



**Government
of South Australia**

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Treasurer

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Ms Gaybrielle Cotton
Publicity Officer
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Dear Ms Cotton

Thank you for providing the Women's Electoral Lobby election survey titled *Women's Electoral Lobby SA Policy Platform*.

Please find attached a consolidated response on behalf of the Government to your questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rob Lucas'.

Hon Rob Lucas MLC
Treasurer

6 March 2022

2022 South Australian Election

Response to Women's Electoral Lobby SA Inc

Pandemic Recovery and Gendered Violence

Women's economic participation and financial resilience is at the top of the Government's priorities, as demonstrated by the launch of our Women's Leadership and Economic Security Strategy 2021-24 last year. A grant round was also announced as part of the launch, which prioritises projects that assist women improve their economic participation and financial wellbeing, particularly following the challenges presented by the pandemic.

The Marshall Liberal government has been addressing gendered violence since March 2018, having developed a three-year policy framework, titled Committed to Safety: A framework for addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia (CTS) that has been providing a clear and considered plan for action in relation to preventing domestic, family and sexual violence.

Focused on three pillars of action: primary prevention, services and support and justice, CTS provides an avenue for countering the drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence and ensures support to families in crisis.

Reducing and eliminating violence against women and children

A record \$21 million has been invested by the Governments into innovative programs to tackle the scourge of domestic violence. By listening to what the sector needed, and actioning what they wanted the Government has delivered:

- \$5.76 million to roll out 40 new crisis accommodation beds for South Australians leaving domestic and family violence across Adelaide and the regions, including 9 beds for a perpetrator pilot. These beds are now all up and running.
- \$2.55 million to fund the Women's Safety Services SA domestic violence crisis hotline 24/7. \$2.968 million to fund the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme for the first time in South Australia – and so it can continue until mid-2024.
- \$567,000 to fund development and continuation of new life-saving domestic violence app.
- \$624,000 to fund the South Australian Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services (now Embolden) as the peak body.
- Funding to open some of the nine DV safety hubs in regional areas. Some hubs need funding, some hubs do not as they are run in community buildings and by volunteers.
- \$1.86 million towards funding the national sexual violence prevention campaign – Stop it at the Start.

Ensuring children grow up safe and well also remains a key priority for the Government. The Government is doing more than ever before to roll out new programs and services to better support families earlier and reduce the number of children and

young people entering out-of-home care long-term. The Government's reform of the Child and Family Support System (CFSS) consolidated early intervention support services in the Department of Human Services in 2019. From 2021-22, the total CFSS budget is \$58m per annum, which includes an additional investment of \$9m per annum on programs and staffing to achieve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Climate and environmental crises

Since March 2018 South Australia has demonstrated that it is able to achieve climate leadership without restrictive policies, lead the nation on resource recovery performance, reform natural resources management and reinvigorate the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

This is evidenced by:

- The development of the South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021 – 2025, which received endorsement from renowned climate economist Professor Ross Garnaut.
- Our 2020-2025 State Waste strategy which expands our state's performance targets. Australia's first specific food waste strategy.
- The nation's first single-use plastic ban.
- The creation of Landscape Boards to replace the old, outdated Natural Resource Management framework, with an emphasis on effective water management, pest plant and animal control, as well as soil and land management
- The creation of the Landscape Priorities Fund, to invest in programs that will deliver significant environmental outcomes.
- Increasing the Friends of Parks grants programs more than ten-fold, from \$60,000 per annum, to a record \$750,000 in 2021/22.
- Increasing grant funding available for holders of native vegetation heritage agreements has increased from \$4,000 per annum (under the previous Labor government), to \$3 million over 2 years, through the Revitalising Private Conservation in South Australia program.
- Expanding the number of national parks in South Australia from 21 to 29 and doubling the area protected from 3.9 million hectares, to just over 7.9 million hectares. This record expansion of the protected areas network (including the creation of the Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert National Park where the Kalakoopa Creek is protected via an exclusion buffer zone) has been complemented by the biggest government investment in parks ever – boosting conservation, as well as eco-tourism.
- Using desalinated water to reduce Murray use with 40 gigalitres of water produced from the Adelaide Desalination Plant and an equivalent amount released upstream from the River Murray.
- Securing \$100 million to improve the environmental conditions of the Coorong and surrounds, and Riverland wetlands, as part of the Project Coorong and Sustaining Riverland Environments programs.

