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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

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Thursday, 3 June 1999

Legislative Council

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

The CHAIRMAN (Hon E.R.J. Dermer): On behalf of the Estimates Committee I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values that assistance. For the information of members, these proceedings will be reported by Hansard. The daily *Hansard* will be available the following morning. Hansard will distribute documents for correction. Corrections must be returned on the A4 documents sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page. Members are asked to sit at the front of the Chamber so that witnesses will not have to turn their heads when answering questions. It will greatly assist Hansard if members, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes, the consolidated fund estimates or any other document, give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer within five working days of receipt of the questions.

The gentleman on my left is Mr Michael Smyth, our advisory/research officer.

An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers. I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. On behalf of the committee, I also ask members to keep their questions succinct.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee and for each adviser to please state their full names, contact addresses and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

Division 11: Commerce and Trade, \$94 286 000 -

[Hon E.R.J. Dermer, Chairman.]

[Hon N.F. Moore, Leader of the House.]

[Mr R. Muirhead, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Commerce and Trade.]

[Dr R. Field, Chief of Staff, Office of Deputy Premier.]

[Ms L. Smith, Executive Director, Corporate Business Operations, Department of Commerce and Trade.]

[Mr R. Marshall, Executive Director, Infrastructure, Department of Commerce and Trade.]

[Mr S. Collins, Executive Director, Office of Information and Communications.]

The CHAIRMAN (Hon E.R.J. Dermer): I ask each of witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses" form? All witnesses have acknowledged that they have done. Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document? I note again that all the witnesses indicated that they fully understand the requirements.

I commence today's proceedings by asking a number of questions about the statewide telecommunications enhancement program which is listed on page 197 of the *Budget Statements* as a major achievement for 1998-99. Am I correct in assuming that STEP equates with the communications pipeline listed as a work in progress on page 211 of the *Budget Statements*.

Mr COLLINS: You are correct. The capital is an integral part of STEP.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that what is listed as communications pipeline on page 211?

Mr COLLINS: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: I note the \$5m estimated expenditure to 30 June 1999 on the communications pipeline. On what has this \$5m been spent, or on what will it be spent this financial year?

Mr COLLINS: We are currently in negotiations with two telecommunications carriers and although the money will be committed within this financial year, it will not be spent. It will be spent in the next financial year. The commitment is to provide, broadly, terminal equipment and relay facilities throughout regional Western Australia.

The CHAIRMAN: The *Budget Statements* clearly state that the \$5m is estimated expenditure up until 30 June 1999. However, you are saying that it will not be spent in that period.

Mr MUIRHEAD: That is correct. When we first explored STEP, the complexity of letting such a contract was perhaps underestimated. When the budget was framed for the current financial year, we estimated the contract would have been let and those funds could have been expended by this time. As it turned out, the complexity was significantly greater. We had

to do more assessment and scoping of the exercise before tenders could be called for. That has now pushed the project to a point where we will not have appointment until the end of this financial year, or very early next financial year, which then will trigger the expenditure of that \$5m.

The CHAIRMAN: In that respect, the *Budget Statements* are incorrect in stating that the estimated expenditure is \$5m.

Hon N.F. MOORE: When the *Budget Statements* were framed, it was the intention that the funds would be spent this financial year.

The CHAIRMAN: However, that will not be the reality.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am told now that that will not be the case.

The CHAIRMAN: Does that mean that the suggestion in the *Budget Statements* of \$5m expenditure for the financial year 1999-2000 will be \$10m, or will the expenditure of that \$5m be further delayed?

Mr COLLINS: It should all be expended in the next financial year.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the \$5m allocated in the *Budget Statements* for the next financial year in addition to the \$5m that was allocated for this financial year?

Mr COLLINS: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: Has there been any expenditure at all on STEP?

Mr COLLINS: Yes. It has cost approximately \$500 000 in reaching the point where we are now at. That has been part of the process.

The CHAIRMAN: On notice, I would like to request a breakdown of the components of the expenditure to date on STEP.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The details of expenditure to date already?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. I note on page 197 that STEP has reached the point when tenders have been called for and are under evaluation. When will this evaluation be completed?

Mr COLLINS: We are currently in negotiations with the two preferred carriers. We anticipate that those negotiations will be completed and a heads of agreement entered into within the current month.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you actually completed the evaluation stage?

Mr COLLINS: We have.

The CHAIRMAN: When was that completed?

Mr COLLINS: The evaluation was completed last month.

The CHAIRMAN: When will the work on the telecommunication enhancement commence?

Mr COLLINS: We anticipate that phase 1 roll out will occur in the first quarter of the next financial year. Three phases are involved, all of which will be completed within 18 months.

The CHAIRMAN: I request on notice the breakdown of the components of estimated expenditure on STEP in the 1999-2000 financial year. Can that request be met?

Mr COLLINS: Yes.

[9.10 am]

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I refer to the significant issues and trends on page 184, which points out that the Asian currency crisis has impacted and is still impacting on many of the State's key export destinations, and that assisting and facilitating the growth of exports to new and more diverse markets is essential to sustain Western Australia's strong trade profile. What has the department achieved? For how long will this Asian currency crisis last?

Mr MUIRHEAD: There has been a significant move on the part of both the department and the private sector to change the focus of exports to new markets or markets that have not featured as prominently previously, particularly North America and northern Europe. There was a swift transition to move products and services into those markets when the crisis hit. The department has also been very active in increasing the focus on Indian Ocean markets, which, like the Middle Eastern markets, have been largely unaffected by the crisis. The Deputy Premier has led missions to that area and the department has been focusing on trade exhibitions to encourage interest. Certain steps were taken to free up some of the department's support schemes, such as the export market support scheme funding, to make it easier for companies to apply to go to new markets. That has also been beneficial in allowing companies to explore markets without having to be involved with other groups. The success is demonstrated in the trade figures, which have continued to grow but which have shown a different focus on new markets that have not been affected. I do not underplay the importance to the State of the affected markets, and the department has encouraged companies to maintain their presence in those areas.

It is extremely difficult to predict how long the crisis will last. I can only repeat what commentators far more knowledgeable than I have said. Some see the majority of the markets that have been affected to date reaching a plateau, but almost everyone excludes Japan from that prediction. Most observers believe that it will still face problems, particularly in the final quarter of this calendar year.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The annual report states that business support from the Aboriginal business development office has increased from 198 to 538 over the past two financial years. What is the reason for that massive increase in assistance to Aboriginal businesses?

Mr MUIRHEAD: In the current financial year or the previous year?

Hon MARK NEVILL: In 1996-97, 198 people were assisted, and in 1997-98, 538 people were assisted.

Mr MUIRHEAD: The office came into being in the first year shown. At that stage it was not fully staffed and the programs were not in place. In addition, in the second year we started providing services on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, which meant a far greater level of contact with indigenous clients. There was such a large latent demand for business development services specifically targeted at indigenous people, and in many cases delivered by indigenous people, that at one stage we were being overwhelmed. That is reflected in some of the performance criteria in the budget papers, which demonstrate that that office had the lowest level of satisfaction in terms of timeliness.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Do these numbers represent one business or do you count the number of people in the business?

Mr MUIRHEAD: It represents a client contact that may or may not be an individual. It may be an individual seeking to start a business or wanting to explore possibilities. It does not represent the number of people in an organisation. If it were an Aboriginal organisation involving 100 people, it would be represented as only one contact.

Hon MARK NEVILL: So the printing business would not be counted as 40 contacts.

Mr MUIRHEAD: No.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Is it correct that the Aboriginal business development office will withdraw from servicing stores at Aboriginal communities?

Mr MUIRHEAD: A review is currently under way to determine how the stores will be best serviced. The current proposal is a mentoring scheme to assist those running the stores. In those circumstances, the Aboriginal business development office may withdraw. This move is not in any way intended to dilute the performance of the stores. We believe in discussing better solutions with the clients.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Are you withdrawing on 31 July?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I will take that question on notice.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I would like that.

I refer to the funding for the centres of excellence on page 14 of the annual report. Are Minerals Energy Research Institute of WA, Academe, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies consulted when you distribute those large sums?

Mr MUIRHEAD: The State Funding Advisory Committee, which I chair on behalf of the Deputy Premier, consists of people from a wide range of organisations - the private sector, academia and the public sector. Applicants must demonstrate that they have been consulting widely with groups in Western Australia that could be affected by such a centre.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Who is consulted by the department in approving those amounts of money?

Mr MUIRHEAD: Which specific sums?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Anything to do with the mining industry, the Australian International Gravitational Observatory and the petroleum industry.

Mr MUIRHEAD: Does the member want to know who the department has liaised with in doing the assessment of the application?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Yes, and in deciding to make the grant.

Mr MUIRHEAD: The recommendation is made by the State Funding Advisory Committee based on an assessment done by the department. The decision is then made by the minister. The department probably has done some liaison, so I can provide information about that level.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I want to satisfy myself that the Department of Commerce and Trade is the appropriate body to be making that decision.

Mr MUIRHEAD: The State Funding Advisory Committee makes a recommendation for funding, not the department.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the member's request clear?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I think it is.

The CHAIRMAN: If it is not clear, I will give the member the opportunity to write it down and he can put it on notice.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I thought the question was clear.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is clear to me.

[9.20 am]

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I refer firstly to page 193 of the *Budget Statements*. Under the major initiatives for 1999-2000 reference is made to completion and launch of an aviation strategy to promote Western Australia internationally as a location for pilot training. Will the minister tell the committee a little about how that will be implemented, what it will cost and what are the expected benefits?

Mr MUIRHEAD: We believe the State has a natural competitive advantage in terms of clear air, low rainfalls and a large number of airstrips throughout the regions. A consultant's study was carried out to assess how it should best be promoted to international airlines. It was determined that we should have a whole-of-state approach that promoted the benefits of the whole State and the diversity it offered; that is, airlines operating in tropical conditions could conduct their training in the north of the State and those operating in temperate conditions could train in the south. When we started to get interest from various airlines, the regions could then make their own submissions to those organisations. Following that, various documentation has been prepared and videos have been made. The Deputy Premier recently made a presentation at the air show in Denver in the United States. From now on we will do a launch in Western Australia of that to advise organisations in Western Australia what is happening - of course, the regional development commissions are already aware of it - and we will then simply do direct marketing of airlines throughout the world. I do not have the estimated cost, and I will take that part of the question on notice. It is not very high because it is a specific target group of organisations. As a result of the show in the United States three weeks ago, two, and possibly three, air schools in the United States are interested in exploring the opportunity in Western Australia, and one of the Middle East airlines is interested in the possibility of training in this State.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I now refer to the capital works program set out at page 211. Under new works there is an amount of \$3m for Specialized Container Transport. What is that amount for?

Mr MUIRHEAD: The \$3m for specialised container transport was for the enhancement of major roads at Forrestfield to enable SCT to put its facilities there. Other facilities were in place but further infrastructure was needed to enable not only SCT, but also other organisations that might locate there. I know that a major road needed to be enhanced and that also there were possibly some headworks for utilities. I will get the detail on the cost breakdown of the various infrastructure being funded, but I believe it was for roads and utilities.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I will not ask for it to be placed on notice, since I know that the amount is for infrastructure.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Is it correct that a handout of \$5.2m has been made through the agency to the Fletcher Group of Dubbo to establish an abattoir in the electorate of the Minister for Primary Industry? If that is correct, why does a gift of this magnitude, which equals more than 10 per cent of the agency's recurrent expenditure, not rate a single line in the *Budget Statements*?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It sounds like a good question, but I do not know the answer.

Mr MUIRHEAD: We were not aware at the beginning of the year when working on the current year's funding that this funding would be required. With industry incentives, some come out of the blue, some we chase and sometimes organisations approach us directly and indicate they are interested in establishing in WA, but need assistance either to make their business competitive with an international location or to reduce the cost of moving to a new location.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Is it correct that one of the basic criteria that must be applied prior to making a decision such as this, which amounts to giving public money for the exclusive use of a private company, is for the agency to determine that there is not already an existing operator providing the same service and who might be unfairly disadvantaged by public assistance being given to a competitor?

Mr MUIRHEAD: Under the investment incentive scheme, that is correct. The projects which are funded must normally be unique and not involve an activity that is already being done. In this case, two elements are related to that: Firstly - I am stretching my memory and knowledge - the Fletcher abattoir had a different process for raw boning technology and, secondly, close to 100 per cent of its product is exported.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Did the agency take into account that not only were there existing providers of export sheep abattoir facilities in this State, in the same great southern district, but also there is significant surplus capacity in the industry? Was the agency aware of that surplus capacity in the industry, and what justification did it find for applying public money for the benefit of that company in those circumstances?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I need to take those questions on notice. I am not aware of the detailed level of the research which went into assessing the current capacity in the industry. Ultimately recommendations are made to Cabinet, which makes decisions on these applications.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Public money has been wasted in these decisions and, indeed, it has been used improperly in the circumstances, given the criteria which must be applied before making such a decision. I call on you to justify why this New South Wales based company has been the subject of such extraordinary largesse at the taxpayers' expense and at the expense of the State's existing abattoir operators.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member is making an assertion which is simply a point of view. The matter has been debated in this House on a number of occasions, but the member simply does not accept the explanation provided. Any further explanation I suspect would be a waste of time. I deny emphatically that there is any impropriety attached to this.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask Hon Kim Chance if he has any more questions.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I have asked the agency to justify its actions to the House. That has never been done.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Government has justified this, as I recall - not having been involved personally in the debate. A number of debates have already been held on this issue and the Government has responded fully on every occasion.

The CHAIRMAN: I am certain the question has been put clearly and the minister has responded. Any further pursuit of the question would probably be redundant.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I will desist, but I am still seeking a justification that the criteria in this case were met, and that lies at the base of my allegation of impropriety. I believe they have not been met.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I repeat, this has been debated in the House. I understand that the details of the assistance have been tabled, but I will check that. If a member has a view that is different from that of the Government, no matter how many times the Government says this, the member will not be convinced.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the minister have nothing to add?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The minister is not prepared to take the question on notice?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We have had this debate before.

Hon KIM CHANCE: We have not had a debate about the criteria.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The fact of the matter is that the member simply does not accept the explanation.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I find that quite unacceptable.

[9.30 am]

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will restore order once I gain the respect of everyone involved. Hon Kim Chance should ask the question seeking the information he wants on notice. I will receive a response from the minister to that and that should close the matter.

Hon KIM CHANCE: What are the relevant criteria applying to this case and how can the agency show that those criteria have been properly met?

The CHAIRMAN: If the information is not available now, will the information be supplied on notice?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We are talking about the *Budget Statements*. Normally questions are put on notice because neither the minister nor the officers have the detail sought. The member is asking a question in relation to a broader policy. He has been told that the criteria that apply to these grants were met and the funds were made available for a purpose. If he does not accept that explanation, it does not matter how many times we respond.

The CHAIRMAN: We do not have time for a commentary on the virtue of the question. The member has asked a question clearly requesting information on notice. Will that information be provided?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will talk to the minister about that. I do not know how many times Hon Kim Chance feels I should provide the information.

The CHAIRMAN: Commentary is wasting our scarce time.

Hon N.F. MOORE: With respect, questions of that nature which are statements of political import require a response.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister has given an answer that is clear and we will not take the matter further.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I refer to the fourth dot point at page 193. I notice with interest that, in conjunction with Austrade, the Department of Commerce and Trade has opened an office in the Philippines to promote Western Australian trade and investment. What products are likely to be exported to and, I gather, imported from the Philippines?

Mr MUIRHEAD: One main area is services and products for the mining sector in the Philippines, which has had significant growth and will incur more growth. We have also been successful in exporting services for public transport such as for the construction of railway lines and public transport networks. In addition there is a significant amount of interest, particularly from the tourism industry, in our high-speed ferries. I believe two ferries have been sold to the Philippines and sales for more are under negotiation. Other areas of sales are specialised food products for the hotel industry and to the middle and upper-class population of the Philippines. The Philippines purchases live cattle from Western Australia, although the Northern Territory has the majority of that market.

I believe that food and clothing are the main imports from the Philippines, although I am not too clear on that aspect. The overseas office facilitates imports, but it is not an area of real focus.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Is timber a portion of imported products?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I do not know the answer. I will provide the import figures on notice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Regarding the Department of Commerce and Trade's coordination of the work of the development commissions, are funds available in the Gascoyne Development Commission budget for restoration of the Carnarvon jetty?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I understand that the development commissions have a separate budget provision within the estimates.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I understand that within the Department of Commerce and Trade is an essential coordinating agency for the development commissions.

The CHAIRMAN: The member has asked his question and I would be grateful for either an answer or a clear and succinct explanation as to why it is not available.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Perhaps I did not make myself clear. We are here this morning discussing the estimates for the Department of Commerce and Trade. The question relates to the Gascoyne Development Commission, which is a separate budget item; it is not within this department's budget, although I am happy to try to provide the answer to the question.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the minister saying that he is happy to provide the answer to the question?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Hon Tom Stephens could ask me a question about sport in the Kimberley if he likes.

The CHAIRMAN: I am trying to avoid wasting time on discussions about the nature of questions. The minister said the question was not within the ambit of Commerce and Trade. I am trying to establish whether he will provide an answer.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I want clarification regarding the process of this committee before I indicate how I will answer it.

The CHAIRMAN: The member has asked the question and he has explained its relationship to Commerce and Trade. If the minister is prepared to answer the question, I would be grateful if he could do so promptly.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I understand there are no funds in the department's budget for the jetty at Carnarvon.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does a Commerce and Trade central agency have responsibility for coordinating the development commissions?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: At page 193 one of the major achievements for 1998-99 is promotion and delivery of an extensive range of enterprise support programs to enhance the international competitiveness of Western Australian industries. In view of the current economic climate, I support this approach. Can the minister expand on the information? Will the program be continued into 1999-2000?

Mr MUIRHEAD: That suite of programs has a focus on helping organisations achieve an export-capable level or enhancing their capability. It ranges across issues such as business planning services to business visiting schemes, export graduate schemes and the textile clothing and food 2000 development package, which we deliver on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. We proposed to continue that next year, although the TCF development package funding is expended; there is no funding for that next year. I think it totalled only \$90 000. We will be continuing to offer and promote the other schemes. As always we will look at whether those schemes are meeting industry needs. They have been confirmed through industry strategies that we developed in conjunction with industry. We focussed on 10 specific industry sectors and have drafted strategies which have been useful to industries that have signed up to them. While industry continues to tell the department that they are useful, we will continue to implement them.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: In that same vein, one of the major initiatives is to undertake market strategies to identify business opportunities for Western Australian small and medium enterprises. Can you expand a little on that? What sort of interest do small and medium businesses have in this area or is the department being proactive in encouraging them.

[9.40 am]

Mr MUIRHEAD: I always like to think we are being proactive. However, in Western Australia in particular, small to medium enterprises have always adopted an extremely aggressive view in looking at new markets. Our strategy has changed over the past couple of years from us really calling the tune on what we see are the appropriate markets to focus on and, as I mentioned earlier, dragging organisations there, to working in conjunction with industry through, again, the industry strategies where we have reached sign-off between ourselves and industry bodies on what markets they see as viable. We are then agreeing on expenditure to research those markets and to look for opportunities, whether that be through our own overseas offices, Austrade, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or consultants. Therefore, it really is quite a cooperative arrangement.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Almost all your performance indicators show a deterioration in performance. It is quite amazing to see that because I thought departments usually change their polling organisation if it does not meet expectations, so full marks for honesty. Have you done any polling on performance of the regional development commissions? If you have, I expect that it would indicate that they do not have a high level of credibility. I think they are seen by many people in regional areas as being branches of the National Party. Have there been any surveys on the performance of the regional development commissions?

Hon N.F. MOORE: You mean by the Department of Commerce and Trade?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind members of the importance of succinct questions and the absence of commentary.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As long as you do not mind if the answers contain some commentary, Mr Chairman. I am sure, with your very balanced approach to these matters -

The CHAIRMAN: If the commentary becomes excessive, I will not be slow to remind people.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Of course. The Department of Commerce and Trade does not do any polling in respect of the regional development commissions. As I indicated earlier, the regional development commissions are separate items in the budget. If the member wanted to ask questions about them, he should have put them on the agenda.

Hon MARK NEVILL: We have an officer here from the minister's office, and we all know that there is a strong coordinating role from the minister's office for those commissions. Therefore, I thought it was a reasonable question.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The gentleman from the minister's office is here on this occasion to assist on the Department of Commerce and Trade's budget. As I said, if the member wants to talk about the regional development commissions, I will be happy to do that next year when he puts it on the agenda.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Okay. My next two questions relate to Wittenoom. Firstly, there has been a relocation of a lot of the housing, etc, from Hope Downs to Wittenoom. Are you aware of that and what is the purpose of it? Secondly, the Water Corporation has drilled three bores, two of which have been equipped to replace the current water supply scheme. Those bores are near the power station, yet we have the absurd situation now that Western Power Corporation will not connect those bores to the electricity, which is really just a transfer. As the Department of Commerce and Trade has a coordinating role in that program, could the minister advise what is going on there?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The department administers the Wittenoom trust fund, which provides funds to assist in relocating people from Wittenoom to elsewhere. I am advised that that is basically the role of the department. The other issues which the member raised which relate to Western Power and the Water Corporation are questions we can probably take on notice and refer to those organisations.

The CHAIRMAN: Would that be satisfactory?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Yes, Mr Chairman. However, Commerce and Trade has clearly taken on that whole coordinating role of policy in respect of Wittenoom. Mr Michael Beach has been central to that, so in my view it is squarely in your court, even though those other departments are involved.

The CHAIRMAN: Rather than again going down the road of commentary, could we have Hon Mark Nevill's specific question again and we will see what specific answer we get to it?

Hon MARK NEVILL: It is coming up, Mr Chairman. What is the situation now with what was formerly the Hunt's factory in Albany in terms of Commerce and Trade funding?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I do not know what the current situation is. I know that there are issues around that at the moment. I would need to take that question on notice to give an update. The organisation is now called Vital Food Pty Ltd.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Could we have that on notice?

The CHAIRMAN: It is taken on notice; that is understood.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: The budget recognises that there is an overwhelming reliance on resource commodity sales, which have taken a bit of a battering in recent times because of the drop in the Asian market in particular. Further, this type of trade is high in energy use and is therefore greenhouse gas producing. Does the department have any strategies to promote a more diverse range of exports and services? In particular, does the department have a strategy to encourage either negative or low greenhouse gas-producing industries for export?

Mr MUIRHEAD: The Department of Commerce and Trade focuses primarily on what we might call sustainable industries; that is, manufacturing and service industries. We do not have a focus on resource extraction or exploitation, other than in downstream processing areas. We have a focus on industries which are sustainable in the long term. At present we do not have a strategy which specifically relates to and focuses on low-emission industries, although we are represented on the State's Greenhouse Coordination Council and take cognisance of what is happening there and provide input on the manufacturing industry to that council.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As to the broad substance of the question, the Department of Resources Development is more involved in resource projects. Perhaps the member could ask the question of that department.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: We are talking about a wide range of resource sales, and we are coming to a point at which we will see a whole lot of new resources coming on sale which are from high greenhouse gas-producing industries. I am concerned that unless we have a better mix in our economy we may run into trouble by having export bans or whatever put on this State because of the high growth in greenhouse gases in this State, and that will severely impact on commerce and trade.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member is making a political statement more than anything. However, the point he is making is that we should not proceed with the Gorgon project.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: No, I am not.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hon Jim Scott asked a question. We will now receive the answer to that question. He will have an opportunity to respond in a moment.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Gorgon project, should it happen to get off the ground, is probably worth about \$10b to the Western Australian and Australian economies. There is no question that the gas that the Gorgon project will be extracting,

should it commence production, is high in CO₂. However, there is also an argument about where one should be making judgments about greenhouse gases: Should it be at the extraction point or at the end usage point? There is a very good argument that those who use gas for the production of electricity and other purposes will do so with fewer emissions than would be the case if coal were used. This is a matter which is very much in the bailiwick of the Minister for Resources Development, whose portfolio we are not dealing with today.

[9.50 am]

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I refer to the output measures for science and technology development services at page 188 of the *Budget Statements*. The client satisfaction rate for quality and timeliness is only 60 per cent for 1998-99 and is expected to increase to 70 per cent in 1999-2000 due to increased promotion of the Western Australian innovation support scheme. However, the cost per unit of output for science and technology development services is currently \$14 496 and will drop to \$12 478 in 1999-2000. How does the department expect to improve the client satisfaction rate to 70 per cent by increased promotion of WAIS when the cost per unit of output will be significantly less?

