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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Wednesday, 27 May 1998

Legislative Assembly

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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

The CHAIRMAN (Ms McHale): For the information of members, the Estimates Committee will be reported by contractors to Hansard. A daily verbatim proof *Hansard* will be available during the afternoon of the following day. Hansard will distribute the documents for correction at that time, which must be returned on the A4 document sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page. I caution members that if a Minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information which the Minister agrees to provide will be sought within one week.

It will also greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the Budget Statements volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, the item, the program, and the amount in preface to their question.

As has been the practice of previous Estimates Committees, members should not raise questions about matters of general concern which do not have an item of expenditure in the consolidated fund. The Estimates Committee's consideration of the consolidated fund's estimates of expenditure will be restricted to discussions of those items for which a vote of money is proposed. We are dealing with estimates of expenditure and that should be the prime focus of this committee. Although there is scope for members to examine many matters, they need to be clearly related to matters of expenditure. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators which are included in the Budget Statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates.

It would assist in the committee's examination if questions and answers can be kept brief, without unnecessarily omitting material information. It is my intention to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered, and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The Minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, would the Minister clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information she agrees to provide? Details regarding supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers, and accordingly I ask the Minister to cooperate with those requirements.

Division 69: Family and Children's Services, \$145 230 000 -

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

[Mrs Parker, Minister for Family and Children's Services.]

[Mr R. Fisher, Director General, Family and Children's Services.]

[Mr W. Budiselik, Executive Director for Industry Development and Service Specification.]

[Mr P.M. de Mamiel, Director of Financial Services.]

[Mr T. Murphy, Executive Director, Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office.]

[Ms P.M. Bagdonavicius, Executive Director, Strategy and Funding Management.]

[Mr P.M.A. Birchall, Director, Service Design and Evaluation.]

[Mr L. McCulloch, Executive Director, Metropolitan Service Delivery.]

[Mr G. Watt, Executive Director, Business Management.]

Mrs PARKER: Madam Chair, could I please start with an opening statement?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mrs PARKER: The 1998-99 expenditure budget for Family and Children's Services, including the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office, will total \$159m, including \$148m in recurrent funds and \$11m in capital services. Recurrent funding for the department has increased from \$107m in 1993-94 to \$148m this year, an increase of 38 per cent.

The paramount responsibility of Family and Children's Services is the care and protection of those children who are

unable to be cared for by their parents or other guardians. In this budget the Government has made a commitment to continue improvement of support services for children requiring out-of-home care. It will continue to implement a range of services to support these children with a level of care comparable to that of children who are able to live with their families. Funding has been allowed for consumer price index increase in basic subsidy rates for all children in care. New procedures have been implemented and will continually be strengthened to reduce the risk of employing people in any paid or voluntary capacity who may pose a risk to children. These procedures reflect this Government's commitment to the ongoing protection of children.

As a result of the recent restructure, Family and Children's Services has strengthened representation of Aboriginal people in all areas of the department. This includes the creation of a position on executive, new Aboriginal services officers in the field and the employment of eight Aboriginal trainee officers who will become permanent field officers after they complete their traineeship. A further 14 traineeships will be made available over the next two years.

Family and Children's Services will continue to respond to the needs of Aboriginal families and children through the "Bringing Them Home" report by enhancing family tracing information services, enhancing the management of records and providing counselling services to support the provision of family information.

New and growing suburbs, especially in the outer metropolitan area, continue to attract young families. This area will continue to be a priority for new services. The department's recent restructure has seen some 50 full time equivalents transferred to service delivery roles. Service delivery has been enhanced through more flexible approaches and structures. The department has aligned its teams in the metropolitan area to the key outputs within zones, which will provide a basis for better accounting for outcomes and a more focused and flexible utilisation of resources.

Parents have the first and foremost responsibility for their children's wellbeing and development. Early intervention and prevention continues to be a major focus for the Government. A range of initiatives has been put in place during the term of this Government to support families. This year services for families with children under the age of 10 years who are experiencing behaviour problems will be expanded. Two new mobile parenting information centres will be established in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, while new parenting information centres will open in the metropolitan area, Broome and Bunbury. The Government is committed to supporting families. Resources are being provided to Family and Children's Services to purchase a range of services to be delivered through non-government organisations and local governments. This budget provides \$46m for non-government services.

Point of Order

Mr BROWN: Excuse me; I thought this was the Estimates Committees, not an opportunity to make speeches. If at every show the Minister reads a long speech, members will not have an opportunity to ask questions. There is an opportunity to make a speech in Parliament. I have never heard this before in my life. This is disgraceful! This is the only chance that we get to ask detailed questions on these matters. Frankly, I will not put up with this rubbish on this issue - it is bloody appalling!

Mr NICHOLLS: On the same point of order, past practice has been, among other cases, that Ministers give an overview to start the session. I do not accept the language the member opposite is using. If he does not like the length of the overview, or he thinks it is not relevant, that is fine. However, the sort of comment he is making frankly reflects badly on him and on our Parliament.

Mr BROWN: With respect, I do not need the member to lecture me.

Mr NICHOLLS: Take some advice.

Mr BROWN: The member should give himself advice - I do not need his advice. We have two hours to consider an allocation of \$250m. I do not want two hours taken up with gratuitous speeches with people patting themselves on the back. I want the opportunity to ask questions.

Ms WARNOCK: I support the member for Bassendean. Frankly, we are considering a huge budget. The introduction for this portfolio is written in the Budget Statements, and we do not need another introduction. All members from all sides of politics are becoming impatient about not being able to ask questions, which is what we are here for. We have little enough time as it is.

The CHAIRMAN: Enough has been said on that point. Minister, it is unusual to read a statement prior to questions being asked. I gave approval to start by making a statement. I reinforce that I will ensure that questions and answers are brief. Many questions will be asked. How many more pages are to be read in the prepared statement?

Mrs PARKER: Two pages.

The CHAIRMAN: That will take too many minutes. We are keen to proceed. Bring the statement to a conclusion, without reading the next two pages.

Committee Resumed

Mrs PARKER: Provision has been made for CPI adjustments on an annual basis for state funded services. Family and Children's Services continues its commitment to the domestic violence action plan across the State. In 1998-99, it will continue to proceed with the drafting of the family and children's services Bill and introduce that into Parliament.

The major initiatives included in this year's estimates will be the budget of the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office, which has seen a significant increase and most of the initiatives in that new action plan are under way. As Minister for Family and Children's Services, I am confident that the programs delivered by my department will provide support resulting in stronger and healthier families, which are the basis of strong and healthy communities across Western Australia.

Ms ANWYL: Does the Minister believe that three hours will be sufficient to consider this general area given that four hours was spent yesterday on Agriculture and Fisheries, which had a budget some \$30m less than that allocated to this area? Given that we have now spent in excess of eight minutes on preliminaries, does the Minister think that it would be desirable to have more time made available for this session?

Ms PARKER: I do not set the timetable for the Estimates Committee. That is a matter for the management of Parliament and it has been a consistent time; certainly, this is the same time as that allocated last year. I am sorry if the amount in the budget has increased to the point where you cannot cover the arrangements in that time. However, it is consistent with what you had available last year.

Ms ANWYL: An underspending of about \$6m appears to have occurred. The estimate for total recurrent expenditure in last year's budget papers was \$132.8m, and \$126.9m is the estimated actual. Therefore, roughly 4.5 per cent was underspent. Are you aware of the areas in which that underspending occurred?

Mr de MAMIEL: The output and appropriation summary does not include funding for revenues received from the Commonwealth. That figure is actually understated. You need to reconcile back to the amounts we actually received from other sources. The figure does not include revenues that we received from other sources, including commonwealth programs which are some \$13m.

Ms ANWYL: So there was no underspending?

Mr de MAMIEL: No.

Ms WARNOCK: I draw the Minister's attention to a matter that occurred in my electorate recently. Several times recently I had reason to try to accommodate a family who came to my office without any accommodation whatsoever. My electorate officer spent some three hours trying to accommodate a family of five and rang every emergency service in Perth that we were aware of, and rang the Minister's department several times. I am interested in the note on the bottom of page 449 which refers to the department's obligations in relation to emergency accommodation and for families in crisis. I am also interested in the level of customer satisfaction quality target of 95 per cent; how is that arrived at, and how will it be measured?

I was frankly disgusted with the efforts of the Minister's office on this occasion; my office was amazed to find that a department which we believed had an obligation to emergency accommodation, particularly for families with children, virtually had to be forced into accepting its responsibility. I wrote a detailed letter to the Minister about this, as I did to the Minister for Housing and Aboriginal Affairs and to which I received a detailed reply. I received a two paragraph letter from the office of the Minister for Family and Children's Services thanking me for letting it know about the situation. I was extremely dissatisfied about it and mentioned it in my speech in the budget debate last week.

I would like to hear from the Minister what obligation she believes this department has to people who need accommodation. This was a family of five with three young children under the age of 10 years. Their alternative was to sleep under a bridge in my electorate. I thought the department had a responsibility in this area. I would like to hear the Minister state this morning the responsibility her department had in this regard.

Ms PARKER: I am certainly aware of the case that was brought to my attention and the difficulties that the member faced. I understood that in liaison between my office and the office of the Minister for Housing, although there was some difficulty in finding a response, a response was found. The ministry for housing followed up on that matter and the matter has been resolved.

Certainly crisis housing and support is needed, and this department has quite an involvement in meeting that need, along with those responsibilities of the Minister for Housing.

Regarding the Budget Statements - this matter has been raised in Parliament - the decrease of \$126 000 has been explained. Although the budget appears to indicate a reduction of \$126 000 in the allocation, in fact there has been an increase in the allocation. For example, in 1997-98, the figure was inflated by the inclusion of a carryover of \$440 000 for the supported accommodation assistance program for 1996-97 as a result of delays in payments to a few agencies pending the finalisation of compliance obligations under agreements. These payments were made in 1997-98 early and inflated last year's figure. There has been no reduction in services. Taking into account the factors outlined above, the budget for 1998-99 includes an additional \$314 000 for crisis support. I recognise the need for this service. I ask Mr Budiselik to also make a few comments on the issue.

Ms WARNOCK: Well, I hope that Mr Budiselik will explain exactly the department's obligations because to be perfectly frank - and I hoped to keep this from Parliament - we had to threaten finally to pay for a taxi for the family to sleep on the Minister's lawn before we got some action from the department. I held that point back from my speech in the budget debate. I am waiting to hear the department's obligations, and whether in future when such an event occurs I can expect some quicker and firmer action from the department. I thought there was an obligation in crisis accommodation for families in such a situation; namely, sleeping under a bridge, or, as in this case, if the department tells us it has no responsibility, our being prepared to pay for a taxi to accommodate these people on the Minister's lawn.