Work

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* (WHS Act) already requires an employer to take positive steps to prevent sexual harassment where that is reasonably practicable as part of the duty to ensure the health and safety of workers at work.

Existing obligations under the WHS Act are that a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers and others while they are at work, and the elimination or minimisation of risks. This includes risks to physical and psychological health and, therefore, it is unnecessary to amend the WHS Act or regulations to make specific reference to sexual harassment or psychological health. SafeWork SA has undertaken successful prosecutions for breaches of the WHS Act in relation to incidents involving harassment, including sexual harassment.

The Government is considering the adoption of a Code of Practice in relation to sexual harassment, which may be physical or psychological, to provide additional guidance, as well as developing and disseminating further educational material regarding this issue.

The findings of the Equal Opportunity Commissioner regarding the workplace culture at Parliament and in the legal profession were concerning, and action has been taken pursuant to the EOC recommendations.

Importantly, the Parliament has adopted a Code of Conduct for Members and a new People and Culture Unit is in the process of being established that will be responsible for developing policies and investigating complaints. The bulk of the EOC recommendations are to be implemented by the People and Culture Unit.

The decriminalisation of sex work is a conscience vote for members of the parliamentary Liberal Party. As you may be aware, a Select Committee has been established in respect of the Private Members Bill. Once the Committee's report has been published, Members of Parliament will have the opportunity to carefully consider it prior to the commencement of debate.

The Government strongly condemns any employer who does not comply with the law by refusing to pay employees in accordance with their industrial entitlements for wages and conditions or threatens an employee who speak up about alleged underpayment.

The term "wage theft" is frequently used as a blanket term to describe the underpayment or non-payment of wages and entitlement that are due to employees in accordance with provisions in legislation, awards, enterprise agreement or contracts. It is highly emotive, loaded and misleading term which can mischaracterise hardworking small business owners who make genuine, accidental errors or miscalculations, which can unintentionally result in an underpayment of wages and entitlements. Such miscalculations or errors are often due to the complexity of the national system, which comprises the National Employment Standards and some 155 modern awards. Therefore, the Government prefers to use the term, "the deliberate underpayment of wages and entitlement", as this does not capture those businesses who have no intention of underpaying employees.

The Government is opposed to creating a criminal offence for the underpayment of wages as a result of a completely unintentional mistake or reasonable differences in interpretations of complex awards and enterprise agreements.

The Government considers that law reform in respect of underpayment of wages and entitlements would be most appropriately led by the Commonwealth Parliament. By virtue of the *Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2009* (SA) which commenced on 27 November 2009 and the *Statutes Amendment (National Industrial Relations System) Act 2009* (SA) which commenced on 1 January 2010, the South Australian Government referred certain matters relating to industrial relations to the Commonwealth. As a result, all South Australian employers and employees in the private sector are covered by the national system under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) with State and local government employer and employees remaining under the State system.

Under the Federal industrial relations system, disputes between employees and employers that relate to underpayment of wages and entitlements are governed by the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth). An employee can seek assistance from the Fair Work Ombudsman in relation to an underpayment of wages and entitlements. For unpaid superannuation, an employee can make a report to the Australian Taxation Office who will investigate the matter. Further public awareness campaigns about the role of these organisations and options for people, will assist to provide information to people who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

The reality is that, as a consequence, the capacity for the State, in terms of its industrial relations jurisdictions, to make new laws which impact upon employer and employee relationships is significantly restricted, and in some cases has disappeared completely.

In respect of law reform in this area, the Government strongly supported the Federal Government's attempt in late 2020, as part of a package of proposed industrial relations reforms, to criminalise the dishonest and systemic underpayment of wages by amendments to the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

In March 2021 the Federal Government enacted some of the proposed industrial relations reform package; however, disappointingly the full package of reforms, including the proposed criminal offence for dishonest and systematic wage underpayments, was not enacted due to opposition from the Labor Party and some crossbench Senators. The proposed penalties for breaching the law would have been, for an individual, up to 4 years' imprisonment or a \$1.11 million fine or both; and, for a body corporate, a fine of up to \$5.55 million.

The Government does not support the creation of a Wage Theft Act for South Australia. It is appropriate that changes that will affect the Federal industrial relations system be made by the Commonwealth Parliament.

Housing

The Government recognises that housing is a fundamental pillar of our society and of individual wellbeing. A Housing system that is well-functioning, sustainable and affordable means more South Australians, particularly women, can live safely and live independently.