Mr MUIRHEAD: The note at the right-hand side of page 188, which refers to the reason for the significant variation in the *Budget Statements* due to increased promotion of WAIS, relates to the fact that we believe we will develop an additional 250 services, and not to the increase in client satisfaction. That explains why service delivery will increase by some 20 to 25 per cent over that period. Client satisfaction is a stretch goal that will go right across the science and technology development services program and is not related only to WAIS. We hope to be able to do that through improved delivery of service, better understanding of client needs and greater efficiencies.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I refer to major achievements for 1998-99 at page 195. It is pleasing that the department is providing leadership to assist Aboriginal people to participate in economic development through business enterprise. Can you identify some of the projects that were in that leadership program?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I am rusty on the detail, but one example is the Gumula Aboriginal group in Tom Price, where we have provided input to help it to diversify its services, access federal government schemes, and, I think, employ a business planner. I am happy to provide two or three specific examples on notice, rather than trying to recall them.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I refer to page 209. There has been a lot of positive comment in the community about the department's support for research and technology. Does the line item for the Scitech Discovery Centre include funding for the proposed move of Scitech? Can you identify specific support under the centres of excellence program for the Institute of Child Health Research?

Mr MUIRHEAD: There is no funding for the proposed move of Scitech. The board of Scitech is considering what it wishes to do with regard to a move, and discussions are under way. No funding is being provided for the Institute of Child Health Research under the centres of excellence program at this time. I am not sure whether it is actively preparing an application, in which case the department may be liaising with it at the moment. I will need to take that question on notice.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Is it possible to identify some of the centres of excellence that you are supporting?

Mr MUIRHEAD: I will provide a list of the centres that we are supporting.

The CHAIRMAN: That is also on notice.

Hon DEXTER DAVIES: One of the major initiatives for 1999-2000 at page 191 is the continuation of the regional headworks development scheme, in response to perceived demands for a residential headworks assistance program similar to the regional headworks development scheme. What progress is being made towards developing a regional headworks development scheme?

Dr FIELD: The department has a coordinating role, but the activity is being promoted through the portfolio of the Minister for Water Resources, which is the main thrust for that headworks scheme, because water is one of the major issues that has been holding up residential development.

Hon DEXTER DAVIES: One of the major initiatives for 1999-2000 at page 201 is to expand the network to 76 telecentres by December 1999. Given the spectacular success of that program so far, how many telecentres will be developed between 1 July 1999 and 31 December 1999 to reach that total of 76 telecentres?

Mr MUIRHEAD: Provided the final approvals go through, we will have 64 telecentres by the end of the current financial year, leaving 12 to be opened between July and December 1999.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that is your answer based on your best recollection.

Mr MUIRHEAD: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Will you undertake to check that at a later stage and advise the committee if there is any variation?

Mr MUIRHEAD: Certainly.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: The second item at page 209 is the Western Australian innovation support scheme. Is that the establishment at Bentley Technology Park? As it is a support scheme, one would expect the department to subsidise it. Can the committee obtain the terms and conditions of that support; namely, what services are expected to be provided, and what outcomes will be achieved?

The CHAIRMAN: We will take that on notice.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The estimated actual expenditure for services and contracts for 1997-98 at page 202 of the *Budget Statements* was \$19.137m. Item 7 at page 76 of the department's annual report for 1997-98 states that the estimated actual for services and contracts was \$23.301m. What is the reason for the rather large discrepancy between those two figures? In the previous financial year, the estimate for services and contracts increased from \$11.5m to \$23.1m. What is the reason for that?

The CHAIRMAN: My concern at this stage is that we will run out of time. Is it possible for those two questions to be put on notice?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It certainly is.

Sitting suspended from 10.00 to 10.15 am

Division 25: Education, \$ 1 388 391 000 -

[Hon E.R.J. Dermer, Chairman.]

[Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Mines.]

[Ms C. Vardon, Director General.]

[Mr R. Mance, Acting Deputy Director General.]

[Ms J. Johnston, Relieving Executive Director.]

[Ms J. Hasleby, Project Manager.]

[Ms V. Burns, Director, Early Childhood Education.]

[Mr S. Home, Executive Director, Human Resources.]

[Mr K. Wyatt, Director, Aboriginal Education.]

[Mr N. Jarvis, Acting Executive Director, Business and Resource Management.]

[Mr P. McCaffrey, Director, Finance.]

[Mr P. Frizzell, Executive Director, Schools.]

[Mr D. Axworthy, Senior Consultant.]

[Mr M. Parr, Manager, Client Services.]

The CHAIRMAN (Hon E.R.J. Dermer): On behalf of the estimates committee I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values that assistance. For the information of members, these proceedings will be reported by Hansard. The daily *Hansard* will be available the following morning. Hansard will distribute documents for correction. Corrections must be returned on the A4 documents sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page. Members are asked to sit at the front of the Chamber so that witnesses will not have to turn their heads when answering questions. It will greatly assist Hansard if members, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes, the consolidated fund estimates or any other document, give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer within five working days of receipt of the questions.

The gentleman on my left is Mr Michael Smyth, our advisory/research officer.

An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers. I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. On behalf of the committee, I also ask members to keep their questions succinct.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee and for each adviser to please state their full names, contact addresses and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

I will commence the proceedings by asking a number of questions that relate to the department's program for computers in schools. Has the Education Department completed the audit of computer technology in WA government schools?

Mr JARVIS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What did the audit indicate to be the respective ratios of primary and secondary school students to computers in WA government schools?

Mr JARVIS: I do not have those exact details but the audit is a published document which I can forward to the Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee would be pleased to receive it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will take that question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: The question and request were clear and we look forward to receiving the audit. Does the audit indicate the ratios of computers to students in primary and secondary categories?

Mr JARVIS: Yes, it does.

The CHAIRMAN: Has each WA government school now developed a technology plan?

Mr JARVIS: A few may still be negotiating with the district directors, but overwhelmingly the answer is yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What explanation is there for the few schools who have yet to complete those plans?

Mr JARVIS: I said that because I do not know whether it is 100 per cent; it could be 100 per cent. According to the district directors, most schools have submitted their plans. I can give you on notice an indication of what percentage have not.

The CHAIRMAN: Not only do I want to know the percentage that have not provided the technology plans, I would like to know which schools they are and the date by which all schools are expected to comply.

Mr JARVIS: The answer could be that they all have.

Hon N.F. MOORE: In the event that some have not we will provide that information.

The CHAIRMAN: To date, how many computers have been provided to WA government schools through the computers in schools program announced in the 1998-99 *Budget Statements*?

Mr JARVIS: All of that information is contained in the census document. Schools are in the process of spending this year's allocation, therefore not all moneys have been expended in buying computers. We will have another census at the end of this year to ascertain how many computers were purchased this year.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the census that you refer to a separate function from the audit that I referred to earlier or the same function?

Mr JARVIS: The audit was the baseline census. When we re-conduct that census this year we will progressively be able to monitor each year the numbers of computers and other technology investments such as local area networks, routers and so on in schools.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it possible at this stage to give the committee a figure or must you take it on notice and provide the answer within five days, on how many computers have been provided in the program since it was announced in the budget papers last year?

Mr JARVIS: It will be very difficult at this stage to provide a figure on how many have been purchased in this State because schools are in the process of purchasing items.

The CHAIRMAN: The first available figure will follow a census conducted at the end of this calendar year - is that correct?

Mr JARVIS: Yes. They have in each of their plans announced their intentions on the number of computers they will purchase.

The CHAIRMAN: Can that information be provided on notice?

Mr JARVIS: We have not aggregated all of those intentions. We are waiting for the census.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I suggest, Mr Chairman, in view of the potential magnitude of providing the answer within five days, that it be put on notice and we will provide an answer when it is available.

The CHAIRMAN: I can understand why it might take a little longer than five days; however, I want that information as quickly as it can possibly be provided, and for it to be provided to the committee as part of this hearing.

Hon N.F. MOORE: All I am saying is that every endeavour will be made to satisfy your requirements, Mr Chairman, but it may not be provided in five days. I presume that if it is provided beyond the budget debate period that you would still want it sent to this committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I note on page 386 of the *Budget Statements* that the estimated expenditure for this program for 1999-2000 is \$20m. What is the estimated expenditure for this program in 2000-2001?

Mr MANCE: It is a four-year program at \$20m per annum.

The CHAIRMAN: The concern I have is that when I look at the budget papers for 1998-99, the commitment to the expenditure was \$60m over the two years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. Are you now telling me that the program is for \$20m a year, which is less than what was committed over those two financial years? In last year's budget papers there was a clear commitment of \$60m to be spent over those two financial years. Are you now telling me that only \$20m will be spent in each of those financial years, which will be a total of \$40m?

Mr MANCE: We can answer that. I will hand over to Mr Jarvis. Also Mr McCaffrey might like to mention that the first grant went out this year and just how the cash flows work from one year to the next.

Mr JARVIS: That \$20m figure is just one particular computer program. There is a base school grant allocation of \$3m per

annum which is recurrent; a school grant per capita increase which is \$6.5m over four years; the computers in schools initiative which is \$10.96m over four years; and the learning technologies in schools program which is \$80m over four years. That particular line item refers only to the learning technologies in schools initiative, which is the \$80m over four years.

The CHAIRMAN: In the 1998-99 budget papers the computers in schools program, which was announced in last year's budget papers, stated clearly that \$60m was to be spent over 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. That was a very clear commitment in last year's budget papers.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Chairman, I remember that last year there was a debate about your interpretation of last year's budget and I believe we did not agree. I am just going on 12 months' of memory.

The CHAIRMAN: I am happy to quote chapter and verse.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I have no doubt that if you want to take the time of the committee that you will do that. However, it is interesting that you should be raising a question about commitment to this program. As you would be aware, the Government has made a significant commitment by providing very large sums of money for computers in schools. I would have thought that you would be saying what a great program it is, rather than trying to indicate that it is not enough.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, commentary at this stage is inappropriate, as is my quoting chapter and verse. The facts are here on the budget for anyone to see. I seek simply to confirm that the computers in schools program expenditure for 1999-2000 will be \$20m and the programmed expenditure estimated at this stage for 2000-2001 will also be \$20m. Is that a correct assumption?

Mr MANCE: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: The fact that that contradicts last year's statement is a matter on the public record.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Chairman, before you make that judgment publicly, as you have, we would like to look at what was said last year, because I remember very clearly now -

The CHAIRMAN: The minister is welcome to look.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I have every intention of doing that, but you realise that I do not carry that around in my head and I cannot refute the allegation that you are making now.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, we have limited time. Let us proceed to the next question.

Hon N.F. MOORE: With respect, Mr Chairman, you have made an allegation that the information provided to you today is different from what was provided last year. I do not necessarily agree but I do not know. Before you make those statements you should give us a chance to check what was said last year and to respond. My memory is that last year you got it wrong; you may have it wrong again this year.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I have said that you are welcome to check and you will have plenty of opportunity to discuss this further outside this hearing.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is this a place where you make statements on your judgment about things and then say, "Let's go on to the next question."?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, minister. It is here and you are welcome to look at it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: To be fair, you need to give us a chance to respond before you make judgments.

The CHAIRMAN: You will have every chance to respond.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Before you make judgments.

The CHAIRMAN: I have made my judgment and I have made that clear. I would like to proceed with the next question. The 1998-99 *Budget Statements* committed \$20.2m for the extension of computers in schools program in the 1998-99 financial year. Why was \$200 000 cut from this commitment, according to page 386 of the 1999-2000 *Budget Statements*? I am happy to go through that again. In the 1998-99 *Budget Statements*, \$20.2m was committed for the extension of the computers in schools program in the 1998-99 financial year. Is that clear so far, minister?

[10.30 am]

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Why was \$200 000 cut from this commitment? The *Budget Statements* for 1999-2000 show the expenditure as \$20m. The financial statements for last year said that the expenditure for the 1998-99 financial year would be \$20.2m. The question is very simple and clear: Why was \$200 000 cut from the program?

Mr McCaffrey: Part of the confusion is in the terminology "computers in schools". We always talk about computers in schools as being inclusive of all the programs we are dealing with. I notice on page 396 the title of "Computers in Schools". It could read, probably more appropriately, learning technologies funding, which is the \$80m about which we are talking now. That \$20.2m was reflected in the cash flow that we expected to expend in that year. As 1998-99 transpired we spent all of the \$200 000 in the previous financial year and we got back to a clear \$20m commitment in these statements as they are shown today. It is not a cut to any program; it merely reflects the expenditure we expected at that time. The member may recall that in March or April we put in estimated expenditure to the end of the financial year.

The CHAIRMAN: Does that mean that the \$200 000 was spent in the 1997-98 financial year, rather than the 1998-99 financial year?

Mr McCaffrey: Yes. That is my understanding.

Hon Mark Nevill: I have been following the tertiary entrance examination results for the past three or four years from my electorate, which are very disappointing. What is in this budget from the Education Department to redress the appalling results in the goldfields, mid west, Pilbara and Kimberley regions, particularly in the TEE results and the paucity of any students graduating with maths, physics and chemistry?

Ms Vardon: There is nothing specific in the budget to address year 12 academic studies for that area. Some of the programs and funding generally can be seen to be directed to improving year 12 retention rates, attendance rates and academic outcomes. The money directed towards the students at risk, towards teachers' professional development and vocational education and training in schools can be seen as part of a TEE improvement strategy. The general programs that we run are directed at a share that is required for year 12 students.

Hon Simon O'Brien: What resources are allocated to the problems of truancy in schools? I wonder whether the information could be summarised in terms of the number of officers engaged full time or part time in addressing the problem. I appreciate that the information for my next question may not be available immediately. How many truancy officers are in place by education district?

Ms Vardon: Some of this information will have to be supplied at a later time. A number of our efforts through district offices are directed at truancy and keeping young people, particularly, at school. There are 16 district offices and 21 district directors around the State. These comprise school welfare officers and school psychologists, and in some cases district offices may have discrete resources for truancy. For Aboriginal children where attendance is an issue, we have Aboriginal education workers whose role is to carry out home-school liaison duties and encourage children not only to come to school, but also to stay at school.

Mr Axworthy: The responsibility for monitoring attendance and following up with parents to check that the children are attending school is taken very seriously by all schools. In looking at specific resources allocated, we must look at resources in every school. Every administrator and every teacher plays a part in trying to maintain an attendance rate in the school and encouraging children to attend. I can provide, as supplementary information, the specific numbers of support staff available in each of the district offices. I caution that there is some danger in looking at the relatively small number of staff with statutory powers in terms of truancy and being able to take cases to court. If we look at that relatively small number - it would be about 11 FTEs and about 14 people - it could be misleading to suggest that they are the only people allocated to deal with truancy and attendance, because the number is much larger than that.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That answer generally provides the information I require, so I will not ask for any further information on notice. Under the auspices of the Safer WA program we have heard this week that the police district superintendents are chairing committees of managers of other government agencies in each district to address a range of concerns in the community. Does the Education Department participate in these committees, and if so, at what level are the representatives who are sitting on the committees?

Ms Vardon: Yes we do participate in them at the district director level. The departmental representative on the overall committee is Mr Peter Frizzell, an executive director. We participate at very senior level.

Hon Muriel Patterson: The significant issues and trends on page 392 refers to the increasing growth of the non-government school sector in Western Australia. What proportion of funding is devoted to this? How fast is the non-government school sector growing and where do we stand in comparison with other States? In the major regional cities, such as Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Albany, what growth is expected in the non-government school sector, and how is this impacting on the Government's infrastructure planning in these areas?

[10.40 am]

Hon N.F. Moore: We have here a similar problem to the one we had earlier this morning. This item is under Educational Services, which is a separate department. Non-government schools are part of the jurisdiction of the Department of Education Services. The question should be asked of that organisation. Perhaps the estimates committee will invite the department along next year.

The CHAIRMAN: The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations did not invite the Department of Education Services to attend this year. The best way for the member to request that information would be as a question on notice in Parliament when it resumes the week after next.

Hon John Halden: Page 381 of the *Budget Statements* lists the line item for salaries and allowances. I note an increase in salaries and allowances from 1998-99 to 1999-2000 in the order of \$9m. Could I have a breakdown of that \$9m?

Hon N.F. Moore: Is that from \$1 079 408 to \$1 088 674?

Hon John Halden: That is correct.

Mr McCaffrey: The \$9m is a little deceiving. It is the gap between those two years' expenditure, but a number of non-recurring payments must be made in 1998-99 including a transfer of cleaning and gardening from salary payment to contract, which is shown in a separate line item. We are also currently covering some staff from redeployment and we anticipate that that will not be required next year. In addition, there are some non-recurring expenses related to arrears which

had to be paid for some work groups and teacher aides. When all that is taken into account we are looking at an increase around \$28m in those items. The \$9m does not truly reflect those commitments. We feel that we have sufficient funding to meet our base requirements for the next year.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: There must be off-sets in that figure.

Mr McCAFFREY: In the \$28m?

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Yes. You say it is \$28m but it reflects as \$9m in the budget.

Mr McCAFFREY: We are not expecting to have to pay about \$19m in those items in the next financial year.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Could I have a breakdown of that on notice?

Mr McCAFFREY: Yes.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: My next question relates to the next financial year of the same line item. I notice a roughly \$68m increase. Could I have a breakdown of that proposed increase?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Do you mean from this budget to the forward estimate?

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Yes, 1999-2000 to 2000-01.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We will take that on notice.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: I am happy to have that on notice. My last question also relates to the same line item. I note in the Press that the state wage case is currently being negotiated. Is there provision within this line item for any implication of that case?

Mr HOME: I am not sure to what extent the state wage decision will impact. Most recent state wage decisions have focused on minimum wages.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: It will cover awards.

Mr HOME: It will cover awards, but the vast majority of the Education Department's workforce is not affected or impacted upon by changes to the minimum rate of pay. Some work groups may be affected, but changes in base rates will not necessarily impact. Are you referring to the minimum wage or a state wage case?

Hon JOHN HALDEN: The state wage case. I suggest this case could have significant implications for cleaners and gardeners.

Mr HOME: Yes, although the program of contracting out cleaning and gardening will dissipate the financial impact. It is hard to speculate about the possible outcome of the state wage case. Most of our salary predictions are made on the basis of what we expect to put in place through enterprise negotiations with the relevant unions.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: The national wage case resulted in an increase of \$27.80. Clearly the Education Department still has a number of workers who are likely to benefit directly from a state wage case decision, which will, at minimum, see the same flow-on. That is a significant amount. Are there provisions within this line item for that increase or will it have to be absorbed within the available funding?

Mr HOME: An overall allocation is made for salary adjustment across the work force. The extent to which any state wage decision might reflect an increase greater than 1 per cent or an increase greater than what is provided for within the budget would have to be dealt with within our budget. Adjustments may be required.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: My question relates to the asset sales revenue under local area planning on page 370 and asset sales under the capital works program on page 389. Can you provide any details of what will be included in those sales? Have those sales already been announced or are you estimating those figures from other information?

Mr McCAFFREY: Are you talking about the major policy decisions section and the \$49.37m?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Below that is listed asset sales revenue of \$13 050 000. It is in the major policy decisions block.

Mr McCAFFREY: That is the proceeds of sales of some school sites we anticipated when the estimates were formed. We expect \$5.7m from the sale of the Chidley Educational Centre site in Mosman Park and the Valuer General estimated \$7.3m will be received from the sale of the Scarborough Senior High School site.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: It has already been announced those sites will be closed and sold.

Mr McCAFFREY: Yes, that was part of the announcement made by the Minister for Education.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: It is not a future initiative for which a dollar figure has simply been provided.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the member wants to clarify that all of the money listed in that line item will come from the previously announced sale of schools.

Mr MANCE: Those amounts are projections. The minister has announced the closure of Scarborough Senior High School. The Chidley Educational Centre is projected to close. An interim program has been in place to replace the Chidley operation. It is subject to a review the results of which are due early this month. If the pilot program has been successful,

I understand that the announcement will be made by the Minister for Education and the closure and sale will proceed. Those amount represent those sites.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: On page 389 under "source of funds" a credit figure of \$17.505m for asset sales is listed. Have those asset sales already been announced? Are the parents aware of the sales of those assets?

[10.50 am]

Mr MANCE: That figure of \$17.505m includes the Scarborough Senior High School, the Chidley Educational Centre site and also the Swanbourne Primary School at \$3.04m. That makes up approximately \$16.16m of the \$17m. The other \$17m is made up of other excisions and sales that go in and out of the school development improvement fund. As other asset sales take place, that will make up the difference to the \$17m. The major components of the \$17.5m are Swanbourne Primary School at \$3.045m, Scarborough Senior High School at \$7.35m and Chidley Educational Centre at \$5.77m, a total of \$16.16m.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: The balance is a very small amount. Are parents involved in the decisions when things go in and out of the school development fund?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Page 390 under "Commonwealth" in the net appropriation determination contains schools assistance, special projects, Aboriginal education and Indian Ocean Territories. I am not concerned about schools assistance, but what mechanisms are in place to match up commonwealth funds against specific state programs for the other three items; for example, are special projects awarded for an amount for which a school has applied, and how does that match up with how the school receives and accounts for that money?

Mr MANCE: And the accountability and reporting back to the Commonwealth.

Mr McCAFFREY: All special project funding that we receive from the Commonwealth is separately identified. We use an identifying code for each program as that expense is generated either from a central officer or from a school-based officer. We get the accountability back through the reports from the district directors on what is happening in the schools. We also keep a record of all of the expenses so we can acquit those funds against the commonwealth programs as the expenditure is met.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Is there no prospect of any of that money being diverted into something other than for what it was originally granted?

Mr McCAFFREY: It should not be. If a school receives some grants, it has the responsibility to correctly classify that funding into the school records and to maintain accurate records of the expenses against it. We go through an audit process on a regular basis and spot audits are conducted on how the schools are doing transactions. We do not target specifically special program funding, but I expect that would be part of the normal audit process.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Are similar mechanisms in place for Aboriginal education and Indian Ocean Territories?

Mr McCAFFREY: It is very similar. The Indian Ocean Territories funding is slightly different because we receive that on a recoup basis from the Commonwealth to maintain a service on its behalf in those two island schools. Again we keep an accurate record of all of the costs and we submit quarterly returns to the Commonwealth Government. It then forwards to us the funds to which we are entitled.

The CHAIRMAN: On that general point, are the schools in the Indian Ocean Territories - that is, Cocos and Christmas Islands - included in the Government's computers in schools program?

Mr McCAFFREY: They are treated exactly the same as a state school in Western Australia. I am not sure whether they get a specific allocation, but if they did, we would claim those funds back from the Commonwealth as being an equal part. It would probably give us a bit more money out of the \$20m.

The CHAIRMAN: I am pleased to hear that. Can you check that for me on notice and confirm for the committee what you believe to be the case?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We take that on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Last year a \$50m supplementation was made to the Education budget. Is there a supplementation to the 1999-2000 budget?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We have not started the financial year yet. We get supplementation after the financial year has started.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I will take you back to the \$50m supplementation in last year's budget. Can I have an explanation of for what that \$50m was used?

Ms VARDON: That \$50m supplementation has gone into the total budget pool. It is used for new initiatives and the continuation of initiatives that have already begun. It helps with productivity and the productivity savings that we are required to find. In addition to that, over the past three years the department has had a rigorous savings program and it has added \$61m worth of savings to that pool. It goes into the total bucket. It is used in the main for new initiatives, but it helps with productivity savings as well.

Mr MANCE: Our budget is applied to new initiatives and ongoing programs. As supplementation comes in from Treasury,

we honour the commitments to new initiatives, continue with them and continue to adjust our budget position as that money comes in.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Are you aware that there is some confusion as to how that \$50m supplementation has been spent? The Premier claims that it was used for reduction in class sizes, while the Minister for Education claims that it is to meet the budget over-runs from 1997-98.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The confusion is in the minds of those who gave the story to the media.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can I have some clarification?

Hon N.F. MOORE: You just had an explanation.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we have an answer to the member's question?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member said that there is some confusion because the media reported that the Minister for Education and the Premier had a different point of view. We have given an explanation, and I thought the confusion was only in the minds of those people who did not understand.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that. I think the minister has answered that question. Does Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich have a different question which may be related?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I would like to ask another question in relation to the expenditure of that supplementary \$50m. What part of that \$50m has been specifically allocated to a reduction in class sizes? Has any portion of it been allocated to that area? What part has been allocated to debt reduction?

Ms VARDON: I cannot add anything further to my previous statement, which is simply that we are continuing with those initiatives, and reducing class sizes is certainly one of them. The supplementation received has gone into the general budget pool. It continues a whole raft of new initiatives, plus our ongoing programs, and has certainly helped with the productivity savings that we were required to find, not from schools, but simply from the department. A figure of \$15.5m was also provided to enable the implementation of the local area education plans from the eastern and western suburbs. That was decided by Cabinet after the budget was formed for 1998-99. The Premier and the minister had exactly the same points of view; it is simply an issue of which part is emphasised at any particular time.

The CHAIRMAN: If any part of the member's question remains unanswered, she should specify it and ask that it be put on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What productivity dividend applies to the 1999-2000 budget in the Education Department, the Curriculum Council and Department of Education Services?

