

Wednesday 20 May 2026

Question Time – Legislative Council

NORTH ADELAIDE GOLF COURSE

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (15:25): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before addressing a question without notice to the Attorney-General on the topic of police presence at the Adelaide Parklands.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS: Like many South Australians, I was disturbed to see footage of a large contingency of police being deployed to the Adelaide Parklands to monitor the site of the North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment. I understand that last week we saw the arrest of eight protesters. Among them was 78-year-old self-described 'granny' Mij Tanith, who is with a walker.

My question to the Attorney-General is: can the minister advise how many police have been deployed to Possum Park and the Adelaide Parklands over the last two weeks, and is he satisfied that this is really the best use of police resources at this time?

The Hon. K.J. MAHER (Deputy Premier, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Arts, Special Minister of State) (15:26): I thank the honourable member for his question. In relation to police operations and the resources deployed, I am happy to refer that to the police minister in the other place and see if there is a reply to be brought back. I know that sometimes, for very good reason, exact details of how police conduct their operations are not revealed, as I am sure the honourable member would understand.

One thing I would say is that I place great confidence, and I think most South Australians place great confidence in how the police do their job and keep South Australians safe. I think we have all watched some of the things the honourable member has described, but we have also all watched on and seen a building burnt on the golf course, and I don't think any of us endorse those sorts of actions either.

So, as I say, I am confident that the police do their job in the interests of keeping South Australians safe, and I think, when we reflect on it, a lot of people will wonder about—and these are just a few people engaging in this sort of behaviour, but it does not help causes with some of the behaviour that we have seen as well.

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The Hon. L.A. HENDERSON (15:27): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking a question of the Minister for Tourism regarding the North Adelaide Golf Course.

Leave granted.

The Hon. L.A. HENDERSON: On 7 May, the Premier announced that the state government had secured an agreement for South Australia to host the Australian Open every year from 2028 to 2034, including three men's and three women's Australian Opens, at an upgraded North Adelaide Golf Course. The Women's Australian Open will be held at the Kooyonga Golf Club in 2026 and at the Royal Adelaide Golf Club in 2027. My questions to the minister are:

1. Was the 2028 to 2034 Australian Open agreement contingent upon the completion of the \$45 million upgrade to the North Adelaide public golf course?
2. If so, what modelling was produced to demonstrate a net economic benefit for the course's redevelopment before the agreement was made?
3. Could the men's and women's Australian Open tournaments take place at either the Kooyonga Golf Club or the Royal Adelaide Golf Club from 2028 to 2034, and, if not, why not?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Tourism) (15:29): I thank the honourable member for her question. As she has highlighted, there is an agreement for Adelaide to host the men's and women's Australian Open in Adelaide between 2028 and 2034. Adelaide will host, as we have already highlighted before in this chamber, three men's Australian Opens and three women's Australian Opens.

The first men's Australian Open at North Adelaide will be held in 2028. This is an opportunity for us to showcase an incredible golf course that we will have a public golf course that we have now been able to reinvest back into. It is an investment that I understand the Adelaide City Council themselves had long called for. This is an opportunity for us to invest in that site but also to have events like the Australian Open in South Australia.

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The Hon. L.A. HENDERSON (15:29): Supplementary: was the 2028 to 2034 Australian Open agreement contingent on the completion of the \$45 million upgrade to the North Adelaide public golf course?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Tourism) (15:30): As we have already highlighted in this chamber, we have an agreement to host this between 2028 and 2034, and we look forward to hosting this in South Australia.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

NORTH ADELAIDE GOLF COURSE

The Hon. L.A. HENDERSON (15:30): Supplementary: was any modelling produced to demonstrate a net economic benefit for the course redevelopment before the agreement was made?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Tourism) (15:30): We know that golf tourism in itself provides an opportunity for our state. We know that the 2025 Men's Australian Open at the Royal Melbourne attracted more than 113,000 attendees, the most successful men's championship in the event's history. We know the government's major events strategy has already delivered more than \$700 million in economic benefits because of projects just like this one.

We know that golf continues to be an economic driver in our state, but it's also enabling us to invest back into our golf course, into our public golf course, to expand the number of trees to enable more coverage of trees on that site as well.

