

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Wednesday 2 July 2008
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chair:

Mr T. Koutsantonis

Members:

Ms F.E. Bedford

Ms V. Ciccarello

Ms C.C. Fox

Mr S.P. Griffiths

Mr A.S. Pederick

Ms E.M. Penfold

The committee met at 10:59

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE, \$134,416,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE,
\$4,889,000

Witness:

The Hon. G.E. Gago, Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr A. Holmes, Chief Executive Officer, Department for Environment and Heritage.

Mr J.R. Janssan, Executive Director, Business Services.

Mr A. Gerace, Assistant Manager, Management Accounting.

Mr T. Crowe, Business Analyst.

Mr J.R. Denton-Brown, Director, Financial Services

The CHAIR: Estimates are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. The committee will determine an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments to facilitate the changeover of departmental advisers. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed on a timetable for today's proceedings. Changes of committee membership will be notified as they occur, and members should ensure that the chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form.

If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the committee secretary no later than Friday 18 July. I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions, based on about three questions per member, alternating each side. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule. A member who is not part of the committee may at the discretion of the chair ask a question. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the House of Assembly *Notice Paper*. There is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the committee. However, documents can be supplied to the chair for distribution to the committee.

The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. All questions will be directed to the minister and not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. I also advise that for the purposes of the committee television coverage will be allowed from the northern and southern galleries.

I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular, pages 2.30 to 2.32, Appendix C, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, part 11. I call on the minister to make a statement if she chooses.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I will take the opportunity to make a short opening statement. The Department for Environment and Heritage has a responsibility to conserve and protect our environment for all generations, and this past year has seen many significant developments and achievements. Before outlining aspects of DEH's budget for 2008-09, I highlight some of the significant developments and milestones that DEH has achieved in the past year.

The South Australian government is working to establish five biodiversity corridors by 2010. The NatureLinks initiative will deliver these corridors that will link protected areas in key regions with private lands managed for conservation outcomes, in line with our target 3.2. The first NatureLinks plan, East meets West, is being finalised for release in August 2008 and will guide ecological restoration across northern Eyre Peninsula and the West Coast of South Australia. Three new conservation parks were proclaimed: Vivigani Ardune in the South-East; Minlacowie; and Ramsay on Yorke Peninsula. In addition, the Wilderness Advisory Committee submitted its final recommendations on the Murray Mallee wilderness proposals and I am determined to proceed with the proposed Billiatt and Dangali wilderness protection areas.

In 2006 an election commitment was the delivery of 20 additional park rangers for South Australia who will assist DEH to manage the expanded parks system. In 2007-08 the additional five park rangers were recruited and placed throughout regional South Australia. An important achievement for 2007-08 in building Aboriginal partnerships was the negotiation of a co-management agreement with the Witjira National Park and the Irwanyere Aboriginal Corporation. The prolonged drought has brought a particular challenge in managing fire and fuel reduction burns in 2007-08. The arrangements between DEH and SA Water were expanded following the success of the program in 2006-07, with SA Water providing additional funding to DEH to increase the number of seasonal firefighters. This is in addition to the 2007-08 government-approved additional funding of \$826,000 for the recruitment of 26 additional seasonal firefighters for a three-month period.

The major focus for DEH in 2008-09, as in 2007-08, is the establishment of a system of multiple use marine parks. DEH was allocated additional new funding as part of the 2007-08 budget process of \$4.152 million over four years to assist with the creation of 19 parks, a target in South Australia's Strategic Plan. The Marine Parks Act 2007 was proclaimed on 22 May 2008, and the process of developing supporting regulations was commenced. The Marine Parks Council of South Australia was also established on 22 May 2008. The council is responsible for providing advice to me on a broad range of marine park matters, including marine park boundaries and interim protection orders, marine park zones and management plans and promoting community participation in marine park management.

As part of the Adelaide Living Beaches Strategy, the metropolitan sand carting program was maintained to move sand from beaches where sand accumulates to erosion prone beaches. A five-year contract has been let for this program, and sand pumping trials undertaken at West Beach and the Torrens outlet have provided valuable information to inform the design of sand collection infrastructure.

I am delighted that the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animal Welfare) Amendment Bill has been passed and will be proclaimed shortly. The bill reflects that changed emphasis from preventing animal cruelty to promoting animal welfare. The name of the act has been changed to the Animal Welfare Act and increases enforcement provisions by including penalties for animal ill treatment and making aggravated cruelty an indictable offence, and it provides for the routine inspection of intensive animal industries.

Funding to the RSPCA for enforcement activities has increased from \$500,000 to \$580,000 in 2007-08. From 2008-09, there will be an annual allocation of \$660,000 to allow for the increased costs associated with inspectorial work once the bill is proclaimed.

The 2008-09 budget will continue to deliver on environmental priorities. After taking into account the one-off transaction of other accounting 'book' entries in 2007-08, there will be a small increase in the expenditure budget for DEH during 2008-09 in both gross and net expenditure terms. This outcome reflects the continuing process of aligning agency expenditure with targets in South Australia's Strategic Plan, election commitments and other key environmental priorities. Some of the targets for 2008-09 will be:

- The outer boundaries for all 19 marine parks will be declared and released for public comment, and DEH will establish regional/local consultative forums for each marine park.
- Final Naturelinks plans will be prepared for the Flinders to Olary Ranges, River Murray to Coorong and Cape Borda to Barossa biodiversity corridors. Baseline indicators for the Naturelinks corridors will be established to enable ongoing review of ecological condition.
- DEH will continue to build its bushfire suppression capacity through recruitment of additional brigade members, employment of seasonal fire crew, targeted training programs and co-operative working arrangements with other agencies, in particular the CFS and SA Water.
- The Crown Lands Management Bill will be debated in parliament, and DEH will modify its automated workflow system to reflect simplified processes in the new legislation when it is passed.
- Three additional park rangers will be recruited and assigned to arrange a development program across regional South Australia.
- The Rescue to Recovery strategy will be implemented. This strategy aims to maintain populations of critically endangered fish and reintroduce these fish into natural habitats as the impact of the drought recedes.
- Works required to landscape and upgrade public access and facilities in Botanic Park in order to interface with the new zoo entrance will commence.

I am pleased to report that the DEH has performed well in 2007-08. The 2008-09 DEH budget builds on the department's recent achievements and supports the department's key objectives to conserve and restore the environment in these challenging times of drought and the threat of climate change.

Mr GRIFFITHS: It is not my intention to make a long introductory comment, and I recognise that there are many challenges facing the Department for Environment and Heritage and certainly, for the future of South Australia, it is important that they do their work well. I will note, however, that the minister referred to the marine parks and the intention to establish the 19 parks and to determine the zones within those.

Further, I note that the minister was actually in my electorate last week—I am advised after the fact—and she had meetings in several communities about things. My understanding of protocol was that a local member of parliament was actually formally advised when a minister was in an area, but unfortunately that courtesy was not conveyed to me.

I only found out the minister was holding a meeting in the town where I was half an hour before it was to commence, and it was impossible for me to be there. I hope the visit was worthwhile but, unfortunately, I did not have a chance to take part in any of the discussions. With that, I am quite happy to move to the first question area unless the minister wants to comment.

The CHAIR: It is not really a question on budget estimates. It is probably more a matter for question time.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.31: Environment and conservation and the River Murray—expenditure and savings initiatives'. The opposition has noted that the forward estimates require very significant savings to be undertaken in each portfolio area. I am advised that for the Department for Environment and Heritage it is some \$12.8 million over four years. My very first question to the minister is: can she indicate which programs will be affected, and how, over that period?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: As outlined in the 2008-09 state budget papers, savings will be applied to the department from 2009-10 through to 2011-12 and, as mentioned by the Treasurer in his budget speech to parliament, details of the specific measures that will be achieved in 2009-10 will be presented in the 2009-10 budget.

The department will be working through potential savings options once specific details have been provided by Treasury and Finance regarding the information that will be required from departments, and what time frames. Treasury has asked us to respond by September.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I thank the minister for that detail because it was my intention to ask as a follow-up what work had been conducted and what time pressures were upon you, but given that it

is \$290 million over four years across government, it will be a challenge for many departments, no doubt.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.37: Works in progress. Minister, does the absence of any allowance for the 2008-09 financial year of planned road upgrades indicate that they have all been completed or is there no work to be undertaken this year, and will the projects that are not completed yet remain incomplete?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: A significant financial commitment was made to the upgrading of roads in national parks across the state in the 2007-08 budget, and these were significant amounts of over \$1 million. That was for major works involving Innes and Alligator Gorge. Given that very significant focus on the commitment of upgrades in that year, we do not plan for major upgrades during 2008-09 but will consider further major upgrades for the 2009-10 financial year. We have \$500,000 put aside for upgrades in the 2008-09 year.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I thank the minister for that answer and certainly recognise that Innes National Park (being in my electorate) is deserving of the work, so I thank you for that. I did not realise that there was funding in 2008-09, because it is certainly not shown in the budget line that I am looking at. It just shows that the comparison between the 2007-08 budget figure and the estimated result is some \$618,000 less than originally budgeted, so my presumption was that works had not been completed and it was decided to call a halt to it.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am informed that it sits in the annual programs budget line on page 11.7, down the bottom of the page. It is not detailed, but it is included in that figure.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Thank you, minister. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.8: summary income statement, which relates to fees, fines and penalties. Will the minister provide information as to why there has been such a marked increase in this item in 2007-08 as against the budgeted amounts for both that year and, indeed, this financial year? Was there a corresponding increase in the cost of policing, levying and collecting these fines?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The increase of approximately \$1.6 million in net expenditure from the 2007-08 estimated result is, as I have been advised, primarily as a result of the following issues: an increase in expenditure in 2008-09 related to the approved carryover from 2004-05, from various NRM and NHT projects of about \$1.3 million; an increase in expenditure in 2008-09 related to approved carryover from 2007-08; the River Murray Forest election commitment of around—

Mr GRIFFITHS: On a point of order—and I hate to interrupt the minister—my question was about fees, fines and penalties.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order, minister.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I understand you are asking for the difference in the—

Mr GRIFFITHS: The budgeted amount of \$259,000 and the actual income of \$471,000.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that it was as a result of a once-off transaction. In response to your question about the cost for policing, there has been no significant increase in costs for policing.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate the answer but, given that there are fees, fines and penalties, can the minister provide me with the detail of that one specific occurrence or transaction that resulted in \$212,000 extra in income than that which was budgeted?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I do not have that detail with me today, but I am happy to take it on notice and bring back a response.

Ms FOX: I refer the committee to the Portfolio Statement, page 11.15. Will the minister explain how partnerships to manage land are contributing to the conservation of the state's biodiversity?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Although the Department for Environment and Heritage is the lead agency for nature conservation in South Australia, conservation of biodiversity extends beyond state government responsibility. More people are realising the benefits of biodiversity conservation, and innovative partnership arrangements developed by DEH are encouraging non-government entities to get involved in the conservation and management of our unique and precious natural heritage.

One such partnership was sealed in February 2008 when Bush Heritage Australia acquired Bon Bon Station. Bon Bon supports rich and diverse habitats and is located between the Great

Victoria Desert and the large salt lakes of Eyre, Torrens and Gairdner. Covering approximately 215,000 hectares, it is representative of acacia woodlands and suchlike. The protection of this land provides an important link in the pastoral landscape between large DEH-managed parks such as the Yellabinna Regional Reserve and Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park.

DEH was instrumental to the acquisition by way of in-kind support and a significant financial contribution of \$1 million. DEH assisted in securing additional funding for the purchase from the Australian government's national reserve. A grant agreement exists between the state government and Bush Heritage Australia that provides for the protection and management of the biodiversity values of Bon Bon Station in perpetuity. The agreement also requires the establishment of an appropriate conservation covenant, such as a Heritage Agreement, for the ongoing protection and restoration of biodiversity on Bon Bon Station.

Strong partnerships are also in place through the Heritage Agreement Scheme, a conservation covenant program that encourages and assists landholders to conserve native vegetation on their properties, creating permanent private nature refuges for future generations. This is a genuine partnership between private landholders and the state government, and complements the network of parks and reserves in South Australia.

The Heritage Agreement Scheme has proved to be an innovative and effective program for the conservation of native vegetation, and I am grateful to those individuals who agree to committing their land to a cause that provides long-term benefits to South Australia's biodiversity. Currently, over 1,400 agreements have been signed for the protection of more than 600,000 hectares of bushland. The addition of Bon Bon Station to this scheme would increase the coverage to over 785,000 hectares.

Ms FOX: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.15. Can the minister explain how the conservation of native biodiversity is being improved through additions to the park system?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I thank the honourable member for her question. The conservation of native biodiversity is at the core of South Australia's Strategic Plan objective 'Attaining sustainability'. The state's biodiversity provides us with the resources we need to live in a sustainable manner, as well as to be able to enjoy the unique environs this state has to offer, and the role this government is playing to protect it is vitally important. As part of this strategy, the government has continued its program of strategically acquiring land of significant biodiversity value to add to the protected areas system.

In the 2007-08 financial year three new conservation parks were proclaimed as additions to South Australia's protected areas: Vivigani Ardune in the South-East; and Minlacowie and Ramsay on the Yorke Peninsula. Proclaiming these and other parks involved consultation with many stakeholders, including indigenous communities and local councils, and stakeholders had the opportunity to provide comment and advice, with agreement on the proposal reached during this consultation stage.

Vivigani Ardune Conservation Park is well covered in intact native vegetation and provides an important link between other properties managed for conservation. The land contains regionally threatened vegetation associations (dryland tea-tree woodland and tussock grassland), regionally threatened flora (Blue Devil), and fauna of conservation significance, including the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, the Little Lorikeet, the Diamond Firetail, and the Red-necked Wallaby.

Minlacowie Conservation Park comprises remnant mallee and broombush vegetation in very good condition, and conserves a number of significant plant species, including the nationally and state-vulnerable Winter Spider-orchid. The dominant vegetation of the Ramsay Conservation Park is sheoak and mallee, with low woodlands and a grassy understorey. It conserves the nationally and state-endangered Jumping Jack Wattle, which has not been recorded to date in any other national park or wildlife reserve on the Yorke Peninsula.

The government is committed to continuing its program of protecting the state's invaluable biodiversity through strategic acquisition of high conservation priority land.

Ms FOX: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.20. Could the minister explain how the construction of the new Amazon waterlily pavilion will benefit the Adelaide Botanic Gardens?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Amazon waterlily pavilion is the Adelaide Botanic Gardens' new energy-efficient glasshouse that was officially opened by the Premier in November last year as the culmination of the gardens' 150th anniversary celebrations. The pavilion, the third major capital

works project within the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, was built to showcase the gardens' iconic visitor attraction, the famous Victoria amazonica waterlily. This waterlily has a rich 140-year history in the gardens, which illustrates the significance of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens within an international context.

The waterlily was originally discovered in British Guiana (now Guyana) by Dr Richard Schomburgk, the second director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, and his brother Sir Robert Schomburgk. This was at a time when the world was fascinated with rare, exotic and unusual plants and when there were major expeditions to new worlds to discover such plants, which would then be exchanged around the world by networks of plant hunters, horticulturalists and enthusiasts. Dr Richard Schomburgk propagated the waterlily seeds, and when the plant first went on show in 1868 in the purpose-built Victoria House glasshouse, 30,000 South Australians (one-fifth of Adelaide's population at the time) flocked to see its first flowers and massive 2 metre leaves.

The Amazon waterlily pavilion has been built over the original and now restored heritage pond, and the magnificent fragrant waterlily continues to attract, inspire and educate. The pavilion, influenced by the intricate Amazon waterlily leaf design, is truly one of a kind in Australia. It is built substantially of structural glass and features glass beams and columns, while the principles of ecologically sustainable development dictated the pavilion's orientation, layout, heating and ventilation. The pavilion will complement the other two iconic glasshouses in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, and the history of construction technologies. The Palm House is one of the last surviving 19th-century prefabricated, wrought and cast iron glasshouses in the world, while the Bicentennial Conservatory is an outstanding example of late 20th century aluminium and glass construction.

The Adelaide Botanic Gardens is committed to the conservation of plant biodiversity through education, display and research, and in the pavilion's interpretive gallery visitors learn about the importance of botanical discovery and the relationship between plants, people and culture. Visitors are attracted by the beauty of the waterlily and the remarkable story of the flower's reproduction (the flower has been described by Professor Roger Seymour from the University of Adelaide as a 'beetles nightclub').

The Amazon waterlily pavilion and surrounding terrestrial bromeliad collection, which is regarded as one of the best bromeliad collections in the world, complements the gardens' existing botanical displays, visitors' facilities and community and school education programs. The total cost of the pavilion is \$4.3 million, with the state contributing \$2.6 million. It is the state's most visited cultural and scientific institution, with 1.7 million visitors a year. The Amazon Waterlily Pavilion will play a significant part in further promoting the Adelaide Botanic Gardens as a cultural tourist destination.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.9: No Species Loss. Can the minister advise whether any species were lost in 2007-08 and whether any joined the endangered, vulnerable and rare species list in that period?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The South Australian government is committed to a target of 'lose no species' or 'lose no native species' as a result of human impact. The measure of the target is no decline and, where possible, an improvement in the regional status of known native species or relevant ecological communities. South Australia's plants and animals, and the ecosystems they form, have been in decline. At least 26 plants, 27 mammals, eight birds and one reptile species are presumed to have become extinct in South Australia since European settlement. However, no species is known to have become extinct in South Australia in the past decade or more.

The revised threatened species schedule, pursuant to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, listed endangered, vulnerable and rare plant and animal species in South Australia were gazetted on 21 February. The revised schedule recognises 96 more threatened species, with a total number of 1,137 listed, compared with 1,041 in 2002. I am advised that this increase tends more to reflect the improvements in information and data collection, rather than a change in the status of these species.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As an extension to my question, I note that in the performance commentary a strategy is in place for 2007 to 2017. I also note that no species have been lost in the past 10 years. I have not reviewed the strategy, but is any species identified as being particularly at risk over the period to 2017?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The short answer to the question is no. We use the schedules and the revision of the schedules to help us identify and prioritise those species that might require projects and management plans. Outcomes in 2007-08 include the release of the 'No species loss: a nature conservation strategy for South Australia, 2007-17' and the integration of the strategy into

the Department for Environment and Heritage nature conservation program; commencement of regional status assessments for flora and fauna, as identified by targets 6 and 7; development of the draft South Australian arid lands biodiversity strategy, 2008-18, released for public comment; and the ongoing implementation of threatened species recovery plans, which include the Glossy Black-Cockatoo, the Mallee fowl and a range of Lofty orchids.

Out of the 485 endangered and vulnerable listed threatened species in South Australia currently, I am advised that recovery and action plans are being implemented for 202 (43 per cent) of those identified.

Mr PEDERICK: As a supplementary question, are any species under threat with the planned expansion of reservoirs in the Mount Lofty Ranges?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: No planning proposals have been currently received for the expansion of any reservoirs. I take it that the member refers to the Mount Lofty Ranges. The member would know that, as part of that planning process, thorough environmental analysis is completed, which includes identifying any vulnerable species that could be affected by any proposed planning changes. As I said, there is no plan, so those assessment processes obviously have not commenced. The proper environmental assessment will occur according to due process.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.13: Public Land Fire Management. On page 11.13 the performance commentary states that once the 10 fire management plans have been adopted they will cover one-third of DEH's protected area system. Given that in this financial year expenses increased by over 20 per cent—for example, the 2007-08 budget had \$7.711 million compared to actual of \$9.387 million—does that not indicate that this program is underfunded and that a great deal more funding is required to complete the other two-thirds?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The one-third which was targeted and to which the member referred has been identified as a priority by the department for the protection of both life and property. I have been advised that there is adequate funding for the planning process. In relation to the variations, I have been advised that they relate to a number of one-off events, such as the KI fire and also \$826,000 for additional summer firefighting crew, to mention just a few.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, page 11.13. The South Australian government has given a commitment to create 20 additional ranger positions over four years across the state. Will you advise the committee of what progress has been made?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The role of South Australia's parks and reserves is becoming increasingly significant over time. Our parks are reservoirs of biological diversity and will continue to provide a refuge for South Australia's unique wildlife as our climate changes over time. In addition, our national parks provide a focal point for tourism and are becoming increasingly important in supporting regional economies throughout the state.

The professional rangers who have responsibility for managing natural areas work in some of the most remote and isolated areas of the state and tackle a huge variety of tasks in protecting and conserving parks and the environment for the benefit of all South Australians and, indeed, future generations. Their interaction with park visitors means that park rangers play an important role as ambassadors to tourists to South Australia from interstate and overseas.

