

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 18 June 2026

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mrs (Ashton) HURN: Yes, that is right—a bit busy. Moving on to page 15, Premier, the investing expenditure summary: the North Adelaide public golf course redevelopment, which I am sure you are very excited to get to.

The Hon. P.B. (Peter) MALINAUSKAS: I am sure you are.

Mrs HURN: There are a few questions to ask. How much of the course redevelopment is operating expenditure? North Adelaide public golf course redevelopment, \$45 million—it has, let us call it an asterisk, but it is the letter 'a'. It says: 'Total project costs include both operating and investing expenditure.'

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am advised that, of the \$45 million, all of it has been allocated as capital and investing. In the event that expense has to be reallocated as operating, it gets reprofiled through a DTF process, but I am advised that all of that \$45 million is allocated as investing.

Mrs HURN: Just to clarify, the \$45 million is just for the course itself? That is not for clubrooms or any additional infrastructure that the government might need to consider?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is correct, but when you say 'the course itself', things like irrigation and so forth are incorporated in there.

Mrs HURN: But no other structures or the clubrooms?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Not the clubrooms, no. As we have publicly said, work is underway in terms of the design process at the moment, in terms of costings and the like. That is happening as we speak, I am advised, but, yes, this is for the course.

Mrs HURN: What is the timeframe on that, to do the other design work for the clubrooms, etc.?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There will be a process that we have to go through that will be like any other public investment. There is a design team, and there will be cost consultants and so forth. They will go through an iterative process in conjunction with the government, and then in due course, once that work is concluded, there will have to be a public announcement. We will publicly announce it and the like in the budget and so forth. When that happens will depend on when that work is complete.

There is obviously a timeline that needs to be adhered to in order to achieve the stated objective of finishing in the beginning part of 2028. That has to be worked towards, so presumably at some point in the not too distant future that will have to be concluded. There is a little bit of time for that, but in terms of the course itself, that had to start when it started by virtue of the fact that there needed to be two growing seasons for the turf to be in place to ensure that it is at an appropriate standard when it opens in early 2028.

Mrs HURN: Do you still believe that you are on track for that March 2028 period even in light of some of the legal challenges?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I am advised that is the case, yes. If there was a substantial interlocutory injunction put in place that had a substantial delay, that could have an impact, of course. I mean, it would stop the work from happening. The advice I have received is that the government's position is sound in terms of the process that has been followed. I think that has largely been vindicated through the decision that was taken by the court the other day, although there is still a process to be gone through there. But, no, it is on track at the moment, notwithstanding any substantial external shock in that regard.

Mrs HURN: Obviously, there has been a lot of public commentary and lots of concerns about the number of trees that have come down. I know that we have asked questions in the parliament about that number. Can you confirm to date how many trees have been cut down? I suppose I am keen to get an understanding about what alternative course designs were considered by the government to minimise the number of trees that were being cut down.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There was any number of different options that the course designers worked through. They were given explicit instructions by the government to minimise tree loss wherever we could, and that was a pretty lengthy process. I had committed that we would publicly release what the final numbers were once that was wound down as much as it possibly could—when I say 'wound down', reduced as much as we possibly could—and we did that last year.

Yes, there were a heap of options looked at in terms of course routing. It was done iteratively. Obviously, I was not party to that process, but I was getting updates from time to time. I said, 'Where is it at? Where is it at?' I wanted to get the number out there as quickly as possible, because I had no reason to not disclose it, but they were trying to reduce it.

To put things in a bit of context, there are over 9,000 trees in the project area and the final number was to get it down to 585. What has been lost in the public discourse, as is the nature of things, is that, of those 585, the majority are either exempt by virtue of the fact

that they are invasive species or they are smaller in size so as to not be classified as significant or regulated trees.