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The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (15:31): Supplementary: was it necessary to bulldoze almost 600 trees in a week in order to secure the Australian Open?

The PRESIDENT: I don't think you heard the bit about the original answer, so we are going to move on to the next question.

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The Hon. L.A. HENDERSON (15:31): Supplementary: can the minister advise what modelling was produced to demonstrate what the net economic benefit for the course redevelopment is before the agreement was made, in comparison to the Kooyonga Golf Club?

The PRESIDENT: I don't think it follows, but if the minister wants to answer? We will move on to the next question.

Tuesday 19 May 2026

Question Time – House of Representatives

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (15:03): My question is to the Premier. How many trees have been removed from the Adelaide Parklands for the redevelopment of the North Adelaide Golf Course—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order on my right!

Mr BATTY: And is the tree removal now complete?

The SPEAKER: Member for Bragg, can you please repeat the question?

Mr BATTY: Yes. It's to the Premier, and the question is: how many trees have been removed from the Adelaide Parklands for the redevelopment of the North Adelaide Golf Course, and is the tree removal now complete?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:04): I thank the member for Bragg for his question. The government went to the election with the stated policy that we would be removing 585 trees of the over 9,000 that are located on the golf course. I am advised that that work is now largely complete, although not all of the 585 have been removed. I understand there might be some that are ancillary, but the vast bulk of the work has been completed.

I am clearly alive to the fact that this has caused some concern in the community, not necessarily everybody but a not insignificant number of people, and I can sympathise with their concerns. No-one likes to see trees removed under any circumstances, but we were very clear with the people of South Australia that this was our plan and here are the reasons why. The Parklands are there for public use. What we are doing is taking public money to invest in the Parklands for more parklands, more public use.

There are between 130,000 and 140,000 rounds of golf that are played in that precinct every year. It is one of the most utilised golf courses in the state, if not the most utilised golf course in the state. For decades, the Adelaide City Council had a plan to upgrade the golf course. We have simply taken those plans and put them into life. The Adelaide City Council's own plan for the golf course was a model that is largely consistent with the one that is now being applied, which is presumably why the Adelaide City Council supported the public golf course redevelopment as recently as last year.

Critically, of the 585 trees that have been removed, they were planted for the purposes of making a tree-lined golf course back in the sixties and seventies. We're simply saying that we are going to remove 6 per cent of the trees that are there, and then we are going to add to the tree canopy, so that in 10, 20, 30 years from now the tree canopy will be a lot bigger than what it was before the tree removal.

It is also important to note—and people will see this once the works are complete—that, considering it is 6 per cent of the trees, it is not as dramatic as what might immediately appear when you just see one tree falling on social media. There has been an extraordinary amount of effort taken by the teams and the crews on the ground to make sure they are applying best practice when it comes to ensuring that no fauna was compromised. There

are teams of people doing that work, and I want to thank them for it. They were actually dealing with pretty difficult circumstances last week when they were doing that work.

I went down there on Friday night to speak to those workers, the arborists and the fauna handlers, and I just had a chat with them. I've got to say I felt for them. One bloke made an observation—and I think I might have mentioned this on the radio this morning—that was quite simple but quite striking. He said, 'You've got to see this from my perspective, mate. This is my job. I do this every single day.' In fact, he said, 'In many respects, I do jobs that are a lot bigger than this one. I'm an arborist. I chop trees down. This is the way we do it.' He said, 'It just so happens that for this particular job I'm getting abused for doing the work.' I felt for him because he's not making the decisions; I am, principally, and I accept the responsibility for that.

In the long run, what we are going to see is a public-use park that has always been a golf course just becoming a better golf course. It will have more native flora there. It will have a greater tree canopy than what was the case previously. In many years to come, I think people will look back on it as a good investment to make in our Parklands in the way that the council has wanted to do for many decades prior.

Mr BATTY (Bragg) (15:08): My question is again to the Premier. Did the government consider any other designs for the North Adelaide Golf Course and, if so, did any of those alternative designs involve the destruction of fewer trees in the Adelaide Parklands?