Hon N.F. MOORE: In respect of the technicality of that question, the last two are not being dealt with today so that will need to be put on notice.

Mr MANCE: In the Treasury papers the productivity dividend is identified as \$32.6m for that financial year.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How much of this year's budget has been allocated to pay for last year's budget over-runs?

Mr McCaffrey: When you say last year, do you mean 1998-99, and how much of the 1998-99 expenditure is being funded from the 1999-2000 budget?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes.

Mr McCaffrey: It is \$27m and it is reflected on page 370.

[11.00 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How much devolved purchasing authority do you have granted by the State Supply Commission?

Mr MANCE: I think it varies. It is \$25 000 for normal purchases. That is beyond local school delegation. There are some exemptions depending on the items.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can the department enter into major contracts with suppliers of goods and services?

Mr MANCE: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would some of those contracts run into hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Mr MANCE: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why does the department not have the delegated authority to reimburse \$14 to the gentleman who paid back an overpayment, which was a technical error as the result of the inefficiencies of the PeopleSoft system?

Ms VARDON: That repayment has been made.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why was it not done automatically? I had a small part to play in it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Am I correct in understanding that the member's question is this: In that particular instance, of

which Ms Vardon is aware, was there or was there not a delegated authority to allow that payment; and if there was not such a delegated authority, why not?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes.

Ms VARDON: That payment comes under the category of ex gratia payments, which need to be approved by the minister. That has happened, and he will continue to approve those payments.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Do you have any figure for the amount of overpayment which has occurred through the PeopleSoft system?

Ms VARDON: It varies from day to day. We can supply some figures. That question is on notice at the moment from Mr Eric Ripper. That information will be supplied I think in the next couple of days.

The CHAIRMAN: We will assume that is a question on notice.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: My question focuses on commonwealth-state relations. I will refer to the federal budget. I have in front of me the federal financial relations 1999-2000 budget paper No 3. With regard to the specific purpose payments to the State for government schools, I note in the table A3 on page 93 of the federal budget papers that a sum of \$123.423m is for specific purpose payments for current purposes for government schools and a sum of \$22.849m is for capital purposes. How are those commonwealth specific purpose payments reflected in the budget? What are the programs? Given that may take some time to answer, I will put that part of the question on notice. How are these programs dealt with in the ongoing programs of government schools?

Mr McCAFFREY: We get advised of the specific allocations which Western Australia will receive and under which programs they will fall. It can vary depending on whether it is part of Aboriginal funding or special project funding. We keep a balance between our anticipated cash flows from the Commonwealth in our budget papers and match it with the expenditure. When there is a variation up or down in a program, we also adjust the concurrent revenue that goes with it. I do not have the detail of those. If those figures are for the years 1999-2000, we do not receive any detail of that until after the budget papers are finalised. I am not aware of getting that detail. Are those figures Australia-wide?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I have the figure for Western Australia of \$123.423 as specific purpose recurrent payments. I will put on notice the request for the details of those payments to the State. There is a specific purpose payment for indigenous strategy initiatives of \$13.986m to government schools. What indigenous education programs will that money go towards?

Mr WYATT: The \$13m to which you refer is broken into two parts: \$7.9m is for Western Australian government schools and the balance is for the TAFE sector. Some 50 per cent of that budget covers the salaries of Aboriginal and Islander education workers and particular programs that are addressing literacy, numeracy and the employment of indigenous people under a number of state initiatives, so state and commonwealth funding is matched in respect of those matters.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What funds were appropriated for the secondary assistance scheme this financial year? How much was expended? To what schools were funds allocated? How many students were covered? How much is being appropriated for the next financial year for this assistance scheme?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Obviously we would not have all the detail here.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I am happy to put the questions on notice.

Mr McCAFFREY: I have some information.

The CHAIRMAN: If you could give that information, Hon John Cowdell will put the rest on notice.

Mr McCAFFREY: The expected expenditure for 1998-99 is \$8.07m for all student allowances, which includes the clothing allowance scheme.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Could you provide a breakdown of the two components?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We will give the gentleman an opportunity to answer the question.

Mr McCAFFREY: I do not have a breakdown between the two components with me. I would have to provide that separately. The estimate for 1999-2000 is \$8.2m and for the out-years we are predicting a growth of \$200 000 per annum in line with normal growth in our system.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: If I could put the balance of that question on notice: Its two components, which schools and how many students it covers?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am advised it could take quite a while to provide the information. There is a five-day rule for providing answers. Would you be happy if it were longer than five days?

Hon J.A. COWDELL: If it is as timely as possible.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It will certainly be done as quickly as possible.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Does the department keep any figures on amenity fee levels and collection rates at state primary schools and state secondary schools?

Mr McCaffrey: We have not traditionally collected that information. We do get anecdotal comments from our districts from time to time about various collection problems in some schools. We are in the process of updating our data collection for our annual reporting process to see whether we can get a better feel of what the collection rates are on a school-by-school basis. A number of schools find no difficulty at all and have close to 100 per cent collection rates, whereas others may have down to 55 to 60 per cent collection rates depending on their location. We do not have school-by-school data at this time.

[11.10 am]

Hon J.A. Cowdell: As a question on notice, can you provide any data you have relevant to the question? I realise that the department does not have a complete and comprehensive set of figures.

Hon N.F. Moore: Does the member want to know how much is obtained by the school system from school fees?

Hon J.A. Cowdell: Yes.

Hon N.F. Moore: And he wants it school by school?

Hon J.A. Cowdell: Obviously, the department must pick up some of the amount for health card holders. Some are met centrally through the secondary assistance scheme. I want to know the amount collected, what was not collected and what was reimbursed by the department.

Mr McCaffrey: Is that on a school-by-school basis?

Hon N.F. Moore: Give us 100 years!

The Chairman: It is accepted on notice.

Hon N.F. Moore: With respect, the member's question will place an enormous burden on the department.

The Chairman: Rather than have a lengthy discussion, the member has made a request for information. It will be provided on notice. The minister may make three possible responses: First, yes; second, no; and third, it will take longer than five days to provide.

Hon J.A. Cowdell: I defined the question. I welcome any information the department has collected in that regard. I do not ask the department to institute a level of data collection not currently undertaken.

Hon N.F. Moore: I want to avoid unnecessary work in collecting information not readily available.

Hon J.A. Cowdell: I concur with that view.

Hon N.F. Moore: Opposition members want information quickly to make their decisions on the budget.

The Chairman: The member is making a request for information, if available.

Hon N.F. Moore: It will be provided as quickly as possible.

Hon J.A. Cowdell: If these fees become compulsory, will the department assume responsibility for the collection or legal enforcement of such fees, or will schools individually make a commercial decision?

Hon N.F. Moore: That is a hypothetical question.

The Chairman: No.

Hon J.A. Cowdell: I define it: Changes in school fees are proposed. Has the department allocated any funds to assist schools if the new scheme is adopted?

Hon N.F. Moore: The member and some of his colleagues know whether it is a hypothetical question. I understand that the matter will be considered by the House in the future.

The Chairman: My interpretation of the member's question is that given the possibility of fees becoming compulsory as a result of parliamentary debate, has the department developed a contingency plan in relation to the question the member has asked. Is that correct?

Hon J.A. Cowdell: Yes. Will facilities be provided if the change in policy is adopted?

Hon N.F. Moore: Again, I make the point that it is a hypothetical question. We will seek to provide an answer based on the hypothetical scenario.

Ms Vardon: The answer is no.

Hon J.A. Cowdell: Have any funds been allocated to anti-bullying programs this financial year? Are expulsions and suspension statistics kept outlining the magnitude of the problem in the State? Is the State liable for failing to act in cases of bullying, and has it incurred any damages in that regard?

Ms Hasleby: A new policy was released last year as part of the management of schools program which includes the development of a code of conduct. To support that policy, \$390 000 was allocated across the districts in the State. I understand from activity in districts that part of the money is directed to professional development and support of the development of anti-bullying programs.

Mr AXWORTHY: Yes, we keep figures on student suspensions and the reasons for them. I do not have the precise numbers available today. I do not have available the precise number of students suspended for bullying. Bullying per se is not a category used in data collection. However, one category is the physical intimidation and verbal abuse of students. We could provide that information on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: The final question related to legal liability. If an individual school does not act on extensive bullying, is the State legally liable? Have cases been brought against the State in this regard?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Generally, the school has a duty of care obligation. In the event that someone takes legal action against the system, schools may be found liable. I do not know whether it has happened.

The CHAIRMAN: We will take that question on notice.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I have three questions which interrelate on the early childhood sector. Page 365 of the *Budget Statements* outlines major achievements. I take the opportunity to congratulate the department and the minister on a major initiative resulting in an increase of almost 4 000 children accommodated in the Education portfolio from the Family and Children's Services sector. This involves the provision of a place for every four-year-old in the kindergarten program. In finalising the transfer of the responsibility from Family and Children's Services to the Education Department, how many family centres will continue to be used to provide kindergarten programs?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member is right: It has been a major initiative of the Government in the last six years to increase opportunities for early childhood education. We have significantly improved the situation we inherited. The Government should be congratulated.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Indeed; it is an increased budget with almost 4 000 extra children in the system.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is good to hear some good news, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I like to hear good news and the Government congratulate itself; however, I request a factual answer to the question asked.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We do not have the numbers with us, so we will take it on notice.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I notice that nine Aboriginal pre-school centres have moved to become the responsibility of coexisting schools. How many of those Aboriginal pre-school centres catering for four-year-olds have remained in existing buildings?

Ms BURNS: All but one of them.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: That is another good news story.

The CHAIRMAN: More questions will be answered if we limit commentary.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: We have heard a lot of negativity, so I added some positives. The multi-age grouping programs, which were an initiative of the early childhood sector, are very good programs for seamless education for children in the early years. How many MAG programs are in existence? Are they still in a pilot phase, and will they continue to be funded?

Ms BURNS: I can answer the latter part. I must take the number on notice. They will continue and flexibility is part of the early childhood education policy. They will be encouraged and supported.

[11.20 am]

Hon B.M. SCOTT: They were established as pilot programs. Are they still seen as pilot programs or will they continue to be funded as a permanent project?

Ms BURNS: The intention is to integrate them within the general early childhood education program within the schools. The intention would be to use persuasion and promotion of that method of pedagogy as one of the desirable options that teachers and schools can choose.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: My third question refers to the Centre for Professional Excellence noted on page 368. With the changing nature of the early childhood education sphere, are any specific programs being planned for the centre to allow early childhood teachers to access early professional development programs in that centre?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I understand that the centre is an independent board and it makes decision about the programs it will undertake. We can take that question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we continue, I note that the question prior to the last question was taken on notice and then answered in part. We are endeavouring to clarify which parts of that question remain on notice.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I will clarify the question: The MAG programs were initiated as pilot programs. How many MAG programs are in place? Will they continue as pilot programs? Does the budget contain a line item to continue the funding for them?

The CHAIRMAN: Do any parts of that question remain to be answered on notice?

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Yes. How many are there, and will they continue to be pilot programs, but that has been partially answered?

The CHAIRMAN: The quantity is what remains to be answered on notice.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Yes. I want to know the number, and whether they will continue to be funded under a pilot program or a systemic program.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: The allocation in the current financial year for the students at educational risk program is \$3.1m. What will be the allocation for the next financial year?

Ms HASLEBY: The allocation is expected to be the same amount.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Do you have data available on how many students fall into different types of risk that overall are catered for in this category of students at risk?

Ms HASLEBY: Do you mean school-based data?

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Yes.

Ms HASLEBY: No, we presently do not have school-based data. We use the figure that the Child Health Research Institute has given us as a result of the WA child health survey which is approximately one in five, and that is the broad spectrum.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Do you presently know whether those children may have behavioural problems or specific learning difficulties, or in what other sense those students are at risk - the overall total?

Ms HASLEBY: That is in terms of the broad definition of children at-risk of not achieving major learning outcomes. You are correct in suggesting that the majority would be learning difficulties. It is difficult to separate it because often behaviour and learning difficulties are linked.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Is the \$3.1m allocation largely spent on distributing manuals to individual teachers to provide help for them in dealing with students at risk?

Ms HASLEBY: No. The \$3.1m is broken up into an allocation to district support schools in implementing the students at educational risk strategy and associated policies, which include behavioural management in schools and students at educational risk. Through that funding, schools access professional development and some resources in terms of policy and support documents. An allocation is also made for retention and participation. Districts work with schools to develop appropriate programs according to local needs. An emphasis is not made on files being distributed to schools.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: How many education districts are able to afford to employ a special education teacher as part of their district student services program?

Ms HASLEBY: I would not have data about the number of districts employing special education teachers.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Are you able to provide that data?

Ms HASLEBY: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: We will take that question on notice.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Could you also provide information on how many teachers are able to receive special training for remedial teaching?

Ms HASLEBY: Do you mean how many teachers are able to seek special training?

The CHAIRMAN: I expect that the member seeks to know when resources are available to enable the teachers to receive the special training. Am I correct?

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Yes, that is right.

Ms HASLEBY: The resources that are being allocated are for a broad spectrum of professional development, and in some cases that includes specific strategies to address learning difficulties.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: I think your original answer to me was that this is handled at a district level, and that districts decide themselves how to allocate their allocation on this program. Is any of that allocation given to specific training of non-specialists, the ordinary teachers in the schools, in the how-to of managing students at educational risk? It strikes me that although you have some very good additional materials, there is nothing like actual training.

Ms HASLEBY: Yes, a significant amount of funding is being channelled into that area through the district service centre for learning difficulties. The information we have is that many of these professional development programs are being very well attended by teachers. In many districts a certain number of days are allocated to teachers to access that sort of training.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Would you be able to provide me with data on how many districts offer that, and how many teachers take that up?

Ms HASLEBY: I am sure we could ask our districts for that information.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is taken on notice.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It may take a little longer than five days.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: I appreciate that. I have one last question on the same area. The reference to this program in

the *Budget Statements* states that you will be strengthening accountability measures to ensure that schools are delivering better outcomes. How will you do that?

Ms HASLEBY: It is a four-year program. We are currently in the first year and the first phase is about working with schools on their identification processes. By the fourth year, the policy will be fully implemented, which means that students are identified, plans put into place and improvement monitored. The accountability for those programs will operate through the district directors in each of the districts.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Will that also enable the department to have better data, given that we began this dialogue by you saying that you did not know how many students are at risk and in which categories? Will you then have a better handle on what the situation is out there?

Ms HASLEBY: Yes. As part of a new program of the profiling of students, data related to the identification of students at educational risk from each school will be aggregated at a district level.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Is this more paperwork for the teachers?

Ms HASLEBY: I do not know about more paperwork. The teachers already identify that it will be a matter of entering that into a computer system.

The CHAIRMAN: We are starting to venture beyond the scope of this hearing. Does the member have any further questions about specific resources?

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: No.

[11.30 am]

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I refer to the new primary school at South Port Kennedy. It is indicated on page 386 of the budget papers that all expenditure will be completed this coming financial year 1999-2000. What is the completion date or, more appropriately, the school start date? How many students are anticipated in the first enrolment?

Mr PARR: It is proposed to establish a school as a separate entity for the commencement of 2000. In the first year, students will be accommodated in transportable classrooms on the existing Port Kennedy Primary School site. The South Port Kennedy buildings are anticipated to be ready by the end of the first term. On that basis, the students would move to the new site at the beginning of the second term. At this stage, the estimated enrolment is 300.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What will the enrolment be during the first term, when the school is collocated?

Mr PARR: I do not have those figures. The majority of the students who will attend the new school currently attend the Port Kennedy Primary School. Enrolment at Port Kennedy Primary School will increase a little from 1999-2000.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: So, all the students who will attend the new school are currently attending the old school?

Mr PARR: Yes.

Hon BOB THOMAS: I wrote to the director general on 14 May foreshadowing some questions. Does the director general have those answers?

Ms VARDON: I assume that the member is referring to questions about Albany Primary School. We have the answers to those questions.

Hon BOB THOMAS: If I have the questions incorporated in *Hansard*, will Ms Vardon table the answers?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I question the appropriateness of this course of action. While I do not have a problem with it, it raises a potential issue down the track; that is, members submitting a long list of questions prior to these hearings. Those questions are then not asked in the committee and as a result no-one hears them and the department provides the answers.

Hon BOB THOMAS: I will read them.

Hon N.F. MOORE: If they are factual questions, I do not have a problem.

The CHAIRMAN: My clear understanding of the objective is to allow more questions to be asked, and that is a worthy objective. I am not aware of any specific standing order prohibiting that course of action. If any member is aware of any such standing order, I will be happy to hear from him or her.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I can bring a standing order to the Chair's attention. We have a committee policy on this.

The CHAIRMAN: I will be happy to hear from the member later.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That could be some time.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee will not tolerate gratuitous comments interfering with its work. This process appears to be similar to questions being put on notice at the end of the hearing. At that time members submit questions which they have prepared but which they were not able to ask. For that reason, and in the absence of advice on the standing orders - I am waiting to hear from Hon Simon O'Brien - at this stage it is reasonable for Hon Bob Thomas to submit his questions. It is different from a member's writing to a minister or agency in a private capacity in that the questions and answers will be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: We have an established committee procedure for questions that members have not been able to ask. That is not the situation here - the member has the call and is free to ask the questions. We do not allow more questions to be asked during a hearing by not asking them at the hearing. Clearly, the questions should be asked, and if the member and the department have facilitated the answering of those questions by giving prior notice, that is well and good. We will then all have the opportunity to hear the questions and the answers.

Hon BOB THOMAS: The member is incorrect. However, I propose to read the questions and if Ms Vardon wants to -

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What am I incorrect about?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Members will respect the Chair. I believe that I have heard Hon Bob Thomas.

Hon BOB THOMAS: I will read the questions.

The CHAIRMAN: I will determine a course of action.

Hon N.F. MOORE: A similar issue will arise later today. A member has submitted many questions, some of which relate to the budget but many of which do not. I am in the process of deciding whether I will provide the answers. It would be helpful for ministers to know whether this course of action is proper according to the standing orders so that we do not have any problems in the future. I would like clarification of the standing orders.

The CHAIRMAN: How many questions does the member have?

Hon BOB THOMAS: I have nine questions, and the answers will be very brief.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the department have prepared answers?

Ms VARDON: Yes.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is a helpful process. The problem I have is that down the track a member will submit thousands of questions and that will ruin the process.

The CHAIRMAN: The member's desire to save time is very clear. We have spent four or five minutes discussing this matter, which has defeated the purpose. I did not anticipate this procedure and it was not referred to in the committee's guidelines. Given that, I have not had an opportunity to approach those whom I would normally consult on these matters. For that reason, we will proceed on the basis of the member's reading the questions as quickly as possible and the minister's reading the answers as quickly as possible.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Is the Education Department considering an offer to buy the Albany Primary School site?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No offers to purchase are being considered at present.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Which sites in Albany are under consideration for the construction of a replacement school?

Hon N.F. MOORE: At present, three locations on the Albany Senior High School site are being considered for the construction of a replacement school.

Hon BOB THOMAS: What is the estimated cost of site works for each of those schools and in each case what is the total cost of the new school?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The estimated cost of site works for each of those schools is: The manual arts site, \$1m for site works and \$700 000 for roadworks; the front of Albany SHS, \$900 000 for site works and \$1.2m for roadworks; and the rear of Albany SHS, \$1.1m for site works and \$1.5m for roadworks. The estimated total costs are, respectively: \$6.5m, \$6m and \$7.3m. That does not include the cost of replacing the hostel facilities or the high school's hall.

[11.40 am]

Hon BOB THOMAS: Has the department assessed the cost of upgrading the existing Albany Primary School to provide dedicated art, music and information technology rooms, as well as other classroom modifications necessary to upgrade the school to a standard similar to that of a newly-built school?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No. During the local area education planning process, there has been strong support for providing a replacement school on a new site.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Does the Education Department own land behind the Albany Senior High School, in the area bounded by Suffolk Street, Watkins Road and Palmer Street?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes.

Hon BOB THOMAS: What is the size of the area and what are its proposed future uses?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is approximately 3 hectares. The area is planted with pine trees at present. Apart from the option of using the land for a replacement school, there are no proposed future uses for the land.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Has consideration been given to selling any of this land for residential development, and then using the funds for improvements to schools in the Albany area, such as upgrading the Albany Primary School?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It remains an option.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: My question relates to teacher shortages. The minister might be aware that in March 1999

the department produced some projected figures on teacher supply and demand for the period from 1999 to 2005. That document projected a shortage of primary school teachers between 1999 and 2001 of approximately 200, and a shortfall in the number of secondary school teachers required of between 226 and 350. It explained that there were added pressures as a result of the youth training allowance. What are the current shortages in the primary sector and, if there are specific shortages in the secondary area, to what do they relate?

Mr HOME: I do not have those specific figures, because they change on a daily basis.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Do you remember the last ones?

Mr HOME: The last figure for permanent vacancies for which the department is seeking teachers is in the vicinity of 28. About 21 or 22 were in the secondary area and the majority of those positions, but not exclusively, were in country areas.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Do you have any information with regard to the subject specific areas those shortages are in?

Mr HOME: The main area has been in design and technology. We have some vacancies in English, and minor vacancies in mathematics and science. These shortages arise not as a result of trained teachers not being available per se, but because of an absence of teachers prepared to take positions in the locations where the vacancies exist.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Today is there still a shortage of 28 teachers within the State?

Mr HOME: We would ordinarily and historically run on a recurrent vacancy number in the order of 15. Those situations arise due to maternity leave, leave without pay, resignations, retirements and so forth. It is higher this year and is currently in the order of 28.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In view of the fact that we have had teacher shortages since the commencement of the year, is it likely at any point during this school year that all the positions will be filled, or can we expect the problem to get worse next year?

Mr HOME: We never have a situation where all vacancies are filled because of the recurrent vacancies which arise. We anticipate that this year it will continue to be difficult to staff schools in particular locations. Where those vacancies exist, we have teachers in front of the children but some are relief teachers who would prefer not to teach full-time. This year, the number of graduates from universities was half that of previous years and that has had an impact. Next year, there will be approximately 1 200 graduates, which is the usual number, and that will certainly ease the difficulties experienced this year, if not fully solve them.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is fair to emphasise that point, because teacher training in universities has increased from three years to four years, and there is a significant drop in the number of graduates. Also a shortage of 28 teachers from a total of 17 624 FTEs in the teacher area, is not a large number in the context of the total system. As Mr Home said, 15 is the average number of positions unfilled at any particular time, historically. The current situation is only slightly worse and in the context of the situation in universities, it is quite a good effort.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The department's report identifies design and technology as areas difficult to fill as a consequence of the youth training allowance forcing many students back into the education system, and that is the sort of subject they like. It also highlights projected shortages in early childhood education, mathematics and languages other than English. The information provided indicates that the finding of the department's own report is incorrect, because you do not envisage teacher shortages in those areas.

Mr HOME: Our view at the moment is that the labour market for secondary teachers is in minor shortage in a number of subject areas, such as design and technology, mathematics and physical science. Specialist education support teachers are also in demand. In the primary sector we have a substantial oversupply. Our statistics indicate that between 700 and 800 qualified primary teachers are not working in our system and are looking for work, but are not prepared to take positions in rural areas.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Does that reflect the failure of the country incentives package? The Government has introduced the package, but teachers are still not prepared to take positions in country areas.

Mr HOME: No, I do not believe it does. The indication is that the package has been highly successful in retaining people who had indicated they might leave at the end of last year, in areas such as the Pilbara and the Kimberley. It indicates a fairly drastically changed demographic in terms of graduates. Increasingly graduates are older - 28 years plus; increasingly they are female; and increasingly they are less mobile. We are confronted with a situation of lower preparedness and ability of graduates to take positions in rural areas.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister has said that a shortage of 28 teachers is not a serious problem when one considers the total volume of teachers employed within the department. However, I do not doubt that people in regional areas would be very concerned and might hold the view that their children are receiving a lower quality of education because the department cannot provide the resources required to fulfil the educational needs.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I made that comment and it is important that I respond. There is no doubt that any single teacher shortage is one too many - Mr Home explained the circumstances - but in a system of 17 624 FTEs, the positions that are not filled are quite small percentage-wise. No-one would ever dispute that the department would like every position to be filled, but there are many reasons that does not happen, and the member knows them as well as I do. We cannot ever guarantee that every circumstance will be satisfied because it is not possible.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is now June, and those schools and communities affected want some answers. What will the Government do to ensure that in the second part of the year they have their full teaching complement?

[11.50 pm]

Hon N.F. MOORE: We will continue to seek the necessary staff to fill those positions.

Mr HOME: We have implemented a range of specific programs to deal with subject area shortages and particular locations. The remote teaching service package that has been in operation for a number of years has been a major factor in increasing retention and recruitment to the remote teaching service schools. The country incentives package has been a major factor in retaining and attracting people. The overwhelming anecdotal evidence to us is that people have been attracted more by permanency than by financial incentives. The extent to which it is an issue of throwing resources or money at people to entice them to remote areas is questionable.