Mr BUDISELIK: Clearly, there is an obligation on the department to support families in that situation. There is concern among the supported accommodation assistance program about the number of families seeking help. We have increased the number of services. The problem in running that program is more the exiting of families once they have come into crisis accommodation. That can slow the system down. Our problem is not so much providing some immediate response, but more moving them through. Of course, if you cannot move people through the system, it begins to clog up that system. That is the issue we are dealing with. I understand the issue will also be addressed in the Poverty Task Force report, but it is a valid criticism. I understood that our zone manager responded ultimately and provided motel-type accommodation on the spot which is sometimes -

Ms WARNOCK: That is right. It took us about three and a half hours though.

Mr BUDISELIK: Maybe more publicity is needed about how people access those services. However, on occasions we provide motel accommodation or something similar to get over a crisis.

Ms WARNOCK: That would be very helpful. I had hoped to hear you reply that that was an obligation. I hope that the system might work better next time.

Mrs PARKER: In recognition of that problem of people coming into that crisis accommodation and staying for periods longer than one would define as a crisis, we have put programs in place to support people to exit the crisis and support them in maintaining accommodation of their own. That is important because we do not want the allocation for crisis support being clogged up in that way. That is tending to happen at the moment with people staying for medium term in what is really meant for a crisis situation.

Ms WARNOCK: That explains the problem; that is, there is an enormous call on crisis accommodation and frankly more funding is needed not only for crisis accommodation, but also for the next stage. That was the point I hoped to make.

Mr BUDISELIK: One final thing: The increasing emphasis in supported accommodation assistance is on case management. Therefore, agencies which previously responded to the immediate crisis are now being encouraged to see clients through and case manage them and let them navigate the system. But it is a problem. We get good national data with SAAP, and we are aware that this problem is emerging in other jurisdictions as well.

Ms ANWYL: In relation to the crisis support budget on page 449, we have had calls from non-government agencies indicating that they have had increased demand for emergency relief of up to 52 per cent. The crisis support budget does not appear to have had an increased allocation. Where in the budget can we see an increase for those non-government agencies which provide emergency relief?

Mr BUDISELIK: I was reading before in some *Hansard* statements about the reported 52 per cent increase. The data we collect does not indicate that level of increase. Basically, we need to get back to the figure.

Ms ANWYL: The Western Australian Council of Social Service says it is more than 25 per cent. Anyway, there is an increase.

Mr BUDISELIK: There are many estimations. The allocation of the financial crisis program in 1997-98 was \$2.6m

in the family crisis program. We are estimating it out to be \$2.686m. Therefore, we are spending in excess of our allocation.

Ms ANWYL: In translating that to increased assistance for those non-government agencies that are directly handing out emergency relief in our community, can you point to the increase between the two financial years?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: My understanding of the member's question is that she is talking about the commonwealth provision of emergency relief, rather than the state's. In terms of financial counselling services, there is an allocation of \$2.1m for the 52 financial counselling services across the State. They will benefit from the CPI adjustment indexation this year which will take their standard rate up to \$44 000 and more.

Ms ANWYL: I do not refer to financial counselling, but to the emergency relief dollars that are available and distributed by non-government agencies. Specifically, page 474 indicates that the crisis support part of the budget would appear to relate to the department's funds it may need to administer to needy families. So, on the face of it, there appears to be no increase, but a decrease. We have heard that an increase has been allocated. Will you assist us with that regarding non-government funds? I do not refer to financial counselling dollars.

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: You are talking about increased demand. The difficulty I have is that the non-government agencies distribute the commonwealth moneys for emergency relief, for which you say there is an increase in demand.

Ms ANWYL: Financial counsellors do not give out the money though.

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: No, but services are often providing that emergency relief in conjunction with financial counselling.

Ms ANWYL: That is right. Are you saying there are no state dollars for that component?

Mr FISHER: Emergency relief is the Commonwealth's responsibility and it provides the money.

Ms ANWYL: In terms of crisis support though, the department has a core responsibility, does it not, to administer emergency relief to families in crisis?

Mr BUDISELIK: That is the financial assistance program you are talking about.

Ms ANWYL: I am asking in which part of the budget it is disclosed. Is it the crisis support reference on page 449? There appears, on the face of it, to be a decrease of \$126 000. Despite WACOSS saying that there is a 25 per cent increase in demand across the board, where in this budget can we see a catering for that increased demand? Your answer may be that it is a federal responsibility and we do not have any part in it; however, I do not think that that is the case. I ask you to consider your answer carefully.

Mr BUDISELIK: I think it is the correct answer. I think with our financial family crisis program, we assist with money against a number of categories. Our funding for the non-government sector is largely around financial counselling. The emergency relief provision is largely about dissemination of commonwealth funds.

Ms ANWYL: I refer again to page 449. Under outputs, you have the number of contacts for this year as 216 145. There is a projected increase for the next financial year of a whole 250 contacts to take us up to 216 395. It seems to me inadequate to allow for 250 more contacts given this call from WACOSS for recognition of the increased demand of about 25 per cent across the sector.

Mr BUDISELIK: WACOSS will not only be lobbying Family and Children's Services. In terms of the service we provide, which is oriented around financial counselling, WACOSS will also be lobbying the Federal Government for more emergency relief dollars. We are one of the last States which is still in the business of providing emergency relief through the family crisis program.

Ms ANWYL: Are you saying that the figure in next year's budget may be zero?

Mr BUDISELIK: No, because the family crisis program allows for the meeting of unforeseen circumstances, but the separation in the non-government sector of financial counselling from the provision of emergency relief is something we took on as a policy position some time ago. Therefore, the services we fund tend to be more about financial counselling to assist people.

Mr NICHOLLS: The member for Kalgoorlie's point seems to need clarification. My understanding is that there was a change in emergency relief funding and the pool of funds in 1994 when the State committed a large number of dollars to fund financial counselling, and I understand -

Ms ANWYL: I will not be lectured by the member for Mandurah.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am asking a question about which the member might be interested. Large sums of money were allocated to the non-government sector for financial counselling, including a requirement for financial counsellors to become accredited. I do not see that funding outlined in the budget; the Minister might like to refer to that matter. Picking up on one of the earlier questions from the member for Perth concerning emergency accommodation or crisis accommodation, as a point of clarification, is the department now an accommodation agency providing accommodation to any family that finds itself without housing; if so, how much funding has been put into that and where is it being taken from in the budget? Is the department still acting under the guidelines of SAAP, which provide very clear parameters on who can access the housing and the priorities? Could the Minister clarify those matters for me?

Mrs PARKER: I thank the member for Mandurah for his question. Regarding financial counselling, there are some 52 services across the State with a commitment of \$2.1m to that area. The aim is to ensure that people do not continue to have this need for crisis support, and that they are supported to establish management of their own circumstances so that they can establish themselves in a situation being housed adequately and with budgetary support. Some advocacy service is provided in there as well. The service specifications were reviewed early in 1998. Essentially, they have remained unchanged and retain a strong focus on knowledge and skill development to enable clients to make decisions about financial problems and also to help them to negotiate their way through their debt. The other important point is that the Financial Counsellors Association of WA received funding to undertake a training project for the development of the diploma of financial counselling. That took longer than was anticipated.

Mr NICHOLLS: What were the levels of funding for financial counselling?

Mrs PARKER: Each service is funded at a level of \$44 255 per annum. Some services in the north west of the State receive additional funding in acknowledgment of the extra costs they have in service provision. They receive \$52 876 per annum.

Mr NICHOLLS: Will you comment on the accommodation side? I am somewhat confused by the answer regarding whether the department is taking on accommodation responsibilities, and whether it is acting under statutory guidelines.

Mr BUDISELIK: No, the SAAP definition where people are at imminent risk of homelessness still guides the department's crisis response, so we are not an accommodation agency.

Mr NICHOLLS: So if a family finds themselves out of a house, whether they have not paid the rent, have been evicted or simply do not have accommodation, does the department now provide accommodation for those people until they find accommodation? Is this the role that the department has taken on? That definitely was not in the SAAP guidelines, as I understood them, some years past.

Mr BUDISELIK: No, we usually would expect families to make their own arrangements. It is when people are incapable or need assistance that we would provide support, but not in terms of navigating the accommodation and the like.

Mr NICHOLLS: What funding goes into that SAAP area to provide that accommodation, and what are the priorities? Will you also indicate the levels of federal and state funding?

Mr BUDISELIK: Pauline is the state SAAP representative.

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: The current non-government budget was \$19.1m, and in the next financial year it will be \$19.4m. There has been an expansion of services being provided through SAAP. We have had new services go in. An important one that is relevant to the current discussion is a new service operated by Manguri, which is supporting Aboriginal families with tenancy problems. They are supporting 15 families. That is now being established.

In addition, other priorities have been in relation to domestic violence accommodation, particularly in rural areas with two new refuges going ahead in Derby and Newman. Also, a number of other expansions and new developments have occurred in the program.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is the level of federal and state funding? Is that half of the \$19m or does it match?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: It is not an absolutely equal matching. It is somewhere between 50 and 55 per cent of commonwealth money on the base level of funding for services. The Commonwealth puts in slightly more than the State, but it also puts in some commonwealth-only reform dollars. Currently, we have that in relation to things like the boarding house project and the rural and remote domestic violence project in the north of the State. In addition, the State has put in state-only funds in relation to domestic violence initiatives as well.

Dr CONSTABLE: It is very difficult to compare what we are presented with in the budget program statements from

year to year. I still refer to page 449 and crisis support. I note that the estimated actual for 1997-98 was \$30.4m; however, page 362 of last year's statements indicates under crisis management and support an estimate for 1997-98 of \$35.6m. Can someone explain that to me? It is difficult to compare them, but is there really a difference of \$5m?

Mr FISHER: Members are having difficulties with the changes each year, and so is the department. An issue we find is that Treasury is constantly changing the way in which we must report. We started off three or four years ago working on nine programs. We got that down to two programs, but then we had to report on a subprogram basis. The Government has changed to output-based management and we are now reporting, as you can see, in this budget on outputs.

Questions have already been raised on this issue. The member for Kalgoorlie asked a question about our target figures in relation to a particular item with next year as compared with this year. Many of our estimates at this stage are best-endeavour estimates. We have not got it down to an exact science. I will get Mr de Mamiel to respond to your question because it is an accounting issue.

Dr CONSTABLE: Before you do, the description on page 449 looks very much like the headings on page 362 of last year's papers. Where has the \$5m gone or where was it spent instead?

Mr de MAMIEL: There is a change in the mix of the functions that the department undertakes. You must remember that these costs include our salary costs, and it depends upon the way in which our industry is structured. At any time, those dollars can change -

Dr CONSTABLE: I want to know if you are spending as much or more on the services rather than on nuts and bolts?

Mr BUDISELIK: The answer is as much.

Dr CONSTABLE: As much, but not more?

Mr BUDISELIK: It varies slightly because of the way the figures are represented. As an example, in allocating those costs, we survey our staff on where their time is going a couple of times each year. Therefore, fluctuations will arise in the costs. However, with the adoption of the output-based management structure, we are now spreading those costs across those eight outputs.

Dr CONSTABLE: I would like as supplementary information a detailed breakdown analysis comparing 1997-98 with what you estimate for the coming year. Otherwise it is impossible to know what is going on. Is that all right?