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS (Croydon—Premier) (15:08): I thank the member for Bragg for his question. Yes, I'm aware that there were alternative golf course designs that were being put out there by the opposition in the former parliament. I think Frank Pangallo pointed to a golf course design that would see somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 trees removed. He made this a principal point of policy that he took to the election in the former—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: Do you want me to answer the question?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The Liberal Party pre-selected Frank Pangallo. He made this a clear point of difference that he campaigned on at the election. I note that the seat of Waite not that long ago was a former Liberal leader's seat—

Mr TEAGUE: Point of order: standing order 98(a). The question was really specific about plans considered that involved less trees removed.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has been answering the question for a minute. I think he will get to the substance. He is able to answer how he wishes. Thank you, Premier.

The Hon. P.B. MALINAUSKAS: The former member of the other place, the candidate for the once safe Liberal seat of Waite, articulated there were plans floating around for I think 3,000 to 5,000 trees to be removed. That was a plan that was being suggested existed. Here's what I know has happened in respect of the golf course design team: they were given instructions, including explicitly by me, to make sure that the number of trees removed was minimised at every opportunity, and they have done extensive work to do that. What we saw was those numbers continually come down until they got it to the 585 number. That number has been worked over and over to make sure it's as small as possible.

A couple of important points: the first thing is that that 585 number doesn't represent 585 significant trees—in fact, quite the opposite. Many of those, if not a very substantial number of those, are quite small trees that could otherwise be characterised as shrubs, but we have included them in the number to be able to provide maximum transparency in

the lead-up to the election. More than that, a vast bulk of them I understand are an invasive species, or at least a very significant proportion of them are an invasive species that are naturally accommodating to the type of wildlife that we should be trying to see in our Parklands.

So this is an investment in actually making the Parklands better: more native flora to accommodate more native fauna. I accept that the images of some trees coming down is confronting—and I don't like seeing it myself—but, in the long run, we are going to get a far better outcome. There are other examples of where this government has been able to deliver that, despite active objection from the Park Lands Preservation Association.

The best example of that most recently is the Aquatic Centre—it was actively opposed; trees had to be removed. What did we end up with? Go and walk around it, because all the work is finished. Run around the Aquatic Centre now and you will see way more public amenity, you will see a reduced footprint on the Parklands, you will see a reduced carbon footprint in terms of energy consumption. We are seeing tens of thousands of people using the Aquatic Centre more than what was the case prior, and we have relieved the Adelaide City Council of a loss-making enterprise because it's a far more efficient operation there now. So, it is a far better outcome that was opposed by the very same groups and people.

That's not to dismiss those people and their concerns for trees—trees that this government shares an enthusiasm for—but we just want to see a better outcome in the long term done in a measured and considered way, which is the approach that we have taken with respect to the golf course design. I am sincerely looking forward to seeing its completion because I think South Australians are going to be pleasantly surprised at what is a far better end result.

Tuesday 19 May 2026

Question Time – Legislative Council

The Hon. M. SELWOOD (14:45): Supplementary: the minister said that in some other projects they are replacing trees with mature trees. Why then did the government not support the Hon. Robert Simms' amendments to the North Adelaide Golf Course bill to replace the trees with mature trees in the golf course redevelopment?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Tourism) (14:45): I think what you will find is that we will be, as much as we can, using mature trees. We are already working with the Kaurua Yerta group to go through and figure out what species of trees will be best to go into these new spaces. You have to remember that a lot of the trees that have been removed have either been introduced or invasive species that have come in—actually the vast majority—and also smaller shrub trees that have also been removed. What we are doing is setting aside and making sure the trees can start growing, and then have the mature trees, as many as possible, go back into that space.

We know that in the late fifties—I think 1960—this was a site that was created to be a golf course and we know that those trees were planted on that site and have been growing since then. We also know that there is an opportunity for us now to invest back into this site and have more trees as a result.

The Hon. R.A. SIMMS (15:03): My question to the minister for Climate, Environment and Water is: does the minister stand by the comments she made in relation to government developments on the Adelaide Parklands and, if it was so wrong for the Marshall government to build a basketball stadium on the Parklands, why is it acceptable for the Malinauskas government to axe hundreds of trees for a golf course redevelopment on the Adelaide Parklands? Isn't this just more Labor hypocrisy?

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Minister for Tourism) (15:05): It's an existing golf course.