We have specific programs in place to train people in subject areas. Last year we spent about \$500 000 putting in place a training package to train qualified teachers so that they are competent to teach secondary maths. We retained a large number of those people who taught in the country. An internship program is in place for design and technology. We have been negotiating with the university from where those graduates will come and we are seeking to place them into schools this year so that they can finish their qualification while they are teaching children.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The equal opportunity decision about people returning from the country receiving priority is a serious issue. The minister has indicated that we will seriously consider that. People teaching in the bush usually want to return to the city some time later. If the system cannot provide them with a priority they will not go to the bush in the first place. The member will be aware of that problem. We need to examine that issue in a bipartisan way.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I refer to the impact of the proposed abolition of career structures for class 1 and class 1A teachers and class 1 junior primary teachers - the amendments that the Government proposes to make to regulations 167 and 184. Has any costing been done on the savings to the Education Department that will result from the abolition of those career structures?

Mr HOME: The amendments to regulations 167 and 184 of the Education Act regulations have not abolished any career structures. The changes to the regulations have removed a prescription for the number of deputy principal positions within schools. I understand that the intention of the School Education Bill is to allow flexibility for schools to determine their own administrative profile. That has been taking place for some years. Positions exist in schools that are not prescribed in those regulations. Positions such as program coordinators have existed for many years. The extent to which schools change their profiles in order to structure themselves to best deliver what the school requires is a school-based decision. We do not anticipate there will be an overwhelming abolition of positions in schools. The majority of schools will stand by their existing structures.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Are you saying that there will be flexibility?

Mr HOME: There will be flexibility.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: The second major initiative at page 369 refers to increased local flexibility and scope for decision making at the local level to support student learning and its being explored through the local management of schools pilot project. I seek a more detailed explanation.

Mr FRIZZEL: I can provide details to the member on notice. The project is about getting a much better match between the community's educational needs and that which the school can offer. This is an opportunity in a pilot project for schools to explore and push the boundaries on flexibility. Later this month the offer to 30 schools to be part of testing the boundaries of flexibility will close. I work across the State with district directors and school principals. There has been a considerable amount of discussion, debate and excitement about the opportunity to be part of this project. I cannot tell the member until the closing date how many schools will be involved. However, as I said, it is an opportunity to be part of a pilot that will test the flexibility across staffing, profile, school times, programs and support structures. It is an exiting opportunity and we are looking forward to the closing date. We have publications in schools and school communities. The matter is being robustly debated at present.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind participants that there are three more people wanting to ask questions. I would be grateful if questions and answers could be as succinct as possible.

Mr FRIZZEL: There is a great deal of involvement and we will let you have the detail on notice.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: On the same page the second last dot point refers to five senior high schools and one senior campus trialling the enrolment of international students at a fee of \$8 000 a year. How was that figure arrived at? Where do you expect most of the intake to come from?

Ms JOHNSTON: We will take that question on notice.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: What amount will be made available for remote country incentive packages? What are the criteria for those two packages?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The packages are detailed; therefore we will take that question on notice.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I compliment the Education Department on the remote teaching service and its effects.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Can the member make the question short and perhaps put it on notice.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: It is an initiative of a previous Minister for Education and I compliment him.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Can the member ask his question.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Yes, I will. My observation is that -

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hon Barbara Scott can now ask her question.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I refer to the major achievements at page 366 on the national literacy testing. Western Australian children fared well in comparison with their eastern states counterparts in spite of the fact that our children are almost one year younger. I note that 81 per cent of females from Western Australia exceeded the benchmark and 75 per cent of males exceeded the benchmark. However, I note that the ratings of the Aboriginal sector and children of other languages were lower. What did that testing cost? Are there any plans within the department to teach and test Aboriginal children and children of other languages in literacy skills in their mother language?

[12 noon]

Mr JARVIS: The cost of that particular program was \$435 000. The estimated cost for this year's national testing program of year 3 and year 5 literacy and numeracy is \$700 000. To answer the question on English as a second language in Aboriginal communities, which I think was the question -

Hon B.M. SCOTT: No, the question was: Are there any plans to teach and test children in the language that they speak at home or their mother language?

Mr JARVIS: No.

The CHAIRMAN: On that note, I will close the hearing on this division by thanking the minister and his advisers for their assistance and cooperation.

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet - Item 6, Contribution to the Anti-Corruption Commission Trust Account, \$9 076 000 -

[Hon E.R.J. Dermer, Chairman.]

[Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Mines.]

[Mr W. Mann, Chief Executive Officer, Anti-Corruption Commission.]

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the estimates committee I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values that assistance. For the information of members, these proceedings will be reported by Hansard. The daily *Hansard* will be available the following morning. Hansard will distribute documents for correction. Corrections must be returned on the A4 documents sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page. Members are asked to sit at the front of the Chamber so that witnesses will not have to turn their heads when answering questions. It will greatly assist Hansard if members, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes, the consolidated fund estimates or any other document, give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer within five working days of receipt of the questions. The committee's advisory/research officer, Mr Michael Smyth, is the gentleman sitting on my left.

An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers. I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. On behalf of the committee, I also ask members to keep their questions succinct.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his adviser to the committee and for his adviser to provide his full name, contact address and the capacity in which he appears before the committee. I ask Mr Mann whether he has read, understood and completed the "Committee Hearings Information For Witnesses" form?

Mr MANN: Yes, I have.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you fully understand the meaning, effect and provisions of the witness form?

Mr MANN: Yes, I do.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As a point of clarification for me, as you would be aware, Mr Chairman, the Anti-Corruption Commission is part of the estimates of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. I am wondering whether the committee sees its role in the future as being one in which it takes sub-entities from within a particular estimate of a particular agency and deals with them within that particular budget. I am wondering, for example, whether the committee will be looking at agencies that are contained within a broader agency and asking questions of them or taking evidence about those particular agencies. Will that be something that the committee will do in the future? I do not think it has happened before. I want clarification of whether the ACC should be dealt with as part of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet or whether it should be dealt with as a separate item.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee has considered it appropriate to deal with this agency as a separate entity in respect of the questions that are likely to be asked and the answers that are likely to be given. In the absence of hearing reasons why the committee should not proceed in that way in the future, I anticipate that it will.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I raise the issue because I will be seeking further advice in due course about the appropriateness of this course of inquiry. In the past we have dealt with a particular department's budget and dealt with the whole department -

The CHAIRMAN: Your point is clearly understood. The committee would be happy to receive any submissions from you or others on what you or members may regard as the appropriate course of action. However, I would rather not take up any more of our limited time further discussing this matter.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Before we proceed and for the assistance of members, the minister has already indicated that the ACC is within the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. Can he please point out where the ACC is in these budget papers?

[12.10 pm]

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: It is at page 1120 and is a one-line amount.

The CHAIRMAN: That advice is correct.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: As you have pointed out, Mr Chairman, the ACC has the benefit of being given some four lines in the budget papers. The annual report of the Anti-Corruption Commission of Western Australia for 1997-98, which was tabled in October of last year, states at page 21 that 25 criminal charges were laid. Page 5 of the annual report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission states that 27 cases resulting in criminal charges were laid to 30 June 1998, of which none was investigated by the ACC. That same document, which is really an update on the annual report of the ACC, states that 36 charges were laid from 1 November 1996 to 31 October 1998. What is the current total of charges laid since 1 November 1996; and, of those, how many were investigated by the ACC, how many have been concluded, how many have led to convictions, how many have been proceeded with and been dealt with by way of acquittal, and how many have not been proceeded with?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Chairman, the issues raised by the member do not have a great deal to do with the single line item for the ACC in the budget of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. How broad may the questioning be, bearing in mind that a standing committee of this Parliament is keeping an eye on this agency, if I can use that expression, and this sort of information about its activities is made readily available to that committee on an ongoing basis? Bearing in mind that we are here today to talk about money and how agencies spend it, to what extent will this range of questioning be permitted?

The CHAIRMAN (Hon E.R.J. Dermer): The estimates committee's view on this matter is that all activities of the ACC are made possible by the funding of a line item, and it is the practice at each estimates committee hearing that members of the Legislative Council, or members of the committee, are at liberty to ask questions that go into greater detail than the line item in the budget statements. My ruling is that the line of questioning by Hon Nick Griffiths is entirely appropriate, in the same way that any question that seeks further detail about activities which are funded by a particular line item can be asked in any estimates committee hearing.

Mr MANN: I will take that question on notice and will be pleased to answer it at a future date.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: The line item at page 1120 refers to an actual amount for 1997-98 of \$6.372m. At page 24 of the annual report, the annual expenditure for 1997-98 is \$4 739 639. Note 3 inflates that amount to \$5 397 581, taking into account the cost of professional services for special investigations of \$306 603, and of legal services provided by the Crown Solicitor's Office free of charge of \$351 339. Can you explain the difference?

Mr MANN: It would be best if I also took that question on notice, but the figure of \$6.372m is the appropriation received from the consolidated fund, whereas the figures at page 24 of the annual report are for operating expenses. I will provide a more detailed answer at a future date.

Hon N.F. GRIFFITHS: What is the allocation for legal services provided by the Crown Solicitor's Office for 1998-99, and how much has been spent on legal services provided by other people?

Mr MANN: I will need to take that question on notice. The commission currently has a full-time legal officer, whose salary is met by the Crown Solicitor's Office, and that is factored into those services that are provided free of charge.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What is the allocation for 1998-99 and for 1999-2000 for special investigations?

Mr MANN: Again, I will need to take that on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What has the ACC spent on media work in 1998-99 and what is its budget media work in 1999-2000?

Mr MANN: I will need to take that on notice.

[12.20 pm]

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The allocation for 1999-2000 at page 1120 of the budget papers is \$9.076m, which is somewhat less than the allocation for 1998-99, which in turn was dramatically more than the allocation for 1997-98, to which Hon Nick Griffiths just referred. Is there a reason for that fluctuation? Does it relate to an increase in the workload of the Anti-

Corruption Commission? If so, why is it now contracted down from this current year to next year's lower projection, which I notice is kept the same for subsequent years? What trends do you expect to emerge?

Mr MANN: The simple answer is that the ACC is a new organisation and we are still in the throes of resourcing it with staff and equipment to meet the workload. As you know, the commission has grown over the past three years and the workload has also grown. It is very difficult to budget for the commission. That needs to be said. The proposed allocation for this current year of \$9.076m, as you rightly point out, is less than the estimated allocation for the current financial year. One reason for this is that the commission has great difficulty anticipating what its expenses will be. For example, it is proposed that in 1999-2000 the commission should become involved with telephone intercepts, but that is dependent upon the Commonwealth Government's passing the necessary legislation. The timing of that coming on stream is difficult to predict. It may well be that if the commonwealth legislation is delayed there will be significant saving compared with what we anticipate will be spent in 1999-2000. There are several such factors which are very difficult to predict at this point in the commission's development. The allocation obviously reflects Treasury's view of what our needs may be for the coming year.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: In operational terms in the several years that the ACC has existed have you encountered any difficulties in sourcing additional funds during the course of a year if and when they have been required?

Mr MANN: No.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Has the system been responsive so that you can deal with all your operational needs?

Mr MANN: The response by government to our requests for funding has been excellent; for example, for 1998-99 our initial allocation was \$5m. We sought supplementary funding of \$4.582m and that was granted.

Hon MARK NEVILL: On page 15 of your annual report you say that your total cases increased by 37 per cent in the 1996-97 financial year to 476 cases in the 1997-98 financial year, when you received \$6.372m. What has been the increase this year? Given other comments on page 6 of your annual report about the long working hours, the challenging environment and the volume of work, how do you intend to cope with what appears to be an increasing workload when, as Hon Simon O'Brien has said, your forward estimates are \$500 000 less than you are receiving this financial year?

Mr MANN: We do not have the final figures for the current financial year, but the trend is that the growth in the number of allegations is starting to taper off, and I would expect that next year the total number of allegations will be less than in the current year.

Hon MARK NEVILL: How much has it increased this year above the 476?

Mr MANN: The total number of allegations this year may even be down on last year's number.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Why is there no proper breakdown of the commission's budget before the committee?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will need to take advice on that matter. It is an item within the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet budget. I do not know why it is not somewhere else as well and why there is no breakdown of how it is spent. I will have to find out.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: At 30 June 1998 the commission's staff was 52. What is it now?

Mr MANN: It is 59.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Hon Mark Nevill stated that the last annual report indicated a 37 per cent increase in the number of matters received or initiated to 476 in the 1997-98 year. What is the figure this year - that is, the number of matters received or initiated this financial year?

Mr MANN: I will need to take that question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What was the cost per case, excluding matters that did not proceed even to preliminary investigation stage because they were referred to other agencies, outside jurisdiction, withdrawn or vexatious, etc?

Mr MANN: Again, I would need to take that question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Looking at the expenditure of \$9.58m this financial year and reducing somewhat next financial year, are there items such as special investigations and litigation that you would expect to decline in the next financial year? Could we look to a more substantial reduction in the budget of the agency than is anticipated on page 1139 of the *Budget Statements*?

Mr MANN: The short answer is that I would not expect there to be much scope at all for that figure to be reduced in the future.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I want to pursue the line of questioning followed by Hon Nick Griffiths and Hon John Cowdell. It will require some preamble, Mr Chairman, but so that you do not rule me out of order before I ask the question -

The CHAIRMAN: A brief preamble will be satisfactory.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: - may I beg your indulgence?

The CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Given that special investigations are unpredictable and expensive, that you do not know that you will have a special investigation until a matter comes to the attention of the ACC and that commissioners then make

an assessment that it is a matter worthy of special investigation - there is the unpredictability; special investigations are expensive because of the nature of a royal commission and, likewise, litigation - is the commission able to make projections of anticipated costs of special investigations?

Mr MANN: Perhaps I should have expanded on my answer to Hon John Cowdell. The commission has found it extremely difficult to predict expenditure not only on investigations but also on providing witness protection, which again is hard to predict. In our submissions to Treasury for 1999-2000 we made no specific provision for special investigations or witness protection. In fact we have said to Treasury and to the Premier that we would work on the basis that if funding were required for those purposes, we would need to apply for supplementary funding.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: In terms of the core budget, I notice that for the projections of the 2001-03 financial years the contribution to the trust account is unchanged from the 1999-2000 financial year.

Mr MANN: Yes.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Does that anticipate no growth in the core functions and, in particular, in the staffing of the ACC, or is there another explanation?

Mr MANN: I said in answer to Hon John Cowdell that scope for reducing that figure is limited. In fact, my feeling is that when the full impact of staff recruitment flows through, it may be that the allocation to the commission must be increased in the out years.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: What do you anticipate will be the full impact of staffing? For example, how many investigators is it anticipated that the ACC will recruit?

Mr MANN: I am not able to give a precise answer on the additional number of investigators, but as at today the commission has approved that the strength of the commission be 72 staff.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: From 59?

Mr MANN: From 59.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Given that staffing costs are about two-thirds of the total cost of maintaining the commission, could we anticipate growth simply in recurrent maintenance costs?

Mr MANN: Yes.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is fair to say that, until this time, the Government has been prepared to meet the financial requirements of the commission. When it makes an application for additional funds, it is considered.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Section 54 of your Act prohibits publication of details of allegations but it does not cover the Internet. What will you do about that?

Mr MANN: Hon Mark Nevill is right. The commission will ask the Government to amend that section of the Act to cover the Internet.

Hon MARK NEVILL: How has the Supreme Court decision that the ACC cannot make recommendations from its findings affected its workload? Has it effectively reduced it and the need for staff?

Mr MANN: No, it has not reduced our workload at all. However, it has meant that the commission must be much more careful when it refers matters to appropriate authorities and independent agencies for further action in that it cannot recommend what action should follow.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Irrespective of the establishment of the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission, do you accept that you have a duty to assist and inform Parliament of your activities?

Mr MANN: Yes, certainly.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Hon Mark Nevill referred to the secrecy provision. With respect to the recent occurrence of the commission joining with the police to issue a statement with respect to an investigation by an outside body to do with two contenders for the position of Commissioner of Police, was there any expenditure on outside legal advice to assist the commission in finding its way around the Act in the way that the commission did?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I would like to take that question on notice. I am not familiar with all the details.

Sitting suspended from 12.35 to 2.00 pm

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet, \$82 981 000 -

[Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.]

[Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Mines.]

[Mr M.C. Wauchope, Director General, Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.]

[Mr S. Wood, Deputy Director General, Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.]

[Ms T. Yow, Financial Accountant, Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.]

[Ms F. Roche, Assistant Director General, Public Sector Management Office.]

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the estimates committee, I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values that assistance. Members of Parliament are asked to sit in the front of the Chamber. It would greatly assist the Hansard reporters that, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer, Michael Smyth, who is sitting on my left, within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers.

I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes; however, full *Hansard* transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee and for each adviser to please provide his or her full name, contact addresses and the capacity in which they appear before the committee. At this time I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses" form. All witnesses indicated that they understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of the document. The minister introduced the witnesses and indicated that they all reside at 197 St George's Terrace, Perth - during working hours.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the minister wish to make a brief statement?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No.

The CHAIRMAN: In that case, let us proceed to questions.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have given notice of some questions to which I seek answers. I have listened to the chairmen and heard the protocol that has been adopted. I will try to fall in with the process that has been adopted and work on the basis that I have given notice. I will, therefore, read my questions.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the member to ask the questions separately so that we can deal with them one at a time.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: They relate to the report compiled by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet on consultants engaged by government, described as the report containing a summary of all consultants engaged by government as detailed in returns submitted from agencies. Is there any reason all consultants engaged by government are not contained within this report?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The question relates to the report on consultants that is tabled in the Parliament. The material is submitted by agencies through their ministers to the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. The material is reviewed by the ministry to ensure it complies with the broad definition that has been applied for the contracts for services. In this regard a consultant is considered to be any person engaged to provide professional or technical advice to government at a management level on a fee-for-service basis. It does not mean contractors engaged to provide a service because such contracts are not of a consultancy nature to provide management advice to government. Also excluded from the report are contracts in respect of routine engineering, training and development programs, printing, computer support services, actuarial services, publicity and promotional programs, valuation system analysis, customer surveys and benchmarking. In the early reports much of that material was included. In 1996 a decision was made to exclude those as they were not covered within the intent of the reporting. For the purposes of inclusion in the report to Parliament, consultants are assessed against those definitions individually, based on the details of the purpose of engagement provided by each agency.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is a separate record kept of each of the consultants excluded from the report tabled in the Parliament; is such a record kept centrally; and can it be provided separately?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I prefer to use the term "contracts for services", rather than "consultants", for those that are not included in the report. It covers a range of people. I expect that the agencies would have records of all contracts they have in place. The best way of obtaining that information would be to approach them direct.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How often are checks made to ensure recipients of voluntary severance payments are not subsequently employed in the public sector for the required period, and how are such checks carried out?

Mr WAUCHOPE: When employees take severance from the public sector, they are required to sign a deed of severance which obliges them not to engage in employment in the public sector for a period equivalent to that of the severance. In the end it is up to each agency to ensure that it does not engage people who do not comply with that requirement.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does the use of consultants constitute employment in the public sector as defined in the public sector management and redeployment and redundancy regulations?

Mr WAUCHOPE: Once again, the terminology of "consultants" or "contracts" for services must be used carefully. Contracts for services are not employment contracts.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is a person who has accepted a voluntary severance prohibited by government from being engaged immediately as a consultant?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I believe the deed of severance covers that. I think they are prohibited from returning immediately. That is correct.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Has the State taken any steps to enforce legal rights at any time in relation to the use of knowledge acquired by former government employees?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I am not aware of any such occasions.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is it possible for that question to be placed on notice to establish whether the ministry could make available to the committee the answer to that question with more circumspection than simply the awareness of the director general? The question is whether the Government has taken steps to enforce the legal rights in relation to the use of knowledge acquired by former government employees; and, if so, when and what was the result of the steps being taken. I appreciate the answer of the director general.

[2.10 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: That will be acceptable.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In answer to a question on notice dated 11 May the Premier advised that Peter Conran and Mike Groves are consultants in the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. Were either of those people working in these positions in the six-month period ended 30 June 1998?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I do not believe so but I will need to check.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That will be on notice, if you do not mind. Will those two consultants be included in the future reports of Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr WAUCHOPE: My understanding is that both Mr Conran and Mr Groves are on employment contracts, so the answer is no.

Hon MARK NEVILL: What role does Mr Groves play as a consultant?

Mr WOOD: Mr Groves works in the communications unit. The title "consultant" is like that of "policy officer" or some other designation.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Am I to take it from that that the title of "consultant" does not indicate that Mr Groves is not employed or under a contract to provide consultancy services to the department?

Mr WOOD: In both cases the men have the title of "consultant" on a contract of service. In that sense these are not consultancies as reported in that six-monthly return.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I hope the director general can appreciate that the presentation of a document described as a summary of all consultants engaged by government becomes a bit misleading if it does not contain the exclusion provisions and the categories of people who are excluded despite having the appellation of "consultant".

Mr WAUCHOPE: The Premier made a statement in the other House in August 1996 to clarify that issue and we have relied on that statement to clarify the reports as they are tabled.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The issue of leave liability is listed as one of the significant trends and issues in this division in the *Budget Statements*. I refer to a memo from Agriculture Western Australia informing its employees that they would have to meet the 10 per cent target and identified the number of days each employee would need to take to clear that leave - in this case it was 33 days. That same memo stated that leave liability is now required to be incorporated into individual's appraisals and that defined leave liability targets form an integral part of employees' performance objectives. What does leave ability have to do with an employee's performance? Did the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet instruct agencies to link the clearance of leave liability to employee performance?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member is quoting from a document of some description.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is an Agriculture Western Australia memo.

Hon N.F. MOORE: To whom?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: To employees of Agriculture Western Australia. I am happy to table the document.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We are not dealing with that department today.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The information is based on a requirement of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet for a 10 per cent reduction in leave liability to be achieved and that employees' clearance of leave be linked to their performance.

Mr WAUCHOPE: That was not a requirement of Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet but of the Government. No instruction has been issued from the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet relating to the use of performance appraisal measures to deal with the 10 per cent reduction requirement.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would departments be breaching the Public Sector Management Act or any other Act by giving such an instruction to employees?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I would need to look at that but I do not believe so. There is a management imperative to clear leave; there always has been. Agriculture Western Australia is simply using a different means of achieving that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Do you know how many chief executive officers have taken a sum of money in lieu of clearing their leave liability?

Hon N.F. MOORE: This is not an issue for the Director General of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. When Mr Wauchope said a moment ago that it was a government decision, the member led me to believe that she thinks the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet is the government, when it is not.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Could the minister define who the "government" is?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The government is the collective of all the government agencies. They come together as the government, of which the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet is one agency. I do not think the member should be asking the advisers anything other than questions which relate to their duties as employees of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Premier has advised that private consultants are not provided with media summaries. Can you explain what distinguishes a private consultant from the consultants who are currently in receipt of media summaries from the Government Media Office?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We will put that on notice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Could the director general explain what is the organisation called "Central" which receives regular media summaries from the Government Media Office?

Hon N.F. MOORE: In what context?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is in daily receipt of government media summaries. I want to know what that organisation is.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I have never heard of it.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will put the question on notice. Can you explain why consultants are included on the list of people to whom the Government Media Office sends media summaries on a daily basis?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I would have to take that on notice. I am not quite clear of the question.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The Electoral Act as amended in 1992 requires public agencies to report on certain expenditure and set it out in their annual reports. Under section 175ZE agencies are required to set out expenditure on advertising agencies, market research organisations, polling organisations, direct mail organisations and media advertising organisations and set out the details in the annual report stating the amount of expenditure, among other things. To my knowledge that information was not provided in the last annual report. Is there a reason for that? Does the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet intend to comply with that section of the Electoral Act?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I understood that that information was included in the last annual report.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I have not been able to locate it in the report.

Mr WAUCHOPE: Page 81 of the report contains the information the member is seeking.

[2.20 pm]

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I refer to page 1122 of the *Budget Statements* and the output and appropriations summary. I notice there is a significant increase in the asset expansion under capital investment. What items have been incorporated into the asset expansion program?

Mr WAUCHOPE: That is essentially the Barrack Square redevelopment money.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: That has been recorded as an asset. Native title initiatives are referred to on pages 1121 and 1140. It is more to do with the pattern of expenditure. If we look through the four-year forward estimates, we see that the funding for native title initiatives is progressively increased from \$850 000 to \$2.05m. Why is that pattern being used? Why will it be spread in that way?