Mr FISHER: That is possible.

Dr CONSTABLE: Can I confirm that the Minister is prepared to provide that as supplementary information?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, I am happy to provide that.

Dr CONSTABLE: I want it broken down so I can make a proper comparison between the years because it is impossible to do so from these papers.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister confirms that the information will be provided as supplementary information.

Ms ANWYL: I wonder whether that information would be possible for all programs?

Mr FISHER: There is a huge amount of work in doing that. One item is okay but -

Dr CONSTABLE: How can we do our job if we do not have the information?

Mr FISHER: That is not our decision as a department. That is the Government's decision.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister has given that undertaking on the crisis support item.

Ms ANWYL: So, Minister, it is not possible to give such notice on the other programs?

Mr FISHER: We undertake, in a spirit of goodwill, to look at that and see what we can do.

Ms ANWYL: Perhaps that could be considered during the course of the morning and you could refer to it. I move on to page 450 of the Budget Statements which deals with child protection services. In terms of child maltreatment allegations - again, I am looking at the performance measures and I am conscious of the director general's earlier comment - the number of child maltreatment allegations budgeted for remains static at 2 280. Again, the number of care and protection applications remains static at 255. My question is similar to that of the member for Churchlands: I have been trying to look at last year's budget papers and work out whether an increase or otherwise has occurred in this particular area. Has there been an increase?

Secondly, regarding timeliness, the document states that the percentage of allegations of child maltreatment where investigations began within five working days was 83 per cent. Where does that figure come from specifically, and what steps will be taken to ensure that the number of days it takes to look at a child maltreatment allegation are reduced substantially from five?

Mrs PARKER: I make a short comment because the director general will respond to this matter. The department and the Government have an unequivocal commitment to that care and protection of children at risk. We also have a commitment to the ongoing improvement of services and responses to those children.

Ms ANWYL: Is there an increase in this budget, Minister? That is the question I asked.

Mr FISHER: As you see, we are now funded on outputs. We had great difficulty because we had to change our budget around ourselves. We had to manufacture the outputs, and had to extract from each output our costs for salaries and so on. From our point of view, we understand members' difficulties in trying to compare budgets from previous years. Regarding the best information we have from what we have looked at and the way we have allocated our funding, all of our output areas have increased funding. We have not had any reductions in funding per se - that is, no significant reductions in funding in any output.

In terms of the specific questions about output No 7 relating to child maltreatment allegations, the best possible target in the number of allegations would be zero. In a sense, that should be our target. If we, as a department, can do ourselves out of business, that would be a target we should aim for. However, the reality is that it is almost impossible for us to estimate how many child maltreatment allegations will be made in the coming year. We have used our best information from our computer system to give us an estimate. We know approximately what we will end up getting this year; that is, around 2 280 allegations. We have carried that forward into next year. We hope that the figure would be reduced because we are spending a lot of taxpayers' money on preventive, early intervention programs. The fact is that the population is increasing and that child maltreatment seems to be with us to stay.

Regarding timeliness and the issue of the 83 per cent up to 100 per cent target, we are definitely aiming for that.

Ms ANWYL: From where have you derived the 83 per cent figure?

Mr FISHER: It is an estimate for 1997-98 because we have not finished this year yet. On the basis of our statistics from our CCSS, that is a figure that we are working around. We are very concerned about that figure because it implies that we are only investigating within five working days 83 per cent of cases that come to us. That is just not good enough. In looking at that and breaking it down, we realised that we have a whole lot of inbuilt problems in our own system that we are addressing. For example, in a category one maltreatment allegation, we are supposed to investigate within 24 hours. Our system at the moment indicates that if an allegation comes in at four o'clock in the afternoon and is investigated the following day before four o'clock, but not the same day that it came in - in other words between four and five o'clock - our computer system starts the next day as another 24 hours. Therefore, we have some system problems which we are addressing. Also, as a result of our restructuring within the metropolitan area, in particular where we have our child protection teams doing nothing now but child maltreatment allegations, we are very confident, as we are monitoring it now very closely, that in 12 months' time we will be able to show when we report back here that we have met our target in if not 100 per cent of cases, very close to that. So we are going through some teething problems in this area ourselves. We are confident that with the work that we are doing in relation to our own systems, and as a result of our restructuring, our targets will be able to be lifted in this area. This output is our core business. It is the most important from our department's point of view. It is an area of activity in which we have not reduced resources and in which, as a result of our restructuring, we will be putting significantly more resources from within our organisation.

Mr BUDASELIK: With the counting of money in child protection, if you look at the new output system, things that were previously done under that label are now done under the family youth and individual support output, particularly around the investigation of child concern reports.

Ms ANWYL: Which program is that?

Mr BUDASELIK: It is a different output; namely, output No 4 on page 446. Also, it is against the family safety services program on page 448. So things that were previously done under the broad label of child protection are also reported under there in this new way of reporting. So under the family safety services, for example, intensive family support and reunification is now measured there.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I noticed on page 441, under the heading of major initiatives for 1998-99, the "Bringing Them Home" report is mentioned. How much has been allocated to this area, where can it be found in the papers and what does the program consist of? It is quite an important program.

Mrs PARKER: It is based within output No 4 on page 446. An extra \$1m has been allocated.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: How much altogether?

Mrs PARKER: It is \$1m.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Just the 1m?

Mrs PARKER: Of that, \$200 000 will go to the Aboriginal Affairs Department to provide regional services to Aboriginal people for issues and support services relating to the "Bringing Them Home" report. The three major components of the Government's response in Family and Children's Services are, first, enhanced tracing services. Family and Children's Services will establish a family tracing bureau which will be located in central office. This will provide a comprehensive family tracing and information service for Aboriginal people seeking information - it will provide one central point where they can access the information. At the same time, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs will provide a link to Aboriginal people throughout the State through its network of 23 different regional offices.

Second, we will also improve the record management services. At the moment records exist and are managed in various forms in different government and non-government organisations, and it can be very difficult to collate all that information for persons wanting to seek their family history. Therefore, it is proposed to spend quite some money on upgrading those existing records so that people can access the information without it taking so long. Also, in recognition of the difficulty of remoteness that some Aboriginal people face, the program is an acknowledgment that we need to improve those records so they can be accessed.

The third category of spending is the provision of counselling support to people. Some of the information that they will find could be quite distressing. It is an emotional time for people, which we have acknowledged through a commitment to some counselling support. Also, we anticipate that the Commonwealth Government will also put in resources to supplement that program, and also to look at that on an ongoing basis.

Mr FISHER: The Minister's last comment about the Commonwealth is very important. We are making a lot of effort within the State. The Commonwealth Government has indicated that it is making in excess of \$50m available for the "Bringing Them Home" report. How the funds are to be distributed around Australia is a matter of great concern to us. We have something like 16 per cent of the Australian Aboriginal population in this State. It appears that perhaps the distribution will not be on the basis of that Aboriginal population. That concerns us. For example, regarding the Commonwealth's addressing of a counselling program, we were told it is looking at perhaps putting two counsellors in Western Australia out of that budget. We thought it would provide much more funding for Western Australia in that regard. The main issue of concern between ourselves and the Commonwealth with the "Bringing Them Home" report, and addressing the issue of Aboriginals being taken from their families in the past, is that the commonwealth program does not duplicate or in any way conflict with what is happening at the state level. Therefore, we are working very closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the commonwealth people to ensure that in Western Australia, at least, there is an integrated program combining commonwealth and state government dollars to ensure the best outcome for Aboriginal people in this State.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Can I ask for supplementary information on that? With the money that is being expended and the commonwealth money directed, have you any idea of how many families will be involved? Do you have a generic or top number or is that not known at the moment?

Mr FISHER: No, we do not. We have had a tracing service within the department for many years which has helped many Aboriginal families trace their roots. Along with the Commonwealth, we will be conducting campaigns to advertise the service at both the state and commonwealth level. We do not know what the demand will be. As the Minister pointed out, one of the key issues apart from tracing and record keeping is counselling. Record keeping does not involve only our department or Aboriginal Affairs, but also church groups; we have a task force working on that matter. Undoubtedly, it is an emotional time when people trace relatives they did not know they had. Counselling will be a key element in what we do. However, we have no idea of the numbers.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Will that be situated in the Perth metropolitan area or is it envisaged for country areas in which there are Aboriginal people?

Mr FISHER: That will be in our department. We have a small tracing service at the moment. We will beef up that service and link up with the community. The Aboriginal Affairs Department is establishing 23 offices around the State. One of its functions will be to act as a point of contact for Aboriginal people. In the past we found that Aboriginal people did not want to come into what they saw as the welfare office that was responsible, in some cases, for removing children from families. The Aboriginal Affairs Department will provide that frontline service. Aboriginal people who want access to information about their history or their past will go to the Aboriginal Affairs Department. The department will collect the information and feed it into the tracing bureau within our organisation.

Ms ANWYL: I do not see any mention of the child protection service register in the budget papers, despite its being promoted as a major achievement in the last budget papers. In which part of the budget papers will I find the resourcing of that register? What is the status of the number of registrations, given the information received in the past couple of days about the huge number of reported, substantiated or convicted paedophiles that the police child abuse unit has collated over the past couple of years? We were told at the last estimates hearings that 656 children were registered.

Mr BUDISELIK: It is a discrete unit within the department, with two officers working on it full time. We are in the process of proceeding with the legislation. There have been some good outcomes from the register in terms of the negotiations for reciprocal guidelines with a number of other departments. The registrations have increased. As at December 1997 there were about 1 300 or 1 400. However, the majority of those registrations continue to be child protection service registrations. Some of the other departments that ultimately will register have advised us that until the legislation is in place they have a reservation about registering.

Ms ANWYL: Are you referring to the new Child Welfare Act?

Mr BUDISELIK: No. It will be an amendment to the Child Welfare Act. The member is referring to a total revamp of the Child Welfare Act.

Mrs PARKER: It is separate from that.

Ms ANWYL: Are you going to amend the Child Welfare Act before you revamp all of the legislation?

Mr FISHER: Yes, simply to get this through.

Ms ANWYL: What is the time frame for that?

Mr BUDISELIK: It has a classification, so we hope it will go through the legislative process this year.

Ms ANWYL: What is your timetable for a new Act, while we are on that subject?

Mr BUDISELIK: One of the other outcomes of the CPSR is that the custodian - that may not be the title in the new Act - will have the capacity to make decisions with the lead agency and to undertake a coordination responsibility in the delivery of services. We are already seeing the potential for that to make a difference. The history of child protection has been confusion between a multitude of agencies. The allocation is from within the department; we are not asking for new money.

Ms ANWYL: Has the amending legislation been drafted?

Mrs PARKER: The drafting instructions have been approved by Cabinet, so it is in process.

Mr BUDISELIK: We have prepared a draft Bill that still has to go through the processes.

Ms ANWYL: Where is the allocation for the child protection service register? Why is it not mentioned as a priority?