Since March 2018, the Government's focus has been on fixing a broken housing system that for years had been decimated by the loss of 7,500 public houses, ignored as an important economic and social enabler and used as a 'cash cow' to prop up poorly managed state Labor budgets.

The Government's position is to have fewer South Australians experiencing homelessness and when they do, to have them rapidly rehoused. It is important to ensure that people are safe and able to sustain long-term housing, that they are rapidly rehoused to reduce the length of time they are homeless and that they do not experience repeat homelessness.

This has led to the establishment of five Australian-first homelessness Alliances, one of which is a dedicated domestic violence alliance, that more effectively and efficiently delivers targeted and tailored services to people who are homelessness across the state.

Under this Government, homelessness funding has increased every year with an additional \$20 million investment over the next 10 years to pilot new homelessness prevention initiatives.

A strong focus has also been placed on increasing the supply of affordable houses for South Australians so they can live safely and live independently. The current affordable housing program forms a \$398 million commitment to build 1,000 affordable homes to 2025. This is in addition to a \$21 million budget stimulus build of 100 homes announced in 2019-20 State Budget, 71 of which were sold as affordable. To date:

- 164 affordable houses have been sold
- 47 homes are currently ready for sale
- 300 homes are either currently under construction or under the tender process.

Pleasingly, the majority of homes purchased have been by young, single female first home buyers aged in their 20s and 30s and have been selling within days of being released to market.

We have also launched HomeSeeker SA, a one-stop-shop, online tool that is supporting eligible low-and-moderate income South Australians to achieve their housing dreams. HomeSeeker SA provides:

- An easy-to-use tool to help South Australians find the housing options available to them, depending on their age, income and current housing status.
- Advice on how to navigate many of the steps involved in buying a home, including information on government incentives that assist people to buy and rent an affordable home.

- Budgeting tips to help people to become more financially independent
- Property listings that provide eligible buyers the first opportunity to purchase affordable homes that:
 - have an exclusive listing period of at least 90 days for affordable homes built by the Government.
 - an exclusive listing period of 30 days for homes sold by private developers.
 - A fixed price point between \$250,000 and \$422,050

In addition, the Government has assisted over 18,000 South Australians access or maintain private rental accommodation over the past 18 months. This includes support with financial assistance for bonds, rent in advance and rent in arrears as well as information and advocacy services on housing issues.

Our commitment to public housing has seen the South Australian Housing Trust once again become a 'standalone' authority that could properly manage its assets and be sustainable into the future.

A new Board and governance structure, a new Chief Executive and re-instated funding from the Government has renewed trust and enabled it to fix what had been neglected under Labor. The number of people on the waiting list has been reduced from 20,380 in 2018 to 16,613 in 2022, as well as the time it takes for people on the Category 1 waitlist to be allocated a home. This has meant more South Australian women have been able to secure a public housing tenancy.

Education and Training

The Government is delivering record funding for public schools and preschools in South Australia. The 2021-2022 Budget commits \$769 million more for education spending than in 2017-2018.

In the last year, every public school and preschool has benefited from COVID stimulus grants totalling \$42 million extra in funding for critical maintenance and minor works that might not otherwise have been able to be funded. This has seen the creation of jobs and economic prosperity for businesses in our communities, whilst also improving every public education facility in our state.

The Government is delivering a record \$1.5 billion investment in public education infrastructure, which includes 5 brand new schools and significant upgrades at more than 100 schools right across South Australia.

The Government supports an honest teaching of Australian history which reflects both a strong understanding of Aboriginal histories including the challenges that came with European settlement, but also an understanding of the traditions from British institutions that benefit our citizens today. The revised Australian Curriculum will be considered at the next Education Minister Meeting in April 2022.

The Government is building a future workforce by delivering the most significant reforms to vocational education and training in a generation, so that every school – right across South Australia – has the opportunity to deliver VET that will provide real pathways to skills and jobs.

VET reforms are already shifting perceptions about the role of VET pathways for young people, including pathways for women and girls. This Government is helping more students think about their career sooner, and to open their eyes to the exciting range of possible careers that VET can lead to.

Through our nation-leading Flexible Industry Pathways, a pipeline of skilled workers is being developed for jobs of today, tomorrow and decades to come. There are 26 Flexible Industry Pathways – vocational pathways for students right across senior school years. They have been designed with industry and the Skills Councils to fill demand in priority areas. This could see up to 270 Flexible Industry Pathways being offered across South Australia in 2022.