I am pleased to advise an additional five rangers have been appointed. Two rangers have been appointed to the Western and Outback regions, respectively, to work closely with the mining sector to ensure that escalation in mining exploration activities does not compromise the environment. Two rangers have been appointed to the Adelaide and Northern and Yorke regions and will focus on ensuring that development along the coastline will not adversely impact on the unique natural values of these areas. Another ranger will be located in the Northern and Yorke region to support many friends of parks and individual volunteers in the region.

These staff join the seven additional rangers who were appointed in 2006-07 and who are already making a significant contribution in the areas of volunteer support, controlling weeds and feral animals, and great progress is being made with the department's fire management program. Clearly, the 20 new rangers initiative demonstrates this government's ongoing commitment to the environment of South Australia.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, page 11.12. Bearing in mind the member for Hammond has asked some questions in relation to fire management, will the minister provide an update on the Department for Environment and Heritage's fire management program?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Following the Premier's bushfire summit in 2003, DEH significantly increased its commitment to fire management. Initially, the government provided DEH with \$10 million over four years and in 2007-08 indicated that funding for this initiative would be ongoing. This has seen additional firefighters recruited and trained, an increased capacity in the operational coordination and response, a major expansion of prescribed burning in parks and reserves, and the development of key partnerships.

In addition to these operational fire activities, new fire management plans have been prepared and the use of GIS in fire management has increased. Work has commenced to improve fire ecology and monitoring. Several major fire research projects have been initiated. An example of DEH's ongoing commitment to fire management is the employment and training of over 60 additional seasonal staff available for firefighting during the bushfire season. In conjunction with SA CFS, seven additional fire appliances have been purchased, and the recruitment of 12 specialist fire management staff with expertise in fire management has also been included.

Bushfire response plans have been developed for all seven DEH regions to ensure a consistent and appropriate level of response for bushfires on DEH managed lands: 850 trained places for DEH staff, including a seasonal fire crew being provided in the South Australian Country Fire Service; and recognised firefighting related training. This includes 128 DEH staff trained in the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System and 33 DEH staff have also attended interstate training in Victoria and Western Australia to gain specialist skills in incident management of prescribed burning.

DEH actively participates in the following national fire groups: Australasian Fire and Emergency Authorities Council; Fire Management Group; and Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. At a state level, DEH is a member of the SA Government Agencies Fire Liaison Committee; state, regional and district bushfire prevention committees; and State Emergency Management Council. DEH is a brigade of the South Australian Country Fire Service and, as such, some 300 DEH staff are trained and available to assist in SA's CFS bushfire incidents. DEH also contributes specialist staff, with expertise in the areas such as mapping, planning, fire behaviour, to incident management teams.

A senior DEH staff member has also been appointed as the assistant chief officer of SA's CFS. In the past two years, DEH has worked collaboratively with SA Water to provide an increased bushfire suppression capacity in South Australia's water catchments in the Mount Lofty region. This initiative has resulted in 23 additional firefighters and six appliances being available. Through these initiatives, DEH demonstrates an ongoing commitment to delivering best practice fire management in South Australia's parks and reserves.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer the committee to the Portfolio Statement, page 11.11: trails provide access for memorable experiences for South Australians and visitors. What contribution has this government provided to improve trail-based experiences in the state's national parks?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Parks managed by the Department for Environment and Heritage have been the focus of trail planning and upgrading over the past year. Trail plans are being developed for Cleland Conservation Park, including the Waterfall Gully to Mount Lofty hike, Belair National Park and Flinders Ranges National Park. The plans provide strategic direction for sustainable upgrades of the trail network to encourage use, connect visitors and provide links to spectacular natural landscapes, and contribute to community health and wellbeing.

Based on plans, trail works will commence in the 2008-09 financial year on the Waterfall Gully and Mount Lofty hike. These upgrades will complement the works recently undertaken to repair flood damage. The new work will enhance trail experiences by improving trail surfaces and alignments. It will also contribute to protecting the biodiversity of the park through improved weed control and tree and shrub planting on sections of the trail corridor.

Trail improvements have recently occurred within Deep Creek Conservation Park, with the realignment of 3.7 kilometres of the Heysen Trail to better provide walkers with spectacular views of the Southern Ocean and experience the park's unique natural environment. These plans and subsequent works reflect the actions from Linking with Nature—a trail strategy for South Australia's protected areas 2008 to 2012. The trail plans are the first of a series of planned trail experience upgrades in the parks around the state and are linked to an investment of \$2.7 million of additional funds for statewide trails over five years.

Mr PEDERICK: My question refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.13. Which are the five fire management plans nearing completion?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that we do not have that level of detail with us today, so I am happy to take that on notice and bring back a response.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.9: Performance commentary. This relates to species lost and the targets. Given that in the 2007-08 budget the Mount Bold expansion was a centrepiece of the government's policy—although that seems to have shifted to options in the Mount Lofty Ranges—am I right to believe that no environmental work has commenced; or has it been identified that either the expansion of Mount Bold or the Mount Lofty Ranges option threatens endangered species, and therefore takes away one of the main centrepieces of the government's so-called water performance strategy?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have substantially answered this question in one of my previous responses, but I can add to the answer by saying that I have been advised that some preliminary work has been commenced by DEH, but given that there are no firm proposals for a development, no detailed environmental work has commenced.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to the same budget line. Considering the situation that this state is in—that is, it is desperate for water supply options—what are the time lines for any proposed environmental studies? Considering the crisis this state is in, I would have thought that this would have been a centrepiece of the planning for reservoirs in the Mount Lofty Ranges.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: This really goes to matters outside my portfolio responsibilities, and I am happy to refer the question to the appropriate minister, the Minister for Water Security and the River Murray.

Ms BEDFORD: My question is from Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.18. One of the most practical functions of the Coast Protection Board is to assist councils to protect their assets and the community from coastal hazards such as flooding and erosion. As an indicator of how effectively public money, as administered by the board, is used, can the minister state what funds are allocated to protection works across South Australia's coasts?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: First, I want to differentiate the board's funds from those provided by the government to directly manage the Adelaide coast from Kingston Park to Outer Harbor. In 2007-08 the board provided significant grants to the cities of Onkaparinga, Salisbury and Port Augusta.

In the Onkaparinga area \$219,000 was programmed to assist the council to stabilise cliffs that had been assessed as posing major safety risks to the public. This program of works is continuing in years to come. The 2007-08 works focused on the cliffs of Witton Bluff South near the very popular Noarlunga Beach. This included filling dangerously unstable caves and reinforcing the cliff base against wave erosion. Dangerous overhangs and unstable boulders have also been removed at the very popular Maslin Beach. As a result, beachgoers at both locations will be much safer.

The City of Salisbury is building a new sea wall at St Kilda to prevent future occurrences of the flooding and erosion that, most recently, occurred last year. St Kilda has often suffered flooding during winter storms and it is not cost effective to repair or upgrade the existing failing sea wall, which is on both private and public land. The new sea wall will be located on public land and owned by the council, and it has been designed to resist expected climate change-induced sea level rise. The board is committing \$180,000 per year over four years for this.

The funding of Port Augusta is part of long-running staged levy building to prevent flooding of the city, for which \$77,000 was committed this year. In the above example the levy is designed and built to protect against rising sea levels, and in some areas the levy has been incorporated into the council's foreshore development and also serves as a recreational area, including pedestrian and cycling paths.

Overall, the board has committed more than \$350,000 directly to councils to conduct top priority coast protection works. This represents 70 per cent of its available funds in this period. This is a very high proportion of its total funds and represents an efficient use of public money. The remainder has contributed to critical monitoring activities, grants to community groups and the management of board owned and coastal Crown land.

I take this opportunity to highlight that a major priority for the board is to ensure that South Australia's coastal communities are prepared for and protected against the impacts of rising sea levels resulting from climate change. In fact, South Australia led the country by adopting the board's policy on sea level rise as early as 1991. The board has consistently implemented this

policy so that new protection works include suitable allowances and, since 1994, new coastal development has been built to be safe against sea level rise.

Ms BEDFORD: Again I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.15. Can the minister provide advice on the progress that has been made in establishing wilderness protection areas under the Wilderness Protection Act 1992?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Wilderness Protection Act 1992 establishes the Wilderness Advisory Committee, which is responsible for assessing land for its wilderness values and making recommendations to me on areas that should be proclaimed as wilderness protected areas. Wilderness protected areas provide the highest level of protection for biodiversity conservation, and the government has made significant advances in progressing the amount of land protected under the legislation.

In 2002 when this government came to power there were five wilderness protection areas, all located on Kangaroo Island, covering 70,000 hectares. There are now nine wilderness protected areas, with three proclaimed on Eyre Peninsula in 2004 (Hambridge, Hincks and Memory Cove wilderness protection areas); and the Yellabinna Wilderness Protection Area, proclaimed in 2005.

In 2007-08 the Wilderness Advisory Committee submitted its final recommendations on the Murray Mallee wilderness proposals, and I have determined to proceed with the proposed Billiatt and Danggali wilderness protection areas. When these areas are proclaimed in 2008-09, this will bring the total number of wilderness protected areas to 11 and the area protected to 950,000 hectares.

The committee has also submitted a preliminary report on the wilderness values of the Nullarbor region, and further discussions are occurring to identify potential wilderness protection areas in this region. In line with the previous commitment to investigate the wilderness values of the Nuyts Archipelago, Isles of St Francis and Investigator group of islands, the committee submitted its report to me in May 2008. In 2008-09 I will decide whether to proceed with public consultation on the committee's report.

Overall, the government is proud of the progress that has been made in protecting the wilderness values of South Australia and remains committed to continuing this important conservation program.

Ms BEDFORD: Again I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.9. Can the minister outline to the committee the latest developments with regard to the SA Urban Forests Million Trees Program?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The SA Urban Forests Million Trees Program was established by the state government in 2003 and is dedicated to planting 3 million local native trees and associated understorey species across the Adelaide metropolitan area by 2014. The program aims to reconstruct approximately 2,000 hectares of native vegetation throughout the Adelaide metropolitan open space system, and it will offset carbon emissions, provide habitat for wildlife, and improve air and water quality.

The planting season of 2008 represents the halfway mark of the program and the 1.5 million tree milestone, which was planted by Terri Irwin and the Premier on 3 June 2008 at Botanic Park. During 2008 around 250,000 seedlings will be established throughout more than 50 project sites, ranging from large-scale habitat reconstruction within the reserve system to local amenity and education projects, including streetscapes, schools and local parks. Monitoring of survival rates for seedlings planted in 2007 was completed in May 2008.

The survival rate for 2007 plantings for the program to date remains near 80 per cent, which is considered an excellent result for a large-scale reforestation program in a location with a temperate climate. The program has identified a number of priority sites on which to concentrate its restoration efforts to maximise benefits to local biodiversity. Current best practice is employed and new approaches have been developed consistent with best practice ecological restoration principles and practices.

Large-scale reconstruction projects in 2008 include continuing restoration of the Gawler buffer project sites in Adelaide's northern suburbs and Evanston South and Uleybury. Approximately 26,000 plants will be established across these sites, including many grown by South Australian volunteers through the Trees for Life voluntary tree-growing scheme. The program will expand efforts along the Edinburgh corridor, in partnership with the City of Salisbury. In 2008 approximately 5,000 plants will be established, with an aim of creating a biodiversity corridor

between Edinburgh and Bolivar. A further section of the Darlington hills face zone within the O'Halloran Hill recreational park is being restored to the former canopy.

Large-scale projects are being implemented along the metropolitan coast from St Kilda to Sellicks Beach. When completed in 2014, plantings representative of Adelaide's approximate 21 different original naturally occurring vegetation types, most of which were largely cleared, will have been established over approximately 2,000 hectares of public open space. The program continues to work with many stakeholders, including all metropolitan local councils, 12 state agencies, over 100 schools and several environmental groups including Trees for Life, Greening Australia, and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

In 2008 the program has also provided funding for projects with 10 local Friends of Parks groups. Over 100 schools have been involved in the program, principally through the program's Grow a Great School initiative, which provides funding, technical support and resources for schools to develop educational sites of outdoor classrooms, including bush tucker trails, butterfly gardens or frog ponds to support environmental education learning outcomes consistent with the curriculum.

Education workshops and outreach programs, in addition to the Grow a Great School initiative, expect to reach over 5,000 children through activities run in partnership with organisations such as the Adelaide Botanic Gardens and the South Australian Museum. One of the keys to bringing back Adelaide's vegetation is in using plants grown from seeds gathered from local remnant vegetation. By doing this, the program is helping to protect and maintain the original genetic integrity of the bushland indigenous to the Adelaide region. These local plant varieties have adapted to the local soils and climate conditions, surviving for generations on rainfall alone. The success of the million trees program lies in the fact that it has immediate multiple benefits for the environment and provides educational tools that will last for future generations.

Ms BEDFORD: With regard to the survival rate of these trees, how are they going if they are grown from seed, with the bad weather we have had?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am pleased to say that sample sites are monitored during the first autumn season following planting to give an estimation of the overall survival rate. Monitoring of sample sites for seedlings planted in the winter of 2007 were completed in May 2008, with a survival rate of around 78 per cent. The average survival rate for the program to date remains near 80 per cent, which is considered to be an excellent result. Regeneration is occurring at many of the larger million trees project sites, whereby plants established through the million trees program have set seed that has germinated, resulting in more plants naturally regenerating.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.31: Department for Environment and Heritage saving initiatives. Are cuts to the branch broomrape eradication program included in the forward savings target figures? It is a very important subject.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: That question is a little early.

The CHAIR: I suggest the honourable member wait until we get to the appropriate session.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: It is under the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity, which is at 4.30 pm this afternoon, and I understand you will not be here.

Mr GRIFFITHS: My question refers to part of an answer the minister provided to a question from the member for Norwood. The budget reference is Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.13, and refers to five new rangers appointed. As part of the answer the minister referred to two being appointed for the Adelaide and Mid North and Yorke Peninsula areas to deal with coastal development issues. Can she provide more information on that matter?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: We have recognised that significant coastal conservation issues have been identified in that area, so we have located two rangers to assist in those activities. They will not be exclusively involved in coastal development activities, but it will be a major focus of their job.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Supplementary to that answer—and I respect rangers enormously, and I have no problem with that—I would be interested in some of the specifics: what training have they undertaken; with whom will they be liaising; and are they targeting specific areas? I would just like an outline of the sort of work that these two people will do.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I refer those questions to the chief executive, Mr Alan Holmes.

Mr HOLMES: There are three parts to your question. I think the first one was around training. New rangers in our organisation are part of a graduate trainee program, and we run them through that over a 12-month period. As the minister mentioned in answer to a previous question, the new rangers that are coming on this year are designated as trainee rangers. We will have three ongoing trainee rangers, and we will recruit from that pool into vacant ranger positions as they become available.

One of the issues we have is being able to recruit people into ranger positions in rural South Australia, so we are training our own. We are using those three positions this year, but new rangers in our organisation go through a graduate program and an induction program and then work with experienced rangers to make sure that they are able to take up the full breadth of their duties.

In terms of the two specific rangers that you referred to, the intention is that they are park rangers, but they are located in areas where there is considerable coastal pressure and coastal conservation issues, and you would expect that their liaison work would be with local government, the NRM board, NRM groups and community groups that exist in those areas. That would be our expectation.

To give a bit more detail on the specific issues in one of the locations—and the honourable member will be familiar with this—at the head of the Gulf St Vincent there is a conservation park, and I cannot think of its name; I drive past it often, as would the honourable member. The management of that conservation reserve is closely linked to the landholders and neighbours to that park. It is the liaison work with adjoining landholders that is critical, and we recognise the need to do more of that work. So, there is a bit of a shift in the work of rangers in trying to get them to work more into the community rather than working just in the park. I hope that helps answer the specific questions that you had.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate the information provided, but I presumed from the initial answer that the minister gave to the member for Norwood's question that it was going to be working at a somewhat higher level in planning. I respect the fact that the Samphire Coast area especially needs to be protected and maintained as much as possible, but I presume that these people are working at a level where they would be involved in planning decisions, potentially, and involved in consultation with local government on that, but it appears that that is not the case.

Mr HOLMES: The minister has asked me to respond to your further question. The intention is that they do work at that level as well, so it is about that conceptual planning framework and the development plan level. We would expect these rangers over time to develop the skills to be able to work with councils and assist councils in better planning for those areas.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As a supplementary question, Mr Holmes has referred to the fact that they would be located in the area. Can the minister indicate where these two rangers will work from?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: One will be at Black Hill; and the other will be at either Kadina, Innes or Clare—it has not been decided yet, but it will be roughly in that area. Mr Chair, I refer to a question asked previously in relation to 'Performance criteria' on page 11.13. I was asked for the five management plans for 2008-09. They are the southern Flinders, the southern foothills, Ngarkat, the Hills Face Zone and Southern Western Fleurieu, and they are due for completion in the first quarter of 2008-09.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Again, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.18. Minister, I note in the performance commentary that you talk about the establishment of a sea level rise advisory committee. Can you provide me with some information on whether that committee will be in place for some time and what its role is?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I refer that question to Mr Alan Holmes.

Mr HOLMES: The Sea Level Rise Advisory Committee reports to the Coast Protection Board. The Coast Protection Board, in its policy statement, specifies the sea levels that developers need to take into account at 2050 and 2100. They have been set on projections or information and they were done in the early 1990s.

Since that time there has been substantially more information about the impact of climate change and anticipated sea level rise, and it is likely that the figures we have in place are underestimates of what is likely to happen. So, it is a significant issue and, as an example, the developments at Glenelg or Port Adelaide have all had to take account of potential sea level rise in the design of those buildings. So, our concern is that the specifications we have in place and

developed in the early 1990s may not be adequate for 2008. That is what the advisory committee will do: it will review those levels so that the policies of the Coast Protection Board can be updated. The reason an advisory committee has been established is that it is likely to have significant consequences for developers, and we need to make sure that the development industry is intimately involved in that process, otherwise it will not accept the levels.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Was this committee involved in providing supporting information to Yorke Peninsula council when the decision was made to refuse the Marion Rise development in Marion Bay which was subject to a Supreme Court appeal?

Mr HOLMES: No; the advice on that development was provided by the Coast Protection Board. The Sea Level Advisory Committee has a specific role relating to the policy on the levels that the board will include in its advice to development authorities.

Ms FOX: I refer the committee to the Portfolio Statement, page 11.18. Will the minister explain how the newly established Marine Parks Council of South Australia will support the establishment of South Australia's marine parks?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Marine Parks Council of South Australia was established on 22 May 2008 at the time of the proclamation of the Marine Parks Act 2007. Appointed council members and their specific areas of expertise are as follows:

- Susan Stovell, Presiding Member, who has extensive involvement in community affairs;
- Professor Anthony Cheshire, Deputy Presiding Member, with knowledge in a field of science relevant to the marine environment;
- Dr Hazel Lindsay, with knowledge in a field of science relevant to the marine environment;
- Parry Agius, with extensive knowledge of indigenous culture, especially in connection with the marine environment;
- Christian Pyke, with experience in the field of commercial finishing;
- Hagen Stehr, with experience in the field of aquaculture;
- Trevor Watts, with experience in the field of recreational finishing;
- Peter Owen, with experience in the field of marine conservation;
- Michelle Grady, with experience in the field of marine conservation; and
- Peri Coleman, with experience in the field of marine conservation.

The Chief Executive, Department for Environment and Heritage or his nominee will also be an ex officio member of the council.

Council members collectively possess the key knowledge and skills required under the act to support the creation of our state's representative system of marine parks. Council appointees were selected from a high calibre field of 36 nominations, and I thank those individuals for their interest in the important work to be done by this body. Stated functions of the council are to provide advice to the responsible minister on the establishment of marine parks, interim protection orders, marine park boundaries, marine park zones, management of marine parks and ways to promote community participation in the management of marine parks and the conservation of relevant marine environments.

The first meeting of the council was held on 23 June 2008. Further meetings will be held in the near future to facilitate the provision of specific advice on the proposed network of 19 marine parks and any necessary interim protection orders prior to their release for public comment later this year. The government is looking forward to working with the council to ensure that South Australia's marine parks deliver on the requirements of the Marine Parks Act and meet the government's commitment to create 19 marine parks by 2010, aimed at maximising ecological outcomes.

Ms FOX: I again refer to the Portfolio Statement, page 11.18. Will the minister outline the milestones and outcomes of the government's funding commitments to marine parks?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The government has set an ambitious target to create 19 marine parks by 2010, aimed at maximising ecological outcomes as part of our Strategic Plan Target T3.4. South Australia's marine parks will serve as a conservation tool for our precious and diverse marine environments and will contribute significantly to our important fishing, aquaculture and regional

tourism industries and local communities in South Australia. In 1998, COAG sought to satisfy Australia's obligations under international conventions by establishing an Australian national system of marine protected areas. Creating the 19 marine parks in state waters by 2010 will satisfy South Australia's contribution to that commitment.