Mr WOOD: The funding for initiatives for native title within the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet includes the operating expenses of the native title and strategic issues division. That increase in expenditure is dedicated to the native title agreements, such as the Spinifex, Balangarri and Kiwirrkurra agreements. We have some additional expenditure by virtue of operating costs; that is, the cost of doing the negotiations on the ground. The majority of the increased expenditures relates to some capital works in fulfilment of parts of the agreement. It is projected costs on a best-guess basis about what might be required in finalisation of some of those agreements.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Is it not so much the development of new agreements, but ensuring that the commitments under agreements either already negotiated or under negotiation are met?

Mr WOOD: It is both. We are in the realms of considerable guesswork about how fast agreements will progress, which ones can be settled, etc. It is a best-guess basis covering those new and existing agreements. What you see in those forward years is predominantly on the capital side of what would be required in the agreements currently under negotiation.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Is it possible to get a breakdown of the costs of operating the unit as opposed to the infrastructure costs? Can I put that on notice?

Mr WOOD: Currently the costs of operating the native title and strategic issues division are about \$700 000 a year. The additional expenditure of \$300 000 for the operating costs in relation to agreements will increase to \$400 000 for next year and the year after, and the two years after that. Then the costs of \$550 000 on the capital side in the next financial year will

escalate on a cumulative basis. I do not have the exact figure with me, but it is progressing up to just over \$1m at the end of the forward estimates.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: You may have already cleared up the other matter, which is on page 1140, under new works. The estimated cost for native title agreements infrastructure is \$4m. Is that related to the commitments that are made under the agreements in negotiation?

Mr WOOD: Yes, it is. I am still hunting for those figures, but it seems I do not have them with me.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Can I put that on notice?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I refer to the major achievements under output 3, which is support for the Premier as Minister for Public Sector Management. It states -

Extensive assistance and advice has been provided to Government and Metrobus on the management of the redeployment situation, which arose from the closure of Metrobus in July 1998.

I understand that in the latest figures that were provided, 614 redeployees were officially registered, of which 249 were MetroBus redeployees. Page 26 of the *Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet Annual Report* states -

A total of 53 public sector agencies referred employees for redeployment assistance. In total 324 employees were registered for redeployment which represents a 26 percent decrease on the number of referrals made in 1996/97.

Why is there a discrepancy between those 324 redeployees and the latest figures of 614 total redeployees which I have?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The 614 redeployees include the MetroBus redeployees. You have referred to the annual report, which would have been as at 30 June last year, and the MetroBus closure did not take place until 1 July.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: To the best of your knowledge, does the total figure of 614 redeployees account for all current redeployees, or are there other redeployees in government agencies who have not been registered with the Office of Mobility and who may still be operating within government agencies?

Mr WAUCHOPE: That is the number of redeployees who are registered with the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Does that mean that there are other redeployees in government agencies who may not be registered with the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr WAUCHOPE: They are not official redeployees unless they are registered. There may be people in other departments who are becoming surplus to requirements but who have not been deemed to have the status of redeployees; they have not been registered.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can you put a figure on that?

Mr WAUCHOPE: No, I do not have a figure.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I refer to the heading "The Premier's requirements and those of Cabinet are met" and outcome 4, "Management of policy" on page 1130. I am interested in the native title and strategic issues. Are officers dedicated to policy issues on native title? If so, how many such officers are there? Is the cost of representing the interests of the State in native title processes borne through the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet or through another portfolio?

Mr WOOD: Output 4 on page 1130 refers to the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet costs, to which I referred earlier in terms of the native title and strategic issues division within the ministry. We have a number of policy officers in that division. Three policy officers, one manager and one consultant handle a variety of negotiations, mostly on claims. The other costs to which you referred are costs within a range of departments. Legal advice, legal assistance and tribunal representation, etc are handled through the Crown Solicitor's Office, which has a unit to deal with these issues. Likewise, the Department of Land Administration and the Department of Minerals and Energy have officers engaged on native title issues as part of their normal business. Other departments engage officers as the need arises, be it Fisheries WA, the Water and Rivers Commission, the Department of Conservation and Land Management, etc.

[2.30 pm]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is there some way of aggregating across government the costs of representing the State's interests in native title processes?

Mr WOOD: Yes, I have a chart relating to native title expenditure to date across what was previously the Office of Traditional Land Use, the Department of Minerals and Energy, the Department of Land Administration, the Crown Solicitor and the native title and strategic issues division. I do not have any costs relating to other departments. The expenditure from 1993-94 until the present - my figures go to 25 May - is just short of \$37m.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is that for a series of financial years?

Mr WOOD: Yes, across those agencies that I mentioned.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Are such things as contesting the Miriuwung-Gajerrong case in the High Court included in those costs or is there a separate allocation through the Attorney General's Department?

Mr WOOD: Those costs reside in the Crown Solicitor's Office. The cost for the Crown Solicitor's Office for that work plus for all the other work is just over \$11.5m to date across those financial years.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is it possible to have those aggregated figures incorporated into *Hansard* or given to members?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is appropriate that I table them.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Getting back to that section of the Electoral Act to which I referred earlier, could the minister provide to the committee information on each expenditure under those five categories that is over \$20 000? That would filter out all of the advertisements in *The West Australian* and that sort of thing. Could he also provide a more detailed breakdown of payments to West Coast Field Services?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will take some advice on that and see whether it can be provided.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is the consultant's report for 30 December completed?

Mr WAUCHOPE: It is in the process of compilation and is near to completion.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is there a time frame in which reports are scheduled for completion at the end of any six-month period?

Mr WAUCHOPE: No; it will obviously be processed as quickly as possible. It is unfortunate that there are delays but that is due in part to the fact that we are trying to obtain information from a large number of agencies and they do not always provide it on time.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: So when will the report finishing on 30 December be tabled?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I cannot give a commitment on that. It is obviously something the Premier will be tabling.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is it possible to have tabled for the committee the results of the research on native title and Wik that was carried out by AMR: Quantum Harris?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I would need to take advice on that.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Could I put the question on notice?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the Opposition can put the question on notice but whether the research results are tabled is another matter. I said that I would seek advice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The minister seems to have enormous amounts of detail on expenditure. I would have thought that it would be handy to have the results of what is being spent as well.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I did not say that we would not provide it: I said that I would take advice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Would it be possible for the minister to table work that is done through the budget of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet - that is, the compilation of an internal directory of the ministerial officers who are associated with the Cabinet - so that members of Parliament could have access to that list?

The CHAIRMAN: Has that not gone through at question time at various stages?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is asking for everybody's private number. If he wishes to contact people, there is a thing called the telephone directory.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I am looking for the list which details the ministerial officers.

Hon N.F. MOORE: They are in the telephone directory.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is it possible to have tabled the directory that is compiled at public expense and that becomes a working document for ministerial officers?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Probably not.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Could I put that question on notice? If it requires the deletion of people's home phone numbers, could it be tabled in a format that has the home phone numbers deleted?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I said that I would seek some advice. I can see no reason why the Leader of the Opposition should know the direct lines of everybody who works in a ministerial office. He, like everybody else, is quite capable of looking in a telephone directory, seeing the number of the ministerial office and telephoning that number. He will be put through to the person he wishes to talk to. I see no reason that he needs to know any more than that. I will speak to the Premier about his department.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What is the role of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet in assisting redeployees to be placed in permanent jobs?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet has two principal roles relating to redeployment: One is setting the policy framework and the other is handling the case management of individual redeployees. We are in the process of devolving appointment case management to individual agencies. That will commence in the next two months.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In the light of the promises made by government - I would like to have defined what is government - that these redeployees, particularly MetroBus redeployees, will be found permanent jobs, why has there been no provision in the budget to assist government agencies to increase their number of full-time equivalents in order to be able to facilitate MetroBus and other redeployees being placed in permanent positions?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am not the Treasurer. I am not able to respond on behalf of the Treasurer. He determines what goes into the budget. We are here today to talk about what is happening in the budget of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The ministry is responsible for providing extensive assistance to and advice for redeployees. Somebody in government or some government agency must accept responsibility for the promises made by the Government to displaced workers, especially when it promised that they would be given the most comprehensive career transition package ever put in place in this State. Who is ultimately responsible? Why has no provision been made in the budget to provide those displaced workers with permanent jobs?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I repeat, we are not here today to talk about MetroBus redeployees. That is an issue for the Minister for Transport. The member can ask the same question tomorrow.

The CHAIRMAN: It very likely comes under each agency.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It does. I was about to come to that next. Each agency has responsibility within the overall government policy, which is determined by the Cabinet.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How much is currently budgeted by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet for case management of the redeployees? I understand no mistake is made about this being in the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet's jurisdiction.

[2.40 pm]

Mr WAUCHOPE: The agencies from which the redeployees come are responsible for the ongoing funding of the redeployees. The Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet has no funding for salaries or otherwise of redeployees. They are the responsibility of the agencies concerned.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Mr Wauchope would be aware that one of the reasons that redeployees cannot obtain permanent positions is that no government agency wants to take on the legal liability or the salary requirements of a redeployee, particularly a MetroBus redeployee. While MetroBus foots the bill, agencies are happy to have these workers; however, they are not prepared to make the employees additional FTEs for which the agencies must account in their budgets.

The CHAIRMAN: That matter has been dealt with. It is the responsibility of each agency, and the member can ask questions of those agencies.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Concerning page 8 of the annual report, are all the assistant director general positions still vacant or filled by people in an acting capacity?

Mr WAUCHOPE: No. Some changes have been made. Ms Roche, Ms Newman, Ms Novak, Ms Judge and Mr Hay are substantively appointed, although Mr Hay is currently on secondment to the Department of Contract and Management Services. Mr King is still acting.

Hon MARK NEVILL: In respect of the financial impropriety of the management and funding of the Constitutional Centre of Western Australia, does the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet accept that its financial and managerial oversight of the centre has been inadequate?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The short answer is no.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Do you see any problems that you can help resolve?

Mr WOOD: The matter is being investigated by the research officer for the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee. We have indicated that a number of the systems in the centre were not adequate, and we have taken steps to correct those systems. Yes, things could have been improved - they have been improved.

Hon MARK NEVILL: What is the total cost of running the European Office, and are the benefits of the office to the State quantified? How is its effectiveness measured?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The funding advanced to the European Office for 1998-99 was \$1.06m, but that does not include accrual add-ons; therefore, the accrual figure will be much higher.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is the member insinuating that the office is not effective?

Hon MARK NEVILL: I ask for an objective assessment of the office.

Mr WAUCHOPE: To assist me in my consideration of whether it is effective, we receive periodic reports from the Agent General covering the activities he is undertaking and the initiatives he and his office have made during a period. We have the comfort of regular reporting in person and written reports from that office.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What are the duties, roles and functions of the Assistant Director General of the Ministry of the Premier, Ms Vera Novak?

Mr WOOD: Vera Novak reports to me as deputy director general. She is responsible for the native title and strategic issues division. She is primarily responsible for the oversight and coordination of policy on native title in government.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does that lead her to have contact with mining companies which have, or seek, an interest subject to native title claims?

Mr WOOD: Yes, but infrequently.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is Ms Novak involved in the preparation of recommendations for decisions which would affect the mining industry?

Mr WOOD: She is primarily involved with the main legislation; namely, both the commonwealth Native Title Act and the three Bills which came before the State Parliament.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Premier in 1991, when not in that office, criticised Ms Novak for holding a position of registrar of Aboriginal sites when she had a financial interest in a number of Western Australian mining companies, in which I gather either she or her husband still hold an interest. Can you make sense to me of the distinction between her current situation and that of 1991 when a potential conflict of interest led to her being moved from that position at the behest of Mr Richard Court?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is for the Premier to respond to his comments of 1991. Mr Wood can describe Ms Novak's current role.

Mr WOOD: She has no statutory or other role concerning control or access to land which mining companies may wish to access. That role is within the Department of Minerals and Energy.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: However, she has a role in preparing legislation for Parliament which deals with access to land.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is the Leader of the Opposition drawing the bow that somehow because Ms Novak has a role in the formation of legislation, a conflict of interest arises? Government decisions about what goes to Parliament are made by Cabinet. An officer of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet would not have a conflict of interest in that regard.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I draw the same bow as Mr Court drew in 1991 in reference to Ms Novak. I am trying to understand the distinction between her position when we were in government and her position now the coalition is in government.

Hon N.F. MOORE: There is probably a very good explanation for that, but I cannot think of it at the moment.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In reference to major initiatives for 1999-2000 outlined on page 1127 of the *Budget Statements*, when is the prospective royal visit to occur? Who is undertaking the royal visit, and how much is it expected to cost? Is there a break-down of the costs, and what functions will the relevant royal attend?

Hon N.F. MOORE: This is a potentiality; therefore, details about the cost, who the royal will be and so on are not known at this time. Nevertheless, I am sure the member will be pleased to see Her Majesty if she were to visit.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can Mr Wauchope advise whether one of the key reasons for redeployees not finding permanent work in state public sector agencies is that jobs simply are not available? If he disagrees with that view, what are the reasons for redeployees not being permanently placed?

[2.50 pm]

Hon N.F. MOORE: That question seeks an opinion from Mr Wauchope on an across-government issue and it would be inappropriate if he were required to answer it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: On a point of order, I understand that the devolution of this function to agencies will not occur until such time as the results of a pilot scheme, which are to be concluded in December 1999, are released. I understand that, until such time, the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet has a responsibility for the fate of these displaced workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the privatisation activities of this Government. The question I have put is a fair question and it requires an answer. Until that devolution of responsibility occurs, the question should be considered by Mr Wauchope.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not a point of order. If the minister wishes to answer the question, he may.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member is asking for an opinion and Mr Wauchope may have an opinion, but it is his opinion; it may not be the opinion of the Government. He is not here to give his opinion; he is here to provide factual answers.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why have these people not been placed? That is not asking for an opinion.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is not for Mr Wauchope to know or tell you.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Maybe you could answer it as the minister.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As far as I am concerned, there is no problem with the redeployees in my agency.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many redeployees are in your agency?

Hon N.F. MOORE: There are probably none.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is it not a problem to you? I assure you that it is a huge problem to them?

Hon N.F. MOORE: If you wish to get yourself in a knot, as you appear to be doing -

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want only the truth.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I suggest that the member raise the matter during the estimates hearings with the Minister for Transport because he is the appropriate minister for MetroBus redeployees, or with any other minister who may have some redeployees in the system. It was explained to the member clearly a while ago by Mr Wauchope that it is the responsibility of individual agencies to deal with the questions of redeployment.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want to know whether that responsibility has yet been devolved. My understanding is that it has not and that the central responsibility still lies with the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. I would like an answer to that question.

Mr WAUCHOPE: It is correct that the devolution has not been occurring. It will be occurring in the new financial year. We currently still have responsibility for redeployment case management. The pool of people on redeployment is not constant; people are moving in and out, so we are not looking at the same faces year in and year out. I do not agree that there is not a placement success.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I refer to page 1132, the Premier's requirements of parliamentary, statutory and legislative publishing services. I commend the department on taking up this recommendation of the statute committee of this House and placing the legislation on line through the State Law Publisher and AustLII websites during this year. It is a very good initiative of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. When we were initially investigating this proposal, a mishmash of legislation was all over the place and everybody had a patching system. Has all of the Western Australian legislation now been consolidated and, if so, at what cost?

Mr WAUCHOPE: A continuing process of consolidation of the legislation is taking place. We are working very closely with parliamentary counsel with that as a priority for assistance in providing members with some resources to that effect. That is working hand in hand at the same time that we are placing the legislation on the Internet and also providing for other forms of electronic dissemination of the legislation.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I commend this agency on the preparation of the Centenary of Women Suffragettes exhibition at the Constitutional Centre. Is it planned to take that exhibition on tour through the State this year or next year and, if so, at what cost?

Mr WOOD: A costing of a touring exhibition has not yet been done. Likewise, the feasibility of touring is still being worked out because the exhibition would be hard to dismantle and reassemble in its current form, but components of that exhibition could be considered.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Is the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet responsible for keeping a record of all those people who are appointed to government boards and agencies?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I understand the ministry has a record of those who are appointed through the cabinet process, so it is a cabinet decision requirement.

Hon BOB THOMAS: This is a question that you will need to take on notice: Can you provide me with a list of all appointments and reappointments for Beryl Morgan, the President of the Shire of Busselton, the name of the position, and the remuneration?

Hon Tom Stephens interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is there anybody else you would like to check on? For the first time in parliamentary history, this Government tables consultants' names and the cost of consultancies. We also table parliamentary travel and ministerial travel, yet the member talks about not being provided information.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: On a point of order, I would like to move on to my questions. Could I be given the call?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, you just happen to be on the list. It is not a point of order.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Why is the cost per ministerial office expected to increase from \$1.418m to \$1.541m during the coming financial year? What will make up the average increase in cost? Is this expected to occur across the board or only for specific officers and, if so, which ones? Why is the average cost per member of Parliament expected to decrease \$8 000 for that same period?

Mr WAUCHOPE: Taking the second question first, the reduction in the average cost per member of Parliament from \$146 000 to \$138 000 reflects that part of the parliamentary cycle in which most members have their fit-outs for their electoral offices; that is, they have changed offices and boundaries etc. In addition, we are doing fewer fitouts, which is the major impact.

The average cost per ministerial office, which also includes the Leader of the Opposition's office, and the projected increase in 1999-2000 is across the board. It reflects, principally, salary increases from workplace agreements, increases in rents at Dumas House, a general Treasury cost escalation factor and some other increases that relate to the operating costs of ministerial offices.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: A referendum on the federal Constitution is due later this year, the result of which might have some consequences for the Western Australian Constitution. Has a financial provision been made for a possible referendum to amend the state Constitution? What initiatives are in train for constitutional change in Western Australia?

[3.00 pm]

Hon N.F. MOORE: The funds would be located in the Electoral Commission's budget if there are any set aside for that; however, I do not know whether there are any.

Mr WOOD: In answer to the second part of the question, the issue depends on the answer to the referendum - yes or no - hence what needs to be done consequent upon that to the State Constitution. The Premier has made a ministerial statement about the constitutional convention following the constitutional forums. I do not have with me the details of the ministerial statement but it has basically been postponed until after the results of that November referendum.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is not necessarily a cancellation but a "dependent upon" statement.

Mr WOOD: It is a postponement until after the constitutional referendum.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I refer to page 1124 of the *Budget Statements*. The full-time equivalents are estimated to rise by two to 78. What are the extra positions that make up this increase? What will be the level of pay for these positions? In reference to the community's level of awareness of centenary initiatives, by what method is it intended to raise the Western Australian community's level of awareness? What is the anticipated cost of achieving that outcome?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I request that the question be placed on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is placed on notice. It now being 3.00 pm, I thank the minister and the officers for attending today's hearing and for their assistance.

Division 36: Western Australian Tourism Commission, \$37 783 000 -

[Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.]

[Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Tourism.]

[Mr Shane Crockett, Chief Executive Officer.]

[Mr Dale Wilcox, General Manager, Operations.]

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting the Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer, Mr Michael Smyth on my left, within five working days of receipt of the questions.

An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers. I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee and for each adviser to please state their full name, contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee. At this time I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses" form. Do all witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

Mr CROCKETT: Yes.

Mr WILCOX: Yes.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I want to open on a positive note, Madam Chair, and compliment the Tourism Commission on www.westernaustralia.net, an exciting and very useful website. Having established such a high standard, it will be necessary from time to time to update the website as events and tourism sites change. Is there a plan for the continuous upgrade of that site?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will ask Mr Crockett to go into detail about this matter because it is a significant initiative of the Tourism Commission and it is an evolving site. There are also many opportunities for people in the industry to use it in the future.

Mr CROCKETT: As the minister has indicated, it is obviously a critical component of the future for tourism and we were conscious of that in creating the site. One of the reasons for taking some time to get it on air was to ensure that we had the management in place to allow it to evolve and to get better over time. The site is unique in Australia as its management is decentralised. All tourist bureaus and regional tourism associations have a role in collecting and qualifying the product and destination data that goes into it. Because of that, we obviously have a large number of organisations contributing to it. There is also a funding structure built into it in that the product has an opportunity of placing a "bolder" registration by which it can generate funds. Part of those funds go to the tourist bureaus which will use them to upgrade their local product information. Another part of the funds will go to the regional tourism associations which will similarly upgrade their

information. The third part of the funds will come into the Tourism Commission which will be utilised to upgrade the overall site. That is a deliberate strategy and we hope that after its second year of operation it will have a sufficient funding base of its own to continually evolve and take on new technologies.

[3.10 pm]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I commend that. How can those tourism sites that are not registered have access to the site to promote their product?

Mr CROCKETT: We have asked all the associations, such as the Swan Valley group, to put their product onto the Western Australian site as well as their own site. Some have made the point that that is a duplication and that we should hot link them or do something similar. We have not done that because the Western Australian site will ultimately be a commodity that travel agents such as Harvey World Travel will take into their own network. Research indicates that travel agents with existing online booking systems, such as Microsoft Expedia and so on, will not take information that requires hot links because they cannot then control the mechanism to get out of the system. We have been rigid in order to be able to give this material all possible distribution outlets. We are asking organisations such as the Swan Valley group to put their product on the Western Australian site. If they wish to continue their site, that is fine. However, we must ensure that we can deliver the information needed on the worldwide system.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Has the site been edited to make it clear that it contains the products of only those providers who have chosen to pay? If not, when will the site be edited to make it clear that this is not the entire offering from Western Australia but simply the offering of those who have chosen to pay?

Mr CROCKETT: We are undertaking extensive industry consultation. The question of whether we should have a listing of all products has been discussed at length. The issue is being considered through broad industry consultation. There are currently two schools of thought: First, that we put a note on the site indicating that it contains the products of those providers who have paid; and, second, that we allow all products to be registered in a lower-cost category. We are discussing those options, and will make a decision based on that consultation.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I refer to page 1381, which states -

Following the success of Brand WA in the UK in 1998, a new campaign is planned for 1999.

What is the estimated cost of that new campaign?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It will cost \$1.347m.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Why will it cost substantially less than the Brand WA campaign?

Hon N.F. MOORE: What do you mean?

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I understand the Brand WA contract exceeded \$10m. Why will this campaign cost much less?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The \$10m is the total amount for the campaign over three years. It included the cost of producing the advertisements, their placement and showing them in other parts of the world and Australia.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I assume that this new campaign will cover the 1999-2000 financial year.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes. That is for the international campaign.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: My reference was to the success of the Brand WA campaign in the United Kingdom.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The \$1.347m is the cost of the international campaign.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I take it there is also a domestic aspect to the campaign. What is the cost of that aspect?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The budget for the national campaign is \$600 000.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: That covers the 1999-2000 financial year. What is the estimate for the succeeding financial year, and how far into the future do the estimates go?

Mr CROCKETT: We have estimates for the life of the campaign, which is projected to 2002. Obviously they are broad in the context of markets moving. We have the right to use the current suite of commercials until then. Those estimates are not dissimilar in bulk amounts to what we have just described, although the country mix in the international section will change.

Hon NORM KELLY: I refer to page 1391 of the budget papers and the output measures, and specifically to inbound tourism. Mention is made of an increase of 11 000 in air transport seats into Western Australia, but I see no mention of the figures for 1998-99. The annual report states that at the end of last financial year we had 82 inbound international flights per week. What is the current situation? If the number has decreased, how does that affect this target for 1999-2000?

Mr CROCKETT: Between the annual report and now, there has been considerable fluctuation as a result of movements of Indonesian aircraft - some services have been cancelled. There has also been a change in the type of aircraft used, which has also affected seat numbers. I cannot provide the exact figures, because some negatives and positives have negated each other, but the numbers are similar. The increased capacity we are looking to achieve will come primarily from new connections in the Emirates. We are negotiating with Singapore Airlines, the Japanese and the Taiwanese to increase capacity. They are the target markets.

Hon NORM KELLY: What effect has the Asian crisis had on passenger numbers from Asia?

Mr CROCKETT: As I am sure the member is aware, one of the difficulties we face is that the Australian Bureau of Statistics' international visitor figures are subject to a significant time lag. We have figures to the end of the 1997-98 financial year, which show that the Singaporean market has increased by 5 per cent over the previous year, and that increase appears to be reflected in the current year. The Malaysian market has increased by 2 per cent and the Indonesian market has suffered a 27 per cent decrease, which is the one South-East Asian market to show a decline. They are the three markets that we focus on in South-East Asia.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many redeployees are currently working in the WATC?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Two.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Are they both registered with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes.

[3.20 pm]

Hon MARK NEVILL: One of the Government's tourism websites - I am not sure if it is the latest one - indicates that Wittenoom is closed. I would prefer that Wittenoom be left off that website altogether, because it is misleading to indicate on the Internet that it is closed, given the current situation.