The Try A Trade program at TAFE SA that is run with the Construction Industry Training Board is giving women and girls a chance to try a trade. This initiative, born out of a need for gender diversity in the construction industry, covers courses including carpentry, tiling, decorating and painting.

Importantly, South Australian schools have embraced opportunities to support learning in classrooms and beyond so that our girls can see inspiring women in STEM careers. Girls have access to:

- STEM Student Scholarships, which includes funds of up to \$10,000 for year 11 and 12 students;
- National Youth Science Forum, which targets girls in years 7 and 8;
- STEMSista program for girls aged 14 to 17 to learn more about STEM careers and opportunities; and
- New curriculum units for schools, which include a greater focus on girls in STEM.

The Government supports respectful relationship programs in schools.

Consent and respectful relationships education is largely delivered through the use of SA's Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum, which is aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.

The Keeping Safe curriculum is mandated and delivered across government preschools and schools, South Australian Catholic Schools and several independent schools and childcare centres.

In 2021, we provided additional funding of \$543,000 over four years for the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum training program, school support, major review and evaluation.

The Keeping Safe curriculum provides detailed information for teachers to strengthen their understanding about respectful relationships and child safety, as well as strategies and resources to support implementation.

Health

The Government supports provides timely and accessible abortion healthcare to women and pregnant people, most recently facilitating a parliamentary debate which removed abortion from the criminal code and will improve access to early medical abortion for women in both regional and metropolitan South Australia.

Work continues to ensure safe, contemporary planning for surgical abortions following surgical abortions being moved to The Queen Elizabeth Hospital from the current Pregnancy Advisory Centre site, including options in the new Women's and Children's Hospital build.

The Government strives to ensure that mental health services provided by our public system are sensitive to Aboriginal cultural needs, including for people living on the APY Lands, children and young people, all mental health policy (such as the State Suicide Prevention Plan) and through prevention programs such as Suicide Prevention Networks. The recently legislated Suicide Prevention Council mandates ex officio membership of both the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement.

The Government is funding and building a \$1.9 billion new Women's and Children's Hospital next to the Royal Adelaide Hospital so women can access adult intensive care services if they need it, and ensuring co-location with infant services to enable women to have ongoing contact with their newborn regardless of the level of care they require post-birth.

The inpatient mental health service for mothers requiring admission with a baby, Helen Mayo House, is being doubled in size from a 6 to 12 bed unit at the new Women's and Children's Hospital.

In relation to women's mental health, the Government opened the state's first Borderline Personality Disorder service (BPD Co), which provides treatment and support through a hub and spoke model to people living with BPD, including women, and mothers, and young people with emerging BPD.

The Government facilitated Share the Dignity gaining access to metropolitan hospitals to enable the placement of publicly accessible free menstrual hygiene products. SA Health public hospitals that currently have PinkBox vending machines include the Women's and Children's Hospital, Lyell McEwin Hospital, Flinders Medical Centre, Modbury Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Wellbeing SA and the Women's and Children's Health Network are currently working on a statewide menstrual wellbeing policy due to be completed in 2022.

Since July 2019, the Department for Health and Wellbeing has provided funding of \$170,000 to the Pelvic Pain Foundation of Australia for the Periods, Pain and Endometriosis Program (PPEP Talk) in schools, in addition to significant funding provided by the Federal Department for Health and the State Department for Education.

PPEP Talk educates young people in both metropolitan and regional schools about periods and pain and promotes healthy conversations and education about menstruation.

The Government wants to ensure that no girl or young woman in South Australia is missing school because they don't have access to sanitary products.

Sanitary products have been available for female students who need them in all South Australian public schools since 2021. The funding supports the Government's Attendance Strategy, Attendance Matters, which outlines strategies to improve attendance and achieve higher standards of learning, achievement, health, wellbeing and safety for South Australian children.

The Government funds SA Health's Adelaide Sexual Health Centre, at 275 North Terrace, and also provide ShineSA with significant long term grant funding to deliver sexual health education and relationship services and programs to South Australians.

In 2019, Government piloted the Midwifery Caseload Model of Care in Yorke and Northern Local Health Network for Wallaroo, Jamestown and Clare, supporting women's access to midwifery care in regional areas.

The modernising of abortion legislation supports improved access for women and pregnant people from regional South Australia accessing to pregnancy termination advice and services.