Mr FISHER: If we mentioned everything in our budget it would be 5 000 pages long. The register is an integral part of budget spending. It would be within output 7. The resources to establish the register have been found internally.

Ms ANWYL: What is the allocation to the register?

Mr BUDISELIK: I would like to take that on notice. We can get the figure; it is in the vicinity of \$150 000.

Mrs PARKER: I am happy to take that on notice. We will provide the budget for the operation of the register.

The CHAIRMAN: That will be by way of supplementary information, Minister?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Ms ANWYL: You said that 1 200 or 1 300 children are registered. How many adults convicted of offences against children are on the register?

Mr BUDISELIK: We can take that on notice. It is a fairly low number. The legislation will affect the way the police give us that information.

Ms ANWYL: We have heard that the paedophile investigation unit within the Police Service holds up to 1 200 names. Why is it that the department has only a few names, and the Police Service so many?

Mr BUDISELIK: A lot of those names would relate to their intelligence information, rather than convictions. One of the issues between the police and the department is exchanging intelligence information when there is no court conviction reported against an individual.

Ms ANWYL: Is there a proper exchange of information now?

Mr BUDISELIK: We can establish who is convicted.

Ms ANWYL: No, the other way. Can you give information to the police?

Mr BUDISELIK: It is less systematic than we hope it will be. That project is under way at the moment. One of the working parties that has been established by the Ministers' conference is looking at the cross-jurisdictional exchange of intelligence information between welfare agencies where there is a substantiated allegation of child abuse. That is a lower level of proof than conviction in court. However, we are trying to examine a way that information can be exchanged between States while still safeguarding individuals' rights. It is a vexed area. Obviously if there is a finding of guilt in the courts, it is on the public record. The other information is generally based on repeated allegations, some of which are substantiated.

Ms ANWYL: Last time I asked there were six names on that register.

Mr BUDISELIK: We can get back with the number. There will be more than six.

Ms ANWYL: My point is the glaring difference between the number on the department's register compared with 1 200 on the police register.

Mr BUDISELIK: They are measuring different things.

Mrs PARKER: They are quite different.

Mr BUDISELIK: The child protection services register will record the names of people convicted of offences. The police have an enormous intelligence database.

Mrs PARKER: The issue of natural justice is of concern to us to protect not only the child, through the transfer of information, but also a person's right to a trial and for an allegation to be proved in a court of law. That is an issue that Ministers are faced with around the country. We would like to exchange information across state borders. However, the principles of natural justice prevent our doing so. A national working party is looking at some of those issues. We need to progress this issue, and I look forward to the legislation coming into the Parliament. I am not prepared to wait for the rewrite of the three Acts into one Act before we get the child protection services legislation in place. Although those reciprocal procedures have improved the data exchange between different agencies, it will be even better when the legislation is in place. As soon as it is ready I will be happy to discuss it with the member and I look forward to its passing through the House.

Dr CONSTABLE: How much was spent in 1996-97 and 1997-98 on market research and advertising, and what is your estimate for the coming year?

Mrs PARKER: The commitment to advertising has a couple of motivations. Firstly, it is important to raise community awareness about the department and the services it offers. Secondly, the research conducted by Family and Children's Services on parents and their attitudes produced two consistent themes: Western Australian parents valued their role as parents and wanted to be able to improve their parenting.

Dr CONSTABLE: I would rather just have the information because we are short of time.

Mrs PARKER: Although parents were committed they said that nobody had trained them for parenthood. We are committed to making sure the information gets to parents. Mr Budiselik will comment on the budget aspects, and I will comment on people's response to our polling and their awareness of the department, their attitude to the department and the sorts of services it provides.

Mr BUDISELIK: The estimated expenditure for 1997-98 is \$285 000.

Dr CONSTABLE: Is that market research and advertising combined?

Mr BUDISELIK: No.

Dr CONSTABLE: What was it the year before?

Mr BUDISELIK: I do not have the figure for the previous year.

Dr CONSTABLE: Can I get that as supplementary information please?

Mr BUDISELIK: Yes. The estimated expenditure for 1998-99 is \$370 000. We are starting to see very good results from our investment in polling, specifically the number of people who seek help with their parenting demands and the number of people who are saying that as a result of that investment they are changing their attitude to parenting.

Dr CONSTABLE: Can we get details of the results of this market research?

Mr BUDISELIK: Yes, we can provide that information.

Dr CONSTABLE: Could we have that as supplementary information please?

The CHAIRMAN: There was a previous commitment to provide that as supplementary information.

Dr CONSTABLE: Could I have a figure for 1996-97 to make a comparison?

The CHAIRMAN: On what item?

Dr CONSTABLE: On market research and advertising, and also the results of the market research to be available as supplementary information.

Mr BUDISELIK: We are measuring that against the Warwick study which identified a negative form of parenting around the inconsistency and whatever. We are now trying to establish the demographics of that group of parents who use a style of parenting for which these formulas will improve the outcomes of children.

Dr CONSTABLE: Who does the surveying for you?

Mr BUDISELIK: We contract external surveyors.

Dr CONSTABLE: Who did it last year?

Mr BUDISELIK: I cannot recall the name of the company.

Dr CONSTABLE: Could you provide that as part of the supplementary information?

Mr BUDISELIK: I think we used Donovan Research, and they submitted a quote.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, can you just confirm that you will provide that information?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, certainly. I think the member for Churchlands requires three pieces of information.

The CHAIRMAN: The information relates to expenditure for 1996-97, the results of the market research and the company which conducted the market research.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to parent services, which is output 3 on page 445. Is the best start program involving Aboriginal families part of output 3?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: How many locations provide the best start program, how many Aboriginal children are currently involved in the program, how much funding is committed to that program, and has the funding increased?

Mrs PARKER: I do not think that we will be able to give the member the number of Aboriginal children involved in that program.

Mr BUDISELIK: We have that information, but not here.

Mrs PARKER: We will provide it as supplementary information. There are 16 best start projects throughout the State including two in the metropolitan area. They are in the developmental stage. Does the member want a list of the locations?

Mr NICHOLLS: I would like to know not only where they are, but also how many.

Mrs PARKER: Sixteen.

Mr NICHOLLS: What funding is going into that program?

Mrs PARKER: \$755 700.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can the Minister indicate whether that has been increased from last year's budget and by how much?

Mrs PARKER: I will take that on notice. I would imagine that the funding has increased because we have increased the number of locations at which we are providing that service.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can the Minister advise whether the same amount is provided to each program, or is the allocation based on the needs of the locations?

Mr BUDISELIK: It is based on need. There is a variety of funding.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the member asking for a commitment from the Minister to provide supplementary information on the figure for the previous year?

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes. I also asked for supplementary information on the number of Aboriginal children in the program. Has this program been evaluated or will it be evaluated in the near future; and if so, when?

Mr BUDISELIK: It is in the process of being evaluated.

Mr NICHOLLS: When is that evaluation likely to be completed?

Mr BIRCHALL: Very soon. The report is in its final stages.

Mrs PARKER: One of the key components of the best start program is our commitment to a partnership with and ownership by the Aboriginal community. It is a joint program between Family and Children's Services, the Education Department and the Health Department. It took longer for us to develop those services because the specification was not established in Perth and then sent out to the centres, it was developed and worked up by those community members. I remember visiting a project in the north west; it had taken far longer than we had hoped. However, the outcome was that instead of its being a program prescribed for Aboriginal people, it was one that they developed themselves. The time line has always been slower than we wanted. However, I agreed to that for the sake of the Aboriginal people feeling that they have owned the project, set its course, contributed to it and will continue to do so. That was essential to its success.

Mr NICHOLLS: What are the outcome measures for that program? Given that it is a joint program between Education and Health, what outcome measures is the department applying?

Mr BIRCHALL: I do not have the specifications with me, so I would prefer to take that on notice.

Mr BUDISELIK: As a general answer every service we fund has a set of output measures. We are increasing our specification levels.

The CHAIRMAN: Was that a commitment to supplementary information or a question on notice?

Mrs PARKER: We will provide supplementary information on the service specifications and the output measures that are in place.

Mr NICHOLLS: How do locations access this program? Is it set down that only a certain number are set up in a year or is it based on some other criteria?

Mr BUDISELIK: That will depend on the evaluation outcome. We are developing other strategies to support Aborigines and their parenting. Recently we produced a video for the Aboriginal community of Kalgoorlie. The evaluation of the best start program will determine the program's future and whether it is successful.

Mr NICHOLLS: You do not expect any further locations to join the program until the evaluation is done?

Mr BUDISELIK: That would be my recommendation.

Ms ANWYL: There has been a decrease of 12.5 per cent in the allocation to children's services on page 444. Is that related to the four year old transfer?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Ms ANWYL: I note that the estimated number of child care licences for the current year is 1 735 and the projected increase for next year is five. How does that relate to figures for last year? What is being done about child care centres that have closed and the problems associated with the non-payment of staff and so forth?

Mr BIRCHALL: Like a lot of these figures the service provision changes from time to time. The estimate of the number of licences for next year is based on the number this year, plus the fact that we are pretty sure that five more metropolitan centres will open as well as an additional five country centres. I do not have the figure for the number of licences for last year with me.

Ms ANWYL: Could you provide that as supplementary advice?

Mr BIRCHALL: I am pretty sure that is available. Historical data is kept and, if it is available, I will make every effort to provide it.

The CHAIRMAN: I confirm that the Minister will provide that information by way of supplementary information.

Ms ANWYL: Up to 30 centres have closed in Western Australia over the past couple of years. Will that be reflected in the licence figures?

Mr BIRCHALL: That change in the number of services is reflected there. However, although 30-odd have closed since the beginning of January 1996 some others have opened. I am not sure what the net figure is, but the difference would be fewer than 30. You will not see a decline of 30 in the number of licences.

Ms ANWYL: I asked about the projected increase of five licences over the next financial year because some figures would suggest that many more than five centres will close. You have estimated that many centres will close. What tracking mechanism does the department use to ascertain where these centres are opening and closing and to ensure service delivery? I know that certain areas are designated for the development of child care facilities. How does the department monitor all of this?

Mr BIRCHALL: It has been difficult over the past couple of years to make any sound predictions on whether more centres will close, so we have not taken that into account in our estimates. It may happen that more will close, or only those centres which were going to close because they were unviable, the population in their area had changed, the number of children below school age had moved on to school age and so on. It may be that the number of closures will now decline. However, we cannot predict that with any degree of accuracy, so I have not included it in those estimates. Your second question was about keeping track of whether there is adequate service provision.

In the metropolitan area our local children's services officers are in touch with local service provision. The commonwealth department that is responsible for that planning determines the areas of high need and then allocates provision for child care assistance to those areas. Last year it introduced a system whereby it controlled the growth of child care through that mechanism. We have local knowledge which we put into that planning process and the Commonwealth relies on that to a considerable extent. I imagine that there would be very little growth in the metropolitan area and most areas are well covered. In fact, the industry is concerned about an oversupply in some areas which makes the viability of centres difficult.