The annual report of the Tourism Commission has a postage stamp picture of the board but it does not identify the members of the board. Does the board still represent the top end of town, such as airlines and big hotel chains, or has an effort been made to include the bottom end of town such as backpackers?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No, the board represents a wide range of views.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Who are they?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It probably should include their names with the photograph, and it can be fixed up next time. At pages 54, 55 and 56 there is a list of the names of board members, and I will go through them quickly and describe them in some detail. Kevin Carton is the chairman. He has a long history in the hotel business; I do not know whether you would regard him as representing the top end of the town, but he has a very significant sporting background and is a man of great experience in the industry. Mr Crockett is a member of the board and there is no question about his capacity to do the job. Annette Knight, who is Mayor of Albany, is able to bring to the board an understanding of regional Western Australia, although she does not represent it in a direct sense. Mr Ron Buckley used to work for Ansett Airlines and is now a consultant who works in Broome. His input about the north of the State is important. Mr Rod Warren is a lawyer, and in my view it is not a bad idea to have a lawyer on all boards. He has a very enviable record. Mr Ross Hughes is also a member of the board, and he is Chairman of the Rottnest Island Authority. One of the reasons he is a board member is that I felt it necessary to ensure that there is a relationship between the Rottnest Island Authority and the Tourism Commission. He has been appointed to the board. He has a long background in real estate and business. One of the new members is Joanne Tait, who is the proprietor of Cape Lodge in the south west. If members are looking for a good place to stay for the weekend, I can recommend it. Another member who has come on board recently is Mr John Borghetti, who is an executive of Qantas. Again, it is important for the Tourism Commission to have a direct involvement with someone from the airline industry because airlines make such a big difference to the tourism industry. Ruth Harrison has also come back onto the board, and that is a recent change.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I thank the minister for reinforcing my point. For the past four years I have suggested that the Tourism Commission could do more in the area of backpackers. Nothing at the airports welcomes them, and I have seen no efforts directed to that end of the tourism market. Is there any program for backpackers or intention to target that area?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We recognise the importance of them.

Mr CROCKETT: The backpacker market is obviously important. We have a number of programs and advertising campaigns that operate principally in Europe. We are heavily attending dive shows and activities, such as trekking and adventure, in which backpackers have an interest. We are also promoting many of the attractions in the new Swan dive wreck and so on. There is much emphasis in Europe on attracting backpackers to WA, and we have been working with the Backpackers association on the consistency of the backpacker product across the State and focusing on the way backpackers move around the State.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: With regard to the tourist development fund, where can I find reference to the total amount available for expenditure within that fund in the current financial year? How much will be spent from the investment attraction fund, when will the funds be spent and on what?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The tourist development fund is allocated \$1m this coming financial year, and \$2m in the following financial year. At page 1412 the tourist development fund is listed under the details of controlled grants, subsidies and transfer payments. The allocation in 1997-98 was \$1m; in 1998-99 it was \$1m; in 1999-2000 expenditure is estimated to be \$1m; and in 2000-2001 the amount is estimated at \$2m.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What about the investment attraction fund?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It has an allocation of \$320 000 a year, which is included in the recurrent budget. It is money set aside to attract investment in tourism products. I cannot indicate where it is set out in the budget papers.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: When will it be spent and on what?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is spent on putting together a small unit of people in the Tourism Commission to try to attract a particular tour operator. For example, at Mauds Landing we may have a proponent wishing to develop a tourism resort, and this fund would provide the resources for the Tourism Commission to manage that on behalf of the Government.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What is the basis of expenditure from the tourist development fund?

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is dollar for dollar funding for other organisations in the community. It is a minor capital works program, under which local governments, regional tourist bureaus and associations are able to make submissions requesting funding for a range of things. Some of those funds will be used to assist in the signage at Exmouth which, as the member knows, is currently lying horizontal and needs to be vertical. We are taking the opportunity to redo the signage at Exmouth, using a generic branding strategy, and Exmouth will be the first cab off the rank. We are using those funds for that purpose.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Are there similar plans for Onslow?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes, it includes Onslow and Exmouth. Exmouth will be done more quickly because that region was further down the track for branding to be organised. Exmouth will kick off and the rest of the State ultimately will have a generic branding arrangement.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The minister mentioned Exmouth and I understand there were some efforts on his behalf, through the Tourism Commission, to locate officers there to make an assessment on when the beds and tourism product would become available following the cyclone. What effort was made through the Tourism Commission for the Onslow community, or will be made for the tourism ventures in that community which were similarly adversely affected by cyclone Vance?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Initially I visited Exmouth on three occasions and Onslow on one occasion. Because the basic economy of Exmouth is very much related to tourism, I felt that getting the industry back on stream in Exmouth was the first priority. The commission was given the task of getting there quickly and doing the work referred to. An audit was carried out and a strategy put in place to get it back on stream, and I think most people would agree that it has been a successful campaign. Indeed, I am rather proud of the way in which the Tourism Commission was able to respond so quickly. Two officers have been to Onslow and have carried out a similar exercise. This week we will be advertising on metropolitan and regional radio and on metropolitan television and subsequently on regional television telling people that Exmouth and Onslow are back on track and that they should visit those centres. We hope to extend the tourism season longer in an effort to compensate for the early season losses. A newsletter updating the situation in Exmouth and Onslow is distributed weekly to a range of people across the State. We have been keen to assist the industry in both towns to get back on its feet and I think we have been successful.

[3.30 pm]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I refer to the table under the major policy decisions at page 1383. The successful events such as the Hopman Cup, Rally Australia and the Heineken Classic golf tournament do not show estimates for the next two financial years but they are shown for the years 2 000-01, 2001-02 2002-03. Is that because they are subsumed in the event tourism table at page 1394 where \$10.27m is allocated?

Mr CROCKETT: The principal reason is that the cost of those events is increasing in those two forward years, so additional funding is allocated to offset that increase. However, the existing funding for those events is in recurrent expenditure. In the case of the Hopman Cup it is an additional \$100 000 and \$100 000 in the following year's funds because the cost of the event will increase.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is the cost of those events subsumed in the budget item "event tourism" at page 1394 for which the total cost is \$10.27m?

Mr CROCKETT: Yes.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: What is the cost of each of those events?

Mr CROCKETT: The funding for Rally Australia is \$2.542m, for the Heineken Classic it is \$600 000 and for the Hopman Cup it is \$190 000.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is it possible to estimate the financial returns to the State?

Mr CROCKETT: They are all independently researched and the economic impact figures are available. I will provide them on notice.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I am sure they are quite substantial.

Hon N.F. MOORE: They are. Collectively I think the return was about \$150m from all the events held in Western Australia.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I understand that the Tourism Commission is reviewing the appointment of an advertising agent to undertake its public relations work over the next three years.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: What is the extent of advertising that the commission will be undertaking?

Mr CROCKETT: We have effectively worked through Contract and Management Services, which, as you will be aware, has a list on its panel of advertising agencies. We initially wrote to all those pointing out that we were reviewing advertising agencies and they responded. We advertised in *The West Australian* that that review would be in place. Agencies were then asked to submit their credentials in line with the policy of not asking agencies to incur a huge expense when a large number was coming in up front. I cannot recall the exact number that responded, but it was a significant number.

On the credentials pitch, it was short-listed to three agencies. We subsequently sought a full creative and strategic pitch, which was completed in the last day or so. It is being assessed by the appropriate panel to decide on the agency to be chosen for the work.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Was *The West Australian* the only newspaper in which advertisements were placed?

Mr CROCKETT: I think that is correct but I will have to check. I will put that question on notice.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Why were you confined to one newspaper?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Crockett said he thought that was the case, but that he will check on it.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: If it is only one newspaper, I would be grateful if you could find advice on what policy led to using only one newspaper. I will take that answer on notice. You said that there were many responses to the advertisements and you short listed three companies. Which are those three companies?

Mr CROCKETT: The three short-listed companies were 303, Shorter Group and Marketforce Productions.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Have they made presentations to the commission?

Mr CROCKETT: Two have. One of the short-listed candidates decided to withdraw from the process on the basis it was not ready for the presentation. The two remaining agencies have presented.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Which agency withdrew from the process?

Mr CROCKETT: Shorter Group.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Who received the presentations when they were made?

Mr CROCKETT: A panel was constituted for the procurement process from the beginning. It constitutes in essence a representative of each division of the commission and totals approximately six people. The agency will work across the whole commission because each division has interest in specific work; for example, events work is different from international marketing. The board of commissioners was also present given the significance of this contract; it is very important. The commissioners ultimately need to sign off on the recommendation of the panel before making a recommendation to CAMS. We felt it appropriate that the commissioners have a first-hand look at the presentations, as well as give their assessment. The presentation was made to the board of commissioners and the members of that procurement panel.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Who will make the final decision on the contract?

Mr CROCKETT: The board of commissioners. Obviously they must make a recommendation to CAMS, which is the principal contractor to the agency, and which will make a final endorsement and make the appointment.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: You described how the presentations were made to the board and the representatives of the six parts of the commission. Which officer will be involved in the process by which a recommendation will be made to the board, and what will be the process to develop the recommendation?

Mr CROCKETT: The process is very defined. The panel constituted for the procurement is principally the body that will make the management recommendation. It is the same panel that did the short listing on credentials, so it oversees the process from beginning to end. It is completing a criteria sheet that was developed and endorsed prior to presentations. Each agency presentation to that panel will be scored against that. It will make a consensus recommendation. The chair of the panel, Ross Gregory, who is second in charge of the international division, will present that consensus recommendation to the board of commissioners, who will obviously examine it in the context of the important strategic nature of the decision and endorse or modify it as is appropriate. He will then forward it to CAMS.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: When do you expect the successful tenderer to be announced?

Mr CROCKETT: Obviously the assessment process of those presentations is rigorous. We do not intend to put a time frame on it, although we hope that in the next couple of weeks the panel will put out a recommendation to the board. It is important it be done appropriately rather than in a set time.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Are you suggesting that it will be approximately a couple of weeks?

Mr CROCKETT: Yes.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: How long do you think the board's consideration will take?

Mr CROCKETT: The board is scheduled to have a number of meetings in that time frame. We hope that the decision will be made at one of those meetings.

[3.40 pm]

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Therefore, we are talking about sometime during the course of the next month or two months.

Mr CROCKETT: I imagine in the next month, yes.

Hon NORM KELLY: My question relates mainly to page 29 of the annual report of the Western Australian Tourism Commission, which refers to attracting events to Western Australia. I notice that in 1997-98 the target was five successful bids, of which only three were successful, yet the estimated economic impact has almost trebled from the target of \$11m up to almost \$29m for, I take it, those three successful bids. I asked a question without notice a little while ago about this or a similar matter. However, I am interested in how those figures are calculated and the basis of those calculations. I realise that this question may need to go on notice.

Hon N.F. MOORE: You want to know how we determine the economic benefit?

Hon NORM KELLY: That is right, and specifically for the figures which appear in the annual report.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I think I have already done that on one occasion at least.

Hon NORM KELLY: I think you did that for the actual events rather than the bids. I think you provided information about the Heineken Golf Classic and Rally Australia events that were held.

Mr CROCKETT: Obviously, when we bid for an event we undertake a feasibility study to estimate the potential economic impact of that bid. This is an oversimplification of the study, but principally we look at the history of the event in other locations and the number of visitors in essence that the event attracted. An allowance is made for fewer or more if the event is hosted in Perth, depending on the nature of the event. Those visitors are then transferred, obviously, under the existing normal economic generated figures that are available. Depending again on country of origin and type of visitor, each visitor will have a per-day average expenditure and an average length of stay. That simple calculation of visitor numbers times expenditure and length of stay generates that estimated visitor expenditure.

Hon NORM KELLY: I appreciate that. When one looks at the figures in 1 and 2 under this performance indicator, it seems that you have gone from an average of about \$2m per event up to almost \$10m per event.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Different events can bring in vastly different amounts.

Hon NORM KELLY: Yes, but the two figures seem to be going in opposite directions.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Some events might give quite a small economic return; others might give a very big return. It depends on the mix at the time. I am not sure to which events these figures relate. If you put the question on notice, I will provide the information.

The CHAIRMAN: While I have your undivided attention, I will take the opportunity to ask a question. Some members of Parliament travel quite a bit.

Hon N.F. MOORE: So I have noticed.

The CHAIRMAN: Some more than others. Therefore, I think we can speak with a fair bit of authority - on behalf of our constituents of course. When one travels around the world and comes home to Perth and has to pay a fee for a Smart Kart, one wonders what sort of a welcome that is. One must also take into consideration that our own Australian people from interstate have to pay for a Smart Kart. This is not the case in other areas. Is it necessary? Do you think it is wise? Do you think it is a good welcome to our State?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I agree with you. Interestingly, I was at Perth airport the other day and I was thinking the same thing; that is, do we still charge people to use Smart Karts. Obviously, it is a contract that the airport owners have with the owners of Smart Karts. Perhaps all those members of Parliament who are arriving home should pen a letter to the airport operators or owners to let them know what they think. I am inclined to agree with you. I do not know of any other parts of the world in which people actually pay - not that I have been to too many of them.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to see something done about that in the future.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: This may be a policy question, and forgive my parochialism. The Swan Valley is a unique tourism site in Western Australia. Its entry is 14 kilometres from the central business district hotels. Therefore it attracts a large number of day trippers, interstate as well as international. However, because it is within the metropolitan area, its proximity to Perth is a disadvantage because it does not qualify for regional tourism authority funding. The Government has been generous in providing funds for events, such as the Taste of the Valley and Spring in the Valley, but there is no opportunity for forward planning by the local tourism group. Is it possible, given the unique nature of the Swan Valley, for it to qualify for ongoing support for its tourism activities?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Crockett and I have had a number of discussions about this over time. I realise the difficulty the commission has in allocating the funds to regions. The metropolitan area generally benefits significantly because the vast amount of money we spend attracting people to Western Australia means they come through Perth. Therefore, in a sense, there is a captive market almost for Fremantle, the Swan Valley and other metropolitan destinations because people come

to Perth. We just need to make sure that when they arrive in Perth they know which way to go to reach those destinations. In the country, however, it is more difficult, and there need to be promotional campaigns for the regions. That is why we fund the regional tourism associations to assist them in marketing their own regions.

I am sympathetic to the point made by the member about trying to provide funds within the metropolitan area for those regions which are perhaps the *crème de la crème* of our tourism attractions. Without making a list of them and upsetting those that are not on the list, I undoubtedly agree that the Swan Valley is one of them. However, as I have explained to the member on a few occasions, I also think that the Swan Valley needs to do a lot more for itself as well. It has enormous potential which has not been realised by a long shot. It has a number of submissions in for this year's tourism development fund, and we may in fact be able to provide some funds through that to get some badly needed infrastructure in place. There is a \$50 000 allocation in the tourism product development funding for the Swan Valley for this coming year. Perhaps Mr Crockett could explain what that is about.

Mr CROCKETT: The member highlights a very important issue for tourists in the metropolitan area in that in the past we have not been good at directing the tourists who are already here into what we term our day trips, which are effectively the Swan Valley, Fremantle, perhaps Mandurah and areas like that. Therefore, we feel that directional signage in particular is important, as well as upgrading some of those day tripper destinations in terms of product, particularly the way people approach them. Driving through the Swan Valley is not particularly conducive to tourism. It is more for light industry and those sorts of things. We are looking at upgrading the river system as an entry point. This year we have highlighted the Swan Valley and Fremantle as two areas in which we want to work on developing the product, if I can use that term, as opposed to marketing - we think developing the product is probably the more critical part of the mix at the moment - so that when people are here there is a focus on getting them to go to the Swan Valley because of its attractiveness and ease of getting to the area. There is \$50 000 in the products development funding this year specifically earmarked for the Swan Valley. We are not sure what that actually is. We will have to sit down with the Swan Valley people and work that through.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I commend and encourage you in that initiative.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We take on board your point of view. It is one shared by me. I think the Swan Valley has the potential to be a very successful tourism destination. Its great virtue is that it is so close to the city. I think a former Lord Mayor described it as the lungs of the city.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: A jewel in the crown.

[3.50 pm]

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I have some questions about output 3, international marketing, and output 4, event tourism. One of your major initiatives for 1999-2000 is to work with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games and the Australian Tourism Commission to position Western Australia as the western gateway to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. I commend you for again having a Best on Earth in Perth campaign for 1999-2000. Page 1396 states that that campaign will feature a record 14 international events. Are some of those events related to the work being done with SOCOG with regard to the Olympics or will the Olympics add to those 14 events?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Crockett will explain the strategies we are adopting with regard to the Olympic Games and how we are trying to promote Western Australia as the western gateway to Australia. I can give you a list of the events which are part of the Best on Earth in Perth program for 1999-2000. Those events are not related to the Olympics but are events that we have held in Western Australia for a number of years and new events that we have attracted. A number of events that have been around for a long time have come on board the Best on Earth in Perth marketing strategy; for example, the Perth Cup is now being marketed as part of that strategy, which gives us a capacity to market that event elsewhere. A number of things are happening. I will put on my Sport and Recreation hat and say that we are hoping to hold a number of events in Western Australia prior to the Olympics which will be managed by Sports International WA, which is headed by Tom Hoad. The Greek Olympic team will come to Western Australia prior to the Olympics, and we are looking at developing a festival of sport around that team and a number of other teams in about four team sports. However, that is not part of EventsCorp's activities but is part of the Sport and Recreation portfolio.

Mr CROCKETT: It is well understood by everyone that the Olympics provide a great opportunity for Australia. Obviously the difficulty for Perth and Western Australia is that the principal port of call will be Sydney. The approach we have taken, after considerable negotiation with SOCOG, is to get the right to use the logo "Perth - Western Gateway to Sydney 2000 Olympics". We have recently secured that approval. It has taken us some time to get the right to use the word "Olympics". SOCOG is very protective of that terminology. That will now feature as a tag line in all our promotions in Europe, with the view that that is a core market for us. Obviously it makes a lot of sense for people who are travelling from Europe to go to Sydney via Perth, particularly with the British Airways London-Perth service with one stop in Singapore. In addition to that promotion, which will tag all our campaigns, we have focussed extra funding onto the visiting journalists program that we run as matter of course each year, because Australia will attract a lot of journalists in that year as a result of the Olympics and will be the flavour of the media world. We are encouraging journalists to come to Western Australia as well as to Sydney, and our attempts to do that to date have been very successful. The principal means of benefiting from the Olympic Games is the additional free publicity that it will generate for the State via the interest that is being shown in Australia generally. That is proving to be very positive and we hope to get a lot of benefit from that.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I emphasise that SOCOG is very protective, as are all Olympic organisers, of the term "Olympic" and the five rings - I suggest members read *Lord of the Rings* some time to learn why - and they are very expensive to use. We have gone to extraordinary lengths to be able to use the term "Olympic" as part of our promotion. That has been very

difficult to achieve, but we have managed to do that, which will now make it easier to promote Western Australia as the western gateway to the Olympics. It has been a long and labourious task.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: The minister suggested that he could make available a list of those 14 international events. That would be very helpful.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Given that most international tourists arrive in Australia through Sydney, what is being done by the Tourism Commission to encourage visitors from the eastern States to come to Perth by trying to get those prohibitive airfares to Western Australia reduced?

Hon N.F. MOORE: You are right about the prohibitive airfares. One of the reasons that we are keen to have someone from the airlines on the Tourism Commission is to ensure that the airlines understand our problem. There is a clear relationship between the number of visitors from the eastern States and the price of an air ticket. In the day when we had Compass mark I and Compass mark II, the number of visitors increased dramatically. Price is very important. We continue to argue with the airlines about bringing down the price. We are working on a range of international structures so that international airlines can operate within Australia.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Are any packages being worked out to get people out of Sydney and to Perth and Western Australia?

Mr CROCKETT: Specifically during the Olympic period or in general?

Hon MARK NEVILL: In general.

Mr CROCKETT: We spend a lot of time talking with the airlines about price issues, because, as the minister has said, there is a clear price point, and people will travel if the cost is below that point and will not travel if it is above it. However, it is a pricing decision for the airlines at the end of the day. We have some success with some of the Brand WA campaigns we have run in conjunction with the airlines in getting a promotional fare at a cheaper rate, and that has resulted in good increases in numbers. It is always difficult to get international visitors who have not pre-purchased the Australian leg of their journey to purchase that on the east coast and to then come to Perth, because they generally do not have access to the cheaper fares that they can purchase offshore. We are also working at length with the origin market to encourage people to buy multiple destinations within Australia and to come in and out of different gateways. An example would be to come into Sydney, pre-purchase the next stage to Perth, and fly out of Perth. We are trying to work back to the point of origin to convince people to purchase multiple-destination tickets. We hope ultimately to do just the western destination as opposed to the east coast.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Page 35 of your annual report states that your research on the proposed Perth convention centre indicates that you expect to generate \$2.2b in revenue in the first 10 years and create 600 full-time and part-time jobs. What research has been done to reach that conclusion, and it is possible to table that for the committee or is it commercially confidential?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am happy to table that. A study was done by Parnell Kerr Forster in the early 1990s into the need for a convention-exhibition centre in Perth, and it came up with those figures. Based upon experience in other parts of Australia, I would not be surprised if those figures were conservative. This project is going ahead very well so far, and we are looking forward to having a convention-exhibition centre in Perth in the near future, bearing in mind we are the only mainland city that does not have one. We hope the Opposition will change its mind on this and support it.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Has the site been selected yet?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No.

Hon DEXTER DAVIES: I am somewhat parochial about the valleys, and I was pleased to hear the minister's announcement that the Avon Descent may be funded by EventsCorp. Is that correct?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I made the comment that we wanted to see the Avon Descent reach another level and to use it as a vehicle to promote tourism in the Avon Valley. The Avon Descent as a sporting event is a highly successful, well run and extremely efficient operation. It has been my view for some time that many more things could hang off that event, particularly in the context of promoting tourism in the Avon Valley, so I have put to the organisers of the Avon Descent that I will find some money for that event from a budget of the Tourism Commission for regional events if they can demonstrate to me that they can increase the tourism benefits associated with that event. In fact, I am meeting with them this evening.

[4.00 pm]

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Has any consideration been given to looking at the tourism sector from a perspective of promoting Perth as a place for children and families? I know that the minister has launched a very successful book called *Perth For Kids*. Does the Tourism Commission have any involvement with the project known as Pathways for Children in the City of Perth? It is a project to designate pathways through the city and mark them, and hopefully have them on a map so we can identify significant destination sites appropriate for children and families in this city, and areas surrounding a major capital city. Does this budget contain any considerations to focus on the advantages of families with children coming to Perth or those living here being encouraged to use all of the wonderful perspectives in this city?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am not sure if there are specific funds for targeting that part of the market other than to say the overall strategy of marketing Western Australia is based on the concept of its being fresh, free spirited and natural, with wonderful natural attractions, a great climate and a great outdoor lifestyle. The message we are trying to convey is that the lifestyle in Australia is superb and unique and a great place for outdoor activities. In Asia, we emphasise that Perth is a great place

for young families with children to visit. It is safe compared with other parts of the world, the climate is great and there is much for kids to do. I take on board the member's comments and we will have a discussion about how we will look at this pathways idea because it has some merit. The Premier is very keen on ensuring that we have facilities for young children. The playground to be constructed at the Heathcote site will become a major tourism attraction. Similarly, the pool and other facilities at Barrack Square will be an attraction for young families with children to visit. Needless to say, they will all be very anxious to climb up the belltower and have a look at that too.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Will you be republishing the booklet *Perth For Kids*?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am not sure that we did it.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: You launched it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I may have launched it. I have a feeling it was a private publication, but I will follow it up.

The CHAIRMAN: We thank the advisers very much for their attendance and assistance this afternoon. I now close this session.

Sitting suspended from 4.04 to 4.15 pm

Division 32: Fisheries, \$17 235 000 -

[Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.]

[Hon M.J. Criddle, Minister for Transport.]

[Mr P. Rogers, Executive Director.]

[Ms S. O'Donoghue, Principal Policy Officer.]

[Mr P. Millington, Director, Fisheries Management Services.]

[Mr B. Mezzatesta, Manager Financial Services.]

[Mr J. Nicholls, Director, Strategic Planning and Policy.]

[Mr N. Austin, General Manager.]

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting the Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer, Mr Michael Smyth on my left, within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers. I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee and for each adviser to please state their full name, contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee. At this time I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Committees Hearings Information for Witnesses" form. Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of their documents? The witnesses have answered in the affirmative.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I will make a couple of initial remarks with regard to Fisheries WA's key budget outcomes. The coalition Government is continuing its commitment to sustainable natural resource management. The 1999-2000 state budget allocations to the Fisheries WA budget of \$40.8m including \$1.7m in capital works represents a similar budget position to last year in the allocation of output areas. Regional Western Australia has received a significant budget boost from Fisheries WA programs, with \$11.5m allocated to support regional management and research initiatives in the 1999-2000 budget. The \$8m resource sharing initiative has been continuing, with estimated expenditure of a further \$1.7m in 1999-2000. The Government's commitment to providing \$8m over four years for aquaculture promotion and development has been maintained. A sum of \$21m will be spent on the management of the State's commercial fishery in 1999-2000, of which \$12m will be met through cost recovery from the commercial sector and non-consolidated fund resources. An amount of \$7.1m will support recreational fisheries management during 1999-2000. A sum of \$2.4m has been allocated to support fish and fish habitat initiatives, including funding for management of the Abrolhos islands associated fish habitat protection area and the development of draft by-catch plans for trawl fisheries in Shark Bay and the Abrolhos. A sum of \$500 000 of the fish and fish habitat budget is funded from non-consolidated fund sources.