In 2007 the state budget included an additional commitment of \$4.152 million over four years to accelerate marine parks development. This funding was essential to provide the necessary capacity for scientific investigation, communications, planning and consultation to facilitate the concurrent development of the 19 marine parks by 2010. I note, for example, that the additional funding has enabled the Department for Environment and Heritage to acquire a new research vessel and research equipment to expand and enhance its statewide habitat mapping program.

DEH has also been able to recruit a team of specialist community engagement officers to work in and with local communities across the state during the marine parks development process. The role of the community engagement team is to talk to and involve as many people as possible in the marine parks process.

By involving people in the planning and development of marine parks it is hoped that marine parks will be seen as a valuable community asset, with strong community ownership into the future. Through the work of the community engagement team, DEH is also learning about how local communities value and use the marine environment and how they would like to see their local area protected and managed. This year alone the community engagement team has spoken to more than 5,000 members of the community and representatives of interest groups from all over the state, and this has made a significant difference to the level of community awareness and involvement.

Our market research shows that more than 70 per cent of South Australians support the development of marine parks to protect and conserve our valuable and diverse marine habitats and species. This applies to both metropolitan and regionally-based South Australians. Last year I introduced the marine parks legislation into parliament, and this was designed to help secure our precious marine environment while at the same time provide security for user groups, such as tourism and agriculture operators and commercial and recreational fishers. I am pleased to advise that the legislation passed both houses in November 2007.

On 22 May 2008 the Marine Parks Act 2007 was proclaimed and the Marine Parks Council of South Australia was appointed, paving the way for the development of the state's 19 multiple-use marine parks. Our independent scientific working group and the former Marine Advisory Committee have worked hard to ensure that the best available scientific knowledge and social and economic considerations were used to inform the selection of marine parks, and I would like to acknowledge the efforts of both these groups—particularly for their assistance in developing the marine parks design principles, which were publicly released on 23 June 2008.

The marine parks program will continue to progress in stages and in accordance with the act, commencing with the release of the 19 marine park outer boundaries later in 2008, followed by a six-week public comment period. Any necessary amendments to the boundaries will be made within six months. The next step will then be to develop the multiple-use zoning within each marine park and the associated management arrangements, in close consultation with key stakeholders and local communities.

South Australia is in a good position to learn from the marine park processes undertaken in other states and to establish a marine park system that is robust and world-class. Thanks to the ongoing financial commitment of the government, the creation of 19 marine parks in South Australian waters by 2010 is on track and making excellent progress.

Ms FOX: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.24. Could the minister provide an overview as to how the passing of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animal Welfare) Amendment Bill will provide benefits to South Australia?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I recognise the importance of this legislation to the people and animals of South Australia, and I am keen to see the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animal Welfare) Amendment Bill enacted. The government has introduced legislation that allows for the protection of animals without compromising activities that provide a social and financial benefit to the community, particularly in regional areas of South Australia.

Through increasing inspectors' powers, increasing penalties, clarifying the provisions, and addressing administrative and technical issues that the RSPCA has raised, I am confident that enforcement and compliance will be improved. The bill provides for the following:

- increases penalties to up to \$20,000 or two years' imprisonment for animal ill treatment and organised animal fights, such as cockfighting, and makes aggravated animal cruelty an indictable offence;
- empowers animal welfare inspectors to routinely inspect commercial animal facilities and allows inspectors to enter a property to rescue an animal, even if the owner is not present;
- empowers courts to order confiscation of objects used in an offence and allows the court to order forfeiture of mistreated animals if the defendant is not fit to plead; and
- changes the name of the act to the Animal Welfare Act 1985 to reflect the changed emphasis from preventing animal cruelty to promoting animal welfare. This emphasis is reflected throughout the provisions of the bill.

To assist with the implementation of these greater powers, the government has provided an \$80,000 increase in funding to the RSPCA for the 2007-08 financial year—bringing the total provided to \$580,000—and has announced that this will be further increased to \$660,000 in the following two financial years. This will enable the RSPCA to employ additional staff to undertake routine inspections of commercial animal facilities.

I thank members for their support of that bill, and I am pleased that both houses saw fit to endorse it with few amendments. Animal welfare is an issue of concern to all of us and to the community. The contributions made support that and our objective, which is to ensure that animals are treated in a fair and reasonable manner.

Membership:

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Pederick.

Ms CHAPMAN: This afternoon I will ask some questions on the minister's other portfolio area in relation to the Glenside Hospital redevelopment; however, for the purposes of this session I will ask questions relevant to page 11.21 of the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, which states that \$3.895 million is to be spent on heritage conservation. This has been summarised in the budget as:

Ensuring that the state's built and maritime heritage and heritage objects are identified, protected, conserved, maintained and celebrated.

My first question specifically relates to page 11.39, which talks about the increase in land sales from the sale of land at Glenside (\$2.5 million). We know from the Premier's section that his department will buy this to facilitate his movie hub. My question is: how much of the Glenside site is currently owned by the Department for Environment and Heritage? In particular, is the whole of what is described in the minister's other portfolio responsibility as the 'cultural precinct' owned by the DEH?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am advised that currently the whole site is owned by DEH.

Ms CHAPMAN: Can I clarify that it is the whole of the Glenside Hospital site?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes.

Ms CHAPMAN: It is owned by the Department for Environment and Heritage?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: That's right—or the minister responsible. It is quite a simple answer.

Ms CHAPMAN: Yes, it is.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: It is not complex.

Ms CHAPMAN: No, indeed. My next question is: when the Premier and/or his department were approved to buy the portion to accommodate the movie hub, was any valuation produced? How much land will his department acquire to accommodate this movie hub? In other words, what does he get for his \$2.5 million, and was there a valuation?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am advised that there was a valuation for the screen hub site: it was around \$2.5 million. It was prepared by Carter Property, licensed agents, auctioneers, managers, property consultants and valuers, and approved by cabinet. The value took into consideration matters such as conservation, capital required, the fit-out to make the main building useful, services, works, and the demolition of buildings.

Ms CHAPMAN: And the area?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I do not think I have that detail with me, so I am happy to take the question on notice and bring back a response.

Ms CHAPMAN: My third question on the development relates to the budget line in relation to funding for the Glenside site and the operations that are happening there at a moment, in particular the deconstruction of the laundry site last Friday. How much did that cost, including the cost of security guards, and which budget line did it come from?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The question is outside the purview of the responsibilities for this portfolio.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Fox): Would the minister care to answer it?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I will answer it this afternoon—if the member asks the question, of course.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.22. Our state's heritage is highly significant, and it is the joint responsibility of the government and the community to protect it and to educate South Australians about it. Can the minister detail what the government is doing to help educate South Australian young people about the importance of our cultural heritage?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The government is committed to maintaining and conserving our heritage. I have been lucky to see first-hand many of the state's fantastic heritage sites, including the beautiful state heritage listed buildings on the Glenside campus.

It is really important that community education is an ongoing part of conservation. In 2003, the government encouraged students in South Australia to identify and celebrate their local heritage through the Schools Heritage Competition. This is an annual event that is open to all reception to year 12 students across the state, and it provides opportunities for classes to learn and spread the word about heritage in our community.

South Australia's rich built heritage is truly unique, and for many years this competition has served to give students a sense of pride in local heritage places. Many teachers have confirmed the benefits of the involvement of their students in the competition and the diversity of learning experienced by them.

In 2007, students were encouraged to use computer technology to showcase heritage places in their local area using TV segments, website or printed materials, or by developing a series of traditional or electronic postcards. A new award (the *Postcards Award*) was offered to students to develop their original ideas as a segment for the Channel 9 *Postcards* show.

The Teaching Heritage Award, introduced in 2006, was expanded in 2007 to include both primary and secondary schools. In 2008, students are encouraged to develop interpretive products for significant heritage places, and the competition offers three quite different entry categories and prize opportunities. It retains the successful communication technology component of previous years, as well as the *Postcards Award* category in 2007. Students are invited to submit entries in three categories: site interpretation to enhance the visitor experience, electronic interpretation, and interpretation through television.

Students will also have the opportunity to develop a plan that interprets heritage places and brings them to life. A new prize has been introduced and the winner will be able to work with a professional heritage interpreter to implement their plan in real life. The closing date for 2008 entries is 3 October 2008.

The next generation of South Australian leaders are currently within our education system. We hope that we will reach them early and that they will see the enormous value of our heritage and how it contributes to telling the story of our state. By focusing on how to communicate the significance of local heritage places to others, students gain an insight into our history and what makes us unique as South Australians.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.9. With the decline of environmental conditions along the River Murray and Lower Lakes due to the effects of long-term drought there have been significant impacts on the native fish of those ecosystems. Will the minister comment on what the government is doing to prevent their extinction?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I thank the member for highlighting this most important issue. As a result of the prolonged drought, water levels in the river and, more particularly, the associated backwater swamps of the Lower Lakes have continued to drop. Similar issues have also occurred in creeks and swamps in the South-East. River and swamp water levels have receded away from fringing wetlands vegetation where many aquatic species of animals live and find their food and shelter.

Without this shelter several small species of native fish have become much more exposed to predation by larger, mostly introduced, fish species and fish-eating birds and their numbers have declined dramatically. Some are now to the point of being undetectable at all or nearly undetectable in previously known localities. Fortunately, baseline surveys had been conducted by both private and government fish experts and follow-up monitoring had alerted managers to the declines of populations of Murray hardyhead, Yarra pygmy perch, purple spotted gudgeon, dwarf galaxias and Ewens pygmy perch.

Emergency rescues were conducted for each species, with small numbers of each collected and then transferred to aquaria, ponds and tanks to be maintained by private native fish ecologist and fish conservation enthusiast, Mr Michael Hammer. Many of these fish have bred in these aquaria and management is now being assisted by the Adelaide Zoo. A plan to set up a permanent captive maintenance facility at Cleland Conservation Park is currently being considered.

Following these emergency rescue activities, a drought response strategy is being prepared to:

- develop and implement action plans for refuge areas for these populations;
- develop and implement contingency plans in response to monitoring outcomes, including assessment of the role of ex situ management options and reintroductions;
- develop longer-term response plans for in situ (in the wild) conservation of these species.

This work is being undertaken by staff employed by the Department for Environment and Heritage, Primary Industries and Resources SA (Fisheries), SARDI, the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board and freshwater fish consultants. Funding support has come from the SA government drought task force (\$200,000 through PIRSA), a special government allocation of \$25,000 for work in the Finnis River catchment and \$50,000 for rescue efforts during 2008, the Australian government's Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (\$110,000 through the SA Department for Environment and Heritage).

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, the Portfolio Statement, page 11.11. Will the minister provide an update in relation to the exciting project that is seeing a significant investment in the upgrading of visitor facilities and services in Belair National Park?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I thank the honourable member for her most important question and interest in this national park. Belair National Park is South Australia's oldest and Australia's second oldest national park. I am pleased to advise that the project to upgrade facilities in the park is progressing well. The government is delivering high quality and sustainable visitor facilities to this important national park, while enhancing its significant heritage fabric and conservation values.

Having recognised the longstanding importance of Belair National Park as a place for recreation in a natural setting, the South Australian government initiated a major upgrade of visitor facilities in the park which commenced in 2003. Facilities in the park have been established over a period of many decades. With little capital maintenance being invested in them since, they were reaching the end of their useful life and were not of a standard that visitors to such an important national park would expect.

To date there have been upgrades at the Karka Pavilion, Old Government House, Pines and Government Farm precincts. The upgrades have included new high quality and low maintenance picnic shelters, improved visitor safety by removing through traffic from the precincts, improved visitor access and car parking, the provision of disabled access compliant toilets, the protection of native vegetation and significant exotic heritage trees and the rehabilitation of degraded sites.

The improvements at these sites have received enthusiastic approval from the community, as demonstrated by the large numbers of visitors regularly making use of them. I am advised that the facilities in these precincts are usually the first facilities booked, and many are booked a long way in advance.

Some of the new facilities in Belair National Park have featured recently as examples of best practice in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects award winning guidelines for facilities in New South Wales parks. Currently, work on the upgrade of the adventure playground picnic site and the gold escort ground heritage precinct is nearing completion, involving the provision of better and safer car parking arrangements, improved bus access, upgraded picnic shelters and toilets, and removal of inappropriately sited workshop buildings.

The final design for the upgrade of this precinct incorporated several changes suggested by community members during the consultation period, including the provision of a 'family friendly' toilet facility that features both an adult's and children's pan in the same cubicle, so that mum and dad can take a young child with them into a safe and clean facility. I am very pleased to advise that, subject to a favourable tender result, it will not be long before visitors to the park are enjoying improved facilities in the Dianella precinct (just east of the main oval).

Planning is also well advanced for a significant upgrade to this precinct. This will see work undertaken to: formalise traffic access and parking areas; rehabilitate areas affected by erosion; and improve protection for the natural values on this site. It is also planned to replace the existing toilet with better located disabled-compliant and family friendly facilities, to provide high quality, aesthetically pleasing low maintenance shelters and a number of new barbecues throughout the precinct. Through traffic between the main oval and the main oval pavilion will also be removed to make it safer and more enjoyable to use these facilities.

Environmental rehabilitation of currently degraded areas will be achieved in partnership with the Friends of Belair. Staff from the Department for Environment and Heritage have discussed the plans for this precinct with the Friends of Belair and the Blackwood/Belair and District Community Association. Both these community groups are very supportive of the planned works. Once completed, these works will further improve the visitor experience at Belair National Park, while helping conserve its important environmental and heritage values long into the future.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to page 11.21 on protecting heritage and the Glenside site. Minister, no doubt you are aware that, yesterday, the National Trust of South Australia declared the whole of the Glenside site at risk for cultural and historical built and natural environment. They have issued their memorandum on that. I do not know whether you have had an opportunity to read it yet, but they have made that assessment. In particular, in relation to your Glenside campus concept master plan, they say that the methodology and its preparation is deeply flawed, as well as other general criticisms. They recommend that no action should be taken regarding the sale and further demolition of any part of the campus until a new master plan is completed.

Now that you have told the committee that the whole of this site is owned by the Department for Environment and Heritage, my question is: as the Minister for Environment and Conservation are you able to say, as the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, that this master plan should be reviewed? Are you prepared to do that and, if not, have you asked the Premier to appoint an acting Minister for Environment and Conservation to ensure that there is a voice on this issue in the cabinet?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The short answer to the first part of the honourable member's question is no. There has been a thorough consideration of heritage issues throughout the redevelopment planning process, and I can assure all members that heritage has been a central theme of the planning undertaken to date and will continue to be into the future. Heritage has been explored as part of the development of the concept master plan released in 2007 and the final master plan released in 2008. SA Health is well aware of the state heritage listed structures on the site. In fact, the master plan details an exciting plan to revitalise and enhance these structures in developing both the concept master plan and the master plan.

SA Health formed a planning team, which included urban designers, urban planners and architects with specialist heritage skills. Further, SA Health has sought expert advice on the local heritage merit of some buildings on the site as a result of a 2003 suggestion made by Bruce Harry. In this instance, SA Health engaged DaSH Architects, well known local heritage architects, to assess these buildings.

SA Health, DTEI and DEH continue to have dialogue about how one appropriately reuses state heritage structures on the site. These conversations are fundamental to guiding the work of

the yet to be appointed design teams for both the Adelaide screen and film hub and the health facilities. Once the design teams are in place (around late August 2008), DEH will have a very hands-on role in guiding this exciting opportunity to demonstrate adaptive reuse of these structures.

There has been significant engagement of heritage experts in the preparation of the master plan and there will continue to be engagement of the Heritage Branch in the implementation of this important master plan. Heritage will remain an important theme in the redevelopment of the Glenside campus. Existing state heritage structures will be incorporated into a near-city urban development that will provide world-class mental health and substance abuse facilities, supported accommodation and intermediate care places, and a cultural hub and housing.

In relation to the second part of the question, I have sought advice regarding the excise of powers as Minister for Environment and Conservation under the heritage acts, and there are no decisions to be made by me as minister that would cause a conflict between those roles at present. Most powers are held (as we know) by the very independent and very capable Heritage Council and, if any conflict issues arise, I will certainly ensure that a decision is delegated to an appropriate minister. We know that, in relation to state heritage matters, one of the processes involved in that assessment involves the independent Heritage Council. In relation to local heritage issues, it belongs under the Development Act and is part of a DPA planning process that goes through the minister for planning. So, I am not involved in that process.

Ms CHAPMAN: This is my second and final question. In relation to this very independent Heritage Council, which receives applications, including the application of Burnside council 10 days or so ago to seek a provisional listing of a property known as the laundry site which was demolished on Friday, is the minister aware, as the opposition has been informed (because this is a body for which you are responsible), that the requirements under the Heritage Places Act stipulating that meetings be held publicly may well have been breached?

No meeting was conducted to review that demolition (the demolition which you have authorised wearing your other hat) and, in fact, the application was forwarded by email to members of the council. As minister responsible for heritage, will you at least look into this and accept that, if there are decisions made by you wearing one ministerial hat, you also have a responsibility wearing the other hat to ensure that the relevant decision is actually complied with?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that the Heritage Branch has a delegation from the Heritage Council regarding provisional listing. The chair of the council, I am advised, carefully consulted the Heritage Council members and its Register Committee before she asked that the delegation be exercised in a particular way. I note that this occurred after the announcement I had made about the demolition of the laundry. This is really about political grandstanding.

Ms CHAPMAN: This is about demolition of an asset.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: It is about demolition of an asbestos-ridden building that has clearly been assessed as not having heritage value. In relation to the question asked about the Adelaide Film and Screen Hub, in the master plan precinct 2 is described as being 2.77 hectares in size.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.9: nature conservation and the performance commentary. Can the minister outline what stage has been reached with the environmental impact statement for the proposed weir at Pomanda Island, or Wellington, including the environmental management plans for acid sulphate soils and the conservation of threatened native fish species?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The government needs to undertake necessary preparations in the event of ongoing extremely low flows in the River Murray. These preparations include investigation of the proposed impacts of a temporary weir near Wellington on the Murray River. The Department for Environment and Heritage has been asked to facilitate the environmental approval process under the commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The first stage of this process was to forward a referral to the Australian government describing the proposed project and listing all possible impacts the project may have on matters of national environmental significance such as the Coorong and Lake Alexandrina, the Lake Albert Ramsar site and nationally listed threatened and migratory species.

This referral documentation was forwarded to the Australian government on 1 June 2007 and was available for a 10-day public consultation period. Pursuant to the EPBC Act an exemption

for the weir construction phase has been requested due to the urgency of retaining water for critical human needs, and an exemption was prepared and submitted to the Australian government. However, it was not actioned due to improving forecasts for water resources, enabling time for an assessment of both the construction and operational phases of the weir.

The Australian government is assessing the level of environmental impact assessment figures for the proposal to address the potential impacts of the values of the Lower Lakes and Coorong that might arise from a temporary weir. The assessment helps the government manage the weir in a way that minimises any impact on the environment and achieves best possible environmental outcomes. The assessment includes work to identify strategies to support environmental recovery once the drought has broken. The recovery phase is important, as we know.

Approximately \$220,000 is being spent on environmental impact assessments in addition to considerable in-kind support from relevant government agencies, and this includes costs to cover a contractor to prepare documentation and allocations for modelling and other specialist studies, such as acid sulphate soils and native fish and such like.

As a result of the ongoing drought conditions, water levels continue to drop downstream of lock 1 and within Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert. Acid sulphate soils are being exposed to the air as water levels recede, resulting in acidification, with dire consequences for ecological health and long lasting environmental, economic and social costs. For large areas such as Lake Albert, the practical option is to keep sediments covered with water and thereby reduce the potential for oxidation and acid production.

As the consequences of acidification are so severe, the option of mitigating acid sulphate soils oxidation by maintaining them wet with seawater is under serious consideration if River Murray inflows do not improve during 2008. In the interim, an emergency project to maintain water levels at greater than 0.5 metres AHD (Australian height datum) by pumping water from Lake Alexandrina to Lake Albert between April and October 2008 has been developed. Geochemical modelling indicates a Lake Albert water level of approximately 0.6 metres coincides with serious pH triggers. Once these triggers are reached, rapid increases in water acidity will occur, which may result in pH levels as low as 1.5, which is highly acidic.

