

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (17:23) There is no doubt that we are going to hear a lot of words over the next few days when it comes to the presentation of the budget by the Treasurer on 16 September. There will be a lot of people who will speak on this side, who are quite angry about aspects of it, and they will vent their spleen in no uncertain way about the frustrations and the feelings in their communities, or about the portfolios that they represent or aspects of interest to them or people in the community who have been disadvantaged in some way by this budget, and no doubt there will be members from the government side who will stand and loudly cheer aspects that they think are fantastic, too, while not necessarily having the courage to say the things they are frustrated about.

However, regrettably—being on the left-hand side of the Speaker—we have the opportunity to look at both. I say 'regrettably' because of the negative aspects of it. I will be magnanimous enough, later in my speech, to recognise a few things that I think are quite reasonable, and I commend the government on the support that it has provided for those. However, there are many areas in this budget which concern me and which I am quite angry about.

I want to, initially, acknowledge the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition. I think she made an excellent speech this morning, for some 55 minutes or so. She certainly defined the difference between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party, when it comes to philosophies, areas of support, and, indeed, her vision. In two key projects, of course, being the Adelaide Oval redevelopment and the Royal Adelaide Hospital rebuild, she defined where the differences are and the philosophies that take place there.

I must admit, the nine months or so that I had the opportunity to be somewhat involved in treasury issues for the opposition allowed me to develop a greater knowledge of the complications involved in the preparation of a budget that is responsible for the expenditure, in this financial year, of a figure approaching \$16 billion. It is true to say that, no matter what level of resource is available to you, there will never be enough dollars to actually provide for every person's need—that is a frustration that governments of all sizes, persuasions and nationalities live with. They represent a large number of people, and they are elected to expend the funds that are received from the taxpayer in the most appropriate way.

There will indeed be differences of opinion on where the priorities should be for that, but there will never truly be enough dollars to provide what the community needs in every person's eye. However, I do live with some level of frustration about the apathetic relationship that the community has with politics. It frustrates me because people seem to think that politics is only an issue that influences them in the month or so before an election. When they sit at home, they might talk to their partner or their children and consider how they intend to vote. Then, for some vast number of people, something like 20 per cent, it will be the decision they make on the day of the election.

To me that is an absolute disgrace, because people across our state and our nation need to recognise that politics impacts on their lives every day, in some way, through the provision of a service or an infrastructure they make use of. The political process drives the availability of that and allows for the revenue to be received to have built that, or to have built something else that they might consider to be a waste or a folly. So, that is where the community at large need to actually engage themselves in the process.

In the last generation, or two generations, we have seen the complete removal of political involvement. Both major parties have suffered terribly when it comes to membership bases. There is certainly a hard core of people who will never give up the fight for the principles they hold true to, but the majority of people sit in the middle now. They are the ones who determine who will fight, and who will sit on the right hand side of the Speaker and have control of the treasury benches. However, sometimes people make very poor and uninformed decisions. Sadly, I think 20 March this year was one of those, but history will reflect that the government won the majority of the seats.

Since 2002, it has been interesting to me to review the budgets that have been put in place by treasurer Foley, and to recognise that he has had a variety of saving measures put there. He has had the Smith review. He has required efficiency dividends and direct dollar savings. Some of these have been associated with targeted voluntary separation packages. Some of these have been dollar requirements that CEOs of departments have been required to meet.

It has been obvious to me that those requirements are not actually reported in any format, so it is impossible to verify that they have been met. We now know, from the budget presented by the Treasurer a few weeks ago, that there is historically some \$500 million in unmet savings requirements, which are now still demanded of the departments. They will have an enormous challenge to meet that, in addition to meeting the other \$1.5 billion in savings, over the next four years, of structural efficiencies that the Treasurer is demanding. Indeed, there must be a lot of people in senior positions within departments and ministerial staff, who are thinking, 'How the hell can we actually deliver upon this?' It is easy to put the figures down on paper, but how do you actually ensure that it creates and it happens.

Regrettably, in reviewing the budget, I think that some crazy decisions have been made in relation to efficiencies and reduced expenditure, and I intend to go into some detail on a few of those that affect regional South Australia, because that is where my greatest concerns lie. I have looked at it, recognising of course that for some number of years there has been a regional statement prepared as part of the budget process—this year there is not. Our side of the parliament think it is probably out of an embarrassment level, for the fact that there is very little in the budget for the people in the regions, and they found it easier not to report on that in any particular format.

Again, how do we get it right? When the Sustainable Budget Commission was announced by the Treasurer, when he presented his budget in June of last year, it was interesting that, as the shadow treasurer has talked about, there was \$150 million in the first year, \$250 million in the second year and \$350 million in the third, to create efficiencies of \$750 million. However, in questioning, as part of the Auditor-General's Report, it was really identified that if future public sector wage increases could be kept to a reasonable level—and the Treasurer was quoting 2.5 per cent—then that would actually create some \$290 million in savings in that third year. I tried to get the Treasurer to identify, as part of the Auditor-General's Report—indeed, from the enterprise bargaining agreements that were in place at that time—what level of future savings was to be achieved so that there could be some level of reporting against that figure, because it was always going to be a key issue in my eyes as to what the eventual savings target beyond wage restraint was going to be. All of us now, of course, know that the Treasurer has sold the people of South Australia a pup. There is absolutely no doubt about that. He said out there publicly \$750 million in savings.

He has now delivered a figure that is nearly three times as large as that. If the people of South Australia had any comprehension of what the plan was going to be, I am confident that they would have revolted against it, because in the fullness of time, as programs are cut, as funding agreements finish and there is no renewal of those, there will be an enormous effect upon the people.

There is going to be a lot of pain felt by the people of South Australia over the next few years. The Treasurer will say that it is because he is the one that is prepared to stand up and make the hard decisions. I also think it is because he is the one who is prepared not to be honest with the people of South Australia and to give them some level of knowledge about what his thoughts are. He has to look at himself in the mirror. I was in a radio station one day with him when he talked about abusing himself in front of the mirror, and it was quite interesting when he said that.