



Hon Michelle Lensink MLC



**liberal sa**

Fresh Approach – New Ideas

e-News, December 2010

## SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

If 2010 has been an *annus horribilis* for the Rann Labor government, it's been an ad hoc time in the South Australian Parliament. We resumed business on May 6, two months after the election, to sit for just five weeks before the winter recess. We ended the year with the final "optional" sitting week being cancelled, ensuring less parliamentary scrutiny than in anyone's living memory. The slack should have been taken up by the Parliament's numerous standing committees, but they have been thrown into disarray because some government Members "sit" on up to three committees, making the scheduling of regular meetings a nightmare. The issue was highlighted recently in *The Advertiser*, when the pay-per-workload of the committees came under stinging attack from the House of Assembly Clerk and myself.

Front Page, *The Advertiser*, 15 November  
reprinted with permission

### \$50,000 a year for committee work

**MPs get extra pay for handful of meetings**

**\$50,000 BONUS**

GREG KELTON STATE EDITOR

BACKBENCH MPs are earning up to \$50,000 extra a year for sitting on committees which meet for as little as 13 hours a year.

A report to Parliament has found the amount of committee work has declined, prompting calls for an overhaul of the committee system.

It shows that the five bodies administered by the House of Assembly held only 67 meetings in 2009-10, sitting for a total of 109 hours and 54 minutes, and produced 56 reports.

Parliament has 10 permanent committees which examine areas such as the economy, environment and public works performance.

Continued Page 4

#### COMMITTEES AND PAYMENTS

<b>ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$21,937
	Member	\$15,485
<b>ENVIRONMENT, RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$21,937
	Member	\$15,485
<b>LEGISLATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$18,066
	Member	\$12,904
<b>SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$18,066
	Member	\$12,904
<b>STATUTORY AUTHORITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$18,066
	Member	\$12,904
<b>PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$18,066
	Member	\$12,904



MP Tony Piccolo

<b>ABORIGINAL LANDS COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$0
	(presiding officer is the Aboriginal Affairs Minister)	
	Member	\$12,904
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b>	Chairperson	\$18,066
	Member	\$12,904

#### VOTE AND YOUR SAY: Is it good use of taxpayers' money?

adelaide.gov.au

CHAIRPERSONS OF VARIOUS COMMITTEES can also use a chauffeur-driven car when on committee business.

Dr Such said he had been on committees "where some MPs have virtually never attended and still got paid". House of Assembly Clerk Malcolm Lehmann says in the report there has been a "decline . . . in the work of a number of the standing committees". He says this means the "staffing and resourcing of the committees will be

difficult to justify as an efficient application of resources if committee activity declines much further". Mr Lehmann also says the state election this year meant "almost five months of committee inactivity". The appointment of MPs to more than one committee also causes problems as committees try to have a full

complement of MPs at each meeting. "The difficulties associated with the scheduling of meetings are further compounded by the 'family-friendly' sitting hours employed by the House of Assembly," the report says. The report says the only committee which is working hard is the Public Works Committee which examines every government project worth more than \$4 million. Because of inflation, relatively minor projects, including office fitouts, road repairs and building renovations are being brought before it. Opposition Deputy Leader in the Upper House Michelle Lensink said the situation frustrated non-government MPs. "In the past, most met at least fortnightly and had several inquiries going at the same time," Ms Lensink said. "I've campaigned about the lazy schedule of the Environment, Resources and Development Committee and will continue to do so. "This Government recently opposed looking into one of the most important issues facing SA - our population and its impact on the environment - on the grounds that they were doing their own review. "They have used their numbers to dodge and delay and it's an abuse of the parliamentary system. If Labor members aren't interested in their committee work they should do the right thing and resign." Dr Such said the committees were not adequately resourced and the Government did not want them to inquire into anything. PAGE 17: **Voteline**

### State Population Target

While the population debate was a feature of the federal election campaign, it is also an important issue for our State. The Rann government has a target of 2 million people, which is a driver for its water and planning policies. However, much of the government's existing policy which was published in 2004 has failed. Goals of increasing our share of the national migration intake (in decline since 2006) and reducing net interstate migration to zero have both failed. In May, the ABS reported a net interstate loss of 4,676 people as South Australia continues to lose people to other states at a greater rate than it gains them. From a 20-year low in 2005-06, the number of South Australians moving interstate has increased, with about 26,300 departing in 2008-09.