Hon KIM CHANCE: On page 583, line item 5 of the *Budget Statements* deals with the Abrolhos islands airstrip upgrade. I had a question which was asked and pretty well answered in the Estimates Committee in the other place which related to the differences between this year's and last year's budgets; I therefore do not need to cover that ground again. What is the legal status of the existing heads of agreement between the Geraldton fishermen's cooperative and the Government on the use of the three airstrips on North, West Wallaby and Rat Islands?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I will run through some of the general points concerning the Abrolhos. It is planned to transfer the

air service responsibilities to the proposed Abrolhos Islands Management Authority. Fisheries WA is in the process of commissioning an independent consultant to examine the issues around an expanded air service provision. Discussions are proceeding between Fisheries WA and interested parties, including the fishing industry, on a wider access to air services. The expanded air service increases the risk to the Government and possibly will mean a cost to the industry. Currently the fishing industry is, in the main, in favour of restricted air service provisions to the Abrolhos, and a Bill covering the creation of the proposed Abrolhos Islands Management Authority is expected to be introduced into Parliament by the end of the spring session for community discussions over the summer recess.

[4.20 pm]

Mr ROGERS: As far as I have been able to ascertain, the existing contracts are operationally viable.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The officers may wish to take this question on notice. Can I be provided with a copy of that heads of agreement? The minister may wish to take advice on that.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I have spoken to the Minister for Fisheries and he is prepared to table that heads of agreement. I think Mr Rogers has copy of it. If the Chairman is happy for me to do so, I will table it.

Hon KIM CHANCE: In the Estimates Committee in the Legislative Assembly my colleague, the member for Eyre, asked a series of questions about cost recovery in relation to the cost of a licence to take salmon. He made the point that the price of salmon was calculated on a hypothetical figure of 57¢ per kilogram when, in fact, the real price was much lower, about 45¢ per kilogram. Did I understand the answer of the executive director to be that if this has occurred, a refund can be made? If so, how does a fisherman prove that he has been overcharged in this way and how he does claim a refund?

Mr ROGERS: The answer is yes, we would examine it. If a commitment has been made, the process is that we must put a minute through to the Minister for Fisheries to amend the fee. Having amended the fee, we would seek to reimburse it.

Hon KIM CHANCE: On page 565 under significant issues and trends reference is made to the growing involvement of the Commonwealth in the day-to-day planing and management of the marine environment. Although it is welcome, it is not always beneficial. In particular, I refer to an issue that I recently referred to the executive director, although he may not have had a chance to read it yet. It is about the handling by the federal Minister for the Environment and Environment Australia of the collection and exporting of aquarium fish. This is a growing and potentially very valuable industry in Western Australia. At least in relation to the *syngnathid* species, we do not seem to be able to come up with an acceptable arrangement with the Commonwealth for a reasonable management strategy. Can the executive director make any general comments on this area?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: The issue of commonwealth arrangements must be examined very closely because, with the 34 degrees south limit, the tuna fishery is another issue that must be dealt with in a pretty sensitive manner, especially as it relates to the wellbeing of our industry.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Not to mention fishing trawling in the Kimberley.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Absolutely. The member is talking about seahorse taken in Western Australia. It is a very small amount. The exports from Australia are controlled by Environment Australia by virtue of the need for approvals under the Commonwealth's Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Import) Act 1982. Fisheries WA believes the approach taken by Environment Australia, in terms of biological and fisheries information needed to assess sustainable issues, is impractical and cannot be obtained cost effectively. Environment Australia has approached individual aquarium fishers to obtain the data sought. In a practical sense, Fisheries WA and the industry are unable to supply detailed information on the total catch and the catch per unit on a monthly basis by species, location, quantity, size, reproductive state and sex, for those who are undertaking a resource assessment for the 12 000 kilometres of coastline, as members can well and truly understand. Unless the industry or the Government meets the unrealistic requirements of Environment Australia, there will be no export fishery for seahorse. Fisheries WA will work with industry to attempt to meet the requirements of Environment Australia by amendment to the aquarium fisheries management plan. A more realistic attitude should be adopted by Environment Australia on a risk assessment approach, rather than a detailed stock assessment. The cost of the latter is prohibitive and relative to the size of the industry.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Therein lies the problem. Although, clearly, this task is beyond the rational use of Fisheries' resources - I thoroughly agree with that; Fisheries simply cannot afford to devote that money to such a small industry - it is even further beyond the resources of the three exporters, which are very small operators. That is what Environment Australia, through Senator Hill, is requiring these exporters to do, and it threatens to shut down the industry in Western Australia altogether. The industry is surviving in Victoria and Tasmania because essentially aquaculture companies are carrying out research and can provide more detailed information, such as is required by Environment Australia. I received a letter from Senator Hill, a copy of which I sent to the executive director just the other day, in which he claims that Fisheries WA has not forwarded data to Environment Australia relating to block numbers, even though I believe this has been provided to Fisheries by the licensees. Is that correct? It seems to be confirmed by the data he sent me and I attached to the copy of the letter I sent to the executive director. That data seems to provide only numbers by species and year of capture rather than block number and other requested data.

[4.30 pm]

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: That is a pretty detailed question, unless the executive director has something to add.

Mr ROGERS: We have sent a range of information to the Commonwealth. I do not know the detail behind that information.

A problem we have is we cannot really do a stock assessment in any event given the nature, randomness and quantum of available data about what a sustainable yield is. Even with that information, I doubt Environment Australia could effectively make a judgment.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is making absurd requests. It is calling for gender proportion analysis when in most of those species, pre-mortem gender identification is not possible. It is just ridiculous; the things have to be killed first. Please take that question on notice.

Will you assure the committee that the department will make every effort to resolve this matter with the federal minister in the three months remaining in the six-month grace period allowed by Senator Hill?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I will let the executive director comment further on the assurance.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is only an assurance to make every effort.

Mr ROGERS: The Minister for Fisheries has written to Senator Hill to try to get a more practical approach on those issues. That has not occurred at the officer level and that is part of the problem. The unfortunate aspect is that while the methodology of sustainability has relevance for large-stock fisheries such as rock lobster, when you get down individual species of butterflies, insects and other species of a minor nature in terms of take, those methods have no relevance. A more practical approach should be taken focusing on a risk assessment approach for those species from what is known in order to make some judgment around that. From our point of view, we will apply persistent pressure to Environment Australia to try to get it to come back with a more workable approach to dealing with commodities of the nature of butterflies, insects and some of the minor species taken as part of the aquarium trade or biological take.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Will the minister provide information on trends of sick leave and workers compensation premiums over the past five years?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Does the member have a page reference?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Just within Fisheries WA. Will you comment on the trend and provide the figures for the past five financial years?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We will take that on notice. We do not have that information.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Will the minister comment on the trends?

Mr ROGERS: In the data I have seen from 1994 to 1999, the level of workers compensation has been reduced as has the number of individual incidents. It fluctuates from year to year but the general trend is down. Apart from the unfortunate incident last year when two of our officers were blown up in an explosion in Fremantle, I do not think we have any major cases on our books at the current time.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Have there been any settlements in the workers compensation cases of former officers O'Donoghue, Thomas and Sutton?

Mr ROGERS: I will take that question on notice but I think the answer is yes, yes, no. I will confirm that.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We will put that on notice.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I do not have a specific line item but I am sure this information will appear in the financial statements on page 578. What is the extent of legal fees incurred by Fisheries WA? Can it be broken down into representation and settlement for compensation? How many legal cases has Fisheries WA been involved with over the past 12 months? I imagine the information will be somewhere along the lines of services and contracts but it is not specifically listed.

Mr ROGERS: I will take that on notice. It is a question of detail.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I have also received some correspondence from people involved in the abalone fishery on the south coast. Does Fisheries WA patrol the abalone fishery? If so, how much do the patrols cost? Are there any cost recovery arrangements in place?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Do you have a budget reference?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I presume it has to do with conservation of the State's fish resources but it is not listed as abalone patrols.

Mr ROGERS: These matters are matters of detail and they are not separated in the consolidated figures. The patrols come under output 1. The level of cost recovery of regional services for commercial operations relates to the current expenditure and comes under cost recovery. According to the figures I have here which are based on the working figures at the time, the total expenditure for compliance activities - putting aside community awareness programs - in aggregate for 1999-2000 is \$679 000 for the State; that is broken up into zones. In addition, some work has been done on the establishment of a DNA database of abalone to provide a better compliance tool for the identification of sources of abalone in offences involving that product.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: My final question relates to the fisheries adjustment scheme buybacks listed on page 578 of the *Budget Statements*. The estimated actual for the year just ending is \$3.8m, the estimate for 1999-2000 is \$1.7m and it drops back to \$450 000 for the three years after that. What is the basis of these estimates?

Mr ROGERS: It is probably appropriate that I table a written reply to that question. That question was asked in the

Assembly and I have a detailed statement prepared as supplementary information. It is probably pertinent for me to table that here.

[4.40 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Will that be acceptable?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Yes, that is fine.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: My question relates to the output measures on page 573 and the quality regarding the level of satisfaction of the broader community. It starts off at a low figure of 37 per cent for 1998-99 and 60 per cent is anticipated for 1999-2000. What areas in the management and development of the agency have been identified as being deficient as far as the broader community is concerned? What measures will be implemented to cause that increased percentage?

Mr ROGERS: During the 1998-99 period - I think it was in 1998 - because of concerns about the consideration of aquaculture licences, noting that Fisheries WA is sandwiched between those who are pro-aquaculture and those who are against aquaculture, the minister suspended the consideration of aquaculture licences until such time as we put in place revised guidelines which are now issued as ministerial guidelines by the Minister for Fisheries. Those guidelines provided a basis for a much more open and transparent process which allows for a more orderly process for the consideration of aquaculture and pearling leases. As a consequence of that change in procedure, and as we cleared the backlog, we expected to see a greater level of satisfaction among the proponents for aquaculture development in relation to the service provided by the agency.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: As you are targeting only 60 per cent for the next financial year, is there still some backlog associated with those problems?

Mr ROGERS: I think we will clear the backlog; it is well on the way now. The reality is that there cannot be 100 per cent acceptability in terms of the aquaculture planning and decision-making process because some decisions go in favour of the proponent and some go against the proponent. In some communities it becomes a very divisive issue in terms of acceptance and that leads to it being very difficult to achieve a 100 per cent level of satisfaction.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The first dot point on page 577 deals with the development of the by-catch action plan for the State's trawl fisheries. Will this entail Fisheries WA officers observing activities of trawl vessels while they are monitoring by-catch.

Mr ROGERS: I will relate to you what I know of the Shark Bay trawl research program. We put the research vessel *Flinders* into Shark Bay in 1998 to commence work on by-catch reduction devices. Obviously staff from Fisheries WA were involved in that preliminary work. Later in 1999, we used a commercial vessel, as a volunteer supply, from the prawning industry. Initially we put an officer on board, but we were required to take him off a while later. We were not satisfied with the quality of the data, so we have now appointed an observer so that when that boat goes to sea to undertake the trawl work, we have an observer on board who helps collect the data and guarantees the veracity of that data. The intent of the whole exercise is to ensure that we achieve a by-catch action plan for Shark Bay by the end of the year with a view to reducing the amount of trash fish which is caught. In terms of our experience in 1999, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no incidental capture of turtles. The by-catch trawl device inserted in the net is very effective in eliminating any large mammal by-catch issues which are associated with the trawl industry.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The by-catch issue in the Gascoyne, and particularly close to Shark Bay, becomes an issue not so much about large animals, but about pink snapper, particularly as that catch extends towards and into the eastern gulf. I am concerned that no observations have been made while they are working, particularly out of the Carnarvon trawl fleet. The stories I have been told about by-catch from the people who have observed that trawling activity, so they are only anecdotal, are enough to make your hair curl. One of your former officers, who is now the President of the Shire of Shark Bay, Les Moss, also has some interesting aspects of the amount of pink snapper taken in by-catch. Are you confident that the processes that you are putting in place will give Fisheries WA an accurate idea of the quantum of the by-catch in that part of the Gascoyne?

Mr ROGERS: I will make a number of observations. We have collected various levels of data in the Shark Bay prawn fishery for many years. We presented to the Shark Bay Shire Council an array of data which indicated the numbers of snapper taken within the total by-catch for the times of the year for which we had data. It is not an issue in terms of the eastern gulf because the stock we are talking about, which is the eastern snapper stock, is essentially contained in the waters which are close to trawling. It is not an issue in terms of the eastern gulf snapper stock. In relation to the western stock, there is some potential overlap, particularly in the north western corner of the western gulf. Again, in terms of the by-catch work that has been undertaken, we are trying to get a measure of the by-catch and the effectiveness of the by-catch exclusion advise in terms of eliminating the by-catch. Although we will never achieve 100 per cent, it will go a long way towards ameliorating those concerns. Although in real terms the total biomass associated with by-catch is small fish, most of the small fish taken are of a non-commercial type. I have not seen any data to indicate that there is a large take of juvenile snapper as part of the prawn by-catch in the fishing operations. However, I have observed that there is a take of by-catch within the Shark Bay prawn fishery consistent with what is happening in other parts of Australia, but there are variations in terms of the total impact.

[4.50 pm]

Hon KIM CHANCE: On this issue the public is looking for Fisheries Western Australia to give it some reassurance. I look forward to the action plan being released.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I guess Hon Kim Chance knows that we plan to complete a Shark Bay trawl by-catch action plan by the end of 1999. It will specifically examine the increase and the level of knowledge of that by-catch in the fishery, reducing the amount of juvenile fish and crabs and mammals and minimising the impact of inhabitants from the interaction of the trawl gear.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I refer to page 569. What funds will be allocated to continue to address the pilchard kill mortality problem and to prevent a recurrence of those two events? What research is ongoing and when will definitive action be taken to prevent other such disease mortalities?

Mr ROGERS: As a result of the disease mortality, a pilchard working group has been established at a national level under the chairmanship of Dr Gary Morgan from South Australia. Representation on that group includes officers from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the Animal Health Laboratory and state authorities such as Fisheries WA and South Australia. I understand that Victoria and New South Wales have an interest. The working group is coordinating the research and response of pilchard mortality. A number of questions are being examined, one of which is confirmation that the viral lines that were isolated in 1995 by Western Australia are the same viral lines as occurred in the 1998-99 event.

Work is being done on the development of some sort of biological probe that will allow detection of the virus in its latent state. In other words it is to ascertain whether the virus is in bait in cold storage, imported, in the faeces of birds or whatever. Work is being done in Western Australia and I believe in South Australia on transmission trials to assess how the disease is being transmitted. That work has probably ceased now that the event has ceased. Preliminary results have been obtained, but we need further pathology work to determine that.

The Minister for Fisheries also advised that he has assisted the agency by making some funds available to allow the egg production work to be re-established for all zones within the fishery during 1999. Work is being undertaken at Esperance now to re-establish what are the bench biomass estimates post the mortality. Work was also undertaken to assess the impact of that mortality on local stocks. Western Australia has provided an estimate of what has been that mortality. From the figures coming out of the Animal Health Laboratory and CSIRO, and to some extent the States, the total expenditure is about \$1.8m.

There is a problem at the moment regarding the priority by the Animal Health Laboratory which is of concern to me, the minister and the industry. The Animal Health Laboratory must respond to all the various disease breaks in not only fish but also all other species. The outbreak near Sydney has consumed resources and reduced the priority to work on pilchards. Western Australia is continuing to push for that work to be completed.

Hon GIZ WATSON: What proportion of Fisheries' budget is being allocated to that? Is research purely on pilchards or is it on other associated species?

Mr ROGERS: I cannot give a figure off the top of my head but I know that by the time the egg production survey work is completed, analysed and assessed the cost will be approximately \$250 000 for Western Australia alone. That is separate from the national figure of \$1.8m.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Is it only on pilchards?

Mr ROGERS: It is principally on pilchards. We are asking for ecosystem impact advice from the task force group. At this stage there is no specific work on ecosystem flow over impacts. We are of course continuing with our observations.

Hon M.D. NIXON: I refer to page 567. I note a 20 per cent reduction in funds estimated for the development and promotion of the state aquaculture industry. Is the department able to provide sufficient services in that area with the reduced expenditure?

Mr ROGERS: Over three years most of the expenditure evens out. We had a carry over of unspent funds from the previous year into the current financial year. The level of funding in 1999-2000 is adequate. A bottomless pit is required for aquaculture research. Much more can be done. However, we will make the best use of the funds available.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I refer to appendix 4 of the annual report. I note that John Patterson, former chairman of the National Party, Tom McNeil and John Caldwell, former National Party members of Parliament, chair four committees. Hon Ian Taylor, a former ALP member, chairs two committees and the federal Liberal member for Curtin, Julie Bishop, chairs one of the management advisory committees. Which of the other chairmen represent the Australian Democrats and the Greens (WA)?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I am sure that the people who chair those committees do a commendable job.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I understand that Julie Bishop is no longer a chairperson.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Did Fisheries WA contribute to the cost of the police inquiry into the Kendrick-Dixon matter? What was the outcome?

Mr ROGERS: I do not believe we contributed any dollars. I think it was a matter for the police and their investigation. I understand the police closed its books on the matter recently.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Did any charges arise out of the investigation?

Mr ROGERS: Not to my knowledge.

Hon GIZ WATSON: At page 566 one of the significant issues and trends is implementation of Australia's ocean policy. What commitment will that entail from Fisheries? What time line is on it?

[5.00 pm]

Mr ROGERS: I can only give you my impression, because the oceans policy is really being driven by Senator Hill and Environment Australia. My understanding from what occurred with the Standing Committee for Fisheries and Aquacultural and the Ministerial Council on Fisheries was that many of the elements of that oceans policy will only take form and substance as we move towards the end of 1999. Once that is better understood, we can then understand the impacts on the management of fisheries resources in Western Australia.

What I do understand, however - much concern has been expressed by the fishing industry and others in Western Australia - is the increasing tendency for Environment Australia to adopt the position, particularly in respect of the imports and exports regulations Act, that as a matter of principle it will not allow the export of products within two years unless state authorities can demonstrate that their fisheries are being managed sustainably. That is a curious situation when one is faced with the fact that the Commonwealth, under offshore constitutional settlement arrangements, has asked the States, including Western Australia, to manage many of the fisheries because we have a reasonable track record of managing fisheries sustainably. Then we find that the Commonwealth is wanting to intervene.

I do not have any difficulty with the audit of sustainability from the point of view of Fisheries WA performance, because we report on that in a consistent way in our annual reports. However, it becomes curious when the Commonwealth, through its external affairs powers, wants to exert control over what are essentially state matters. One might feel that maybe there is a better mechanism or process by which these issues could be managed. I understand the Commonwealth's concern as it relates to issues surrounding endangered species and its responsibility in terms of international conventions on endangered species. However, I am puzzled at this stage by the position the Commonwealth is adopting nationally on all exports, particularly when the same standards are not being applied to imports. It is a curious position that Australia is getting into.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The seahorse issue is a case in point.

The CHAIRMAN: The time has expired. I thank the minister, the executive director, Mr O'Donoghue and others for their attendance. Their comments have been very helpful. I close this session.

Division 69: Aboriginal Affairs, \$17 564 000 -

[Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.]

[Hon M.J. Criddle, Minister for Transport.]

[Mr H. Lowe, Chief Executive Officer.]

[Mr M. Bowen, Director, Strategic and Business Services].

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Estimates Committee I welcome members to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values that assistance.

It will greatly assist Hansard if members, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes, the consolidated fund estimates or any other document, give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory/research officer, Michael Smyth, within five working days of receipt of the questions.

An example of the required Hansard style for documents has been provided to ministers' advisers. I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee and for each adviser to please state their full names, contact addresses and the capacity in which they appear before the committee. At this time, I ask each the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the committee hearings information for witnesses form? Do the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

Mr LOWE: Yes.

Mr BOWEN: Yes.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: If I may make a couple of comments; I will not take more than a minute or two.

The CHAIRMAN: You may.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: This budget has been prepared on the basis of a revised agency output structure that more adequately reflects the strategic direction and the operating environment of the agency. The new output structure is consistent with the strategic direction of the department which was set out in our five-year business plan late last year and which focuses on local area coordination to assist Aboriginal people in getting better access to more appropriate support from the mainstream government agencies. This is underpinned by a network of regional and local area coordinates expanding into previously under-serviced or unserved areas of the State. Major initiatives are contained in the 1999-2000 budget: An additional

\$1.5m for the completion of the expanded regional officers network from seven to 23, an additional \$300 000 for the Aboriginal patrol scheme and an additional \$160 000 for Aboriginal heritage and culture for the implementation of heritage management plans for selected sites and for staff training and advice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The decision of Cabinet to establish the regional officer network was made on the basis of incurring no extra costs and being done from within the existing head office budget. Did that prove possible; were the officers established and located satisfactorily without an increase in budget allocation or were additional funds necessary to complete the establishment of that network?

Mr LOWE: We agreed to establish the offices within budget. We established them within budget and within budget we are paying for most of the increased operational costs. The extra \$1.5m is part of a \$2.6m total recurrent increase in the operating costs. I think you will find that the cabinet minute referred to the establishment of the office that we would pay for, not the ongoing operations of the office.

[5.10 pm]

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Were the office and officers appropriately and adequately located and established within the constraints of that cabinet minute?

Mr LOWE: Yes.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Was the office space and equipment that was allocated, for instance, to the office and officers in Broome considered adequate?

Mr LOWE: It will be. The office in Broome, out of which we were operating in a temporary fashion, was not adequate. The office in Derby was not adequate either, but that was not because of space but because it was previously a petrol station and there was some contamination from an underground tank that had not been moved. The new offices will all conform to public service standards.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I refer to output 4 at pages 59 and 60, promotion and protection of sites, culture and family history. In your introductory statement, you referred to the management plans that you were developing for Aboriginal sites. To what extent are custodians and Aboriginal people involved in developing those management plans to ensure that they are done in a culturally sensitive way?

Mr LOWE: The way we fund those programs is not to do it ourselves but rather to pay the infrastructure costs directly to the Aboriginal people so that they will be responsible for the maintenance and administration of those sites. We are not paying for Aboriginal labour, but we are paying for those things that are necessary to get the site back to whatever state it needs to be in. The work will all be done by Aboriginal people.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Page 59 provides some figures under the output measures for the number of requests for Aboriginal sites processed and the number of recommendations made under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Given the proportions stated on that page, is it correct that the requests for Aboriginal sites relate to requests for them to be placed on the Aboriginal Heritage Register?

Mr LOWE: I believe so.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: There is a huge disparity between the number of requests processed and the number that are approved of about 1:3. What is the reason for that?

Mr LOWE: We have a register of requests to register the existence or alleged existence of a site. Anyone can do that. We do not do an archeological or anthropological search until such time as someone has made an application to do something to that area. Therefore, sites are provisionally registered until such time as they become heritage listed in a more meaningful way.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: The number of 200 is basically provisional registrations and the number of 80 is the number that you expect to have approved through the anthropological stages?

Mr LOWE: Yes, and that is done typically by the people applying to us. The owner of the land must approve that investigation. It will usually be done by a mining company with a lease, with somebody else's permission.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: It states that 90 per cent of those requests come from mining companies.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I have a further question on the same output. Is the AAD working on the drafting and development of a new heritage Act in response to some of the proposals at the federal level?

Mr LOWE: Yes. I am not sure of the degree to which it is a response to that proposal by the Federal Government, but we are working on drafting the legislation.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Significant issues and trends on page 50 refer to the department continuing to work towards the implementation of the recommendation of a review of the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Is the department also involved in the implementation of the report recommending continuing the excision process within Western Australia? What success has the department had so far in facilitating the release of additional lands for excision? I understand some reference is made to the Wangkatjunga community finally being given some excision. Has a policy change occurred?

Mr LOWE: Not to my knowledge. I can provide the answer by way of supplementary information, later if required.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I add to the question. I see that in the lower House the Minister for Lands has accepted a report recommending that the cost of the administration of the pastoral industry be part of the land management strategy for Western Australia. Has the State Government adopted a position to include Aboriginal communities in that same land management strategy by facilitating the presence of Aboriginal communities on lands to which they aspire?

Mr LOWE: Cabinet decided that 12 or 13 per cent of Western Australian land held in trust for Aboriginal people will be transferred back to Aboriginal ownership or management over the next five years. Some of that transfer must be accompanied by bringing properties on the land up to standard so that they will comply with council by-laws and such matters. Provision is made in the budget to carry out the preparatory work in order to make those places sustainable. We have not transferred to Aboriginal management much land at present as the process has just begun. We have had the first approval by Cabinet for the transfer of 78 pieces of land, and the machinery must be put in place to enable that to happen.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is that from the existing land trust holdings?