The Australian government has been advised through the chair of the Water Security Task Force, now the Water Security Council, that these actions are proposed in relation to a matter of national environmental significance. It is a Ramsar site and the actions will mitigate acidification risks at Lake Albert, without significant impact on Lake Alexandrina. The South Australian government has undertaken environment protection and biodiversity conservation risk assessments to confirm the positive outcomes (delaying acidification from the lake) from this emergency measure.

Winter conditions and potential for the delivery of water from the MDB catchment is being closely monitored to enable strategies for Lake Albert water levels for a foreseeable period post October 2008 to be developed and implemented. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission through the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Future Options Working Group is developing short and long-term management options for the site. In the short term, pumping will continue from Lake Alexandrina to Lake Albert, whereas long-term options will be considered by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.

[Sitting suspended from 13:05 to 14:05]

Membership:

Mr Pederick substituted for Ms Chapman.

Mr Pengilly substituted for Mrs Penfold.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr V. Levitzke, Chief Executive, Zero Waste SA.

Mr P. Fioretti, Business Manager, Zero Waste SA.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: In 2003, the government of South Australia created Zero Waste SA with the primary objective of promoting waste management practices that, as far as possible, eliminate waste or its consignment to landfill. The agency focuses on a range of issues from kerbside collection of household recyclables to encouraging infrastructure development and hazardous waste disposal.

South Australia's Strategic Plan includes a goal to 'reduce waste to landfill by 25 per cent by 2014'. This is an ambitious target, and the creation of Zero Waste SA is the key to achieving that target.

Zero Waste SA is guided by South Australia's Waste Strategy 2005-10: a five-year blueprint for sustainable development changes to South Australia's waste management and resource use. The strategy, which will be reviewed in 2008-09, has ambitious targets for each of the core waste streams: municipal solid waste, construction and demolition waste, and commercial and industrial waste.

The Zero Waste SA Act 2004 provides for an independent board to govern the agency and sets out the roles of the agency. The act also establishes a Waste to Resources Fund dedicated to the purposes of Zero Waste SA: that is, the money in the fund may only be used for the promotion of improved waste management practices.

Since 2003, Zero Waste SA has provided grants totalling \$4 million to local councils to improve kerbside collection and adoption of high-yielding recycling services. This has resulted in the 25 per cent diversion from landfill in 2003 and saw it growing to 50 per cent. All metropolitan councils and 22 country councils in South Australia now have high-performing kerbside collections.

This program is to be extended to incorporate food waste collection, helping us reach the waste strategy target of 75 per cent of all material presented at kerbside being recycled by 2010, as well as increasing the amount of high-quality compost available to improve South Australia's poor soils and reduce evaporation and water use. Zero Waste SA is engaged in a program to offer financial and other assistance to regions to implement solutions to their waste management problems. In the 2008-09 financial year, \$1 million is allocated to this program.

The household hazardous waste and farm chemical collection program continues to remove large quantities of hazardous material from the environment. Other programs include:

- Wipe out Waste—a schools waste education program.
- A three-year service agreement with KESAB to deliver a number of anti-litter, anti-dumping and education programs. This service agreement is valued at \$1.287 million over the next three years of the agreement.
- The Resource Efficiency Assistance Program (REAP) partnering DTED, SA Water and EPA. The agencies will operate as the Business Sustainability Alliance (BSA) and be well positioned to provide the key competencies for REAP, namely: waste, water, energy, lean manufacturing, compliance, and climate change and sustainability.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.93 and the summary income statement. To retrospectively justify the government decision to double the solid waste levy as of July 2007, Zero Waste SA commissioned the Hyder report, which provided the following recommendation:

1. The \$10 million increase in the levy announced by the government to be introduced in July 2007 should be given effect by way of a doubling of the metropolitan and non-metropolitan levy rates.

This report also recommended:

4. For sustained and increasing resource recovery in the medium to long term, the waste levy should be continuously increased to around \$55 per tonne by 2013.

Minister, can you please indicate whether or not the state government intends to implement recommendation 4 and, if so, how the increase to \$55 per tonne by 2013 will take place?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The waste levy continues to drive reforms by increasing recycling, reducing waste to landfill and ensuring that non-efficient waste depots that are not applying best environmental practices have to consider other options to become more efficient. It was a very important policy driver. Estimated collections from the solid waste levy for 2007-08 are of the order of \$22.6 million compared with \$11.6 million in 2006-07. Estimated tonnages in the metropolitan area for 2007-08 are 171,000 compared with actuals in 2006-07 of over 1 million tonnes.

The waste levy is collected by the EPA; 50 per cent is transferred to Zero Waste SA and deposited in the Waste To Resources Fund. It funds a number of key projects such as the kerbside performance incentive regional implementation program, the metro infrastructure program and the household and farm hazardous chemical collection programs. Some seven regional councils have applied to the EPA for a reduction in their waste levy rate proportional to the amount of increased recycling initiatives in their area. Once these initiatives are substantiated I will certainly consider whether a reduction is appropriate. Any reduction would be provided to reflect the hard work these councils have put into recycling and reducing waste. In relation to any proposed future increases in the waste levy, that would be looked at by the Waste Strategy Review Committee and is obviously subject to cabinet decision.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.31, regarding environment conservation and the River Murray expenditure and savings initiatives, which also talks about Zero Waste SA and that \$500,000 will be spent in the coming financial year on a public awareness campaign. Will the minister advise the committee and, indeed, South Australia, whether the plastic bags made from high density polyethylene of eight unit microns and density range of 0.94 to 0.96 will be banned under the government's ban on plastic bags? I reinforce the fact that South Australian consumers need to be clear about what is in and what is out. I emphasise this by asking: is this bag approved or intended to be banned; and are these bags approved or intended to be banned?

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Goyder knows full well that the standing orders of the house apply to the committee. As much as I hate to reprimand him for his childish stunt and rule him out of order, he knows that props and visuals are not allowed in the chamber or in any proceedings of the parliament unless designed to inform the committee and with the prior approval of the chair. Even then, I think it might be dubious. I will allow the question, but the member must remove those bags immediately.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I admit that I was aware that I was unable to bring in props during the sittings of the house, but I was not aware that it was not possible during the committee stage.

The CHAIR: I remind the honourable member that in my opening statement I said that this is a committee of the house and that the same standing orders that apply in the house apply here, so props are not to be used.

Mr GRIFFITHS: They are purely for demonstration purposes to emphasise what South Australians need to know, but I look forward to the answer from the minister.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes; I am happy to have an opportunity answer this question. In relation to the proposed bans, the legislation proposes to ban the lightweight plastic carry bags generally used for grocery shopping and take-away food purchases, and that will involve plastic bags made from polyethylene with a thickness of less than 35 microns. It is those bags that will be banned. Those bags have handles so, obviously, not only would a plastic bag such as a newspaper wrapper not have handles but, irrespective of how many microns it might be, if it does not have handles and it is not used for the purpose of carrying retail goods it would lie outside the ban. Barrier bags such as those used for fruit and vegetables and by butchers, bread bags, etc. are not included in the ban. I am sure you will also be pleased to know that doggy poo bags are also not included, and I can see the relief spread all over your face. I can tell you are obviously very relieved.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Your dog doesn't poo? What a clever dog! As a former nurse, I would say it has problems. The other types of bags excluded from the ban include boutique carry bags, heavy duty 'green' bags, and such like. Bags not banned include bags on the roll, such as those used for vegetable and fruit, heavier plastic bags used by boutique and department stores, and compostable bags that meet the AS47362006 standard, which are 100 per cent compostable bags. So, biodegradable bags will not be included in the ban; however, degradable bags will be included, given the definitions I have already outlined. They are made from polyethylene so, although they break down, they just break down into smaller pieces of plastic rather than being compostable.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As an extension of that, I believe something like 400 million of the shopping bags are used in South Australia per year. I respect the fact that South Australians want to do the appropriate thing by the environment, but we are aware that retailers are very concerned about this introduction and we are also aware that there is much uncertainty out there on the part of consumers regarding which bags are banned and which bags they can and cannot use. The public awareness campaign will have to be immense. Is it intended to be the full scope of television, print

and radio? Will information be posted to every home so that people can educate themselves on it? How do you intend to carry out this program?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: You are correct that an estimated 400 million of these lightweight plastic bags circulate throughout South Australia each year and about 4 billion nationally. That is an environmental outrage considering they are an unnecessary environmental nuisance, there being a number of quite readily available alternatives.

In terms of the information campaign, a number of things are being done. An additional expenditure of \$500,000 shown in the budget papers is for an education campaign for the ban. Market research conducted in 2006 highlighted the need for an education campaign to support the smooth implementation of the plastic bag ban to support attitudinal and behavioural change. Market research showed that shoppers and retailers wanted information that explained the bags included and excluded in the ban, as well as the timing of the ban. The research also recommended that the education campaign advise on actions to help people prepare for the ban and point them to further sources of information and assistance. A 1300 hotline, website and dedicated email address are also likely to be considered.

A study funded by Zero Waste for the Shop Distributors and Allied Employees Association here in South Australia also highlighted the need for an education campaign to target the public and support retail workers. We do not want the inadvertent effect of people confused about plastic bags taking it out on retail assistants, and we are certainly very aware of that.

The advertising component of the education campaign will comprise television, radio and press. The \$500,000 funding for advertising is roughly allocated as follows: \$360,000 for media; around \$140,000 for strategy and production; and an additional \$50,000 allocated to direct mail, targeting retailers in the small to medium business sector in particular. It will include a retail information kit containing point of sale material, information for those from non-English speaking backgrounds, and small to medium enterprise businesses. There will also be a communication strategy for shop-workers.

Other elements of the education campaign include outdoor and indoor signage for shopping centres and car parks, and a give-away promotion—and I note that there is one in Rundle Mall today. If you want to pick up a free fibre shopping bag, I understand they are being swapped there for your plastic bags—one for one.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes; so get down there. Consultation with the Plastic Bag Phase Out Task Force is being undertaken, and I remind the member that, in response to some of these concerns, we have also planned a transitional period between the beginning of January and 4 May to help prepare retailers and shoppers for the proposed changes. So, that is a bit of a transitional time and it allows people to prepare for change.

Ms FOX: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.91, where, in the highlights for 2007-08, incentive schemes for the kerbside collection of food waste are raised. I understand that the 2008 target in South Australia's waste strategy—50 per cent of all material presented at kerbside is recycled—has been delivered. Can the minister advise what progress has been made to achieve the 2010 target of 75 per cent of all material presented at the kerbside being recycled, if food waste is included?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Recent audit results have confirmed that, on average, metropolitan Adelaide councils recycle at least 50 per cent of all material presented at kerbside. The state government has achieved this through Zero Waste SA's Kerbside Performance Incentives program, which commenced in the 2004-05 financial year, with incentive grants to councils totalling almost \$2 million in that year. To date, a total of approximately \$4 million has been allocated to councils through this program, including to all 18 metropolitan councils and 22 country councils.

The benefits of these incentives have been the rapid implementation of common systems, a reduction in household waste to landfill and increased household recycling. Common systems allow councils to share contracts, education materials and information to ratepayers. Increased household recycling sees benefits in reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced water consumption and reduced materials used by our society, as recycled materials replace virgin materials used in manufacturing and packaging.

Food waste is the next big gain to be made in domestic waste diversion. The state government's Zero Waste SA is working with a number of local councils to pilot food waste collections in the coming year, and \$990,000 has been allocated to this initiative in 2008-09. Food

waste collection with green organics will be processed by the composting industry, and this will add further nitrogen to its processes, improving compost and increasing the volume of products that can be onsold to the horticulture and viticulture industries.

Ten councils have submitted to Zero Waste SA expressions of intent to participate in this pilot program, including four from regional areas. The pilot will ensure that the collection of food waste can be carried out smoothly and at the least cost to councils. It is anticipated that the pilot program will commence early in the 2008-09 financial year.

Ms FOX: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.91. I understand that there is a program to encourage resource efficiency sustainability practices by South Australian businesses. I recognise the value in recycling and resource recovery, but surely it is better to reduce waste in the first place. Can the minister tell me what the government is doing about this?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Again, I thank the member for her question and her ongoing interest in this important policy area. Through Zero Waste SA, the state government has developed the Industry Resource Efficiency Program, which is aimed at assisting industry to reduce waste—not only material waste but also water and energy.

Resource efficiency essentially means doing the same with less, and it is a systematic and holistic approach to managing an organisation's resources, energy, water and materials, both environmental and financial, and eliminating or minimising waste and emissions to the environment on a sustainable and cost-effective basis.

Similar programs undertaken before in South Australia, interstate and overseas have shown large environmental and cost efficiencies realised by companies implementing resource efficiency measures. Actions can also be accredited, providing a new marketing edge for the organisation. The program is helping businesses and government understand, develop and implement cost-saving resource efficiency measures and, in doing so, build capacity to deal with a range of rapidly emerging environmental, financial and social consequences.

Zero Waste SA is partnering with three other government agencies—the Department of Trade and Economic Development, SA Water and the EPA—to deliver these programs. The agencies operate as the Business Sustainability Alliance and are well positioned to provide assistance and advice in the areas of waste water, energy, lean manufacturing and construction compliance, climate change and sustainability. The Industry Resource Efficiency Program has been expanded for the 2008-09 financial year with a budget of \$686,000, and it is projected that over 100 businesses and institutions will be assisted under this important program.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.91. In the targets for 2008-09 there is mention of an incentive program to increase recycling from the commercial and industrial sectors. I am aware of the considerable success the government has achieved in improving domestic waste and recycling collection. What is being done about waste from the commercial and industrial sectors?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: South Australia's waste strategy calls for a 30 per cent increase in the level of recycling and resource recovery of commercial and industrial waste by 2010 from the 2004 baseline. A report conducted by Hyder Consulting, entitled Review of Recycling Activity in Australia, 2006-07, revealed that in 2006-07 South Australia recycled 2.4 million tonnes of material, of which over 870,000 tonnes was commercial and industrial matter. However, significant volumes of readily recyclable material are still going to landfill. The indications are that this material can be broken down into the following categories: 92,000 tonnes of organics, 42,000 tonnes of paper and 25,000 tonnes of mixed plastics, as well as some timber and metals.

Adelaide has high-performance recycling collection systems for households, and this is largely attributable to the three-bin system and a strong history of source separation. South Australia is in need of an equivalent and effective collection system for the commercial and industrial sectors. There is an opportunity, through modified collection arrangements and workplace awareness, for small to medium businesses to separate materials into recyclables and residual waste and, in doing so, increase the diversion of waste from landfill.

Accordingly, Zero Waste is developing an incentives program to encourage effective collection systems for commercial and industrial recycling. Commercial and industrial waste is frequently collected in large bins and disposed directly to landfill. The new Zero Waste SA program will work with industrial waste collectors, and the commercial and industrial sectors, to provide facilities for the separation of recyclables at the commercial or industrial site on which the waste is

created, as well as a range of other interventions. It is expected that the program will considerably reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill with a corresponding reduction in disposal costs.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.31, and the effort that has been expended on the plastic bag awareness campaign. Given that there are numerous other items in the litter stream, will the minister talk about the effort being made by Zero Waste SA to control and regulate, and inform the public about the need for, responsible disposal opportunities for electronic waste, car tyres, illegal dumping of any sort, and construction and demolition waste?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The rapid development of electronic technology means that computers and other devices are becoming obsolete at an ever-advancing pace. Obviously, it is an issue of concern. The disposal of e-waste at end of life is of concern due to the increasing volumes and hazardous nature of some component parts.

Zero Waste piloted the co-collection of e-waste, in conjunction with Onkaparinga council's established household and farm chemical collection program, on 14 and 15 June 2008. Costs associated with the collection of e-waste were shared between Onkaparinga council, Zero Waste and residents. A per-item cost was required from residents.

It is important that consumers of electrical and electronic products realise that costs are associated with end-of-life disposal and, by so doing, this may encourage more informed purchasing decisions. A number of South Australian councils have, or are considering, arrangements for ratepayers in relation to managing household e-waste. The Zero Waste SA board is also considering how best to assist in this area.

Ultimately, product stewardship can provide a way in which to encourage producers and manufacturers to take more responsibility for products at end of life. It can drive better design choices, decrease environmental impacts along the supply chain and help to build an end-of-life management cost into product prices. For these reasons extended producer responsibility, where industry takes responsibility for their products at end of life, is the leading policy initiative for e-waste being developed at a national level through the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (of which I am a member).

At the June 2008 Onkaparinga collection event, 252 residents dropped off 1,139 items of e-waste, accounting for 8.9 tonnes. This material has been sent for recycling at an Adelaide-based e-waste recycling company. At its May meeting the SA Zero Waste board resolved to pursue a range of approaches to address e-waste in 2008-09, such as:

- writing to original equipment manufacturers Dell, Sony, Hewlett-Packard, and so on;
- influencing state and national policy development;
- advocating within state government in relation to procurement, contracts and processes; and
- sponsoring a forum for local government.

In May 2007 Zero Waste provided a grant of \$32,600 (without GST) to an Adelaide-based e-waste recycling company to assist processing of component parts arising from e-waste. For 2008-09 Zero Waste SA's business plan allocates \$214,000 to address problematic waste, including e-waste.

I reiterate that at a national level through the Environment Protection and Heritage Council a great deal of work is being done on product stewardship across a range of different products. Those issues are probably best and more efficiently dealt with at a national level, given the global way in which our economy and marketing operates.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY, \$6,960,000

Departmental Advisers:

Mr A. Holmes, Chief Executive, Department for Environment and Heritage.

Mr T. Circelli, Deputy Chief Executive, Environment Protection Authority.

Mr J. O'Daly, Director, Corporate and Business Support Division, Environment Protection Authority.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular pages 2.30 to 2.31 and Appendix C, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 3, pages 11.72 to 11.89. I call on the minister to make a brief opening statement.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: During the 2008-09 financial year, the EPA will continue to progress the implementation of the government and EPA board's priorities to ensure it meets key environmental challenges in its responsibility as the state's primary environmental regulator. The EPA's budgeted net expenditure has increased from \$26.3 million to \$28.1 million from 2007-08 to 2008-09. Key targets for the forthcoming year include: implement the recommendation from the EPA's review of its licensing system and processes; introduce a new licence fee structure from 1 July 2008; implement regulations to increase deposit refund amount on drink containers; prepare environmental protection waste to resources policy; review environmental protection water quality policy; review environmental protection air quality policy; commence a review of the Environment Protection Act 1993; deliver the state an environmental report 2008 to 2013; implement Environment Protection (Board of Authority) Amendment Bill; review Radiation Protection Control Act 1982; and implement the Adelaide coastal water quality improvement plan.

The targets for 2008-09 complement the highlights from 2007-08, which include: completed the review of the EPA authority licensing systems and processes; assent to the Environment Protection (Site Contamination) Amendment Act on 1 November 2007; implemented the environment protection noise policy; introduced to parliament for changes to the administration of beverage container provisions of the Environment Protection Act 1993; completed the Kangaroo Island business sustainability greening supply chain project; implemented the environment protection used packaging policy; and endorsed recommended improvements to the framework for the waste management and resource recovery functions. As can be seen from the highlights for 2007-08 and the targets for 2008-09, the EPA will continue to implement new, as well as improved, legislation and policy, in addition to improve systems, thereby assisting it to be a more efficient, consistent and effective regulator.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 78, Sub-program 1.2: Radiation protection. Can the minister advise of the progress on the movement of low level radioactive waste from 134 sites around Adelaide to a permanent facility at Olympic Dam?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The EPA audit of radioactive materials in South Australia revealed that radioactive waste was stored at 80 locations throughout the state. The report on the audit published in September 2003 recommended feasibility studies of options for future management of the state's radioactive waste and establishing a facility for interim storage of radioactive waste. In response to the recommendations, government endorsed a study considering the feasibility of the state establishing an interim store for radioactive waste and a limited study of Radium Hill and Olympic Dam as options for the interim store and disposal of low level radioactive waste in a repository.

The study was completed in 2005, and found that sites exist at both Olympic Dam and Radium Hill that appear suitable for the interim store and repository, and recommended implementing the store and repository at either site. It was found that the Olympic Dam region had a number of advantages over Radium Hill. The main advantages were better security, infrastructure and availability of skilled staff. It has been proposed that the interim store and repository will be located at the Olympic Dam region, but possibly outside the Olympic Dam mine lease area since BHP Billiton is unable to commit locations for the facilities on the mine lease that may be affected by the expansion at this particular stage.