Ms ANWYL: Does the state government department not see that it has a responsibility to monitor that trend of oversupply to some areas and undersupply in others? A number of centres may close because people cannot afford to send their children to them.

Mr BIRCHALL: Yes, we have input into the planning process. Although that is controlled and run by the Commonwealth Government our local knowledge goes into that directly and has a significant effect. We see ourselves as joint partners in controlling that supply, growth and so on. You will also be aware of the continuing need for child care in some country areas. With the removal last year of operational subsidies it has become more difficult to sustain child care centres in some small country towns. That is still a problem in terms of supply, because the capital investment of buildings and so on must be thought about carefully. In some areas we are providing child care centres in conjunction with community centre buildings. We are using one building for two purposes. That will ensure, if the child care side of it is no longer required by the community or there is competition, say, from a private provider, that the building can be used for other purposes by the community.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: A major initiative for 1998-99 on page 439 relates to improving funding management and refers to new service agreements with funded non-government services. I am aware that a large amount of this budget has been allocated to support non-government agencies and services. Where is that reflected in the budget figures, and has there been an increase in the allocation for non-government services?

Mrs PARKER: The 1998-99 budget includes an increase of approximately 4 per cent to non-government services, which takes that service budget to over \$46m. That includes areas like the CPI increase on services and an indexation increase for the supported accommodation assistance program services. The domestic violence counselling service accounts for \$300 000 of that increase. A full year funding of services will be tendered in 1998. That was transferred to FCS following the tendering out of the functions of the women's policy development office. There is also an increase of funding of \$200 000 for safety accommodation in rural areas. There is a particular emphasis on those sorts of services in the country. There is also an increase in funding to support the operation of family centres. All in all, there has been an increase of 4 per cent to the non-government sector.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: A significant issue and trend on page 438 relates to the priority that is given to new and growing suburbs, especially in the outer metropolitan suburbs. My electorate of Swan Hills contains a lot of outer metropolitan suburbs, and I have lobbied the Minister several times for family and other services in that area. How much money is allocated in that section?

Mrs PARKER: In general planning terms, those new suburbs are acknowledged as areas where young families live.

As those suburbs grow consideration is given to planning issues such as community centres or family centres. They are not in a specific area. However, part of the planning process is acknowledging that those new areas can sometimes spring up very quickly without certain facilities being provided. It is important that we provide those facilities, so that young families have services to support them.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: You are involving the private sector in areas such as Ellenbrook. Where else in the outer metropolitan area are you utilising private industry in conjunction with the Government to provide those services?

Mrs PARKER: The developers of Secret Harbour also made a significant contribution to a magnificent community centre. It is interesting to see each of the centres as they are established or opened. The centre at Secret Harbour is a significant one which was planned with community input.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: What sort of budgetary partnership is it? Is it 50:50 or 40:60?

Mr FISHER: Basically, it is tripartite funding with local government, the developers and the department.

Mrs PARKER: In some cases the Lotteries Commission will be involved as a fourth party.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Is your department looking at all the new developments? I know that in my area a number of areas will be developed. In those new areas are you working ahead of the game plan to settle some of these services in conjunction with any developer, not just the larger developers?

Mr BUDISELIK: In terms of our zonal structure and where our outlets are located, the planning process brings together those people who are responsible for the delivery of on the ground services. Our zone managers are no longer looking only at departmental services but also at the provision of non-government services. Most of their work will come from a poorly planned new development, so the resources do swing that way. Moving resources from area to area is not easy. The planning process picks it up. We are one of the few departments with a comprehensive planning process which involves departmental officers and non-government officers.

Dr CONSTABLE: On page 440 reference is made to initiatives to protect children from maltreatment by ensuring that procedures are in place to minimise employing people who may pose a risk to children in any paid or voluntary capacity. I asked some questions about this last year and I want to get an update, particularly on employees and volunteers in non-government agencies. What progress has been made generally; and, in particular, what is the general policy about working with non-government agencies? Exactly what assistance will be given to those agencies? Will it be mandatory for them to have some sort of training and, if so, what sort of budget would be set aside for that? Is it your view that funding to non-government agencies that provide services to children should be conditional on their implementing these screening procedures?

Mr BUDISELIK: It is one of the areas we intend to focus on this year. That issue was taken to our executive recently, in terms of establishing a probity unit within the department. One of the factors to implement that comprehensively is access to the national exchange of police information. That will provide a clearance through a safety screening throughout Australia and New Zealand. We have had one sortie with the non-government sector through a feasibility consultancy undertaken by the Western Australian Council of Social Service. There is not a lot of resistance to the idea. There are some complexities with it.

Dr CONSTABLE: I understand that. It is getting it done.

Mr BUDISELIK: We have already started meeting some of the complexities within our own department, such as historic offences for matters unrelated to any risk behaviour with children. Those people will be aware that the department will look at their records, so we are working out guidelines. That is being introduced into the department as an executive decision, whereby new employees into the department are checked.

Dr CONSTABLE: Into the department itself?

Mr BUDISELIK: All promotional positions in the department are subject to clearance. We are working our way through our own backlog of employees. We are setting ourselves up as an exemplar in terms of the clearances. We intend to undertake a joint exercise with WACOSS to develop the procedures and guidelines for the non-government sector. Ultimately, it will be a condition of a service agreement, but we need to get -

Dr CONSTABLE: How far ahead do you see that being the case?

Mr BUDISELIK: I am not exactly sure, but I hope within the 12 months. A lot of it will depend on an effective linkup with NEPI so we can establish our own probity unit. We are not clear on the issue of costs yet, and whether there will be charges for each individual clearance. The police in Western Australia have a tradition of not charging the department. However, when it goes national or Australasian there may be some change to that policy, so those

discussions are occurring in the background. If there were a charge for individual employees in the sector, we would have to consider our own budget to meet some of those, particularly for volunteers.

Mrs PARKER: This has been discussed at ministerial council level both by the Community Services Ministers and the Police Ministers, so it is an issue of ongoing discussion. How each State will deal with the cost involved is one of the issues.

Dr CONSTABLE: From your earlier comments, it would be a fair target that by the end of next financial year non-government agencies would have on board procedures for safety screening of employees and volunteers?

Mr BUDISELIK: That is where we would hope to get to, certainly with agencies funded by Family and Children's Services.

Dr CONSTABLE: So those people who were not up to scratch on the procedures would not get contracts?

Mr BUDISELIK: I am not sure whether it will be that neat, but our aim is to work towards that as an outcome.

Mr FISHER: This is an important and complex issue. It is easy enough when one is employing people to make a decision on their employment. However, in the volunteer sector, particularly with people who have been working in organisations for a long time, the cost involved is not cheap.

Ministerial council meetings in the past 18 months have been red hot on two issues: Safety screening, and the transfer of information on people who have been convicted or who have had substantiated allegations made against them. Every jurisdiction is battling with this at the moment. We cannot just pull a switch and make it happen. We want to take the non-government sector with us. We do not want to be confrontationist, so we are working very closely with WACOSS to put into place a mechanism in which that can occur. We obviously want to make it happen as quickly as we can. We have the ability to link that to their funding agreements. However, we want to try, first of all, to get our own house in order and we are working our way through that. We want to work with the non-government sector and WACOSS to ensure that non-government organisations can come on board progressively with this; firstly, with all new employees and, secondly, to work their way through the backlog.

Mr BUDISELIK: In relation to implementing that in house, it has become clear that some of our Aboriginal staff are very worried about indirect discrimination because of their higher representation in courts, often when they were young, for violent offences or whatever. They advise us that, if we are not careful, not only will there be an outcome that we had not anticipated, but also we will reduce the number of people who apply to work with us because they will feel their record will be examined and they will be prevented from being employed.

Ms ANWYL: I refer to page 454 of the budget papers which provides scant information on the number of FTEs, which is reflected across all agencies. I am pleased to see a slight increase in FTEs. How many FTEs will be employed in the care and protection of children area? Last year it was 642. Could we have supplementary information on the FTEs across the department, including regional offices, and a comparison with last year? Would you make some general comment on the restructure?

Mr BUDISELIK: That would be very difficult to do. One of the reasons is that with output based reporting, the number of FTEs, which is translated to dollars and represented in the money we are putting into the output, is measured to an extent by the periodic surveying of employees. Any employee may work across a number of outputs over a period and that effort will be represented in various ways depending on the demands in an area at the time.

Ms ANWYL: Effectively, your answer is that we cannot have any breakdown of the current figure of 1 152. That is not satisfactory.

Mr BUDISELIK: As we have moved to output based reporting, the FTE figure was represented in dollar terms, so it would be a difficult process. We discussed this in preparation for this meeting. We anticipated that there would be some dissatisfaction with the reporting on FTEs. As we move to this form of reporting the bottom line will be reported on. However, if we use contract employees, for example, to respond to a particular period, that would not be represented in the FTE figure but it would be an investment of cash in that output. It would be difficult.

Ms ANWYL: The beginning of my question referred to the 642 people working in care and protection of children last year. How will I know whether there are more or fewer people in that area this year?

Mr BUDISELIK: You can presume that we have not cut back on services in child protection output. The previous reporting on FTEs forced us to count people in those program areas. Last year they would have been spread across two broad outcome areas; now it is spread across eight outputs. In a way that is segmenting what we did previously. The costs for output 6 are represented as so many millions of dollars. I tried to explain that in the previous year some of those costs were reflected in outputs 4 and 5.

Mr FISHER: We have a frustration here, because we should show that our FTE numbers in that area have increased. We cannot do that because of the way we are reporting now. However, we can say categorically that we are one of the few departments within Government in which FTE numbers have increased. Over the past four years as a result of work within the organisation we have allocated approximately 250 FTEs into service delivery items. Basically, items that we have saved within the administrative side of the organisation have gone into service delivery. The classic example of that would be in the last review of the organisation and restructure in which we were able to identify 50 FTEs which have gone into service delivery, which were not there before. From our point of view there is a degree of frustration because we know that if we were reporting on the same basis as previously, and we had those FTEs attached to a program, we would be able to show you that we have put more FTEs into those programs. However, the way we are structured at the moment, that is just not possible.

Ms ANWYL: I have been handed a table. Perhaps another way would be to provide some detail of each office and how many staff are in that office?

Mr FISHER: Yes. We can do that, but I do not think it will help you.

Ms ANWYL: I am requesting it. I would like the number of people in each office around the State, and the comparison with last year.

The CHAIRMAN: That will be provided way of supplementary information.

Dr TURNBULL: I am finding the FTEs extraordinarily difficult. I can understand why you are saying that some FTEs are working in one program some of the time and in another program some of the time, and that it is difficult to tot up how many actual hours of service they do in each program unless they have already entered into that sort of data collection. Following the reorganisation of regions into zones, could you give me by way of supplementary information the staffing levels for 1996-97 and 1997-98, and the projection for 1998-99? I do not mind if you put it in what were the regions for 1996-97 and then into the zones for 1997-98, and into the future projections, but can you list what they are for each one? What was the reduction for the regional managers when you went from regions to zones? In 1998-99, how many of the FTEs in each zone will be full-time and how many will be part-time? I understand your problem with the fact that quite a few of them are on contract, so can you provide for each zone how much money will be spent on contracts? I understand that some of that reduction in FTEs for a zone will be replaced by contracts. How much money will be allocated for contracts?