Mrs HURN: How many are significant?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Of the 585, 111 are exempt, that is to say exempt from the significant and regulated criteria. I am advised a further 215 are not by virtue of the fact that they are small in size, which adds up to 326, and the remainder (259) are either significant or regulated. What we decided to do was to be proactive and transparent and put the big number out there but, of course, that has allowed people to conflate the idea that all 585 are big, native, significant species, which is just not the case. In fact, as I understand it, I have been advised that there are some pretty insignificant trees that have been incorporated in that number so as to be fully transparent because we did not want a situation where we removed a shrub and someone accused us of not being transparent around what was happening.

Mrs HURN: Of the 585 trees—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Just to be clear—sorry to cut you off—we are talking about 6 per cent or thereabouts.

Mrs HURN: Of the 9,000, yes. Of the 585 trees, which are broken down as you have described, how many have been cut down to date? I suppose a better way of asking is: have all the trees that need to go, according to your design, gone or are there more to go?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: For the golf course area, they are almost all gone, is the advice that I have received. The reason why it has been done iteratively is we have had a deliberate policy of not wanting to remove any trees that did not necessarily need to be removed. For the golf course proper, the advice I received is that they have almost all gone.

Where there still remain trees to be removed will be subject to where the clubhouse goes, because there is no point removing a tree for the purpose of the clubhouse only to find out the clubhouse design has changed or shifted in its location and then we had removed a tree that did not need to be removed. That is the reason why it has been done. Over 400 trees have been removed ostensibly for the course itself. Again, I keep making this point: 6 per cent of the trees have been removed.

There are a couple of interesting points that I think are relevant. The first thing is: those possums that are in the golf course are there because of the golf course. If not for the golf course, there would not be any possums. The reason why I say that is because all the trees that are there were planted for the golf course. It was completely clear, there were no trees in the golf course—none—and they were all planted largely in the sixties and seventies and

that is when the possums came. If we did not have a golf course there, we would not have trees. If we did not have trees, we would not have the possums.

There are now over 9,000 trees and by the time this is finished there will be over 10,000 trees. The difference is that the ones that are being put in will represent more native species, which means more natural habitat for possums. This is actually going to improve the biodiversity outcome for the precinct, apart from the fact that it would be infinitely better for the public to be able to enjoy, which is what I thought the Parklands were all about.

Mrs HURN: Just to be crystal clear, the 585 trees that have been earmarked to go, that also includes a potential area for the clubrooms as well? There will not be any more than the 585? That takes into account all the scenarios of where the clubrooms could go?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is the advice I received; that is right, yes.

Mrs HURN: Does that also include the driving range as well?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Yes.

Mrs HURN: So everything that is going to happen in that area?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is correct. That is the whole number, yes.

Mrs HURN: The 259 significant trees, have they all been removed or are there still more to go?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I would have to take that on notice. I would have to find out.

Mrs HURN: In terms of LIV Golf as well, and staying on the North Adelaide Public Golf Course, did the department do a cost-benefit analysis for the redevelopment? And if so, did that include specifically LIV Golf as the underlying tournament?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Yes, there was an assessment done in the context of the golf course. One piece of work that remains ongoing is on the business case at the clubhouse. The current clubhouse that is there—I do not know if you are familiar with it—is old and dilapidated and has been due for upgrade forever. A lot of work was done to assess whether or not that could just simply be repurposed and used, but the assessment was made that it is so old and outdated that the cost of repurposing that would be more expensive than just building a new one, hence the new build.

One of the questions is the size of that new build and what functionality it has. So do you have facilities in there that would allow it to be hired out? It gets used. There are occasionally weddings and the like down there, which is not uncommon for the golf course

and clubrooms and so forth. Do we want that functionality in the way that it has been in the past, or can we dispense with that? These are all questions that are being assessed in terms of the economics of it.