South Australian employers are very concerned about our ability to meet skills shortages, particularly as the federal government is overhauling immigration policies, including its skilled occupations list. A group of over 15 South Australian peak employer groups has formed the Skilled Migration Growth Group to lobby and advise the government on its deliberations.

On the other side of the debate are people who are concerned that our water, arable land and infrastructure are unable to meet "A Great Big South Australia". The current anger at the government's plans to increase the town of Mt Barker by 25,000 (well above its own 30 Year Plan target of 15,600) epitomises this.

Interestingly, the government announced that it would review its 2004 population policy the weekend before my motion to refer this matter to the Environment, Resources and Development Committee of the Parliament was voted on. They then used the government review as an argument against why the Parliament didn't need to hold an enquiry. With the support of Independent Members I have been able to refer this issue and we have finally started hearing evidence. Anyone who is interested in making a submission to the Committee should contact our Executive Officer, Mr Phil Frensham on 8237 9387 or [erd.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au](http://erd.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au).

## Premature “sexualisation” of children

Many parents are concerned about the exposure of children to highly sexualised images through advertising, television and the internet. There are serious implications for children’s development and their ability to form respectful relationships in later life, body image disorders and the development of mental health disorders. Organisations such as the YWCA and the Australian Council on Children in the Media have organised public meetings to raise the profile of this issue. The YWCA has suggested that South Australia should require a classification of “PG” and “M” for magazines which are targeted to “tweenies” and teenagers, such as that which applies to movies.

I had a Bill passed in the Legislative Council in July which would enable this to occur. The *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games)(Parental Consent) Amendment Bill 2010* ensures that consumer advice in the form of a PG or M marking will be required on such magazines. This would help inform parents about the age-appropriateness of the content of the magazines their children are reading. Disappointingly the Rann government has chosen to oppose the Bill citing fears that the increased workload would cost too much money. However, the South Australian Classification Council’s own Annual Reports reveal that it costs less than \$5,000 per year to regulate *all* the concerns raised across the state about magazines, films, games, television and publications!

I have produced a petition which can be downloaded from my website, and hope to start a social media campaign soon. Useful websites for parents include:

- Kids Free 2 Be Kids [www.kf2bk.com](http://www.kf2bk.com)
- Australian Council On Children and the Media (incorporating Young Media Australia) [www.youngmedia.org.au](http://www.youngmedia.org.au)
- [www.saynokids.com](http://www.saynokids.com)
- [www.collectiveshout.com](http://www.collectiveshout.com)



Professor Elizabeth Handsley and Psychologist Rita Princi presented their concerns to MPs at Parliament House

## SOME PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTIONS – Why did I raise that?

### State Budget Heaps Bad for the Environment

The State Budget was brought down on September 16, six long months after the election. Environment agencies have taken a hammering as part of Treasurer Foley’s desperate search for cash. This has grave implications for heritage protection, parks management and monitoring of protected species. Even though the Liberal Party would block any sale of our iconic Botanic Gardens in the Legislative Council, funding cuts to the Hills gardens still threaten their viability. From its budget of nearly \$146 million in 2009-10, the environment department will lose over \$50 million from existing programs by 2013-14. Over the next four years, 140 staff are to be axed from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Furthermore, the government is using the environment to raise \$\$\$\$. The worst example is the increases in the solid waste levy, which will punish local government. Other states’ levy increases have been done with consultation, together with a business plan to forewarn industry and enable it to plan its future. The Local Government Association of SA has said that \$19 million has been stockpiled in a fund that isn’t being spent on waste programs so that half of these funds can be funnelled back into Treasury. I publicly asked the minister to make a commitment prior to the budget that he would not allow an increase in the levy without consultation, and clearly he failed to be upfront about this additional tax.

All council ratepayers and “weekend warriors” taking trailer-loads to their local transfer stations will face a 400% increase from the cost of when Mr Rann became Premier. We all support recycling, but householders and councils have done a great deal to reduce waste and should not be penalised.