The EPA is liaising with other government departments regarding the requirements and options for implementation of the interim store and repository. It was noted that facilities at Olympic Dam may be difficult to achieve in the short term due to the ongoing Olympic Dam expansion project development. The EPA will continue to explore options with BHP about a repository in the Olympic Dam area. The EPA will continue to liaise with other government agencies about requirements and options for any interim store and repository. I remind members that the advice I have received is that the current storage of those waste materials throughout South Australia, particularly around our hospitals and such like that use various equipment with low level radioactivity, are stored in a safe way.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I recognise that my information identifies 134. I think that you have quoted 80 in your answer, but we will not argue about the number of sites at this stage. The opposition is aware that announcements were made in June 2004, February 2005, December 2005 and, indeed,

in the estimates committee last year, that the waste would be stored at Olympic Dam, but still we hear that the solution appears to be some way off and you are still involved in discussions. There is a need to provide some degree of certainty about when this material will be removed. Have you identified any time frame upon which you need to have a firm commitment in place so that we know what is happening?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The short answer to the question is no, and obviously I refer to my original response to the question. Currently, the assessment and the advice that I have is that there is no risk. Consequently, there is no requirement or particular pressure for us to build the store in a particular time frame. As I advised, the information that I have is that the current storage arrangements are quite safe. So, because there is no risk and we can take the time that we need to get this right, we will do so.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Madam Acting Chair, I have a supplementary question in light of the answer. Minister, you have advised us of the fact that there is no particular pressure to ensure that these alternative arrangements are undertaken. However, are you able to provide to the committee details of when the inspections of the sites in South Australia, be it 80 or 134, were undertaken?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The advice that I have is that the study was completed in 2005—at about that time. I am happy to take that question on notice and bring back a response, but my advice is that at that time there was an audit of current storage sites.

Mr GRIFFITHS: If I could seek clarification on that point, I understand you will give a response later, but am I clear on the fact that the last time these facilities were inspected and an audit undertaken to ensure their safety was three years ago?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I will correct that. The audit of radioactive materials in South Australia, as I said, revealed that the waste was stored in 80 locations. The report on the audit was published in September 2003.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Again, I have a supplementary question, Madam Acting Chair.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Fox): There has already been a supplementary question, and a question of clarification, so perhaps we can make this your third question.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I am quite happy to accept that, but it is important that I have the opportunity to ask this while we are on this topic. I am not aware of the physical condition in which this radioactive waste is stored, but if South Australians are told that it is five years since inspections have taken place, there would have to be some concerns. Is the minister able to give an unequivocal commitment to this committee, the parliament and the people of South Australia that all those premises currently comply with the Radiation Protection and Control Act?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The advice I have is that at the time of the facility audit there was an assessment made that there was sufficient capacity for storage for the future, so, given that, I can assure members and members of the public that they currently do meet standards.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.73. A target for the Environment Protection Authority for the 2008-09 financial year is to complete at least one Greening the Supply Chain project in partnership with industry or industry association. Can the minister provide an overview of what this project involves and what benefits can be derived from it?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk about the Greening the Supply Chain, one of my favourite topics. It is a program that has been developed by the state government through the EPA to improve efficiencies in industry supply chains. While its origin can be traced back to eco-efficiency concepts introduced at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the concept of eco-efficiency has been internationally recognised as the way business can contribute to the sustainability of our society.

Greening the Supply Chain is a way of reducing the effects of business activities on the environment and bringing benefits to both customers and suppliers. The benefits include better communication, more efficient distribution of goods, quicker market response and, as stated previously, reduced costs. Added to this, the recent concerns with climate change, greenhouse gas production, lack of water, diminishing natural resources and the spiralling costs of landfill, energy and transport mean the need for businesses to carefully examine their supply chain has never been greater. It is also significant that increasing numbers of consumers are seeking more environmentally related information on products and making their choice on this basis. This includes the recyclability of the product and its packaging, 'food miles' and carbon footprint, particularly in the food and wine sector.

For these reasons, businesses are now seriously considering the use of carbon footprinting tools and life cycle assessments to gain a more complete picture of their sustainability and impact on the planet. This involves the entire supply chain. The increased cost of fuel, raw materials, energy, water and waste disposal impacts all processes in the supply chain. Businesses wanting to stay competitive and have a sustainable future are working with other businesses up and down the supply chain to minimise these costs.

Greening the Supply Chain is becoming increasingly important to the business community. Because of the cross-disciplinary nature of the Greening the Supply Chain, the EPA is collaborating with SA Water, Zero Waste SA and the Department of Trade and Economic Development under the Business Sustainability Alliance to provide a unified approach in delivering water conservation, water minimisation and lean manufacturing services to this project.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.78. The Portfolio Statement refers to the preparation of regulations under the Radiation Protection and Control Act 1982 to control solarium. Will the minister provide further information regarding the new regulations to control solarium?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: It is well known that over exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation causes skin cancer, and that exposure to UV radiation in the first 18 years of life determines to a significant degree the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. Solarium use high levels of UV radiation to induce a tan, often up to five times the strength of the summer midday sun, and have been linked to the development of skin cancer. In addition, international studies have shown the risk of developing melanoma increases by 75 per cent if the solarium user is under the age of 35 years.

The current Australian and New Zealand standard applying to solarium have been in existence since 2002, and its compliance is recommended to all solarium operators to reduce the risk. However, the standard was not mandatory and surveys of solarium businesses in WA, Victoria and South Australia revealed that there was poor compliance. As the minister responsible for protection of the community from the harmful effects of UV radiation, I therefore requested the EPA to expedite the introduction of new regulations under the Radiation Protection and Control Act 1982 to control the solarium industry.

The EPA responded to my request promptly and new regulations to control the use of solarium were introduced in March 2008. The new regulations are: the Radiation Protection and Control (Cosmetic Tanning Unit) Regulations 2008 (which came into operation on 14 March 2008); and the Radiation Protection and Control (Non-ionising Radiation) Regulations 2008 (which will come into operation on 1 March 2009).

The cosmetic tanning unit regulations require businesses to comply with the standard and bans the use of solarium on people with skin type 1 (fair skin that always burns and never tans when exposed to UV radiation) and people under the age of 18 years. The non-ionising radiation regulations will require owners and operators of tanning units to be licensed. These regulations are consistent with the national approach to solarium regulation recommended by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC).

The EPA has remained in contact with all South Australian solarium businesses throughout the introduction of these regulations, and I have been advised by the EPA that overall the South Australian solarium industry has welcomed the new regulations and is cooperating with the EPA to ensure compliance.

Ms CICCARELLO: I note under sub-program 1.1, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.76, the sub-program for the Environment Protection Authority section of the budget papers, that a performance commentary states that the EPA Board continued its program of broad-based stakeholder consultation in regional and metropolitan South Australia. Will the minister outline what the EPA Board has done recently in this area and what is intended to be undertaken to continue this program?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The EPA Board maintains an active annual consultation program that assists in providing it with valuable information on the issues facing communities and the environment, as well as on the performance and effectiveness of the EPA. The annual consultation program consists of a number of meetings with industry, local government, interest groups and community members. The wide range of stakeholder feedback received through this consultation then assists the board in future planning and decision making.

Over 2007-08, in addition to the legislative requirement to hold an annual EPA round table conference, the board met with the Adelaide Hills and Mount Barker councils at Mount Barker in August 2007, undertook regional consultation in Mount Gambier in November 2007, met with environment groups in December 2007 in Adelaide, met with waste industry representatives in February 2008 in Adelaide, and met with southern metropolitan councils in May 2008 at Marion. Regional consultations were advertised in local media and attended by local council members, EPA licensees, interest groups and community members. Participants from business, industry and community-based organisations attended this year's round table on 14 May 2008, which focused on furthering a service oriented culture in the EPA.

The two keynote presenters provided valuable insights and set the context for later small group discussions. The feedback received from participants will be used in further developing the EPA's service strategy, which is becoming a more effective regulator. I am informed that over the remainder of 2008 the board will undertake consultation with Business SA and industry, a consultation session in the Riverland and with environment groups. The EPA Board's active program of stakeholder consultation provides it with important information that assists in developing the future priorities of the EPA.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.78, sub-program 1.2, radiation protection. In August last year the outgoing EPA Chief Executive, Dr Paul Vogel, warned:

If the uranium mining industry were to explode over the next few years, there is very limited capacity in this state in terms of radiation protection.

How many Radiation Protection Branch positions remain vacant, and what impact will it have on South Australia's capacity to manage mining exploration?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that at present we are not aware of any positions that are vacant in terms of the Radiation Protection Division. In terms of future or current funding, I am advised that there are adequate resources in the branch to fund its needs, and also that in relation to mining and exploration, there is a cost-recovery principle that has been incorporated into activities, so we expect to gain some revenue from that.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to page 11.76 in the same volume, 'Environment protection'. The first indicator refers to air quality in Adelaide. Minister, are you able to advise how many complaints the EPA has received in relation to housing and other developments, specifically in terms of things like dust and nuisances from development sites?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that we do not have that level of detail with us today. I am happy to take it on notice and bring back a response. I understand that you are asking about the number of complaints relating to air quality. We do not have that breakdown.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As it relates to dust that is emanating from building sites.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: No, we do not have that breakdown with us.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Because certainly, minister, it was quite pronounced in the southern part of the city and in regional areas too. In my own electorate, there were a lot of concerns expressed about some development sites. Within the same budget line, hopefully, the minister is able to provide details on this one: was the EPA able to assess whether the standard for exceedences had been breached by developments taking place across metropolitan Adelaide or part of country South Australia?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I refer that question to Mr Circelli.

Mr CIRCELLI: If I could just get some clarity: you sought information on the number of exceedences?

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes.

Mr CIRCELLI: The exceedences in the portfolio statement relate to exceedences of national guidelines which relate to overall air quality in urban areas and in regional areas. They do not specifically relate to any particular industry. The only exceptions to that, of course, are in Whyalla and in Port Pirie. They have obviously a much greater correlation to those particular industries, but the exceedences that we measure in relation to overall ambient air quality do not relate to any particular industries or activities. The exceedences that we have are as reported here in the portfolio statement.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I am happy to accept that, and I thank Mr Circelli for the answer on that one. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.76, especially in relation to the EPA's role in

licensing, inspecting and auditing activities that have an impact on the environment. On what date did the EPA first become aware of the inappropriate disposal of contaminated drilling samples within the Arkaroola Sanctuary?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that it was around early January, but we do not have the specific date. I am happy to provide that on notice.

Mr GRIFFITHS: In recognising that it might be necessary to provide the date, I am hopeful that the advisers around you or indeed you, minister, are able to provide information about the actions that were taken by the EPA since that date to ensure that it was corrected.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: This is a second question, is it?

Mr GRIFFITHS: It follows on from the first one.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Well, you did not ask that in the first question; you just asked for that date. That is my understanding.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Fox): You are just seeking clarification of the date, is that correct?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I did ask for the date in the first one. My supplementary question is about the actions that have taken place since that date.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I understand that Primary Industries is the lead agency in relation to these matters, and the EPA provides support to them.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, the Portfolio Statement, page 11.73. I note that the target for 2008-09 is to implement the Adelaide Coastal Water Quality Improvement Plan. Can the minister provide details as to how the development of the WQIP is progressing and how the plan responds to the findings of the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Adelaide Coastal Waters Study is now completed and a technical report bringing together information from the study is being prepared. The Adelaide Coastal Waters Study was a six-year study that was initiated in 2001 by the state government through the Environment Protection Authority and project-managed by CSIRO.

The study was undertaken in response to concerns about the decline in coastal water quality along the Adelaide coastline and the loss of more than 5,000 hectares of seagrass. The study provides an integrated understanding of the causes of the water quality decline, seagrass loss and sediment instability. It has involved the development of a model to determine how different components of water quality impact on the health of the marine environment and seagrass in particular. The study has produced 20 technical reports which presented the research findings.

As most people are aware, the findings indicate that nutrient-rich inputs to Adelaide's coastal waters have caused loss of seagrass along the Adelaide coastline, and high levels of suspended solids in the near shore waters from stormwater flows and beach dredging impair recreational water quality. The Adelaide Coastal Waters final report identified that management actions need to work towards improved environmental outcomes by reducing inputs to Adelaide's coastal waters. The study has 14 recommendations, the first five of which are focused on the reduction of inputs.

The recommendations of the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study will be dealt with by the Adelaide coastal water quality improvement plan, an initiative to be led by the state government through the EPA with funding support from the Australian government coastal catchment initiative. The development and improvement plan is well under way. Initial work was undertaken with the community in mid 2007 to set the environmental values for Adelaide's coastal waters. Since that time, stakeholder discussions have been held with staff from the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Natural Resources Management Board, SA Water, Penrice Soda Products, the Stormwater Management Authority, local government and state government agencies to determine targets for water quality improvement.

During May 2008, focus groups for the water quality improvement plan were held with business, industry, state and local government and community representatives to confirm environmental values identified by the community in 2007 and to clearly define targets for improvement for Adelaide's coastal waters. This information is a key component of what is in the plan. The process for Aboriginal consultation is also under way, involving several meetings with Kurna Nation representatives to seek input into the development of the plan. Information has also

been presented to Aboriginal representatives at the Adelaide and Mount Lofty NRM board Four Nations Governance Group meetings. Draft reports on the following have been completed:

- work on monitoring and modelling for Adelaide's coastal waters;
- the impacts of climate change and population growth;
- the potential for market base instruments to minimise the effect of stormwater on Adelaide's coastal waters.

The recommendations of the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study will inform the long-term targets being set by the water quality improvement program and will involve different partners from industry and business to local government and the community and individuals. As stated earlier, key partnerships have been developed between industry, local government and government departments. However, everyone across Adelaide can play a role in conserving water each day and sending less water into our sewerage and stormwater systems and will ultimately impact on the health of our marine waters.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.76. Will the minister advise the committee what the EPA has been doing to improve water quality in the Mount Lofty Ranges?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: On average, 60 per cent of Adelaide's water is sourced from the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed. Land uses within the watershed include horticulture, viticulture, market gardens, dairying and grazing. Pressure from the watershed continues. The drought has further magnified and intensified the pollution risks to the watershed. Pollution issues in the watershed include parasites, pesticides, nutrients, sediments and faecal contamination, the sources of which are usually diffuse in nature. The Environment Protection Authority Watershed Protection Office works with and enhances the work of its many key strategic partners, including DWLBC, SA Water, Department of Health, PIRSA, Planning SA, the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board and local councils.

The Watershed Protection Office (WPO) has continued to address the major concern of water quality through the provision of advice and participation in key projects, including working closely with the NRM board to ensure that water quality was adequately addressed in its NRM plan and WAP plan, and working with SA Water and the NRM Board to develop a water quality improvement plan for the watershed. The plan will include developing agreed environmental values and water quality objectives for the region. This plan will be a major focus for the office for the following two or three years and will inform future management options.

In 2007 the WPO launched the Mount Lofty Ranges E2 model. The model enables the EPA to simulate the likely effects of land management actions in the watershed on water quality and flow. Working with SA Water and the NRM Board in the Upper Cox nutrient mitigation project, water quality monitoring revealed that the Upper Cox Creek catchment in the Piccadilly Valley was a major contributor to nutrients (phosphorous and nitrogen in particular) for many years.

The focus of the 2008-09 period will be to develop, in conjunction with SA Water and the NRM Board, phase 1 of a water quality improvement plan for the watershed. This will include:

- undertaking extensive community consultation on the development of environmental values and water quality objectives;
- continued development and refinement of the MLR watershed E2 model;
- participation in the eWater Project, which is looking at and bringing all the modelling platforms together;
- undertaking a review of the MLR watershed monitoring program for the past five years;
- continued provision of advice and involvement in projects which potentially impact on water quality in the watershed.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to the same Budget Paper, page 11.77. Will the minister advise how the EPA assists local government to deliver services to protect the environment?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: In 2002 the EPA endorsed in principle a preferred model for sharing the provision of environmental protection services with local government. A legislative and non-legislative package has been developed which includes amendments to the EPA Act, a local government support function within the EPA and the formation of a subcommittee of the board of

the EPA to provide advice to the EPA Board and Local Government Association State Executive Committee.

The EPA continues to fund the training of council officers, provide councils with relevant equipment and, on request, accompany council officers to investigate and assess environmental matters. In terms of the 2008-09 targets, it continues to:

- provide ongoing support to officers authorised to administer the EP act in local councils, SAPOL, PIRSA, DWLBC and DEH;
- maintain and deliver training programs to assist officers authorised to administer the EP act in local councils, SAPOL, PIRSA, DWLBC and DEH;
- achieve consistent outcomes for persons undertaking potentially polluting activities; and
- encourage a collaborative approach to the provision of environmental protection services using the relevant compliance and enforcement provisions in the EP act.

I would like to make a correction to the record. I have just now been advised that, technically, there is one vacancy in the Radiation Protection Branch; however, a recommendation to fill that position has been made and a new officer will start this month. In terms of the question relating to the safety of sites where low-level radiation material is stored, I have been further advised that since 2003 inspections of sites have continued on a regular basis as part of licence conditions, as well as random and opportune inspections. These inspections have reinforced that the facilities are safe at this time.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I seek clarification on some of that additional information. The minister used the terms 'regular' and 'opportune'; would some form of schedule be available on the public record? Of the 80 sites, is it once every two years that an effort is made to ensure they are inspected?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Are you asking how often are the regular inspections?

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I do not have that detail with me, but I am happy to bring back a response.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Thank you; I would be grateful for that additional information and clarification. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.76: Environment Protection. Dr Paul Vogel, former CEO and chair of the EPA, gave notice in August of his intention to leave the post in November. The parliament has since passed legislation to separate the role of CEO and chair. Can the minister confirm when the applications for the position closed, how many people have applied, and when the new CEO will be appointed?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: For the chief executive position or chair?

Mr GRIFFITHS: The chief executive.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: We commenced the application process three or four months ago and, again, I am happy to clarify the details. Notices were put in papers and the position was advertised. We received a number of applications and a selection panel was established, the recommendation of which was to readvertise the position. We decided at this time that we would obtain the services of an employment agency, and we have done that. Another round of head hunting has occurred, and we have set up another appointment and selection panel, which has commenced the second round of interviews.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I presume then, minister, that you would be hopeful of an appointment being made within a few weeks, a month at the outside.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: If there is a suitable applicant we will be able to do that; if not, we go back to the drawing board.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As an extension of that question, I presume that Mr Holmes is continuing in his dual role with DEH?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: And doing a marvellous job, I must say. I would like the record to reflect what an incredible performance he is doing at the moment.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I would like to think that was a spontaneous answer but I saw his lips move, so I am not sure about that!

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: He is doing a marvellous job. He is a very competent man.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, the serious side of the question is: given the dual role being undertaken by Mr Holmes, is there any potential conflict, or have conflicts arisen, in relation to his unique situation of handling both positions at the same time?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Not that I am aware. He is such a truly competent man that he has been able to deal with all matters in a highly professional way, as they arise. Of course, he is very well supported by senior staff in both DEH and EPA, which both have a very high calibre of senior staff who, again, provide a high level of support and assistance. I am very grateful for the marvellous work that they are contributing.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Someone has gone red through embarrassment, I think. I refer again to page 11.76 of the same budget paper and to noise complaints received by the EPA. Can the minister provide information on how many have been received and what measures have been undertaken in regard to controlling noise abatement problems?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Noise is obviously a significant issue in the community, and it makes up 30 per cent of all complaints (about 1,000 a year) to the EPA. We know from the World Health Organisation that the effects of noise can lead to long-term psychological and physiological health impacts. Members of parliament have reported to me that a high number of issues relating to noise come through their electoral offices.

The new Environment Protection (Noise) Policy 2007 came into operation on 31 March 2008 to replace the previous two policies, which were out of date. It sets out clear procedures to measure noise and to fix noise goals for most noise sources, making it easier for councils, the police and the EPA to assess noise complaints. Neighbourhood noise disputes will be easier to manage and resolve, and the community and industry will have better and more consistent guidelines on acceptable noise levels under the new noise policy.

The intent of the policy is to strike a balance between the interests of those undertaking legitimate activities that cause noise and the interests of those who are exposed to and affected by it. The policy is in two distinct sections; the first contains the objects of the policy and the measurement procedures to be used. It provides the standards and approach to be used to conflicts arising from industry, rural and other activities upon more sensitive land uses, such as residential areas. It also provides the general noise provisions to be applied to existing situations and development applications referred to the EPA.

The second section provides clear requirements on certain listed noise sources that are less complex, such as residential noise sources, to be enforced as mandatory provisions, where a penalty applies. Compliance and enforcement of these provisions are through either issuing an EPA order or serving an expiation notice for breach of a mandatory provision, which is around \$300.