The clear instruction to the department and all those associated with the project is it needs to commercially wash its own face. We are not in the business of wanting to set this up and it requires an ongoing subsidy in the same way that currently occurs at the golf course. The golf course is losing the Adelaide City Council money year on year, just as is the case of the Adelaide Aquatic Centre. We have done the council a huge service here by relieving them of that burden and at the same time delivering the Parklands—the plans that the Adelaide City Council themselves have had for decades—and investing accordingly. That work is happening at the moment in regard to the clubhouse, and that is one of the reasons why that design process has not been finished, because there is no point. Are you going to choose to have kitchen facilities in there, are you doing it to cater for weddings or not? Those are significant questions that they are working through.

Mrs HURN: What inputs are you putting in for the purpose of that business case and looking at a BCR, for instance? Are you including LIV Golf staying in Adelaide in the long term as part of that assessment, or has that now been removed given the uncertainty of the event?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The advice I have received is that in respect of the clubrooms, no. Because that comes and goes the clubrooms are being designed more for what happens year-round. With respect to LIV, in any event, most of the stuff that is utilised is bump-in, bump-out infrastructure that is brought in and out, which does not bear in on the economics of the new clubroom itself. But for the course, clearly the capacity to be able to hold events, whether it be the Women's Australian Open, the Men's Australian Open or LIV, that is important in the context of the investment relative to the economic output for the city itself—not just for the golf course but for the broader economy writ large.

Just as is the case with Adelaide Oval as well, and other events that we have in the CBD, the good thing about it is that it all can be measured. We know what happens to hotel rooms. There is publicly available data that the government does not produce around hotel occupancy and revenue per available room. We know what happens at the Airport, we know what happens to F&B spend in the city amongst those organisations. There is credit card data and all of it can be measured, which is obviously really important—at least really important to the reasonable person.

Mrs HURN: Noted. I suppose just focusing then specifically on the redevelopment of the golf course, of the investment of the \$45 million, what is the benefit-cost ratio for that project?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There is a piece of work that the department is undertaking with regard to this. Only earlier this week, I think Monday, the announcement was made and the data was put out for the economic benefit of LIV, which has now, from memory, eclipsed the \$100 million mark—sorry, \$97.1 million, just short of \$100 million, which has grown because it was the biggest one across the four years.

It was the biggest one we had yet, which was quite extraordinary, because on one level we were concerned that the numbers would start to come off, but that has proven not to be the case. In fact, they were up 12 per cent on last year in terms of the number of people coming. The interstate participation held up in concert with numbers from previous years. That in and of itself, \$97.1 million, is a pretty big number and obviously eclipses the cost of the upgrade of the golf course, notwithstanding there is still the clubroom to come. But the clubroom is more an investment in the amenity for the people to use year round.

There were 10,895 hotel rooms booked on 14 February. The Saturday of the tournament saw the greatest number of Adelaide hotel rooms occupied in the state's industry, I am advised, on 14 February. That is significant.

Mrs HURN: I suppose what I am trying to ascertain is a figure around the BCR specifically for the \$45 million investment into the golf course redevelopment. I appreciate what you are saying in terms of the hotel rooms and credit card spend, etc., but what is the BCR for the North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I have just given the Leader of the Opposition some numbers that are pretty compelling.

Mrs HURN: And that is all fine, but I suppose I am just trying to ascertain has work been done to ascertain what the BCR is—i.e., is it one; is it above one? What is the BCR for the investment?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: As I outlined earlier, the government undertook a comprehensive piece of work to make sure that this would be a virtuous investment. Obviously, you will appreciate that the type of capital expenditure that we are talking about here in the context of this type of infrastructure is pretty modest. We spent over \$40 million redeveloping Lyndoch oval in the Barossa. It is exactly the same principle. The Leader of the Opposition, I understand, supported that project as well.

Compared to, say, Adelaide Oval, which was a \$585 million investment 16 years ago, this is a pretty modest investment, because ultimately it is remodelling something that is already there, as distinct from having to start from scratch and build a whole brand-new golf course where there otherwise was not one.