### Bad bag banned

I was delighted that on 7 July, the ACCC instituted legal action against the “goody” bag. This follows from a letter I wrote to them in January, advising that this widely distributed product has been making environmental claims which are false, and misleading consumers as to the bag’s “compostability”. As part of the 2008 plastic bag ban, all bags which don’t meet an Australian standard are banned. The composting industry, manufacturers of genuine compostable bags and Jon Dee’s *Do Something!* have been warning the state and federal governments since May 2009 that these bags do not meet standard AS 4726-2006, but they did nothing about them.



I received copies of two reports which state that the bags fail to disintegrate which I provided to the ACCC. One test states that the “bag from Goody cannot be called compostable” and the other “the Goody bag failed to disintegrate, even after 6 weeks”. The failure to break down is a real headache for the composting industry because it contaminates their product. The bags need to be extracted or the entire load of compost goes to landfill. The bags may also be poisonous if particles enter waterways or the food chain if they are composed of “compostable plastic” (that is, manufactured from plastic with an additive to help the degradation process) because they may contain heavy metals and glues.

## Rann Government Greenwash on desal, carbon-neutral cabinet and REES scheme

SA Water's greenhouse gas emission sector agreement with the government in 2010 is an interesting read. SA Water uses more energy than the rest of the government put together. Since 2007-08, SA Water has been failing to achieve emissions reductions, which are set to spike at over 1 million tonnes in 2011-12. It's now been uncovered that in order to achieve the desalination plant's "carbon neutral" claim, SA Water will purchase green energy certificates for \$75 million per year, which will translate into increased water prices for every household and small business in SA.

I have asked the Premier to justify a claim he made in a letter to me in 2008 that he had established the first carbon-neutral cabinet. He said that Cabinet would need to offset 3,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> at a cost of \$60,000. I believe South Australians deserve to know how much this program is costing and which company is being paid to implement it.

Premier Mike Rann's green credentials have again come into question over a scheme he trumpeted as part of his opening speech to the International Solar Cities Congress in 2008. The Residential Energy Efficiency Scheme (REES) commenced on 1 January 2009 to "require retailers to help households reduce their overall energy usage to both bring down their bills and help the environment" he told us.

The program requires electricity and gas retailers to "offer financial or other incentives to households to adopt energy savings measures such as ceiling insulation, draught proofing, and more efficient appliances". A Hahndorf pensioner contacted my office in outrage after he was doorknocked by representatives of *The Green Project*, who provided him with 8 "ecobulbs" in exchange for his signature on two REES Forms. No home assessment, insulation or rebate for energy efficient appliances was offered to him. He then discovered that his ecobulbs (pictured) don't even work!



Clearly this is another case of a Labor government making announcements on the fly and taking no responsibility for ensuring that programs are properly implemented. Is the shonky practice what Mr Rann had in mind when he said "We also want retailers to be innovative in designing new measures in partnership with welfare agencies, energy efficiency businesses and other service providers"? Is this just like Mr Rudd's insulation program, which was designed simply for a greenwash announcement?

## Former Le Cornu site

The old Le Cornu showroom was demolished in North Adelaide some 22 years ago. Since that time, five separate development approvals were granted by the Adelaide City Council between 1989 and 1997. The site has recently been cleared and works were due to start in September. However, it has now emerged that the proponent of the site won't proceed and is expected to sell. One must question the wisdom of granting the project major development status in 2008 against the wishes of the Adelaide City Council, given this outcome.

## Plumbing industry regulation

Plumbing licensing and regulation is divided between the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA), the Office of the Technical Regulator and SA Water. The Plumbing Industry Association is very concerned that shoddy work is being carried out which is not being properly monitored and acted upon because of the split in these roles. The Plumbing Industry Association and the Master Builders Association have both expressed their preference for an independent monitoring body such as a commission to take over regulation and licensing. A national licensing system is due to start by 1 July 2012.

## Red tape for construction industry

The EPA has produced a new policy for "clean fill", which is now officially known as "waste-derived fill". The policy states that for excavation of more than 100 tonnes of soil from a site where *no* potentially contaminating activity has occurred (which it acknowledges is a low risk site) where "such work is usually conducted by commercial operators...sampling and assessment is recommended" – in other words, just to make sure. The policy lists 34 chemical substances to test for in excavated soil and 82 substances for material which has already had contaminants removed. Obtaining EPA approval for use of the fill will require a suitably qualified consultant or a site contaminant auditor.