The CHAIRMAN: Can the Minister provide that information?

Mr FISHER: Dr Turnbull, can you tell us what you want?

The CHAIRMAN: Staffing levels.

Mr FISHER: Apart from those specifics, what are you trying to get at?

The CHAIRMAN: That is the information for which she has asked, Minister. Can you provide that?

Mrs PARKER: We need some clarification.

Mr FISHER: This is not a Machiavellian plot. We are not trying to -

Mrs PARKER: We need to clarify exactly what the member wants with regard to the issue of contracts.

Mr BUDISELIK: Contracts is a bit confusing. If we have a vacancy, we may fill it with a contractor - someone who is recruited but not appointed permanently. We call them contract staff. We also have our non-government service agreements, which are also contracts. It is a bit dependent on the language. If you are looking at how many staff Family and Children's Services has allocated to those different patches, increasingly we are trying to stop ourselves thinking in that way and to start thinking in terms of the dollars we invest through our own staff and also through the services we contract with non-government. The question is what sort of contract you are talking about.

Dr TURNBULL: I am not talking about the contract with the non-government services. I am very concerned that although you are thinking in programs, when it comes to the rural zones, those programs cannot be delivered if we do not have people. It is no good saying that we have the parenting program, the child protection program and another program if one person is trying to deliver all three of those programs. This is a vitally important question in rural areas, because we do have the FTEs to deliver the programs, and where we have a reduction in a rural area as a result of the zones replacing the regions, that really means that despite the fact that we have got a program, the ability to deliver that program has been reduced. When we discussed the parenting program, I was told that no FTE had been allocated to that program and it was on contract. It is not on contract to the non-government sector; it is a person who has got a contract position. That was how the reduction in the FTEs was explained to me.

Mr BUDISELIK: That would still count as an FTE.

Dr TURNBULL: Good. If those sorts of positions are still counted as FTEs, how many FTEs are there in each zone - rural and metropolitan?

Mr BUDISELIK: That will be an aggregation of the information we are already providing.

Mrs PARKER: Would you be happy for us to provide that information in the same way that we said we would provide the staffing levels of the district offices around the State?

Dr TURNBULL: The district offices are not quite the same as all the people in the -

Mr BUDISELIK: What if we did each location?

Dr TURNBULL: That would be even better. We do need to have to have a comparison between 1996-97, 1997-98 and the projected future, because in the re-organisation that has taken place it has been extremely difficult to keep tabs on where the services are coming from.

Mr BUDISELIK: We will provide that. I keep emphasising that the department now sees it as the total dollars; so the services provided in rural areas are also part of our total investment in any zone. If we fund a women's refuge in Albany, it has people on the ground, but we do not count them as FTEs because they are not departmental FTEs.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister will provide staffing levels by location for 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to funding to the non-government sector, specifically to the Western Australian Council of Social Service. I cannot find any reference to the breakdown of funding to the non-government sector. Under which output area would that come in the budget?

Mrs PARKER: It would come under output No 1.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is the level of funding to the non-government sector per se, and specifically to WACOSS? For what services is the non-government sector funded; and what are the outcomes? Do any of the non-government agencies that are funded from the department receive funding to allow them to join associations or representative groups; and, if so, how much funding is provided to those groups?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: Funding to the non-government sector is some \$46m in 1998-99. WACOSS currently receives \$175 000 from Family and Children's Services, and it receives some additional funds from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. That takes its funding to approximately \$250 000. WACOSS also received \$10 000 from us as sponsorship for the conference that was held recently, and it received \$5 000 towards the sponsorship of a directory which has just been produced and which brings together many services and will be a very useful document for many agencies across the State. Services that we fund are paid an allowance for membership fees.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is that funding for each service or each organisation that delivers services?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: Each service that is funded receives a membership allowance.

Mr NICHOLLS: How much?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: It varies on a sliding scale from \$400 up to a maximum of \$1 500 per service. That allowance is not built into the annual funding level but is paid in addition to the annual funding level, and it enables funded services to join the membership body of their choice. It can be used to pay membership fees to WACOSS or to other organisations, or to purchase other services from such representative bodies.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do agencies that are funded for more than one service receive more than one lot of funding so that they can join representative groups of their choice?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: That is right.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is the basis on which funding is provided to WACOSS, what are the services that it is funded to provide, and what are the outcomes against which it is measured?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: We have a business plan for which WACOSS is funded, and it has been reporting to us on that business plan against the outputs.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are not answering my question. What services are purchased from WACOSS on the basis of that funding of \$250 000 from the department?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: That is specified in the business plan. I do not have a copy of that plan with me. I am happy to take that on notice and come back to you with the specifics.

Mr NICHOLLS: Against what outcomes is the department measuring the services that WACOSS is providing?

Mr BUDISELIK: We do not fund WACOSS for a service per se. We fund it to be a representative organisation in this sector, and the strategic plan lists the five areas against which we expect it to report. For example, we expect it to demonstrate to us a substantial diversity of membership; to establish itself in the country and to represent non-metropolitan services; and to provide information to us to assist us in our budget formulation, which it has done this year. There are five headings like that.

Mr NICHOLLS: The department funds all services by between \$400 and \$1 500 to join an organisation of their choice?

Mr BUDISELIK: Or to access services from a representative organisation. They may use that money to attend training run by a service.

Mr NICHOLLS: You fund WACOSS to be a representative group for the sector to the tune of around \$250 000 a year. Do you fund any other representative bodies not to provide services but to represent parts of the sector?

Mr BUDISELIK: No. The problem that faced the community services sector some years ago was a proliferation of peak bodies, and FCS went through a process where we made it clear that funding would be reduced to one representative body. WACOSS might choose to use some of its \$250 000 to support other small peak bodies within its structure - for example, the Council for Homeless Persons, or whatever - but the way to work with the sector in an orderly way was to bring about more regularity. We monitor WACOSS fairly closely with regard to its reporting to us and achieving its business plan. We were also advised that it was not economically viable for WACOSS to rely solely on subscriptions.

Mr NICHOLLS: Given that you fund all of the services in the sector, how much income does WACOSS derive from membership from the sector, and is any effort made to encourage WACOSS to rely more on membership than on direct government funding?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: That is certainly a component of its business plan, and it is reporting an increase in its membership. It will be reporting to our executive this Thursday and giving us a briefing about how it is going against that business plan.

Mr NICHOLLS: How many of the services that you fund have joined WACOSS of their own choice? How much money has WACOSS raised through that membership? What sources of funding does WACOSS have apart from government funding? Funding of \$250 000 is a lot of money. It seems to me that WACOSS is receiving preferential treatment, because everyone else must provide services for funding. It seems to me on the surface that WACOSS is receiving \$250 000 simply to be a representative group, and that we are also funding all the services in the sector to the tune of between \$400 and \$1 500, which funding WACOSS can also pick up.

Mrs PARKER: We will get information about how much money is paid to WACOSS in the form of fees. We have, and I have, a very good relationship with WACOSS. It provides a very good service in a sector that includes very large and very small organisations, organisations that are very established, and organisations that are community based and may not have anyone to represent them. I value the relationship that we have with WACOSS and the work that it does, and there is an ongoing rapport, reporting back and information sharing. It is one way for the sector to be represented, and with the increasing partnership between the Government and non-government organisations in the delivery of services, it is important to have some way in which they can be represented and have a communication either with the department or to the Government via the Minister. I reiterate that under those service agreements, the moneys that are paid to the provider for fees to subscribe to that peak organisation, or others, are not only for that purpose. It is very important in the non-government sector, as in any other sector, that we make provision for ongoing training and professional support. The moneys can be used for that reason as well. For example, with regard to domestic violence, we have ensured that ongoing professional support and training is provided to people in that sector so that they have the same treatment of and respect for their professionalism as would be found in the government system or in a large corporation. In this very disparate sector of these community based agencies, it is very important to provide that support.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, will you confirm what supplementary information you will provide?

Mrs PARKER: We will ask WACOSS whether it can supply the information directly to you.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is not good enough, because my concern is that this agency is receiving a large amount of money that could otherwise be used to deliver services in my electorate or any other electorate. We are also funding

services in the sector with moneys that they can choose to use for membership. One of the primary accountability measures that should be in place is that WACOSS provides you as the Minister, or the department, with an indication of the level of membership and the amount of funding that it is receiving other than from the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: What supplementary information are you prepared to provide, Minister?

Mr BUDISELIK: We will provide a list of members of WACOSS. We will need to clarify with WACOSS the amount of money - not the \$250 000, because that is on the record - that comes to it in the form of subscriptions under the agreement that we have with it. The money is not available for other uses if it is not used for the specified purpose. If it is not paid to WACOSS or used in the way specified, it is declared surplus at the end of the process.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you provide information about how much surplus you have received back from agencies that have not used that money for membership or training?

Mrs PARKER: I do not think we can.

Mr NICHOLLS: How can you then be accountable for the process? You are saying that the money can be used only for that purpose, and if they do not use it, they must hand it back, but you cannot tell me what has been handed back.

Mr BUDISELIK: We need to check the agreement with WACOSS, because I think some of the details are confidential.

Mr NICHOLLS: These are public funds.

Mr BUDISELIK: That is true, but we will need to talk to it about the nature of the agreement that has been developed with it.

Ms WARNOCK: Page 440 refers to three new women's refuges in Newman, Derby and Carnarvon. I was in Carnarvon three or four weeks ago and was told that the refuge that was to be opened was encountering some difficulties with the local community about its location. Has that location problem been sorted out, will that refuge open on schedule, and is it substantially supported by the local community? I was given to understand when I was there that the local member did not support the location, but your people there thought it was a good place for the refuge to be and were concerned that it should open. Has that local problem been sorted out, and will that very necessary women's refuge open on schedule?

Mrs PARKER: We do have a commitment to that location. I have been to Carnarvon and spoken with the people who tendered successfully for that service contract. I support the location for which they are negotiating. I am aware that the local member has taken the view of the local residents that it is an inappropriate location. I disagree with him. However, he is entitled to have his view and represent his constituency as he sees fit. I spoke again to the local member about this issue last week when the House was sitting. He understands my view. I will continue to support that location. I do not know whether it went to council late last week, but it will imminently go to council and be considered as a planning issue. I have no control over what the local council will decide with regard to that location. I have given as much support as I can, and so has the department, to the group that is trying to get approval for that location. The funds and everything are there for the construction of that refuge. It is a very needed service in that area. We have made a real commitment to the country and regional areas for supported accommodation to provide safety for women and children at risk. We are in agreement on this one; I hope we have a resolution of that as soon as possible. I have no control over the decision of the local authority. If it rejects the planning application, we will simply have to go back to the drawing board and find another location.