Mrs HURN: I will just take from that there is no BCR available to the government.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I do not think that would be an astute assessment.

Mrs HURN: Well, what is the number?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: As I have said, we have undertaken the work. It made very clear—

Mrs HURN: So where can we find the number?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The Leader of the Opposition is well familiar with the size and the scale of the economic benefit that we have had to this state as a result of this program, and that is one we are committed to delivering.

Mrs HURN: And that is, as you have put it, as a result of the investment. I am trying to ascertain what work did the government do to determine the BCR and therefore to give the green light to the investment.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The work continues to be done. Particularly we want to make sure that the nature of both the clubroom and the driving range is entirely commercial. Once that work is complete, we will be making more detail publicly available.

Mrs HURN: There was nothing separate done specifically for the golf course?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We have been doing work iteratively on various programs, but what is clear is that the final result will be determined in no small part by making sure we get the work right when it comes to both the driving range and the clubroom as well.

Mrs HURN: So you are looking at it as an overall—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Well, it is a total project, yes.

Mrs HURN: Overall, you might have a BCR, not just—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: What we committed to is one big project.

Mrs HURN: One big project. Do you have an estimated cost for the overall total project? I appreciate \$45 million has been established, but was it your—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is for the course. There is not a final number as yet, principally because the team is going through the design detail of the size and the scale. The most substantial cost is the clubroom, although there will be an infrastructure cost associated with the driving range as well, and that all comes down to size, scale, what format—

Mrs HURN: Is there an envelope?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There is certainly a range of budgetary considerations, considering that we are determined to maintain the fiscal position that we have.

Mrs HURN: So it is open-ended?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No—far from it.

Mrs HURN: So what are the kinds of constraints that you would put?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There are strict requirements that the team is seeking to adhere to. When we get to a final position of being able to get that number down as low as we can, we look forward to releasing it publicly.

Mrs HURN: What are the strict requirements that you have given the department? Obviously, it is the same as with Lyndoch, for instance. There is a clubroom upgrade and then there is a clubroom upgrade.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Make it as appropriate and as affordable as possible, but, ultimately, what we are looking for here is something that is commercial in the long term and economic in the long term, so that it does not represent an ongoing cost to the taxpayer in the way that it has represented an ongoing cost to the Adelaide City Council ratepayer. For instance, we are willing to accommodate expenditures in order to facilitate ongoing revenue streams to make sure that the amenity of the whole precinct is up to a standard that the people of the state deserve, in a way that does not represent an ongoing operational impediment, cost wise, to the state's finances.

Mrs HURN: But no ceiling has been given to the department or to all the gurus who are doing all the planning work to say, 'Do not go over this dollar figure'?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: They are very conscious of the tight budget parameters that we have established.

Mrs HURN: What are those parameters?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: It is not accurate to suggest there is not a ceiling, because of course there is. There is on everything we do.

Mrs HURN: But if there is a ceiling, what is that ceiling?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The clear stated objective is to make sure that we get this done properly in such a way that it does not represent an ongoing financial challenge or operating hit to the budget in the way that is the case for the Adelaide City Council.

Mrs HURN: I am going to move on momentarily, but you have said that there are strict requirements that they are adhering to but you will not put a figure on that publicly.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No, because what we will do is—we have been utterly transparent about this project all the way through.

Mrs HURN: Except when it comes to what the ceiling cost is for the largest expense of the overall project.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I guess the difference between the government's position and the opposition's position is that we are being clear about ours and we have been consistent.

Mrs HURN: I feel that asking questions is not an indication of support or otherwise, which you often—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: So you support the project?

Mrs HURN: We do support it. We have been clear on that. What we have been seeking to ascertain are the different alternatives in terms of the course design that you have tried to reduce the number of trees for. What we are now trying to ascertain is the fact that you have just indicated that the largest component of the overall development—which you have also said you are treating as one project, so the course, the driving range and the clubrooms—and the largest dollar figure is going to be the clubrooms.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No, I did not say the largest figure is going to be the clubrooms.