Mandatory provisions are set for only specific activities in the policy. These are: construction noise, domestic noise, fixed machines (such as air conditioners and other machines such as leaf blowers and power tools), rubbish collection, street sweeping machines, building intruder alarms and frost fans. Guidelines on bird-scaring devices and wind farms are also included in the new policy. These guidelines can be enforced through the serving of an environment protection order.

It is important to note that the new policy has not been designed to prevent the use of common household devices, such as standard lawnmowers, and I am advised that the police are authorised officers under the EPA Act and that all police receive training from the EPA.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to page 11.73 of the same budget paper and specifically to one of the targets, namely, to review activities of environmental significance for regulation, including desalination plants. Minister, can you confirm whether the EPA has completed an environmental impact statement into the proposed site for the metropolitan desal plant at Port Stanvac and, if so, what stage has it reached?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am advised that preliminary work only has commenced and that no formal EIS process has commenced. The EPA is working with SA Water, and the chief executive currently sits on a steering committee dealing with the issue.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As a supplementary question, given that the intention is that the plant is to be operational by December 2011 (and I understand that a large working party is involved in developing the project), my presumption is that determining the best possible site would involve

ensuring an EIS is prepared very early on so that any issues are identified. I am somewhat surprised by your comment that no work has been done on that at this stage. Are you able to provide a time frame on when it is anticipated that work will commence and how long it will take for the report to be completed?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am advised that a pilot desalination plant is currently being established, and this will enable us to check the environmental parameters on which to design the final plant. So that work will assist in informing us on those environmental parameters. My advice is that although preliminary work has already commenced the formal EIS process will not be undertaken in earnest until we have information available to us from the pilot.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

DEPARTMENT OF WATER, LAND AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, \$94,888,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER, LAND AND BIODIVERSITY
CONSERVATION, \$6,332,000

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Freeman, Chief Executive, Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

Mr G. Knezevic, Chief Finance Officer, Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

Dr F. MacLeod, Executive Director, Natural Resource Management Services, Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments reopened for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular pages 2.30 to 2.32 and Appendix C, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 3, pages 11.42 to 11.71. I call on the minister to make an opening statement.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I take this opportunity to make a few short comments in relation to this portfolio. The year, 2007-08, has been very busy and challenging, with the continuing impact of drought being felt by communities across South Australia. We have made significant progress on a number of key initiatives in natural resource management. For example, the Premier launched the River Murray forest at the planting on public land near Cadell in August 2007 where some 2,550 trees and shrubs have been established. If the drought breaks the planting will accelerate on both public and private land in 2008-09.

During the year the commonwealth announced the new Caring for our Country program to replace the National Action Plan for salinity and water quality and the Natural Heritage Trust programs that came to an end in June 2008. The focus of the Caring for our Country program aligns well with South Australia's natural resource management plan, and negotiations on Caring for our Country are well advanced to ensure continuity of funding in 2008-09.

In July 2007, I announced new directions for native vegetation and its management in South Australia. Over the course of 2007-08 we have established a new Native Vegetation Council and an expertise-based Native Vegetation Assessment Panel. Also, we have commenced development on a code of conduct for the management of native vegetation in response to the Coroner's report on the Wangary fires. The year 2007-08 has seen considerable progress in implementing South Australia's Strategic Plan target 3.9: South Australia's water resources managed within sustainable limits by 2018.

Of particular note is the continuing development, review and amendment of 15 water allocation plans across the state. In July 2007, I extended the current arrangements for forestry in the South-East to include accounting for the direct extract of water by forestry over shallow ground tables. The arrangements for accounting for the impact of forestry will be further consolidated in the Lower Limestone Coast water allocation plan over 2008-09.

In order to improve our underpinning knowledge and information, the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation has spearheaded a major collaborative initiative with other users and providers of science in South Australia. The new Natural Resources Management

Research Alliance will strengthen the linkages between science providers and users, foster greater collaboration, increase investment in science priorities and provide strategic advice on science in natural resources management.

Finally, I highlight the significant contribution that volunteers make to natural resource management in South Australia. This effort was recognised publicly through the Premier's NRM awards, held in conjunction with the 2007-08 South Australian Landcare Awards. The awards night was, indeed, a great success, celebrating the incredible achievements of individuals and groups caring for South Australia's natural resources.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I will make an opening statement. It is fair to say that, while country health is the issue about which regional South Australia is particularly alarmed at present, 12 months ago it was natural resource management and the significant increase in the levies that were to be charged on so many communities.

Those of us who sat here last year recall that we raised questions about councils in some regions—including the region I represent—where the increase in levy was something like 335 per cent. There was such a degree of frustration in these councils and they did not know where to turn. They had to try to defend themselves to their communities and justify the fact that the NRM levy was a component of the rate notice over which they had no control.

There has been a lot of frustration. I have spoken to some local government people in my area about the fact that there did not appear to be enough dialogue between the NRM boards and local government communities and there was not enough articulation of the plans and intentions of the NRM bodies. There was enormous frustration that exorbitant levies which sometimes were being charged on individual property owners were not being returned in good projects to a lot of those communities.

Since that time, it has died down because people became sick of complaining. That sort of increase in communities was unsustainable. It appears from the philosophy that has been adopted that the council areas which are deemed to be more prosperous because people living in the area are prepared to pay larger amounts for property which therefore increases the valuation are accepting the major burden in funding NRM activities within regions. It is a messy one.

We on this side of the house certainly have tried to articulate time and again the fact that some controls need to be put in place. In fact, my recollection from asking the minister questions last year is that I believe she had to endorse—and correct me if I am wrong—any increase in revenues that were above the CPI rate for an area. Our reply was that the examples we quoted were 100 times the CPI. It created a lot of frustration.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.31: Saving initiatives. Are cuts to the branched broomrape eradication program included in the forward savings target figures indicated?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes.

Mr PEDERICK: If so, what amount will be spent on the branched broomrape program in the 2008-09 budget year?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The program's budget for 2008-09 will comprise \$2.34 million national funding, inclusive of SA's component of \$0.199 million, plus the SA government's additional contribution of \$1.94 million.

Mr PEDERICK: Is there any threat to our agricultural and horticultural industries due to cuts in the branched broomrape eradication program funding?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The short answer is no, however, I will add a few comments. An independent national review of the program commissioned by the Australian Weeds Committee was completed in February 2008. The review recommends that eradication be maintained as the objective and that funding be provided to extend the program beyond July 2009 for the next triennium to June 2012. A new mathematical model that predicts the progress of branched broomrape infested paddocks towards eradication provides a more precise tool for identifying strategic priorities. That includes an increased focus on ensuring branched broomrape is treated in every infested paddock every year.

Modifications were approved to the code for the control of branched broomrape to recognise the status of infested paddocks that had been free of branched broomrape for seven years as provisional paddocks. The code simplifies some operational requirements for farmers who have this provisional status. The first five paddocks will be released from quarantine in the year 2012, so some 14 per cent—that is, 1,032 hectares of 7,370 hectares—of infested paddocks

have already attained provisional status and been free of the weed for seven years or more. Survey teams completed the market assurance and discovery surveys of over 320,000 hectares. An additional 322 hectares of infestation were identified, bringing the cumulative total infestation to 7,370 hectares. Only one infestation was found outside the 2007 quarantine area.

The 70 square metre area of additional infestation was on the edge of the 2007 quarantine area and this led to the extension of the quarantine area by 194 hectares—that is, the area of the paddock where the additional infestation was located. Although it was planned to fumigate 380 hectares in the period up to the early winter of 2008, only 152 hectares were fumigated because of the very late seasonal rainfall.

The fumigation process requires moisture in the soil and it must be completed before seeding. Agronomists have promoted the benefit of pasture management systems that control branched broomrape and this will be supported by an increased compliance effort in 2008-09 and help to manage the risk area for branched broomrape multiplication.

A new service developed by researchers is also being provided to farmers, enabling them to predict the best time for spraying to kill the host plants for branched broomrape. This program links the SA Strategic Plan targets concerning economic growth by maintaining market access and reducing loss of productivity through spread of the weed. It also addresses the state NRM Plan target 4.1, relating to the integrated management of animal and plant threats to minimise risk to natural systems, communities and industry.

The savings target of \$750,000 for 2007-08 was met by reducing the area of methyl bromide fumigation. Alternative fumigants are available at significantly reduced costs, while retaining their effectiveness in controlling branched broomrape.

Ms BEDFORD: My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.49 which refers to the work being undertaken to develop land resource condition targets. How will this work help in achieving South Australia's Strategic Plan target for soil protection?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: South Australia's Strategic Plan target 3.3 aims to achieve a 20 per cent increase in South Australia's agricultural cropping land that adequately protects it from erosion by 2014 compared to the baseline year of 2003. The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation has developed an implementation plan to achieve a soil protection target and is working in partnership with regional NRM boards and NRM groups, agriculture industry organisations and other state government agencies to achieve it.

The department is providing specialist land management technical expertise within the regions with cropping land, and departmental officers are working with NRM boards to develop soil protection targets and related strategies for inclusion in the regional NRM plans. These strategies will then be implemented as part of each board's ongoing work program.

To date, this work has included preparing summaries on the current status and trends of the protection of cropping lands from erosion for each region, presentations to NRM boards and groups, and participation in regional NRM planning workshops. The department is also developing and undertaking collaborative projects with regional NRM boards, industry groups and the Australian government to encourage the adoption of farming methods such as stubble retention, no till farming and direct drill sowing.

It is well recognised that an increase in the adoption of low-risk farming practices will help to increase the protection of cropping land from soil erosion. To measure progress against the target, the department will use data obtained from its annual land condition monitoring program to assess the cumulative period of time that cropping land is protected from soil erosion during the year. This program involves field surveys conducted across 5,500 sites four times a year. The department also conducts surveys of land managers on a two to three year cycle to monitor trends in the adoption of best practice farming techniques.

The data available currently reflects a steady improvement in soil protection against the 2003 baseline and an increase in the adoption of best practice farming techniques. Inclusion of land resource targets within NRM board plans aims to build on this trend and provide a guide for continued on-ground works that will support achievement of the 2014 soil protection target.

Ms BEDFORD: My next question again relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.47, which outlines activities undertaken by the Natural Resources Management Volunteer Committee. Could the minister provide more information on what is being done to recognise the large volunteering efforts in natural resource management in South Australia?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Volunteers working in NRM contribute in a variety of ways and on a range of projects such as planting trees, monitoring frog populations, weeding and cleaning our waterways, revegetating our native habitats and improving sustainable farming practices. There is an estimated 70,000 South Australians who voluntarily assist with hundreds of environmental and natural resource management projects every year. To recognise the outstanding contributions made by volunteers, the NRM Council established the NRM Volunteer Committee.

One of the committee's first initiatives was to introduce the inaugural Premier's NRM Awards, which were presented in conjunction with the South Australian Landcare Awards on 15 October 2007. Among some exciting projects recognised by the awards scheme were: a community-based reef monitoring program, Reef Watch; and a community coastal rehabilitation initiative at Arno Bay. The Premier's NRM Awards will be held every two years, with the next awards scheduled for 2009.

Following the Premier's NRM Awards, a South Australian couple, Mr Woolford and Mrs Marie Parsons of Port Vincent, were awarded the 18th McKell medal. The medal is a prestigious national award sponsored by the Australian, state and territory governments, which recognises outstanding achievements in shaping community attitudes and practices in natural resource management.

The medal presentation took place in Melbourne on 18 April 2008 and recognised sustainable land use practices on the Parsons' farm which combined addressing dry land salinity, better managing grazing and providing a home for native fauna. I was very pleased to be part of that presentation and, indeed, they are rather amazing people and it was a real pleasure meeting them and listening to their initiative. Mr and Mrs Parsons have worked with the local primary school to educate children on natural resources management and have hosted research programs on land management.

The NRM Council, through its volunteer committee, has also facilitated a statewide forum to share knowledge regarding successful models for delivering regional priorities in natural resources management through volunteers working in partnership with regional NRM boards. The committee is developing the SA NRM Volunteer Recognition Framework. The framework incorporates a regional natural resources management volunteer recognition scheme to continue the ongoing recognition of volunteers in natural resources management. The regional NRM volunteer recognition scheme is about acknowledging, celebrating and sharing the successes of outstanding volunteer services to natural resources management.

In March this year the NRM Volunteer Committee coordinated a roundtable discussion with NRM board representatives and is currently working with all NRM boards to integrate regional NRM volunteer recognition schemes into the Premier's statewide NRM awards. There is a list of award winners that I would love to put on record in terms of their achievement but, given the time parameters, I will not do so.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.49, relating to the NRM research alliance. What is this and how is it contributing to South Australia's science and technology research aspirations?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The NRM Research Alliance was established in late 2007 to maximise opportunities that build upon the existing NRM framework in South Australia, in particular the NRM Act, the state NRM plan, regional NRM boards, the NRM Council and the former Centre for Natural Resources Management. The Centre for Natural Resource Management had the role of coordinating research projects funded by the national action plan for salinity and water quality in South Australia, and \$11 million of the NAP funding was invested into 34 research and development projects by the centre, leveraging a further \$15 million of in-kind support. In June 2008 the NAP comes to an end, to be replaced with a new commonwealth program, Caring for our Country, from July 2008. The establishment of the NRM Research Alliance seeks to build on the success of the CNRM to ensure the coordination of investment into science and research under Caring for our Country.

In addition, a feasibility study completed in early 2007 found a strong case to expand the role of the Centre for Natural Resource Management beyond coordinating investment. The study recommended the CNRM expand to encompass additional partners with an interest in NRM and to provide more strategic advice on science and research issues. The NRM Research Alliance comprises all eight regional NRM boards, the NRM Council, the Department for Environment and Heritage, the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, Primary Industries and Resources SA, the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology, the

CSIRO, University of Adelaide, University of South Australia and Flinders University. Through the involvement of these stakeholders the alliance brings together the leading researchers with key policy makers and managers of natural resources in the state, and also brings together perspectives from urban and regional settings.

The purpose of the alliance is to: foster and strengthen linkages between the users and providers of NRM science, technology and innovation; foster and strengthen collaboration between providers of NRM science, technology and innovation to increase capacity and capability; provide strategic advice on the adoption of NRM science, technology and innovation; and, attract and direct investment of NRM science, technology and innovation that will support improved NRM outcomes. The work undertaken by the NRM Research Alliance supports part C—improving knowledge, evaluating outcomes of the state NRM plan—and contributes to South Australia's strategic plan objective 4, which is fostering creativity.

An amount of \$206,000 per annum is being made available by the NRM Alliance stakeholders over the next three years to support this work. A key milestone for the NRM Research Alliance in 2008-09 is the completion of the science, technology and innovation strategy for the NRM on behalf of the NRM Council. Science, technology and innovation are critical to continually improving our natural resources management. The alliance will help focus and coordinate NRM research effort and investment and will play a key role in building our understanding of the NRM challenges confronting us and developing the capability to manage them.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.47 regarding natural resource management levy increases. I alluded in my opening comments to the very substantial increases that some regions had to suffer through last year. The opposition is advised that one NRM board is looking to increase its levy for the 2008-09 financial year by 62.5 per cent. Will the minister confirm whether she has approved any increases in the levy for any region above CPI and, if so, which regions and by how much have they increased?

Mr Venning interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Schubert is not even a member of the committee—you just walked in and disrupted proceedings. It was all going so well until you turned up. You should be an example to us; you are the father of the committee.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Seven of the eight regional NRM boards proposed NRM levies for 2008-09. The eighth board, the AW NRM board, did not propose NRM levies because there is no prescribed water resource to the region and land tenure arrangements do not suit regional NRM levies. The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, Eyre Peninsula, SA Murray-Darling and South-East NRM boards proposed increases above the consumer price index to their respective NRM levies. The Northern and Yorke NRM board proposed a new levy component, and that involved a NRM water levy in the Clare Valley prescribed water resources area.

The levy proposals that were above CPI were forwarded to the Natural Resources Committee of parliament for consideration, and the committee raised no objection to the levy proposals of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, Eyre Peninsula and South-East NRM boards. The committee suggested amendments be made to the levy proposal for the Northern and Yorke NRM board, and I have agreed not to introduce the NRM levy for the Clare region.

The committee also suggested that an amendment be made to the regional NRM levy proposal for the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM board, as the board proposed an increase to the regional NRM levy that would see an average levy rise from \$12 in 2007-08 to \$20 in 2008-09. The committee suggested that the levy be increased by only CPI which is at 1.4 per cent, and the Minister for the River Murray has agreed to that amendment.

I remind honourable members, however, that the NRM boards are in fact generally made up of local community members; they are community members working for the community. They are a group of locals who do a great deal in terms of contributing towards our natural resource management. There is also a statutory requirement in relation to the establishment of the levy each year that requires public consultation, so each of these boards is required to ensure that its plans go out to local communities and that they are given time to see them and provide feedback. There is quite extensive consultation.

I also remind members that this NRM board levy is not a new levy: it is in fact a combination of a series of previous levies (such as the land, soil and pest levies) which were consolidated into one levy arrangement which is a far more efficient and effective model to apply to natural resource management than a range of hotch-potch arrangements.

The act gives power to these boards to apply a levy, for those levies to be paid to the boards and for those moneys to be spent on natural resource management activities. The NRM boards in effect use local council rate payments as an administrative vehicle for the collection of their NRM levies only. These levies are not levies of local councils: they are levies of NRM boards.

In fact, councils are able to be compensated, if you like, by receiving monetary administration fees for the inconvenience of having to collect those fees. So, although the levies are paid to councils, the councils then in turn direct that money back to NRM boards.

There are a number of quite rigorous controls in place that ensure bipartisan approval of these levy arrangements. Any new levy proposal or a proposal for an increase in the levy above CPI is required to go to a parliamentary committee, the Natural Resources Committee, comprising members from different parties, including the opposition.

My understanding is that those levy proposals that were put forward for the 2008-09 year that were above CPI and new levies went through that rigorous democratic process, and that bipartisan committee endorsed those levy arrangements as per the information that I gave earlier in my answer. There were some proposed changes that were accepted by ministers.

It is opportune to say at this point in time that in the past we have often undervalued the real cost of natural resource management and, particularly, the real cost of water management, and that is what NRM is about. The average statewide regional NRM levy is \$28 a year for the 2008-09 year, and I emphasise: that is \$28 a year. So the regional NRM levy for some regions, as I said, increased by CPI which is 1.4 per cent.

Because the NRM system came from a system of an old series of different fee structures such as soil and pest fees, a range of anomalies were incorporated into the NRM levy system which meant that often there was a wide range of different fees across different council areas, which is obviously quite unfair and inequitable.

When these fees were consolidated under the NRM structure, one of the things that a number of the NRM boards were trying to do was to equalise those fee arrangements across all council areas, so that is why we see that in some areas there might only be adjustment in CPI or a small increase, yet in other areas we might see a large percentage increase as that NRM board tries to bring each of the council areas into paying on the basis of similar values of land property compared across different councils.

That is an equity issue that has created some anomalies, and I think some of the boards plan to do that over a period of five or so years, so it brings all council areas into alignment. In line with that, I have been advised that there were also some decreases in levy fees between 2007-08 and 2008-09. For instance, in the district of Cleve there was a decrease to \$76 in 2008-09 whereas in the previous year it was \$77.25.

Mr GRIFFITHS: That was the average for each property in that council area?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes; I believe so.

Mr GRIFFITHS: That is somewhere above the average of \$28 you mentioned before, minister.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes, and that is probably why they resulted in a decrease. Many of these boards are trying to equalise over a period of years so that each council area is brought into line.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I certainly respect the fact that there is some debate within regions as to whether it is calculated based on a fixed charge or a property valuation. Certainly in the Central Local Government Region I am aware of, which forms part of the Northern Yorke NRM, there was a difference of opinion. A decision was made to go with the capital value system of last year, and that is what created the problem in the five council areas I represent.

You have talked about previous systems, and I admit I have had no exposure to how the soil boards were funded, but I do know that animal and plant control boards, especially for regional councils, were calculated on a percentage of revenue derived from residential properties and a percentage derived from farming properties, so it was not a separate levy that was calculated: it was a percentage of income that came from those overall land sources that went to animal and plant control boards. That is how it was some time ago.

I will ask a follow-up question on this. Concern was expressed to me last year about significant increases in some areas and movements between NRM regions of the financial support

the state government provides. Will the minister confirm whether funding has been maintained at the level it was last financial year? Has it been maintained at the level for each NRM board as it was last financial year? Has it been increased or have there been increases or movements between NRM boards again?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The regional NRM boards received \$4.595 million of state funding in 2007-08, and that included \$0.927 million of additional special funding from the state component of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality fund, so that was state funding as additional support for the boards to transition to new arrangements under the NRM Act. If you take that state transitional funding out of those state funds, about \$3.6 million of state funding went to the boards in 2007-08, and the state government will provide a total of \$3.74 million in 2008-09. It is roughly the same, so \$2.79 million as a continuation of the baseline funding with indexation is provided to the former soil and animal and plant and catchment water management boards, and \$0.95 million in new ongoing support to boards has been announced since the natural resource management was enacted.