Ms WARNOCK: You have no idea when that will open, because of the planning problems that are developing locally?

Mrs PARKER: That is right. It is one of those issues on which we will keep a close eye but over which we have no direct control. It is regrettable that there is a delay in the provision of that service.

Ms ANWYL: It is important to note that an interim service is being provided in Carnarvon. I wish to move to outputs 9 and 10 - drug abuse strategy co-ordination and drug abuse treatment and prevention services. I am sorry that we cannot devote more time to this topic.

Mrs PARKER: We also need to complete seniors' and women's policy by 12.00 pm. It is important to dedicate some time to the WA drug abuse strategy budget.

Ms ANWYL: This highlights the problem with having only three hours for all of these areas. Minister, will you make some representations about next year's Estimates Committee, because drug abuse is such a big area and it has now been placed into this part of the Budget.

Mrs PARKER: I suggest that you speak to the Leader of the House.

Ms ANWYL: I have already done some correspondence, but I hope that you will do it also.

Mrs PARKER: It would not concern me at all to have extra time.

Ms ANWYL: I note that within the Health budget about \$1.8m of federal funds is being applied to this area. I think the statutory body is the Mental Health Services Board within the Health Department for contracting out purposes. A large amount of funding is now within Family and Children's Services' budget. How have those funds come in, and where do they translate from previous years' budgets?

Mr MURPHY: The budget of the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office has been put together from diverse sources. There is a transfer from the Ministry of Premier and Cabinet, which was previously allocated to the task force on drug abuse. There are a number of separate transfers from the Health Department for non-government organisation services and their management, including sobering up centres.

New allocations have been made out of both the 1997-98 Budget and the forthcoming 1998-99 Budget. An additional transfer is pending from the Alcohol and Drug Authority, which is also strictly speaking the Health Department.

Ms ANWYL: Output 10 at page 453 refers to user charges and fees. What component has been allowed for those? Will the community drug teams raise that sort of revenue; and, if so, what amount has been budgeted for drug and alcohol users to pay for services?

Mr MURPHY: The figure referred to in the output is actually commonwealth funds, which is a transfer from the Health Department. There are no provisions within WADASO's budget for fees. The issue of community drug service teams and other contracted services charging fees is a matter for those agencies. The guideline that they are following, however, is that they will not charge fees for services that are specified in their contracts, but where they develop and provide services outside of those contracts, they are free to charge fees.

Mrs PARKER: We have contracted those 10 drug service teams out to non-government organisations, and last week someone from one of those groups raised with me the issue of charging fees, because it had within its other activities a small fee for service, just as a matter of principle. We will work through that matter. In the contracts that we have made for those community drug service teams, there is no consideration that fees will be charged for those counselling and outreach services that we are funding.

Ms ANWYL: Individual services will not be changed?

Mrs PARKER: They have many and varied tasks. We have very much a coordinating task around schools, the local drug action groups, individual services, parent counselling and those sorts of things. There is no allocation for fees to be charged for those services, but if that organisation then developed services outside of what we were funding, we would not have any control over whether it charged fees.

Mr de MAMIEL: The reference to user charges and fees includes services that are provided free of charge, which would be audit services provided by state audits. I do not know the breakdown of that.

Ms ANWYL: The performance measures for output 10 state that 80 per cent of the results of the program surveys rate at a level better than satisfactory. From where is this information derived, and can we have access to that document or survey?

Mrs PARKER: The community drug service teams are new in terms of focus and intention. I have said on record before that we saw when we established that next two year plan - the 1997-99 plan - that there was a gap in service with regard to early intervention and support. A commitment was made to provide that early support. How we will measure it will be very much a matter of putting in place whatever we can best determine at the time. I am sure that as we go along, we will modify a whole range of things, not because we got it so wrong in the first place, but because it is a new and quite significant commitment to make around the State.

Mr MURPHY: All of our contracted non-government services have reporting requirements, and most of those have existing requirements to report on client satisfaction. That is the primary measure from which that will be derived. Our prevention programs are also evaluated to varying degrees, and we will seek to derive from those evaluations a measure that equates to this output measure.

Ms ANWYL: That figure of 80 per cent suggests that there is some benchmark for the current financial year. However, that is an arbitrary figure that may or may not be applied?

Mr MURPHY: No.

Ms ANWYL: From where does the actual figure come, and can we have access to those documents?

Mr MURPHY: We can be quite clear with respect to non-government and other contracted services. They have client survey measures which determine satisfaction, and that is the basis on which we have targeted the 80 per cent. When it comes to prevention programs, it is less straightforward, so there will need to be some translation of our evaluation measures into the notion of satisfactory performance. That is not a difficult task, but it will vary with each program. The first requirement for the contracted services will be quite simple to provide by way of supplementary information. In the case of the prevention programs, we will be able to indicate those measures which are then translated into a measure of satisfactory performance.

Mrs PARKER: The principle is similar to the one that we face with measuring the Parenting Plus programs. It is very difficult to measure the success of prevention services, particularly in the short term. In the medium to long term, we hope, for example, to see fewer young people enter into a drug use or abuse lifestyle, and that is something that can be measured. There are real difficulties in measuring the success of a prevention program. Certainly customer satisfaction and a range of other measures will be established.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I also refer to output 10, drug abuse treatment and prevention services. Where does the schools education project fit into the budget; what is involved; are we on target; what sorts of schools are we handling; and what are we doing generally? I believe firmly that we need to start with early intervention to stop drug abuse.

Mrs PARKER: The school drug education project is the next significant budgetary commitment that we have made, apart from those 10 community drug service teams. We have just gone into a new stage in that project. The pilot of the drug education program is now in place in over 55 schools. That pilot includes an overview of new curriculum, 100 sample lessons, and a take home pack. That assessment period will finish at the end of this term. It will then be assessed and we will just go on with that stage. The commitment is over a three year period to get the school drug education project into every school in Western Australia. That has been a combined effort between the Perth education office and the Association of Independent Schools.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Is that K-12 or just high schools?

Mrs PARKER: It is for primary schools as well. The school drug education resource book and the pilot teacher support documents are being piloted in the schools.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: What is the budgeted amount for that?

Mrs PARKER: In 1998-99, the estimated allocation for drug education in schools is \$1.886m, of which \$174 000 will go to the life education project.

Dr CONSTABLE: One of the performance measures for output 10 at page 453 under the heading "Timeliness" is the number of persons on waiting lists for treatment services. There is no figure for that measure. Can you give some ballpark figure of how long people need to wait for treatment services?

Mrs PARKER: Certainly. There are no waiting lists for the methadone treatment services that have now gone out to the suburbs. The budget increases that we have had have enabled us to increase the bed allocation to organisations that are providing in-residence treatment services. Essentially, there are no lengthy waiting lists for drug treatment programs.

Mr MURPHY: I would very much like to be able to put a target of zero there, and that is our aim through those increases in funding that the Minister has mentioned and programs such as the methadone waiting lists. We have some further work to do in terms of cooperative arrangements for reporting and measuring the government and non-government services.

Dr CONSTABLE: When I read this outcome - reduce the extent and impact of drug abuse - and I look at the performance measures, they do not tell me a lot. You have just given me much more information than is in this document. Why not put in some of those things, such as no waiting time for the methadone program and so on, so that we can see what progress is being made? I would like to see figures, for instance, on the number of deaths from drug overdose, because that is part of it too, so that over time we can see a change in that. There is a range of things, and while they may be difficult to measure, you should put some of that information in here for us to see.

Mrs PARKER: One of the difficulties is that if we take, for example, the heroin overdose rate, I have some reluctance -

Dr CONSTABLE: It is published information anyway.

Mrs PARKER: Yes, but so far this year, in comparison with last year, I think we are at 20 per cent.

Dr CONSTABLE: I am not suggesting a comparison from year to year. However, a comparison over a period of time - five years or more - would start to give us some idea of whether this problem was getting bigger or smaller.

Mr MURPHY: I take your point entirely. It is partly a function of being a new agency and partly a function of this being a new system of performance measurement. As you will see, those effectiveness measures are still being developed, and we will take on board the things you suggest.

Mr NICHOLLS: Solvent abuse has been a problem in my electorate and I know in a number of other electorates, particularly with young people, and it concerns many parents and me greatly. Is it considered to be a major problem in the overview of drug abuse?

Mrs PARKER: Solvent abuse is actually a problem that is very localised. However, although it is localised, is so damaging and it has such long term health impacts on people that we do consider it a serious localised issue and have things in place.

Mr MURPHY: It certainly is as much a drug problem as any of the others that you want to name, whether legal or illegal drugs. The strategies need to be localised, though, because that is how the phenomenon occurs. The Office of Aboriginal Health has a lead responsibility in dealing with the issue in Aboriginal communities, and some major projects are under way in the central desert area. In urban areas, it is a cooperative endeavour. We have specified in the contracts of community drug service teams that they deal with specific local issues such as solvent abuse, and I am pleased to say that they are working together in a number of areas with volunteer community groups and our local drug action groups to tackle this issue.

Mr NICHOLLS: The only initiative of which I am aware is in the central desert region, where before the drug strategy came into place, the communities were substituting petrol with avgas or other fuel sources to stop petrol sniffing. What other programs or initiatives are in place to address solvent abuse in any area that you can nominate?

Mr MURPHY: I will comment on the Aboriginal areas first. The substitution of avgas for petrol gave us something of a breathing space in those areas, and it is still the case in some areas. However, lately the problem has re-emerged in some areas because petrol is still available to those communities, so it is an ongoing issue. Other initiatives include, as I said, the community drug service teams having the mandate to take on this issue on a case management and community development basis. One of the problems with case management for solvent abusers is that they are such a difficult, wearing and damaged group that they tend to move from service provider to service provider and nobody keeps that -

Mr NICHOLLS: That does not tell me anything other than that somebody has been given a responsibility. I have problems in my electorate, and I know that other members have problems in their electorates, but I do not know of any specific program or service that is in place. Are there specific programs that either have been funded through the non-government sector or are being looked at; and if those programs are not on the ground, what is planned in the future to deal with this problem?

Mr MURPHY: One specific community development program with Aboriginal people in that target group is provided by the North East Regional Youth Council. However, the community drug service teams will be taking up those approaches, using both case management for the individuals and community development approaches working with Aboriginal communities, in particular, at the local area, to try to get a range of initiatives targeting that group. Unfortunately, it is not an issue that can be effectively dealt with by having a specific targeted program. One other important initiative through local drug action groups and community teams is reducing the supply of solvents. We have developed a drug aware business pack where businesses sign a code of conduct to agree not to supply these substances without great care. It requires footwork on the part of local drug action groups and community teams to get around to these businesses to make them aware of the issues and to prevent them from providing those substances.