Mrs HURN: The largest component of it.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: What I said is that of what is remaining, that will be the—

Mrs HURN: You have also said that the department has been given very clear requirements in terms of what type of design they are looking for, and you have also indicated that there is a budgetary ceiling, but you are not willing to say what that budgetary ceiling is. Is it \$100 million? Is it \$50 million?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I think it is safe to say to the Leader of the Opposition that the government is not contemplating a \$100 million clubroom. I think that would be egregious—

Mrs HURN: What about \$50 million?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —and I do not even think we should be contemplating that either. We are working to keep the budget as modest as possible in order to—

Mrs HURN: This is all we are trying to ascertain.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: I will let the Leader of the Opposition provide some commentary and ask the question, and I will respond accordingly. We have been consistent and clear about this. We told everyone in South Australia back in February 2025 what our plans were. In late 2025, we told everyone how many trees we were going to remove, and we said it to everyone before an election.

Mrs HURN: Sure.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: We did that very deliberately because I wanted to be open and transparent about it. I well understood that there would be a degree of political resistance to that, because people have different views and opinions, and that is welcomed. I was very grateful that we received the endorsement that we did at the election not just on this policy but others, too, and then more specifically, in the seat of Adelaide, to see the result that we achieved there.

Now, the opposition's position, I welcome the Leader of the Opposition—and just to be clear about this, you do support the project?

Mrs HURN: Yes. I have—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No, not LIV Golf. Do you support the North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment?

Mrs HURN: We have actually been clear about this. I was asked multiple times during the election. I just believe that you sometimes feel affronted by simply the opposition asking questions—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Not at all, no. That is your job and you should—

Mrs HURN: —and we want to see as few trees as—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: But I am still not clear. Just for my benefit—

Mrs HURN: Well, respectfully, this is not quite how estimates work. I ask the questions of you—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Right.

Mrs HURN: —in relation to the budget, and you are being evasive—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: No—

Mrs HURN: —in relation to the ceiling that you are wanting to put on the major part of a redevelopment, and I think that taxpayers do deserve to know. Essentially, what I am ascertaining from this is that there is somewhat of an open envelope for the clubroom redevelopment. That is fine—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is plainly—

Mrs HURN: —and you have said that—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: That is not true.

Mrs HURN: But you are also not willing to put the figure on it. I think taxpayers deserve to know—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The Leader of the Opposition is welcome to attempt to verbal me, as I am entitled—

Mrs HURN: To try and verbal me.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —to make clear that we have been very transparent about this project. We are adhering to the budget that has been set thus far. As we publicly disclosed, there will be a new clubroom. The work is being undertaken on that clubroom to make sure that it is appropriately modest in nature but, at the same time, fulfils the requirement to be commercial and economic in nature so it does not represent an ongoing cost to taxpayers in the way it currently is to Adelaide city ratepayers. That work is happening in situ, and we look forward to releasing the details in the not too distant future.

If it is the case that the Liberal Party's position is to support the golf course upgrade but fulfil its responsibilities to ask questions and scrutinise, I welcome that. I think it has been very difficult to ascertain, in my assessment—and I have been paying attention—

Mrs HURN: Maybe have a squiz.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Okay.

Mrs HURN: Nevertheless, I am keen to move on because I have a number of other topics.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: There is so much work happening within the government, and the fact that you have used almost half an hour of your time—

Mrs HURN: I wouldn't say—

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: —asking about a \$45 million program out of a budget that counts for so many more important things I think is interesting.

Mrs HURN: I think it also speaks to the fact that the opposition is asking questions on the issues that people are caring about as well, and I have been hoping to get some answers particularly about your budget blowouts. Moving on to another topic, Madam Chair, that South Australians have questions on, and speaking of transparency again, I am keen to move on to the MotoGP.