A list of the organisations consulted on the draft policy prior to its final publication did not include the Civil Contractors Federation (CCF), Urban Development Institute, Property Council, Master Builders Association or the Housing Industry Association. The CCF has estimated that for an excavation job which exceeds 100 tonnes (such as for a swimming pool), the new regime will add \$3,000 to the cost of the project because of additional testing. The policy could also add 20% to the cost of developing a block in a Brownfield subdivision.

## OUT AND ABOUT



L-R, speaking at NESWA's celebrations to mark 65 years since the end of WWII, with Helen Pointon, Betty Khor and Elizabeth Wood celebrating History Week with the National Council of Women, assisting revegetation at Gemtree Winery for Arbor Day, guest speaker with Mark Parnell for the 2010 Youth Parliament in the House of Assembly.



**Diving with cuttlefish in the Spencer Gulf**

At the invitation of Stuart MP Dan van Holst Pellekaan, I went swimming with the *sepia apama*, or Australian giant cuttlefish near Port Bonython, close to BHP Billiton’s proposed desalination plant site. It is a popular eco-tourist destination for those wanting to catch sight of these amazing creatures as they gather to spawn. With two wetsuits on to protect against the icy waters, our group came across numerous cuttlefish off the shallow rocky coast. It’s hard to do their appearance justice, even with an underwater camera. Marine biologists hold concerns



about this species because they only live for one or two years, which means that a storm or pollution event which disrupts their breeding cycle could bring them close to the brink of extinction.

**Broken Hill and Menindee Lakes**

A delegation of Liberal MPs took up the offer of the Broken Hill City Council to visit the Menindee Lakes water storage system. The Council is concerned that the water source upon which this outback city relies on is regularly maligned in our media because of its shallow nature and evaporation losses. The Menindee is part of the Murray Darling Basin and has also faced its share of drought conditions. A number of the lakes were completely dry until flood events upstream early in 2010. The Council has a number of proposals for engineering works which would make the lakes more efficient storages – both for Broken Hill and for Murray Darling water. Obtaining funding from the federal government has proven to be frustrating, which amounts to a waste of valuable water which could have assisted thirsty parts of the system during the extended drought.



View from Sillers Lookout on the Ridgetop Tour

**Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary**

Isobel Redmond was one of ten Liberal MPs to visit Arkaroola in the State’s Northern Flinders Ranges so we could see firsthand this highly significant environmental and geological destination of the Outback. We had the privilege of gaining insights into the terrain and its wildlife as Marg and Doug Sprigg guided us on the Ridgetop Tour and a flight over the whole site. This experience



has shaped our view of Arkaroola as a unique place in the world which deserves better protection from mining.

Our pilot Doug Sprigg, with Dan, Catherine Battersby, Peter Treloar and Michelle

**Engaging women visit with Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Federal Shadow Minister for the Status of Women, Early Childhood Education and Childcare**

In June Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP visited South Australia to consult with employers and other stakeholders about the Coalition’s paid parental leave (PPL) and childcare policies. Australia is the last nation in the OECD to implement a statutory PPL scheme. Tony Abbott’s PPL is much more generous than the Rudd/Gillard government has been prepared to offer, providing 24 weeks leave at replacement wage. While in Adelaide, Sharman also outlined how a Coalition Government would ease the pressure on current childcare places.



Michelle with Vickie Chapman MP, Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Senator Mary-Jo Fisher

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT DETAILS
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Shadow Minister for the Environment and Climate Change Shadow Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Shadow Minister for Youth	Parliament House North Terrace ADELAIDE SA 5000 T: (08) 8237 9434 F: (08) 8212 7075 Toll Free SA Callers: 1800 182 097 E: Michelle.Lensink@parliament.sa.gov.au W: www.michellelensink.com

E-News Authorised by Hon Michelle Lensink, MLC – To unsubscribe – please email [Lauren.Dimas@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:Lauren.Dimas@parliament.sa.gov.au)  
 More information about Parliamentary activities on [www.michellelensink.com](http://www.michellelensink.com) + more out & about on <http://en-gb.facebook.com/michellelensink>