Mr LOWE: Yes.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Have any of the additional requests for land, including excision, been granted since the Government came to office?

Mr LOWE: Not to my knowledge. I will provide that information.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That applies particularly if it is proposed to change the previous policy decision.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We will take that on notice.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Page 63 of the *Budget Statements* outlines that the department intends to progress the surrender of Kimberley mission land to the Crown in advance of transfer to incorporated Aboriginal communities. What on earth has that to do with the Aboriginal Affairs Department? I thought it would be a matter between the communities and the respective churches.

Mr LOWE: Some negotiations are taking place between the Aboriginal Lands Trust and missions to pass mission lands back to Aboriginal control. It is the vehicle with which the Lands Trust is involved. No reason would prevent the land being passed directly from the mission to Aboriginal ownership, except many questions must be answered concerning identifying traditional owners. I imagine that that is why the ALT is involved. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Broome has given a personal commitment to complete the surrender of agreed areas of mission land to the State this year. Both the ALT and the Department of Land Administration are anxious to complete the long-awaited mission land transfer. The ultimate success depends on the goodwill and commitment of the bishop and his legal advisers. That does not answer the question about the ALT's involvement; however, I suspect it is involved to settle the issues of ownership of the lands by traditional people. The member would be aware of the lands issue concerning Beagle Bay.

[5.20 pm]

Hon MARK NEVILL: And other communities. The third dot point on page 64, under major achievements for 1998-99, indicates that the department has sealed and improved the drainage on roads at Oombulgurri and Jigalong. I would like some assurance that the sealing of roads in Aboriginal communities will be related to traffic movements within those communities and not just random selection because of certain projects. Traffic counts were conducted at Warburton and they were higher than some of the traffic counts in towns, so that was a good reason to seal those roads. That should be the basis on which roads are sealed in a community. Would you give an undertaking to have a look at that more empirical approach?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: An amount of \$10m is allocated to be spent over a period for roads up there and we are in the process of constructing some of those roads through Main Roads. The Aboriginal Affairs Department has a big input as to where they should be.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I am talking about bitumen works within the community.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Yes.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The \$10m?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Over a period of time and that is set aside for Aboriginal communities.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is an allocation of \$2m over each year for five years from the Transform WA publication -

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: That is exactly what I am talking about.

Mr LOWE: We have transferred the demonstration projects to Homeswest to administer because it is a builder; we are not. Similarly, the essential services programs have been transferred to Homeswest. Those funds do not appear in the *Budget Statements* any more. The reasons that certain roads are paved and others are not is not based on traffic movements only. There is also an intention to reduce the degree that dust is kicked up in those communities. Another program is under way to green the communities and to provide swimming pools and those sorts of things that the minister is implementing through Homeswest. The \$10m will be brought forward by borrowings to ensure those roads are put in earlier rather than later to speed up that process.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I refer to output 3, assistance to Aboriginal community-based patrols, wardens and town reserves, on page 57. It indicates that 42 patrols, wardens and town reserves schemes are provided with financial assistance and

management support. Can you give a breakdown of how many of these patrols are in communities, rural urban areas or metropolitan areas?

Mr LOWE: I will take the question on notice. I can give a bit of a breakdown. There are 29 town reserves and they are all, by definition, based within the boundaries of towns. There are 10 wardens, nine of whom are in the Kimberley, and one is located in the Pilbara at Jigalong, which is a demonstration town. The others are scattered; one is at Oombulgurri, and one is in Kununurra, which is a town-based patrol. We are presently funding 15 patrols. We will probably be funding 16 this year which is why the allocation of \$800 000 has been made; that is, 16 at \$50 000 each. Since the *Budget Statements* were printed, there is a requirement for a patrol in Newman and we will be putting one in there.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Does the member want that question further answered or is she happy with the answer?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I may have misinterpreted the figures. You have 42 with financial assistance and 42 with management support. Is it 84 in total, or are 42 patrols getting both sorts of support? Is it a coincidence that the numbers are the same in both categories?

Mr LOWE: It must be.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: The number you gave me then did not add up.

Mr LOWE: No, so that must be a coincidence.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Are any of the metropolitan projects that have commenced recently getting any of this sort of support? For example, one is operating in the Northbridge area.

Mr LOWE: That is the Karnya patrol. We funded that last year for roughly \$30 000, which was an establishment cost. I think that we put in about \$11 500 last month and we will receive an application for funding in the next financial year, but no decision has yet been made.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Is Hon Helen Hodgson happy with that answer?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I would like a breakdown on notice, please. Page 58 of the *Budget Statements* indicates that there will be some specific effectiveness measures to ensure that patrols and town reserves will comply with pre-agreed outcomes. Are there any progress reports on that or is it a new measure?

Mr LOWE: We already have some of that data; for example, we know the figures for patrols in terms of what has happened in crime rates in communities in which patrols operate. We certainly collect data on what town reserves do with their funds and we acquit the way in which the funds are spent. I would not be confident about the accuracy of data on how well it was spent; on what we can guarantee. We have that data on warden schemes.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: May I have a copy of whatever information you have? I appreciate that it may not be complete, but it would be useful.

Mr LOWE: Certainly.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is the \$50 000 the total contribution that is made by the State Government to those patrols or do other government agencies accept responsibility for contributing to the ongoing operational costs of those patrols?

Mr LOWE: I do not know whether other government agencies are providing funds - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission is, but not the State Government agency. ATSIC provides funds particularly through the community development employment program. Several patrols operate on CDEP plus top-up funds, and we provide the top-up funds.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is there a contribution to their operation from, for instance, the Police Department?

Mr LOWE: It is not a major contribution. The police are involved in instructing the patrols and the wardens in the warden schemes; for example, the Karnya patrol, which operates in the metropolitan area, attends briefings with the police in the metropolitan area. They work closely together, but I do not think there is a financial contribution.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Has any consideration been given to the whole operations of the patrols being under the umbrella of the Police Department as opposed to the Aboriginal Affairs Department?

Mr LOWE: Yes.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Has a final decision on that been made?

Mr LOWE: No, but we are negotiating with the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office to take over the patrols, because there is a strong link between the way in which the patrols and sobering-up shelters work within communities. There is a juxtaposition. The police are not interested in taking those over. We are negotiating with the police to pass on to the police the management of warden schemes. We have agreements in principle to do those things, but the details need to be worked out. In the case of patrols, I am aware that the director of the WA DASO is writing to his minister to seek formal approval to accept the transfers.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Do the patrols also have a connection with the issue of truancy within any of their communities? If they do, do they have an opportunity to obtain financial support from the Education Department? Has an approach been made to the Education Department to help fund patrols for that function? If not, why not? If so, what is the outcome of that request? If the patrols currently do not have that truancy focus, is there an opportunity for them to be given that charter as well?

[5.30 pm]

Mr LOWE: We have not approached the Education Department, and I am unable to say whether the patrols or the wardens have. However, in each case we expect that they will seek funds elsewhere. The warden scheme at Oombulgurri operates more or less 24 hours a day and plays a role in ensuring the children go to school. Patrols do not operate all day. They might operate on only three afternoons and evenings a week. Thursday, Friday and Saturday would be typical. The degree to which they play a role in truancy services, given they are not around in the morning, is probably limited. It is unlikely that the patrols have much effect on truancy, but the wardens would probably play a direct role in most communities.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: My task then is to go to the Education Department and find some way of getting it, in the absence of your department, to beef up the resources of wardens and patrols to make some impact on what is regrettably a growing problem that has within it a significant component of Aboriginal youth, particularly in the remote regions of the State. Some districts of the Education Department accept responsibility but there are other districts, with this devolved model, where nothing has been done.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Agencies can pick up responsibility for that to a certain extent. However, at the end of the day, the communities must pick up some of the responsibility and make sure children go to school. It is a team effort and the emphasis should not be on agencies. The communities need to take on that responsibility as well. I would not like to think that all that responsibility remains with the agencies. The communities need to make sure their children go to school.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: A major achievement for 1998-1999 indicates that the WA policy on the "Bringing Them Home" report has been completed. Can that document be tabled?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: There is a report, and we can make it available to the member, but we cannot table it at this hearing.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I would like to ask how many of the recommendations have been implemented, but I suspect the minister would say that I need to see the document. Given that today is the launch of the draft document for reconciliation, is any financial support given by the department to the reconciliation movement in WA? I appreciate that it is largely funded federally.

Mr LOWE: We have provided an amount of \$10 000 or \$12 000. We provide some support in kind, but we have given only a small amount of money.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Is there any indication that funding might be available when the federal funding ceases?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: That is a national responsibility.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: On page 60 an output measure is the average cost of processing a request for family history information which shows a huge drop from \$2 890 to \$768 per request in the current year. I congratulate the department if that is the case. What steps were implemented to bring about that reduction?

Mr BOWEN: It is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of applications dealt with in the agency for the current resources allocated as the family history application process becomes more familiar and known throughout the community. We have therefore allocated a set number of resources. As the applications increase, the unit cost of processing each application will reduce.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: The last question on this thrust is on page 60 under "Major Achievements for 1998-99". At the bottom of the page it refers to public awareness forums held specifically on heritage management obligations. How many forums were held? What was the attendance at these forums? Were they targeted at a particular audience; for example, the mining industry or the general community?

Mr LOWE: At this stage we have held only one in Perth targeted at the mining industry and local government. Our registrar of sites has been touring around Western Australia. She will be visiting all the major centres to conduct forums to a like audience. By the end of the day she will have conducted a dozen or more forums.

Hon MARK NEVILL: At page 64 of the 1997-98 annual report of the Aboriginal Affairs Department, the Auditor General indicates that the acquittal of grant moneys was inadequate. He said that there was insufficient evidence that the grant moneys had been expended in accordance with grant conditions. What steps has the department taken to rectify that problem?

Mr LOWE: We have implemented a marked strengthening of controls which include monthly reports by regional managers to head office providing the current status of every grant. For those that are overdue, the reports include the outcome of visits by regional staff, the withholding of further funds from those organisations that are in default, and monthly reporting to the corporate executive of all of the grants. When the new corporate executive was appointed there was a backlog of 142 grants that had not been acquitted since 1994. We have been either writing them off as we cannot get information or getting such information that we can get. The penalty for no acquittal is no grant. However, we are working with Aboriginal resource agencies. Some agencies are being funded, including funds for accounting and auditing, and we keep a very close scrutiny on those agencies. The member may have read recently that we were hit around the ears a bit because we declined to give funds to an organisation in Kalgoorlie until that organisation had acquitted its grant. There is a tension between getting the proper acquittal and stopping something from functioning which the community clearly needs. However, we have many conditional controls.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Are you concerned also about the effectiveness of that expenditure, not just the acquittal of it?

Mr LOWE: Yes, we are. One of the reasons for handing the patrols across to the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office is because we are finding in some communities that there are difficulties between the sobering-up shelter and the patrol, whether they are border or personality disputes or whatever. We are trying to bring them under one funding management arrangement to achieve the economies that will come out of that. There are also funds that we provide to town reserves which we believe are not being well spent, the proof being that the same problems exist now as existed when those town reserves were funded in the first place. We are clearly not achieving much by way of improvement. We will therefore be doing things this year with town reserves funding such as connecting every individual house to its own power source with individual meters, individual responsibility for paying bills and those types of things. Previously we would wind up getting a chunk in which would not always work and somebody would have to foot the bill.

[5.40 pm]

Hon MARK NEVILL: Aboriginals are chronically over represented in the juvenile justice system and the adult prison system, Aboriginal women are the fastest growing sector of our prison population and we are imprisoning Aboriginals at a greater rate than ever. Given that the State funds police prosecutions and the incarceration of Aboriginals, will some consideration be given to state funding of legal defence for Aboriginal people?

Mr LOWE: I do not know the answer to that.

Hon MARK NEVILL: It is a policy question.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Obviously the Government will have to consider that. We can find funds for all these things, but at the end of the day we must endeavour to prevent people appearing before the court. That is the thrust of AAD's activities. This leads again to the truancy issue. It is not a matter of agencies doing what they can to overcome the problem, the community must deal with those issues. While we can find funds for all these initiatives to deal with drug and alcohol abuse, we must look at prevention. That is a community responsibility.

Hon MARK NEVILL: If someone is in the court to argue for an alternative sanction, people may not end up in prison in the first place.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: That goes back to prevention.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I appreciate that the function of the demonstration projects has, by and large, been subsumed into Homeswest and AAD is left with the coordinating role. The minister referred to the coordination of the funds for the road systems at Jigalong and Oombulgurri. Once the infrastructure has been put in place, which agency will then be left with responsibility for the recurrent expenditure to maintain that infrastructure? Once roads are constructed in Oombulgurri they deteriorate unless they are maintained. Those roads, along with the rest of the infrastructure that is part of the demonstration project, run the risk of evaporating over time. I extrapolate that to the issue of the powerhouses in these demonstration projects. Is there a time frame for this infrastructure to be taken over by mainstream service providers in this State? If so, what is that time frame? Specifically, what is the time frame for Western Power's accepting responsibility for the powerhouse at Oombulgurri and delivering power at the uniform tariff applied in the rest of Western Australia?

Mr LOWE: I am aware that the Minister for Energy is looking at the issue of Western Power assuming responsibility for those communities. I believe his office and the Ngaanyatjaraku Shire Council are starting to negotiate a bilateral agreement under which that would happen. I do not have the details, although there is an intent to move in that direction. When it comes to the management of infrastructure generally within communities, we say that if we do not make sure the community has a decent management and is strong enough to look after itself at the time operation of the infrastructure is commenced - we obtained valuable lessons from Jigalong and Oombulgurri - we will waste money. Down the track, we are looking at gazetting towns and, therefore, providing them with power and other services at standard rates.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Did the officer say "gazetting towns"?

Mr LOWE: We have an agreement, in principle, that if those places are gazetted as towns, the provision of these services is better able to be treated as community service obligations.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does that mean that the gazettal of a community as a townsite will lead automatically to the provision of essential services? The officer said that there is an agreement to that effect. With whom is that? Is it with the state coordinating committee?

Mr LOWE: There has been discussion between the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister for Energy concerning the question of those communities being serviced as any other town would be. At the moment there is an agreement that Western Power, in the first instance, would look at communities with 200 or more people with a view to its taking over the responsibility for the power. I do not think those decisions are locked in anywhere yet. I understand that those discussions are going on.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does that mean gazettal of an Aboriginal community does not guarantee anything at this stage?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We must realise that these are demonstrations. The way we approach some of the detail we are getting into at present might change. Any demonstration that might go ahead would be subject to change.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: With due respect, I wonder whether I could put some of these questions on notice for the minister. Can the committee be advised -

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We will take that on notice. I am trying to say that this is a development where we are trying to do

the right thing by the community and to get some forward planning in place. We must realise that to some extent there will be some experimentation.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It seems to be a source of some confusion to members both here and in the other place during estimates hearings, and more widely in the Aboriginal community. What specifically flows as a result of an Aboriginal community arranging for its location to be gazetted as a townsite? Is there, or will there be, a firm commitment from the Government that the services and utility provisions that come to other Western Australians will flow automatically to those communities as a consequence of that gazettal? If those services and utility provisions come in, will the uniform rate that applies to the rest of Western Australia be adopted, or will it be the Water Corporation rate? Why would a community move towards gazettal and why is gazettal a necessary prerequisite before the State Government will accept its responsibility for its Aboriginal citizens? Why has the gazettal of these communities as towns become -

The CHAIRMAN: Can the question be shortened?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is a long question; it is not a speech.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: It is a whole litany.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is a pretty succinct concept. What is magical about the gazettal of these communities as towns that triggers the State Government into accepting these people as being citizens for whom it has some responsibilities?

Mr LOWE: The gazettal might relate, as much as anything else, to the local roads in the towns, and the degree to which local government has responsibility. They are not public roads unless the towns are gazetted. People cannot automatically drive through them. If people want to drive through Warburton, approval must be sought from the traditional owners. It is not a public road. For the new road from Western Australia to Alice Springs, that matter must be ironed out with the traditional owners so that the road can be excised from traditional lands.

[5.50 pm]

Hon MARK NEVILL: They have proposed that themselves.

Mr LOWE: I will talk to my minister and provide an answer if we can.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We will take that question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the major initiatives for 1999-2000 at page 54 is the implementation of a local area coordination model. It appears that the department is moving away from direct program funding, such as demonstration projects and essential services, to focus on local area coordination. How will that benefit the Aboriginal people?

Mr LOWE: The issue is a fairly complex strategic one. The ultimate responsibility of each mainstream agency is to provide services to every Western Australian. When services are provided through a specialist funding agency, it tends to let other agencies off the hook and it tends to result in a group of people being treated differently from another group. Our agency will have three roles. The first is to coordinate the activities of government agencies and the way they provide services. That is a horizontal look at the way the Government administers its services to Aboriginal people. Within the organisation is a group of staff whose job it is to know what is going on within mainstream agencies and to negotiate with them. An Aboriginal consultative group of chief executive officers meets twice a year to make decisions, which are in a sense already worked out. That process will be driven by and, in turn, will drive what happens at a regional level.

The second role is to assist individual Aboriginal people and their families to access mainstream services from those agencies, and to assist the agencies to be more user friendly and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people. Our third main role is related to culture and heritage. Local area coordination refers, therefore, to coordinating the way in which those people who wish to be provided with services and ask for help receive those services. It is not a lead by the nose exercise; it is the antithesis of that. It is trying to empower people to do their own thing and also to coordinate the activities of the agencies so that, in turn, they are responsive. That is the reason the number of regional offices will increase from seven to 23, because unless people know a community and those working and living in that community, they can neither understand nor be trusted by that community.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I believe regionalisation is the way to go with Aboriginal affairs. ATSIC is not that effective. Has the department made any progress in the Dampier land peninsula with that concept, or anywhere else for that matter?

Mr LOWE: I am not quite sure what the question is getting at.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Will it be setting up regional groupings rather than the cumbersome ATSIC regions?

Mr LOWE: We will have offices in Derby, Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kununurra. At present that is as far as we can stretch our resources across the Kimberley.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I meant getting Aboriginal communities to work in groups. Is the department taking any initiatives along those lines?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Is the member talking of the whole region coming under the auspices of an Aboriginal group itself?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Yes.

Mr LOWE: We have paid for some research into the best form of governance that might be used for people living on the Dampier peninsula. The result was that the cost of doing other than obtaining a service agreement between the local shire

and that collection of communities would exceed the benefits gained. The communities felt they were not receiving an adequate share of the shire's resources and they wanted more of them. They wanted to know whether the funds could be directed to them, rather than through the shire, if they became their own local government. That would be more expensive than getting a service agreement between the shire and the community. It is a moot point and depends on people's philosophy as to whether they think the shire should improve its services to the community or the community would be better off on its own. We are trying to get some very disparate groups throughout the peninsula to work together. The issue of land claims being made through the Aboriginal Lands Trust has tended to pit people against, rather than for, each other.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I refer to the Dampier peninsula community. The specific and major challenge that community faces is getting an adequately constructed and maintained road. The road is notorious for causing great cost to individuals trying to access the community. Has the Aboriginal Affairs Department had any success in pressing the heartless Minister for Transport to allocate additional funds to build a decent road into that community? What efforts does the department propose to make to get some funds out of this heartless Minister for Transport?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I think I had better answer that. Hon Tom Stephens knows that the Department of Transport spends a lot of money in his electorate.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Not enough, minister.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Better than most areas.

Hon BOB THOMAS: More than we get in Albany.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: We could have a long discussion about that. The issue of roads is vital and the Department of Transport has and will continue to put funding into that area. However, in some cases it is very difficult to maintain roads because of the high rainfall. We have also put airstrips and so forth in place as another means for people to travel. The area is well catered for from the point of view of transport in roads and airstrips. It is simply a matter of the state of them and the available funds.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: If you do not have this information, I am happy for you to take the question on notice: With the expansion of services offered through the department's regional offices, what proportion of its staff are Aboriginal? Does that proportion differ between the regional and central offices?

Mr LOWE: The total percentage is around 46.5. Probably 75 to 80 per cent of the staff in the regions are Aboriginal and only 15 per cent in head office.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Do the regional staff generally have cultural ties to the area in which they work or are there people from different cultural backgrounds in some areas?

Mr LOWE: There is a mixture. It is sometimes good and sometimes not good to come from your work area.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I refer to the Government's pre-election commitment to fund a course to train accredited Aboriginal interpreters to work in the courts. What courses have been made available to Aboriginal people to enable them to become accredited interpreters in the court system since the 1996 state election and what plans are in place to fulfill that pre-election commitment? How much money has the Government allocated to these courses in each year since 1996? How many Aboriginal interpreters have been accredited in each year since the 1996 election?

I also refer to the Aboriginal alternative dispute resolution service. What is this service? To what use is it being put in the regions of Western Australia? Through what agency is this alternative dispute resolution procedure provided?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I understand that is not the responsibility of the Aboriginal Affairs Department. Hon Tom Stephens would have to direct his questions to the court system.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Can I leave the question on notice, given that the Aboriginal Affairs Department has the responsibility of coordinating the implementation of Aboriginal services throughout government? In the absence of any other area where this policy could be implemented, I would like to leave those two questions on notice.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Which two? I thought you asked about a dozen.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Two questions with three parts each.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Where it is possible to find out that information through the Aboriginal Affairs Department and to the extent that it is that department's responsibility we will ask for the question to be put on notice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In reference to the number of patrols provided with financial assistance or management support between 1998-99 and 1999-2000, is there any specific reason why there is no increase in the number of patrols?

Mr LOWE: At least one more patrol would be funded this year, but a couple of other applications are also being prepared. At the moment the funds have been increased from \$500 000 to \$800 000. Since last week's estimates meeting that has been increased to \$850 000, with the addition of another patrol. We are also aware that a couple of approaches have been made through the Safer WA campaign for funding for patrols and wardens. If \$800 000 is divided by 16, it seems to give \$50 000. In reality, we fund up to \$50 000. If an agency has \$10 000 left at the end of the year, we would not fund \$50 000; we would fund only \$40 000 to give it \$50 000 to spend. Unless there is a reason for unexpended funds, such as it has been committed but not spent yet, we would harvest that money and use it for another patrol.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What is the explanation for the large increase in salaries and allowances for your agency next financial year? What is the expected increase in output from the department as a result of this large increase? What direct benefits will flow to the Aboriginal community as a result of the increased number of public servants employed within the Aboriginal Affairs Department? What accounted for the large amount of services and contracts in 1998-99, and why does it drop so significantly in the coming financial year?

Mr LOWE: One reason for the increases is that previously the staff establishment was not full. Another reason is that, prior to our arrival, the agency employed a number of contract staff. There were 12 or 14 staff employed on contracts rather than as full-time equivalents, which would obviously cause a decrease in one area and an increase in another. There is the addition of a small percentage increase in the award or in the enterprise bargaining or workplace agreements. There is also the increased costing associated with people living out of the city and in rural areas. Those costs are represented mostly by matters such as Government Employees Housing Authority housing and cost of transport and those types of issues.

Mr BOWEN: Mr Lowe has just about explained it all. The estimated actual FTE for 1999-2000 is 122. In the budget papers for 1998-99, it is 110. The percentage increase associated with the increase in the FTEs accounts for part of the increase in salaries. As Mr Lowe said, the balance is associated with the increased costs of the regional expansion. That is the per unit cost or the per staff member cost of people working in regions with GEHA housing, remote area travelling allowances and the full-year and part-year effects of the pay increases under the EBA and the WPA. In addition to that, in accordance with the Government's policy on the management of leave liability, we are actively encouraging some cashing out of accrued leave credits to make our leave liability more manageable.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Output 4 on page 59 refers to the promotion and protection of sites, culture and family history. What connection is there between this output and the native title claim process? Specifically, does the AAD provide any assistance regarding native title claims, particularly claims that are designed to protect sites, culture and family history? How does the amount allocated under this output compare with the amount the Government allocates to the process of opposing the native title process in Western Australia through the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr LOWE: We have no formal role in native title claims, so we do not pay for them. We provided some funding and interim measures for Spinifex and Balangarra for that transfer. That money has been recouped for the agency next year. Some money which was not being expended this year, and which was used for that purpose, has been recouped. We do not have any expenditure that goes into native title. Any of our heritage issues are separate from that. Our heritage management system does not have anything to do with native title.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: To the extent that native title claimants want to utilise that claims process to protect their heritage, is it aided by your agency?

Mr LOWE: No, but if someone has heritage sites which are in need of protection, we will do that. It is orthogonal to the issue of native title.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to thank you, minister, and your advisers for your assistance. Thank you members for your time. We close this session for the day.

Committee adjourned at 6.05 pm
