

CROWN SOLICITOR'S TRUST ACCOUNT

The Hon. DEAN BROWN (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Why has the Treasurer failed to come back to the parliament with answers to five questions in relation to the transfer of funds, which were asked three months ago: three on 12 October, one on 26 October and one on 27 October? Four questions were taken by the Treasurer and one by the Attorney-General, where they took the question on notice and agreed to report back to the house.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Treasurer): I will seek an urgent response on that.

AUSTRALIAN TOURISM AWARDS

Ms CICCARELLO (Norwood): My question is to the Minister for Tourism. What were the outcomes for South Australia's tourism operators in this year's Australian Tourism Awards which were recently held in Alice Springs?

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Minister for Tourism): I thank the member for Norwood for her question, again showing her interest in tourism in this state. The Australian Tourism Awards were held in Alice Springs this year, and we won two awards demonstrating nationally acclaimed excellence. One of the awards was for destination marketing, won by the Murraylands Tourism Marketing group. This group works for local, national and international marketing, marketing the Murraylands, not as one product or one activity, but the sense of place, the river's history, the heritage, the wineries, the vineyards, visiting restaurants and local golf courses—a whole range of activities—as well as museums, which makes the Murraylands one of our premier regions. The particular efforts of this marketing group were special because of the youth and vitality of their marketing profile with innovative marketing, always cost effective, but incredibly original. This is the second time in a row that they have won this national award and we should congratulate them.

The other winner was the Adelaide Hills Country Cottages. This family-run business has operated for 24 years and was one of the first bed and breakfast operations in South Australia. They operate around 80 hectares of idyllic hillside country with five self-contained luxury units, all in secluded parts of their property with panoramic, 360-degree views of the hills, in one of our premier wine areas. The family-run business has a very strong customer service mandate and works hard to give a special experience. They have won this award before and we should definitely congratulate them.

The government has made a demonstrated commitment to the bed and breakfast industry recently with our significant removal of bed and breakfast operators from land tax levies, by removing those who operate with less than 25 per cent of their floor area in their principal place of residence, as well as reducing the overall burden of land tax on all private businesses. This is a thriving industry and having received the government's support recently in the land tax reshaping manoeuvres, our South Australian bed and breakfast operators are in good shape, and are well positioned to take up extra incomes through the marketing of this premier sector across Australia.

FLOOD ZONES

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH (Waite): My question is to the Minister for Urban Development and Planning. Given the

government's announcement last Friday to 'not approve' and to, in effect, rescind its own Brownhill and Keswick Creek Flood Management Planning Amendment Report, will the government be compensating home owners who have suffered financial loss as a consequence of being forced to comply with their flawed PAR or as a result of having sold land at a substantially reduced value?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Urban Planning has the call.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Urban Development and Planning): The short answer to the honourable member's question is that it is a bit of a try-on from the honourable member, and I would like to know what his policy is. The situation, as I have made clear in my statement on Friday and my statement to the house on Wednesday and earlier in the week when I talked publicly on radio, is that I did not intend to approve the PAR. That was following the consultation process—that goes through a statutory consultation process—and feedback from residents, because the residents raised some legitimate concerns. The long and short of it was the councils and the catchment water management board requested government to try and find a whole-of-catchment solution to this. The councils, in the last two years, over that period of two years, could not agree with one another or the catchment board, and it became obvious after the consultation that that would not happen at this stage. So, the sensible thing to do in that case is the action that I, as minister, have taken and that is for each council to amend the development plan for their individual area.

NATIONAL T-RAY FACILITY

Mr O'BRIEN (Napier): My question is to the Minister for Science and Information Economy. Can the minister inform the house of South Australia's engagement with T-ray technology in medical diagnosis?

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Science and Information Economy): I am pleased to inform the house that researchers at the University of Adelaide in conjunction with other local and interstate partners, including our own Flinders University and University of South Australia, have secured a \$2.4 million grant from the Australian Research Council to establish a national T-ray facility here in this state. For the information of members T-ray refers to the terahertz section of the electromagnetic spectrum, and it is a technology that offers a more efficient and effective way of diagnosis in nano and bio materials. It is particularly non-invasive; it allows for non-invasive detection of skin cancers and other genetic disorders, though the potential of the technology is not only applicable to medical applications but also to applications in the defence, security, aviation and food safety industries. It is because T-rays can penetrate things like plastic and cardboard for tests in a fairly non-invasive way; for example, contaminated food in a security context, anthrax in envelopes, and all those sorts of things. So it is a potentially more effective system for dealing with a lot of very practical problems.