A number of issues have been identified by the boards since their inception in relation to funding and other administrative arrangements. A set of principles was developed for the allocation of state funding to the boards in 2008-09, and these were adopted in determining the final allocations. One of those principles included the capacity to access additional funding. It is obvious that some of these boards have a very different capacity to access levy funding, particularly the AW and Arid Lands boards, where there are very small numbers of residents, and often their homes are valued at much lower prices compared with those in the metropolitan area. That obviously needs to be taken into consideration when state funds are allocated, and obviously those boards that have less ability to access funds are given a higher priority in terms of access to state funds.

Membership:

Ms Penfold substituted for Mr Pederick.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I seek clarification from the minister on some points she raised in her last one or two answers. A question I asked previously referred to the NRM areas in which increases above CPI had been put in place, and I asked how much that was. The minister provided details of the areas which have increased by more than that, but could she confirm which areas they are? In relation to state government dollar support to NRM boards, I think the minister confirmed that it went up by a bit more than \$140,000 from \$3.6 million to \$3.74 million (I think that was the amount, or something like that). My question is: is the distribution of those dollars between NRM boards in 2008-09 consistent with what it was in the 2007-08 financial year?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I apologise for omitting the information on the quantum of the NRM levy. In relation to Eyre Peninsula, the 2008-09 levy is proposed to be above CPI.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I will give you the figures. The average levy per household for 2007-08 was about \$46.50, and the average levy for 2008-09 is approximately \$49. For the Northern and Yorke it is above CPI; the average levy for 2007-08 was \$37, and the average levy for 2008-09 is \$37.59. For the South-East, which is also above the CPI, the average 2007-08 levy was around \$34.91, and for 2008-09 it is \$36.04. For the Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges, for 2007-08 it was \$22.67, and for 2008-09 it is \$26. The Murray-Darling Basin Board revised its CPI, so it is not above the CPI. They are the average quantum's. In line with the principles I spoke about in my previous answer, the quantum's between regions was changed slightly between 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Do you have those details, minister, about the disbursement between each of the regions? I am interested only in those where changes have occurred.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The figures we have with us today do not disaggregate that, so I will have to take that question on notice and bring back a response.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, the Portfolio Statement, page 11.49. Page 11.49 refers to the commencement of the Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre. How is the state government participating in this and other CRCs, and what benefits does this participation deliver?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Cooperative Research Centre CRC program was initiated by the Australian government in 1990, and it seeks to forge long-term collaborative partnerships between researchers, industry and public sector agencies. The aim of the CRC program is to encourage scientific innovation that helps our industries become more efficient, productive and competitive.

The Future Farm Industries CRC commenced in July 2007 and will receive \$34 million over seven years from the Australian government. It replaces the CRC for Plant Based Management of Dryland Salinity. The goal of the Future Farm Industries CRC is to create Australian wealth and sustainability through innovative new farming systems and regional industries that reduce salinity, conserve biodiversity and water resources, and contribute to drought and climate change strategies. The Future Farm Industries CRC has established a major research and development node in South Australia, managed through the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

As a co-investor in the Future Farms Industries CRC, DWLBC influences the research priorities of the centre and the delivery and adoption of the research through the centre's nodes in South Australia. The research is oriented towards innovative farming systems which will have commercial viability to provide potential new sources of income for the farming sector.

DWLBC also participates in five other CRCs, namely, the CRC for Irrigation Futures, which aims to develop improved irrigation efficiencies to improve the sustainability of the irrigation industry; the Invasive Animals CRC, which aims to counteract the impact of invasive animals on natural resources through the development and application of new technologies and management strategies; the eWater CRC, which aims to develop surface water, water ecology and groundwater hydrological ecological modelling products to provide tools to help manage these resources; the CRC for Australian Weed Management, which aims to develop world-class collaborative research that targets the development of genetic control strategies for weeds affecting farming and natural ecosystems; and the Desert Knowledge CRC, which aims to improve the development of sustainable communities within desert environments, particularly those of indigenous Australians, through improved access to knowledge, improved service delivery and development of business enterprises based on natural resources that are environmentally and socially appropriate.

For 2008-09, the state government will commit \$400,000 in funding and a significant in-kind commitment of expert scientific staff of 6.8 FTEs to these CRCs. Through its involvement in the CRCs, the government is helping to improve the productive and sustainable use of the state's natural resources.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.49. I note that a draft biosecurity strategy was developed in 2007-08. Can the minister provide more information on its development?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: A biosecurity strategy for South Australia has been developed that provides for the biosecurity continuum of prevention, preparedness, incursion response and ongoing management of established species in South Australia. The strategy provides the framework for delivery in this state of the proposed national arrangements, the Australian Biosecurity System for Primary Production and the Environment (AusBIOSEC).

A stakeholder workshop, held in March 2008, indicated strong support for the further development and implementation of the strategy. Coordination and sharing of information systems, planning, training and communication across jurisdictional and geographical boundaries will bring increased efficiency and effectiveness in biosecurity in South Australia.

Improved biosecurity in South Australia aligns with goal 4 of the State Natural Resources Management Plan (integrated management of biological threats to minimise risks to natural systems, communities and industry), which contributes to South Australia's Strategic Plan targets T1.1, Economic Growth; T2.4, Healthy South Australians; T3.4, Land Biodiversity; and T3.5, Marine Biodiversity.

Modest funding in 2007-08 (an estimated \$100,000) in in-kind salaries and operating costs across DWLBC, PIRSA and DEH has been used to develop the strategy to a draft suitable for public comment and to provide input into the development of AusBIOSEC. South Australia is already a financial contributor to national eradication programs, recognising the high financial benefits that early intervention can bring. In 2007-08, these programs include: branched broomrape, \$2.46 million; red imported fire ants, \$553,000; electric ants, \$73,000; and European house borers, \$164,000.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.50. Can the minister advise of the progress of the REFLOWS project and indicate what may be the next steps?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Upper South-East (USE) Program Board has developed the REFLOWS project following research over several years. On 1 February 2007, the Prime Minister announced \$7.7 million from the Australian Government Water Fund to add to the \$6.5 million allocated by the board to the project, thereby fully funding this \$14.2 million project. If approved, the REFLOWS project will partially restore historic environmental flows to wetlands and watercourses of the USE and secure a vital link between the internationally recognised Ramsar-listed Bool Lagoon and Coorong wetlands.

The REFLOWS project will deliver water via engineered floodways from the Mosquito Creek catchment to the Marcollat watercourse, from the Bakers Range catchment south of Drain M to the northern Bakers Range and West Avenue watercourses. The REFLOWS project will target key wetland systems in the Marcollat watercourse, the southern, central and northern portions of the Bakers Range watercourse and the West Avenue watercourse. In very high flow periods, the southern lagoon of the Coorong, a Ramsar-listed wetland of international importance, will also receive flows.

Professor Gary Jones, CEO of the e-Water CRC in Canberra, has carried out an independent review of the proposal and is of the opinion that the proposal has 'very significant scientific merit and is worth pursuing as a program with major national and international ecological benefits'. The Australian government has ruled that the REFLOWS project does not trigger the need for a statutory environmental impact assessment; nevertheless, the USE Program Board has committed to high levels of self-regulation and environmental due diligence on this project and is following a non-statutory EIS process with full public disclosure and consultation.

On 7 February 2008, Mr Roger Wickes, Chair of the Upper South-East Program Board, released a scientific and economic study of the REFLOWS proposal for community consideration. To assist the community to understand the benefits of the REFLOWS project, the board held two public information meetings in the South-East and a number of targeted information sessions with those directly affected by the proposal. More than 40 written submissions were received during the eight-week public consultation period, with a significant majority supporting the REFLOWS proposal. Public consultation regarding the proposed REFLOWS project has been completed, and I await a report on the findings of this consultation before approval to proceed with detailed design work and the tender process can commence.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.46 on natural resource management. In light of the Australian government's new Caring for Our Country NRM program and new funding arrangements, whereby I understand that only 60 per cent of the dollars available in 2007-08 are pre-committed towards 2008-09 for NRM support, what are the implications for South Australia's regional NRM boards and, indeed, their long-term financial viability and functionality and, importantly, the NRM levy?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The commonwealth's Caring for Our Country program brings together a number of national NRM programs to better integrate and streamline NRM investment. The program has identified six national priorities which are a national reserve system, biodiversity of natural icons, coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats, sustainable farm practices, natural resource management in remote northern Australia, and community skills knowledge and engagement.

For 2008-09 the commonwealth has directly allocated \$19 million to the regional NRM boards, being 60 per cent base funding plus additional transitional funding. In addition, the state provides \$3.7 million in recurrent funding to the boards for 2008-09. Caring for our Country is obviously different from the previous Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and National Action Plan (NAP) for salinity and water quality in that the commonwealth is not seeking the traditional state cash and in-kind matching arrangements of the previous programs.

However, the commonwealth expects that a complementary program within each jurisdiction will continue to contribute financial and in-kind support, at least equivalent to that provided under NHT and NAP.

A bilateral agreement in relation to the delivery of the interim 2008-09 component for Caring for our Country is being prepared, and proposals for the complementary state NRM program are currently being finalised. In addition to the base and transitional funding, the commonwealth has indicated that it will be seeking bids for additional funds in areas that address

the national priorities. In relation to the funds available for this process, in 2008-09 the state government NRM boards and non-government organisations have begun preparing bid proposals.

The commonwealth is expected to release its business plan for investment in Caring for our Country for 2009-10 to 2012-13 in the near future. This will provide the basis for developing a state position to attract maximum funding from the commonwealth program in the future. I am trying to get the figure for the amount of combined pool money which the state will be eligible to bid for.

So there is a national reserve system of \$180 million and a coastal care program of \$50 million. There will be two others which the commonwealth will announce. As I said, these are moneys that our boards will be able to bid for. The final allocation, in terms of the total state and commonwealth funding for the boards, has not been finalised for the 2008-09 year.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Is Mr Freeman providing you with more information?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: It is in the Budget Paper at Volume 3, page 11.69. It is 60 per cent, which equates to \$15.2 million. That is the 60 per cent base funding, plus transitional funding, plus SA state funding, plus the national combined pool money.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate that information. Without being aware of the previous level of funding from NHT and NAP, the dollars the minister has talked about being available nationally sounds like a lot of money. The minister also talked about competitive bidding for national priorities. My concern is whether the NRM boards in this state will be able to achieve not just in the short term but also in the longer term a level of commitment from the federal government towards projects that will not mean they have to substantially increase the levy which they charge property owners.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I am confident that they will. The final funding has not been determined, so obviously it is pending the federal government announcing its final money. However, I am confident that our NRM boards here in South Australia are more than well-equipped to be able to compete very advantageously for that national pool of money. Here in South Australia, our NRM boards are probably the most highly developed, efficient and effective than in any other state, so we are incredibly well advanced in terms of our NRM structure. We are probably close to at least leading the nation so that we are well placed to be able to put forward proposals quickly and have the infrastructure and administrative support to assist in that.

We have also made a decision that the proposals for that national competitive pool money will be advanced through the department so that we can coordinate an even more efficient and effective approach to those applications to ensure that bids are in line with national priorities and that there is no duplication or unnecessary competition between the NRM boards themselves. They are very much on the front of their feet when it comes to that.

Further to a previous question, I am advised that any increase above the CPI will continue to be referred to the parliamentary Natural Resources Committee after, obviously, the statutory comprehensive consultation processes, so that any increase will be open and transparent. I would add that the levy plans are consistent with the regional plan. The regional plan is reviewed annually and the levy is prescribed accordingly.

It is the plan and the proposed levy structure that goes out for consultation. It is quite an open and transparent process in terms of any proposed increases in the levy, and people are able to see quite clearly what that means in terms of program and project outcomes for their catchment area.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Supplementary to that question, I have a lot of faith in the capacity of South Australian organisations—whether government or private—to compete well on a national basis. I am just wondering about your comment about the capacity of NRM boards within South Australia to compete nationally. Is your confidence in that demonstrated through some form of review that has compared the performance of the South Australian NRM boards with other states, or some form of benchmarking, or do you just have a blind faith their capacity? Has it actually been tested competitively?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I refer to my previous answer where I outlined some of the differences in the capacity of the NRM structure in this state compared with other states. I sit in a national forum, and I am able to observe quite easily the differences in the level of development and sophistication of those NRM structures, and South Australia is certainly nationally well advanced.

Mr GRIFFITHS: So, the dollars that will be available nationally are not allocated to any particular state; it all goes into a central pool for competitive bidding. Is that the situation?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Yes; you are right.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Therefore, given political influences, which sometimes occur, and the proliferation of the eastern states, are you worried that South Australia will not at least achieve what it is equitably due to receive?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have already answered that question. I said that I am quite confident that South Australia will do well on the competitive national platform, and I have given my reasons.

The CHAIR: The member has been asking questions, and I have not intervened. I think that he assumes that they are supplementary questions. I will give him one more, and ask that, in the next hour, he is more observant of the rules.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate all the information that you, minister, have provided. I refer to the same budget line. If the scenario leads to the NRM board saying that it is useful in South Australia—collectively or individually—and does not manage to achieve the level of funding support from federal competitive dollars, will it be the case, therefore, that the state is prepared to compensate for that loss of revenue and to ensure that increases within individual NRMs will be kept to a manageable figure?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have outlined the funding arrangements, and there is no proposal to make any changes to them. If we need to review them, we will in the fullness of time and with due budget and cabinet consideration.

Ms FOX: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.49. My question relates to Far North resources management. Page 11.49 refers to studies being undertaken into the state and the condition of South Australia's natural resources to inform future management. What is the state government doing to better understand the important water resources in the Far North of the state?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Much is being done to understand the water resources of the Far North in order to underpin their sustainable management. Released in April 2008, the report of the Lake Eyre Basin Aridflo Project is one example of information becoming available to help inform water resource management decisions in arid zones. The project was established by the Lake Eyre Basin Steering Committee and is funded through the Natural Heritage Trust. The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation led the project on behalf of the participating governments in the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement. The Aridflo Project has provided essential knowledge about the ecology and hydrology of river systems in the South Australian portion of the Lake Eyre Basin.

The project covered three major river systems—the Cooper, Diamantina and Neales—and looked at a range of ecosystems such as water holes, lakes and flood plains, and examined vegetation, fish, birds, algae, zooplankton and macro invertebrates. The project was able to undertake studies during huge floods, drought and many smaller in between flows to gather information to help us understand how the plants and animals of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers survive during droughts and how they respond to floods.

Although the project found that Lake Eyre Basin rivers are in generally good health, it was also found that ecologically sensitive water resources management is required at basin, catchment and local scales to maintain that good health. The report is being used to develop a five-year action plan for the basin, which will be presented at the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum. South Australia is also managing the Lake Eyre Basin River Assessment in accordance with the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement. The rivers assessment project is developing methods and protocols to assess and regularly report on the health of the river systems, including their catchments, flood plains, lakes, wetlands and overflow channels.

A project looking at the Great Artesian Basin mound springs has also begun. This is being jointly funded by the National Water Commission, the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, the Department for Environment and Heritage and SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board. Other participants in the project include the CSIRO, Northern Territory government, University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia.

This important project will investigate groundwater recharge along the basin's western margin, map the special locations and elevation of the basin's springs and develop the capacity to determine water requirements for environmentally significant mound springs. While our

understanding of these arid zone water resources and ecosystems has lagged behind that of our coastal catchments in the past, projects such as these are bridging the gap and will support sustainable water resources management into the future.

Ms FOX: How is the River Murray forest (referred to in Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.47) helping us to respond to the impacts of climate change?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The River Murray forest is an important program that will help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and demonstrate options for climate change adaptation. The River Murray forest program was launched by the Premier in August 2007 to plant 2.5 million trees to create a native forest between Morgan and Renmark in the Riverland. Forest establishment will involve the use of public and private land within a broad corridor along the River Murray, with investment by the state government to be matched by investment from the community, landholders, business or industry on a two for one basis. Plantings will be made of regionally native perennial species appropriate to the vegetation communities at the location. The plantings will be established on cleared areas that were formerly forested.

The vegetation will accumulate carbon that may have been of value as an offset. So far, 2,550 trees and shrubs have been planted on public land at Cadell near Morgan, however, drought conditions have delayed on-ground works as they are only undertaken when seasonal conditions are suitable. As a result, the project has been extended to 2011-12. Once established, it is estimated that the trees on the River Murray forest will remove approximately 12,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. That is equivalent to removing around 3,500 cars from our roads every year.

The forest will also be an important component of the River Murray-Coorong natural links corridor that will have other important benefits for the environment, including reducing the erosion of our valuable top soils, helping to rebuild ecosystems and preventing the loss of endangered plants and animals.

Ms FOX: What progress has been made to better integrate native vegetation management with natural resource management and development following the announcement in July 2007—referred to on page 11.49?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I announced new directions for native vegetation management in South Australia on 11 July 2007. The new directions aim to improve the overall relationship between native vegetation management, natural resource management and development. To support strategic planning and to facilitate timely decision making, a new Native Vegetation Council now focuses on strategic issues, while an expertise based Native Vegetation Assessment Panel makes decisions on applications to clear native vegetation. This panel was appointed on 19 September 2007 and is comprised of three members of the Native Vegetation Council. It is chaired by Bruce Munday, who is my nominee as minister and a nominee of the SA Farmers Federation; Mark Dennis; and a nominee of the Conservation Council of SA, Ali Ben Kahn.

The panel is proving to be an effective decision making body, allowing the council to concentrate on policy development that will improve native vegetation management across the state. In addition, a key connection between natural resources management and native vegetation management has been achieved through cross membership of the Native Vegetation Council and the NRM Council and boards.

Mr Dennis Mutton was appointed presiding member of the new Native Vegetation Council on 16 August 2007. Mr Mutton is also presiding member of the Natural Resources Management Council. Three other members of the Native Vegetation Council and one deputy member are also members of the regional NRM boards or local NRM groups.

Discussions have also commenced with regional and natural resources management boards on the role they may have in setting regional guidelines for native vegetation management. The closer integration between native vegetation management and NRM is being complemented by work to better integrate native vegetation issues into the planning system with a view to providing better and earlier advice to developers.

The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation is currently conducting a trial that seeks to encourage development applicants to consider native vegetation and biodiversity issues during the development planning stage rather than after planning approval has been sought. The trial is taking place in the Port Lincoln and Kangaroo Island council areas, and the Urban Development Institute of Australia has also accepted an invitation to assist in the trial.

The state government has already put in place a number of initiatives aimed at protecting our biodiversity. These include the 'no species loss', marine parks and climate change legislation, and better integrated NRM planning. As a result of these changes, a more efficient and effective system can be created that will help to achieve a balance between protecting our native vegetation and development and delivering better natural resource management outcomes.

Mrs PENFOLD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, pages 11.69 to 11.70, relating to the Dog Fence Board. The Dog Fence Board expenditure disappeared for 2007-08 and reappeared in this budget at less than that of 2006-07. Could the minister give an explanation?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: We do not appear to have that level of detail with us today, so I am happy to take that question on notice and bring back a response.

Mrs PENFOLD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.69. There has been a massive resurgence in rabbit numbers across the regional areas, yet nowhere in the pages can I find expenditure for rabbit control. Is it hidden somewhere in one of these expenditure items?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that the issue of rabbit control comes under the former pest control board, which has now been subsumed by the NRM board. It is a responsibility of the board which would fund, run and manage those programs. It is also one of the reasons that the South Australian government is a member of the Invasive Animals CRC, which was established in 2005 and aims to counteract the impact of invasive animals through the development and application of new technologies by integrating approaches across agencies and jurisdictions. I am also advised that there is a plan to put a paper forward to the ministerial council to look at the prospect of a national approach to managing rabbits.

Mrs PENFOLD: With respect to the same reference, the minister has considerably more land under her control now with coastal protection and also with the freeholding of coastal land. I cannot find anywhere where there is any fencing of these new acquisitions. Is there an undertaking to fence the land acquired by the minister?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: My understanding is that this question is outside the responsibility of this particular portfolio and that it belongs to the Department for Environment and Heritage.