Why are you only hearing about it now? Basically, because the necessary advances to access this particular part of the spectrum have only become available in recent times through femtosecond lasers and those sorts of developments. I was fortunate recently to open a workshop for the first international meeting here in Adelaide of T-ray technology which was hosted by the Defence Science and Technology

Organisation. This national T-ray facility will be based at the Thebarton Bioscience Precinct. It will be the first of its kind in Australia. It will create a wonderful opportunity for collaboration and innovation amongst researchers. The South Australian government has been particularly pleased to be one of the 18 partner organisations that helped secure that facility to Adelaide and South Australia. It is a prime example of the government's science, technology and innovation vision to build the infrastructure, capability and momentum in this state through collaborations. I especially congratulate Dr Derek Abbott and Dr Sam Mickan from the University of Adelaide for leading the successful bid and I wish them well in their efforts to explore what I think is the next frontier in T-ray imaging technology.

POLICE RECRUITMENT

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): My question is to the Minister for Police. The government has stated in this place its objective of having an additional 200 police on the ground by September 2005. What are the government's targets for overseas and local recruitment this year? Sir, with your leave and by concurrence of the house I wish to explain the question.

The SPEAKER: The explanation has already been made redundant by the disorderly initial remark, quite apart from the fact that I understand what the question means. The honourable Minister for Police.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Minister for Police): As the government has repeated, we are committed to funding 200 extra positions in our police force, which will take our police force from its lowest ebb, which was 30 June 1997, at a level of 3 410, I am advised, to an estimated level by 30 June 2006 of around the 4 000 mark. That is nearly 600 more officers in uniform scheduled by 30 June 2006 than appears today.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: The member opposite says, 'Who put most there?' Depending on what date you take, on 30 June 2002, the standing force of SA Police was about 3 761. As of 30 June 2004—

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Sir, I have a point of order with respect to relevance, and I refer to standing order No. 98. The question was specific: what are the government's targets for overseas and local recruitment this year? It was a specific question.

The SPEAKER: The minister, I think, understood the specific nature of the question. Whether or not he has the information—

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Sir, what I can say to the house is that the recruitment policy and targets, in terms of how many will come from the United Kingdom (and we already know the member opposite's view on those fine officers; he has been quite vicious in his criticism), is a matter for the Police Commissioner. I have today written to the shadow minister, the member for Mawson, and I have urged and asked him to visit the Police Commissioner and receive a full and frank briefing on our recruitment policies. Then we will see the level of debate that the member for Mawson chooses to entertain. I would be interested to know whether he will be as critical in a face-to-face meeting with the Police Commissioner as he is prepared to be in this chamber and in terms of media releases.

The government's policy is clear: we have been recruiting to attrition since coming to office. We are now funding an extra 200 officers. But, as I have repeatedly told the house,

in an extremely tight labour market, which national economic commentators say is now becoming a constraint on economic activity in Australia—there is a massive skills shortage—the recruitment of those 200 is becoming more difficult, which has necessitated the policy of the commissioner to recruit from the United Kingdom. Those targets are proving difficult to meet, and it may be that there will be slippage. But it will not be through our endeavour to recruit. The member opposite has been saying that we should lower our standards.

Mr Brokenshire: No.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Oh, sorry, so he is not saying that. It sounds to me that they have been saying that we should lower our standards. But the Police Commissioner will not do that, nor should he.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Sir, I appreciate your advice, and I again ask for a ruling on standing order No. 98 regarding relevance. It has nothing to do with what the minister tried to say about quality and standards; that is the minister's comment. It has nothing to do with the question.

The SPEAKER: I listened carefully to what the minister said. The subject matter is relevant to recruitment levels to the force from sources local and overseas.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Thank you, sir. We have made no secret, nor has the Commissioner, that it is proving very difficult to recruit. If there is to be slippage in timetables, that will obviously be identified at that particular point. One thing I have learnt, which I think the house needs to bear in mind, is that recruiting police in terms of the expected retirement of officers is extremely difficult. It is a fact that, following enterprise bargaining negotiations with the government and the union (and I assume this is often an occurrence across other sections of government), there is a higher level of retirements shortly thereafter and that then puts added pressures. It is very difficult for the Police Commissioner and his officers to properly and exactly forecast the rate of attrition; and so, at any one time to suit any particular argument, you can pick numbers that present a case that may not be as good as what the true case is.

That is the nature of attempting to recruit against attrition. But I make this clear: we are committed to funding 200 extra positions. I simply say—and I will conclude on this because again it is extremely important—that our task of recruiting officers is being, in my view, made harder—and certainly will be if it continues—by the campaign by the shadow minister and the opposition, because if the shadow minister and the opposition leader continue to criticise the recruitment policies of our police and to do the disgraceful things that were done last week in attacking the quality of British officers coming to live with their families, what British officers—

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have two points: first, I refer to standing order 98, this is clearly nothing to do with the question; and, secondly, we never ever attacked the officers at all from the United Kingdom, and you know that, sir.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has addressed the matter.

BELAIR NATIONAL PARK

Mr CAICA (Colton): My question is to the Minister for Environment and Conservation. What changes can the community expect to see at Belair National Park following the government's announcement that it will upgrade the park?