Ms BEDFORD: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.31, where additional grants for the rainwater tank rebate schemes are outlined. Can the minister tell the committee how this increased grant will benefit South Australians?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The Rainwater Tank and Plumbing Rebate Scheme was introduced on 1 July 2006. Rebates of between \$200 and \$1,000 are being offered towards the cost of purchasing and plumbing a rainwater tank to retrofit into existing homes for uses such as toilet flushing, clothes washing and hot water supply. Funding of the rebate scheme was allocated at \$0.5 million per year. SA Water administers the scheme on behalf of the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation. The scheme links to South Australia's Strategic Plan target 3.9, Sustainable Water Supply, and complements Waterproofing Adelaide strategy 18.

Unspent funds from 2006-07 were carried forward and made available for payment of rebates in 2007-08. The program has been extremely successful with more than 2,934 rebates being provided as at 13 June 2008. Recognising the success of the scheme, funding has been doubled to \$1 million in 2008-09. I am advised that, based on experience with the program to date, this funding will enable approximately 1,800 rebates to be provided (on average) in 2008-09.

Overwhelming popularity of the scheme during the drought and a spike in applications since June 2007 has meant a recent strong demand for rebates. Demand will continue to be monitored, however it is expected that this will reduce over time. Rainwater tank and plumbing rebates will continue to be made available during 2008-09 with the additional \$500,000 made available for this year.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.47: Performance Indicators. Those performance indicators provide the number of water licences and water permits that are processed per annum. What benchmarks does the department have in relation to the time in which they are processed? For example, what is the average length of time taken for irrigators in the Clare Valley to have an application for a water licence processed?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I do not believe we have that level of detail with us today, but I will take it on notice and bring back a response.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.46. I note that employees' expenses have been increasing since the 2006-07 financial year. Does this indicate that additional employees have been employed by the department and, if so, what positions have been added?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: DWLBC had total employment costs of \$38 million for 2005-06 and \$40-odd million in 2006-07. As at 31 March 2008 total employment costs are approximately \$33.3-odd million. The following is an outline of the employment status: in 2006-07 the number of full-time equivalents employed was 540.77 and, as of 28 March 2008, there were 538.49 FTEs. That compares with FTEs in 2005-06 of 519.10.

Mr GRIFFITHS: So, it is a relatively small number. I will now read in the omnibus questions and hope the minister accepts them for all her portfolio areas:

1. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of the baseline data that was provided to the Shared Services Reform Office by each department or agency reporting to the minister, including the current total cost of the provision of payroll, finance, human resources, procurement, records management and information technology services in each department or agency reporting to the minister, as well as the full-time equivalent staffing numbers involved?

2. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors in 2007-08 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant and contractor, cost, work undertaken and method of appointment?

3. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees will there be at 30 June 2008, and for each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the employee and the total employment cost (TEC) of the employee?

4. In financial year 2006-07 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what under-spending on projects and programs was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2007-08?

5. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the estimated level of under-expenditure for 2007-08 and has cabinet already approved any carryover expenditure into 2008-09? If so, how much?

6. (i) What was the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$100,000 or more per employee, and also as a sub-category the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$200,000 or more per employee, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2008; and

(ii) Between 30 June 2007 and 30 June 2008, will the minister list job title and total employment cost of each position (with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more):

(a) which has been abolished; and

(b) which has been created?

7. For the years 2006-07 and 2007-08 will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on all grants administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the grant recipient, the amount of the grant and the purpose of the grants and whether the grant was subject to a grant agreement as required by Treasurer's Instruction No. 15?

8. For all capital works projects listed in Budget Paper 5 that are the responsibility of the minister, will the minister list the total amounts spent to date on each project?

The CHAIR: There being no further questions for the Minister for Environment and Conservation, I declare the examination of the proposed payments to the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation and Administered Items for the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation completed.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, \$2,162,750,000

Departmental Advisers:

Dr T. Sherbon, Chief Executive, Department of Health.

Mr D. Wright, Director, Mental Health Operations, Department of Health.

Mr J. O'Connor, Executive Director, Finance and Administration, Department of Health.
Ms N. Dantalís, Executive Director, Office of the Chief Executive, Department of Health.
Ms S. Cormack, Deputy Executive Director, Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia.
Mr D. Walker, Director, Major Projects, Urban Planning, Department of Health.
Ms R. Burner, Ministerial Adviser, Department for Environment and Heritage.

Membership:

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Griffiths.
Mr Pederick substituted for Mr Pengilly.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments reopen for examination and refer members to the Portfolio Statement, Volume 2, part 7. I call on the Minister for Health and Substance Abuse to make a statement if she wishes.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I would like to make a few brief opening statements. The state government is leading the most far-reaching reform of mental health ever undertaken in South Australia. The reform process began in 2005, when Monsignor David Cappo and the Social Inclusion Board undertook a wide-ranging consultation process and clearly identified a gap between community care and hospital care.

The board's Stepping Up Report was released in February 2007 and provides an excellent blueprint for the reform of our mental health services, with 41 important recommendations that focus on building a stepped system of care. Since the release of the board's report, the Rann government has committed an additional \$107.9 million towards the reform and rebuild of our mental health system. The new stepped system of care will provide graduating levels of care, including six new community mental health centres, 24-hour supported accommodation, community rehabilitation and recovery centres, intermediate care beds, acute care beds and secure beds.

The important reforms currently taking place include building and delivering services closer to where people live, so that they receive the help they need to stay well in their communities. Since last year, we have completed and opened the new 40-bed adult acute mental health facility at the Margaret Tobin Centre and the 30-bed aged-care facility at the Repat. We have also completed and opened three new 20-bed community recovery centres. Work is progressing on a 50-bed mental health facility as part of the Lyell McEwin redevelopment.

Planning is also well under way on the development of three 15-bed intermediate care facilities, and there will also be 30 intermediate care places in country South Australia. Community mental health services will also be enhanced by the development of 73 supported accommodation places. Overall, the state government's reform package will increase the number of adult mental health beds by 86 and, in line with best practice, many of these will be located in communities.

Services within the community will also be supported by the development of six community mental health centres at a total cost of \$25.9 million. The community-based services carried out by the non-government sector are also an important part of the stepped system of care. Some \$36.8 million was provided as part of the last state budget for psychosocial support services for people with a mental illness.

Another major initiative is the construction of a purpose-built 40-bed secure forensic mental health centre at Mobilong. The centre will be adjacent to, but separate from, a new men's and women's prison and will provide a more efficient and integrated service than is currently possible with the services split across two sites.

The Social Inclusion Board recommended that the Glenside Hospital campus be redeveloped as a centre for specialist mental health and substance abuse services. Most of the buildings are obviously past their use-by date and are unsuitable for the delivery of modern health care. Our vision is to rejuvenate the Glenside campus and to shed the stigma that is attached to the old asylum/institutionalised model of care.

New models of care have been subject to extensive consultation and will form the foundation of care/recovery. The procurement processes are under way with a registration of interest open from 17 June to 4 July 2008. During the remainder of 2008, the site will start to be

prepared for development and, by mid-2009, construction of the campus redevelopment will commence.

In relation to drug and alcohol services, the Australian and South Australian governments provided funds to build and operate a substance misuse facility with staff housing at Amata on the APY lands. The state government agreed to establish and manage the facility and fund the recurrent running costs.

The government recognises the significant amount of individual and community harm resulting from the misuse of alcohol, and a South Australian Alcohol Action Plan is currently in development to guide and implement a range of practical actions. It is anticipated that the plan will be completed, and implementation will commence, in 2008-09.

Work has commenced on the development of the three substance misuse day centres in the North and Far West of the state. The centres will provide a range of day-care and non-residential rehabilitation and support services for people living in the communities of Port Augusta, Ceduna and Coober Pedy to augment their sobering-up centres and mobile assistance patrols. The Department of Health has made considerable progress on mental health reform in the past 12 months, and I commend all staff for their ongoing dedication to the care of their clients.

Ms CHAPMAN: Minister, this morning I asked you in the Department for Environment and Heritage session about the costs of the deconstruction of the laundry at the Glenside Hospital site. You indicated that the cost of the demolition itself and the cost of security guards were outside the responsibility of that portfolio, although you also indicated that this whole property is owned by the Department for Environment and Heritage. I now ask you what the costs were, including the security guard costs.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Minor preparatory work has commenced on the Glenside campus site with the deconstruction of a disused shed to make way for a temporary building to house administration staff during the construction of the new health facilities and the recently announced film and screen hub. As I have stated previously, the building contained asbestos and, in that respect, was dangerous for human use. Following a tender process a demolition contract was awarded to Royal Park Salvage Pty Ltd. The demolition and subsequent clearing of the site has not yet been completed but we anticipate that the cost will be around \$85,000. During the demolition process additional security staff were placed around the site. Obviously, this was at the discretion of the project director, who had concerns about clients, staff and the contractor, as well as public safety concerns, which were brought about by the additional number of people who were attending the site unannounced, I have to say, at the time of the planned demolition.

It must be remembered that the deconstruction works involved the removal of asbestos and included the operation of heavy machinery. The cost for the three additional security staff who were present on site for two days was approximately \$2,000. It must be remembered that Glenside is an operating hospital site, and the priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of clients and staff.

Ms CHAPMAN: This morning I also asked the minister about the process of application for provisional listing with the Heritage Council. This demolition is an item in the mental health budget; and, in relation to the meeting (which she described), the minister said:

I note that this occurred after the announcement I had made about the demolition of the laundry.

On which day did the minister announce that the laundry would be demolished? I would like the date, please.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that I made the announcement on Monday 16 June that the first visible work on the Glenside campus was about to commence and that it involved the deconstruction of a disused shed. I gave information at that time that the shed would make way for a temporary building to house administration staff during the construction of the new health facilities and recently announced film and screen hub.

Ms CHAPMAN: As a point of clarification, I think it was the following Friday that the building was demolished. There had been receipt of the application in the meantime for provisional listing, and then it proceeded to be demolished at approximately 2.30 on the Friday. Had the minister actually withdrawn her instruction for it to be demolished and then reissued that instruction?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: On Friday 20 June, I understand that Burnside council submitted a formal nomination to the SA Heritage Council for the new laundry shed, the new kitchen and the

female R2 ward to be considered as state heritage areas for the SA register. Once notified of this, I requested that work cease to allow the Heritage Council to consider the nomination. I was informed that on 23 June a visual heritage inspection of these three places was conducted, to inform the deliberations of the Heritage Council.

Following consultation with the register committee and the SA Heritage Council regarding the nominations for listing of the laundry shed, kitchen and female R2 ward, the chair of the Heritage Council recommended that the new laundry shed and new kitchen not be listed on the SA register. We received that notice on 27 June, and, following receipt of that advice, the planned demolition of the new laundry shed proceeded later that day. An assessment report of the female R2 ward for future consideration is still being prepared.

Ms CHAPMAN: I have one more question relating to this issue. Is the funding, which we now know is out of the mental health budget, part of the \$100 million redevelopment or is there a separate funding for the demolition?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I have been advised that the demolition is part of the overall project which comes under the funding of the \$107.9 million.

Ms CHAPMAN: Can I just clarify then, Mr Chairman. I have a letter here from Ms Ciccarello, who as the chair of the—

The CHAIR: Order! Are you asking me this, or the minister?

Ms CHAPMAN: The minister.

The CHAIR: I have given you ample time. Because there is only half an hour, I am trying to give both the government and opposition equal time. I have let you run with your questions for a certain period of time, but we have reached the halfway point and I am going to have to change over. I am deeply sorry.

Ms CHAPMAN: I wish that had been advised initially.

The CHAIR: I was trying to be fair to you, rather than just give you three questions. The member for Norwood.

Ms CICCARELLO: I refer to the Portfolio Statement, page 7.10. The Portfolio Statement mentions the completion of two community recovery centres during 2007-08. Will the minister outline the purpose of these centres and what role they play in the overall reform of South Australia's mental health services?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I thank the member for her important question. The government's strong commitment towards community mental health care has been realised with the recent opening of the third 20-bed community recovery centre. This facility, called Wondakka Centre, from the Aboriginal word meaning certainty or surety, was officially opened in the City of Playford on 27 June. This centre completes the trilogy of community recovery centres, with the first centre (Elpida House) having opened at Mile End in June 2007, and the second, the Trevor Parry Centre, having opened at Noarlunga in January 2008.

All three community recovery centres were delivered on time and within budget and provide for a total of 60 new beds in the community. This means we will be able to provide mental health rehabilitation and recovery for over 150 South Australians each year (approximately). These centres are designed to help adults who are living at home or who have been treated in hospital but need additional non-acute support to recover from mental illness so that they can continue to lead independent lives within the community. These centres are about engaging those in need and empowering them in their recovery process.

I would emphasise here that this is a whole new level of care that this government has provided to our mental health services. This level of rehabilitation care did not exist in South Australia prior to these centres being built, so it is a very important development of our reform agenda.

Mental health services should be responsive and accountable to the community, and treatment for mental disorders should be provided in the least restrictive way and in a way that is consistent with good clinical care, and, as the first option, with access to assessment and treatment in the community. These centres are an important part of the stepped care model for mental health in South Australia, which was recommended by the Social Inclusion Board in its report, 'Stepping Up: A social inclusion action plan for mental health reform 2007-12'.

Community recovery centres are an entirely new type of care in South Australia and are a key element to reforming the way in which we support people with mental illness. In regard to the stepped model of care, the recovery centres are positioned between intermediate care and supported accommodation community mental health services. The centres are staffed 24 hours a day, and qualified mental health workers closely monitor people living there. Any person with a mental illness who is considered at risk to themselves or other people will not be treated in these centres; people with serious mental illnesses will continue to be treated in our acute hospital facilities.

Ms CICCARELLO: I again refer to pages 7.12 and 7.13 of the Portfolio Statement, which mention capital funding for a number of mental health facilities. Can the minister outline some of the recent achievements in mental health infrastructure and future plans in this area?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: The government has embarked on a modernisation program for mental health facilities on a level not seen before in this state. For many years mental health infrastructure has been in a state of decay, and most services were centred around psychiatric institutions that were not suited to modern mental health care—and, more importantly, did not provide facilities in the community that were close to the families and carers of our more vulnerable consumers.

This government is developing its infrastructure with a community focus whilst at the same time seeking to redevelop sites such as Glenside into a state-of-the-art specialist mental health service that embraces a community philosophy. In 2007 the government completed a number of infrastructure projects in the community, including a \$17.4 million, 40-bed acute facility at Margaret Tobin and a \$10.6 million 30-bed aged acute unit at the Repat, and planning is advanced for a modernisation of the mental health facilities at Noarlunga and Queen Elizabeth. In recognition of the lack of rehabilitation services, the government has also constructed the three 20-bed community recovery centres during the time I have outlined.

Following the release of the Social Inclusion Board report 'Stepping Up' on 20 February 2007, the state government provided additional funding to develop intermediate care supported accommodation facilities, as well as providing the six new community mental health centres.

Services in the community will also be supported by the development of six community mental health centres at a total cost of \$25.9 million. These six centres will accommodate integrated community mental health services to provide the opportunity to relocate services from a number of existing outdated and poorly located facilities, and suitable sites that are close to transport and other services are currently being examined. The government plans to develop a new \$39.8 million, 40-bed secure forensic mental health centre at Mobilong, which would be a national benchmark based on a campus design with an obscure perimeter. The new 40-bed campus will enable the optimal configuration of beds to ensure their best possible and most efficient use. The facility will replace the outdated forensic facilities currently operating at James Nash.

Ms CICCARELLO: Page 7.6 of the Portfolio Statement, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, outlines targets for South Australia's strategic plan. The target related to smoking prevalence among 15 to 29-year-olds and shows that the government is already ahead of its target for both 2007-08 and 2008-09. I understand that reflects a general decrease in smoking rates. Can the minister advise what initiatives have been implemented to enable this to occur?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: South Australia's Strategic Plan has a target of reducing smoking prevalence amongst 15 to 29 year olds from 27.9 per cent in 2004 to 17.9 per cent by 2014. If you take the baseline figure of 27.9 in 2004, when the government announced its plan, the current rate of 22.7 per cent is well ahead of the 1 per cent reduction required each year to reach the target of 17.9 per cent by 2014.

A range of initiatives have been put in place that support our efforts to reduce the incidence of smoking. On 31 May 2007, we were the first state in Australia and one of the few places in the world to ban smoking in cars when children under 16 are passengers. As at 30 April 2008, there were 111 expiations and 35 cautions. We have also increased the number of on-the-spot fines that can be issued for tobacco-related offences and significantly increased the cost of the annual retail tobacco merchant's licence. Money raised from these initiatives will be used for increased compliance measures.

Since 1 November 2007, all tobacco retailers have been required to display large, graphic health warning posters where tobacco products are on display. These warnings are the same as those displayed on cigarette packets, and research has found them to be a pretty effective method of encouraging smokers to quit. We have gained agreement to put a ban on fruit flavoured

cigarettes at the national level, at the recent Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy meeting, and we have also banned the display at point of sale of fruit or confectionary flavoured cigarettes.

The final phase of the state government's hospitality smoke-free reforms was implemented on 1 November last year. All enclosed areas in pubs, etc. are now totally smoke free. A number of other restrictions will come into force on 1 June, involving operator-assisted machines, etc., and discount vouchers. We are also tackling the smoking incidence among certain population groups.

The government has allocated extra resources to tackle the impact of smoking on Aboriginal people by providing funding for a smoke-free pregnancy project. Both the smoke-free pregnancy project and the remote Aboriginal tobacco project will have a strong focus on Aboriginal maternal care and will work closely with existing programs to offer services to Aboriginal people in a culturally appropriate way to ensure maximum benefits and outcomes.

Ms CHAPMAN: I am glad we are talking about smoking and the important initiatives of the government. My question is: why then has the minister's department not provided for an outdoor smoking area at the Royal Adelaide Hospital? Patients in one of the two psychiatric wards at the Royal Adelaide Hospital are still allowed to smoke indoors, when almost everywhere else in Australia, including in cars, smoking is banned.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I will refer that question to the Chief Executive, Dr Tony Sherbon.

Dr SHERBON: The department is consulting unions and staff to move towards improved restrictions on smoking in hospital campuses. Over the course of the coming months, we will be working with unions and staff to establish a regime of smoke-free campuses. It is complicated in a mental health circumstance, where patients stay for much longer than they do in the acute care wards and frequently have a long history of tobacco use. We do discourage patients from smoking, but we will be moving towards smoke-free campuses over the coming months, in consultation with staff and unions. We do have a plan underway to develop an outdoor area at the Royal Adelaide Hospital for smokers, and that process is underway.

Ms CHAPMAN: When the new Marjorie Jackson-Nelson hospital is built and it has 800 beds (and we have heard in the past few days that 100 of those will be day beds), how many of those beds will be available for psychiatric patients?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: As part of 2007-08 budget, the government has made a commitment of \$1.7 billion for the construction of the Marjorie Jackson-Nelson hospital. This project will be delivered through a public-private partnership agreement and will replace the Royal Adelaide Hospital and some specialist services, but not mental health services currently provided at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The hospital will be South Australia's major state-of-the-art adult hospital, and planning is underway. It will incorporate both intensive and acute care beds. I am advised that the exact number of mental health beds provided at the Marjorie Jackson-Nelson hospital has not been decided; provisionally, it is 30, but it has not been absolutely decided.

Ms CHAPMAN: In relation to psychiatric patients smoking in C Ward at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (which they are still allowed to do), in this year's budget, completed on 30 June, they already had funding to put a hole through the wall and have an outdoor area for smoking, just as hotels had to do within certain time limits. My question is: why has your department not made sure that that happens and not force patients still to smoke indoors?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I will refer that question to Mr Derek Wright.

Mr WRIGHT: There is capital that has been identified. The plan is to develop the outdoor area, as Dr Sherbon mentioned. It is not as simple as just knocking a hole in the wall, as hotels have done: there actually also needs to be screening for the privacy of the clients.

Ms CHAPMAN: It was in the budget. The money was there, but it hasn't been done. My final question relates to the trees at the Glenside Hospital site. You now have the Aborman Tree Solutions report confirming that, of the 191 trees it determined worthy of material constraint, 165 should be preserved. How many of these trees will be destroyed to facilitate the government's redevelopment?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: Our aim is to preserve all 165 trees.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions for the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed. I lay before the committee a draft report.

Ms FOX: I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

The Hon. G.E. GAGO: I understand that there is a suggestion that I need to set the record straight. I need to clarify the record. The funds for the demolition of the shed on the Glenside site are coming out of the funds for the project development for the Glenside site. I am informed that the \$107.9 million constitutes only part of the Glenside funding. There are other funds available for the Glenside project redevelopment, so the demolition funds are planned to come out of the Glenside redevelopment project funds.

At 18:01 the committee concluded.