Mrs PARKER: One of the real difficulties with substance abuse is that a variety of substances can be abused, and you cannot make one substance illegal or legally unobtainable because there are just so many things that young people can abuse that fit within these criteria. That is why we have taken the approach of trying to engage the community through the drug service teams, the local drug action groups and the business drug aware program. We have said right from the start with the "Together Against" strategy that no strategy can work on its own and the Government cannot do it by itself, and we need to engage the community. There is a component of funding within the school drug education project to target substance abuse. It is very difficult to target a specific program and group of young people. A whole range of things wrap around it and can apply. It is not an easy issue to respond to.

Mr NICHOLLS: If people in my electorate are abusing substances quite openly and are publicly damaging themselves and causing problems for others, what services are available to provide support or address that problem? Do you have an estimate of the number of young people who are involved in solvent abuse?

Mrs PARKER: The services that are now in place are the community drug service teams; and if you have a problem, you would contact the service provider there, and that is part of its brief. Those teams are in place now, and, as I said, there is a significant increase with this budget in the number of professional people in the field to provide those early intervention and support services that have not been there before.

Mr NICHOLLS: Where are those people located?

Mr MURPHY: The one in Mandurah will commence at around the end of July and is currently providing sessional services to Mandurah.

Mr NICHOLLS: Will it have the resources to be able to tackle solvent abuse and will it have the necessary funds and back-up to be able to put in place programs that will address that problem?

Mr FISHER: Yes, but that may not solve the problem. It is a very difficult problem.

Mrs PARKER: The community drug service teams are the most expensive budget item because, as I said before, we had a commitment to provide not just the clinical treatment services but the early intervention. While you might want more funds, etc, we have had a very significant increase in the budget for the community drug teams: In the country, it is about three times the number of people who are funded in the field to provide that support; and in the metropolitan area, it is about double. The community drug service team should be your first port of call to access some support in dealing with that community problem.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you estimate the number of people involved in solvent abuse in WA?

Mr MURPHY: It is very, very difficult. The task force on drug abuse, three years ago now, estimated a couple of hundred people. I guess it is significantly more than that in urban areas, and it has re-emerged, as I indicated before, in regional areas.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is a growing problem?

Mr MURPHY: It ebbs and flows, but it has grown over recent years.

Division 70: Office of Seniors Interests, \$3 645 000 -

[Mr Barron-Sullivan, Chairman.]

[Mrs Parker, Minister for Seniors.]

[Ms D. Moran, Executive Director.]

[Mr R.A. Freeman, Director of Business Management.]

Ms ANWYL: When will the five-year state plan on ageing be released, given that that was promised in the 1996-97 Budget? What planning is going into aged care accommodation in rural and remote areas, given that many seniors need to leave their usual place of residence to access accommodation?

Mrs PARKER: Dianne will comment about that state-wide consultation, because we made a real commitment to ensure that the state plan provided time in its preparation stages for consultation. Although it was part of a previous Budget, it was never intended that it would be produced during the time of the 1997-98 Budget, because it was all part of that consultation period. The consultation period has now been completed. The plan came back to the Office of Seniors Interests and was collated. We are now negotiating around various government agencies and departments to establish their commitment to the plan, and it will be finalised and released this year at a time yet to be decided, but when we choose to release it.

Ms ANWYL: Will that be this calendar year?

Mrs PARKER: Certainly this calendar year.

Ms MORAN: The consultations were very widespread, and we had a tremendous response with in the order of 550 submissions, reaching all areas of the State. There were a number of submissions from a number of groups, not just the usual groups that comment. We went out of our way to ensure that people who do not normally have an interest in seniors' issues were part of the consultation process. The rural communities were one of the first cabs off the rank in terms of consultation.

Aged care planning is within the domain of the Commonwealth Government. We are very concerned about facilities in rural areas, particularly where seniors have to move from the communities in which they have lived all their lives to another community to take up a place in a residential setting. We are well and truly aware of that concern and are working on it. We have an ongoing relationship with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family

Services, and we are aware of some of those issues. We are pointing out all the time some of the problems that people are facing. We have been protesting about and lobbying against the aged care reform issue, and trying to make sure that the Commonwealth Government is aware of the implications for Western Australian seniors and their carers. There are some major problems.

Ms ANWYL: Is there an allocation for that issue within this budget, or are you saying that it is all a commonwealth responsibility?

Ms MORAN: Anything to do with advice, lobbying or advocacy on commonwealth issues is part of our operating budget. We have a role in policy advice to government, and that is part of our input in policy advice. There is not a specific amount, but the services and functions around that issue are dealt with in policy.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: The second dot point on page 1055, under "Major Initiatives for 1998-99", states that a range of initiatives will be implemented to promote 1999 as the International Year of the Older Persons. What is the department doing and what initiatives is it promoting, and how much in the budget has been allocated to that initiative?

Mrs PARKER: I regard the international year as not just a range of celebrations but a critical opportunity for Australia, which is facing a demographic shift between now and 2020, when rather than seniors comprising about 14 per cent of our community, they will comprise an estimated 22 per cent. That is one of the most significant demographic changes that we will see in this country over a short period of time. Traditionally, we have regarded ourselves as a young country, but within 20 years, almost a quarter of the population will be seniors. There is a real need not only for government agencies to focus on delivery of services, but also for the community - and between the generations - to change its attitude to the role of seniors. By way of example, I often ask groups what percentage of the population of seniors they believe lives in supported residential accommodation. Quite a range of percentages will come in, and the number is around 6 per cent. There is a perception that seniors are very dependent and are a drain on the economy, etc. However, because seniors are now living longer and are healthier, and have many more years of retirement or semi-retirement in which they can make very worthwhile contributions and enjoy a quality of life, it is important for the International Year of the Older Persons that we have initiatives in place that will contribute to the attitude change and will help Australia, and particularly Western Australia, to embrace its seniors population in a different way as we move toward that demographic shift. I have in place a steering committee for the international year activities, and it has made recommendations about a range of activities that the Government should plan. I intend to adopt its report and put in place a schedule of activities to celebrate that year, not in order for us to have a good time, but to engage the community and at the end to have a significant attitude and awareness change.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: What budget amount was allocated for that?

Ms MORAN: There is \$700 000 in the 1998-99 Budget. The Government has committed \$1.15m over three financial years. The bulk of that money will be for specific initiatives which, as the Minister said, will be of long term benefit to the community, particularly the seniors community, and will also enable the community to take part in that year. The plan is currently in a proposal format and is being considered by the Minister. It includes a series of events and initiatives but also, most importantly, a large component for community involvement. The year will embrace the whole community, but with the Government providing resources to support it statewide. It will be a magnificent event in terms of focus on the ageing population, and we expect it to change attitudes well and truly. It will break down the barriers. One of the biggest challenges for us is to smash through the ageism that exists in our community, and we regard this year as providing that opportunity. As the Minister said, it will not just be a year of fun, celebratory activities. There will certainly be some celebrations, but we want them to be lasting, longstanding initiatives that will help us prepare for the not too distant future when almost one in four of us will be a senior.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am somewhat concerned that the budget forecast for the Office of Seniors Interests is decreasing from \$3.6m to \$2.8m in the year 2001-02. I understand the problems you face as a Minister seeking budget allocations; nonetheless, given the comments you made about the increased number of seniors and the importance of providing information and quality planning to government, I urge you to take every opportunity to raise that issue with the Treasurer and to try to find ways of increasing the budget rather than decreasing it. I do not expect you to comment because I know that that is an issue for which the Treasurer has responsibility.

Mrs PARKER: It must be remembered that the Office of Seniors Interests is not involved in service delivery per se; for example, it does not administer any aged care. All of that budget is expended by the Health Department. Regarding what you see as the decline, some significant finite commitments were made in those budgets that will not be ongoing. The preparation of the state plan on ageing was one of them and the allocation of the International Year of the Older Persons was another. As I said, it is not a service delivery agent. It has an advocacy, policy and planning role. Those finite and time restricted activities account for the decrease.

Mr NICHOLLS: I accept your comments, Minister. I wanted you to know that I am concerned that we are not giving the sort of ongoing commitment to the Office of Seniors Interests that I think it deserves. I refer to the Seniors Card under output 4. Has an evaluation been undertaken of the change in the renewal period from two years to five years? At the time of the change there was some concern about accountability for funding the concessions that were available.

Ms MORAN: An evaluation was done in the move from a two year renewal period to a five year renewal period of the Seniors Card. I am pleased to report that that was well received by seniors. They appreciate that there is better support and that they are not burdened with having to renew their card every two years. A five year time frame is far more suitable. The advice and feedback from the community was very good. The card is a matter for ongoing review and evaluation. We are interested in the people who contribute to our Seniors Card discount directory. We are planning an evaluation of the business community to encourage it to provide better service to Seniors Card holders.

Mr NICHOLLS: There has been a longstanding issue concerning reciprocal benefits between the States and the different Seniors Cards around Australia. Have any discussions resulted in reciprocal arrangements? If so, what are the arrangements and are there any plans to continue such reciprocal negotiations?

Ms MORAN: Yes. A lot of work has been done. We have formulated a task force on ageing. In a nutshell the various States and Territories and the Commonwealth meet on a couple of occasions each year. We are working on developing what we call a national seniors tourism scheme based on our Seniors Cards. As the member is aware, in the order of three million Seniors Card holders exist throughout Australia. It is a problem for Western Australians who have travelled east when they cannot get a discount or a concession on a tram or a train in Melbourne. The concession is at the behest of the tram driver. We understand it is not a major problem but it is more of an embarrassment and that is a concern to us. We have been working with the various transport authorities for some time to get them to look at the way they provide concessions and benefits to visitors from other States. I am pleased to report that in Queensland there are benefits for Western Australians travelling by rail. There are still some issues and obstacles to overcome. We are looking not just at fares and tickets but at the whole issue of domestic tourism. Work is being done around packaging with the tourism councils and authorities and with the transport authorities. These three groups coming together will result in a program that will make it easier for seniors to travel throughout the country.

We also see this as a stimulus for domestic tourism. If we can keep our seniors active and involved the Seniors Card will become a "go card" that enables people to get out and about. However, most importantly it will provide some benefits on public transport in other jurisdictions. We are working on this at the moment to get a program up and running for the international year, which we see as a target. Although some breakthroughs have been made, some States are prepared to come on board and others are not. We must negotiate these matters.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is Queensland the only State cooperating?

Ms MORAN: Queensland rail is very good. In South Australia people can apply for a South Australian Seniors Card. A Western Australian going to South Australia can apply for a card. We are trying to break through some of the barriers. We must deal with transport authorities, tourism authorities and of course the small Seniors Card offices. We have made a lot of progress, but we still have a way to go.

Ms WARNOCK: I will pass up my opportunity to ask further questions, as much as I would like to ask them, because we have only 20 minutes in which to deal with Women's Interests, for which I am the shadow spokesperson, and I want to get on to that.

Ms ANWYL: Mr Chairman, there is an unevenness in the allocation of questions. I have only one further question due to the pressure of time, not because I do not have further inquiries. The recent case of a 95 year old woman in Hamilton Hill has of course drawn to the surface the issue of abuse of seniors in the community. Is there specific funding within this budget to deal with that issue? What steps can be taken to empower seniors in the community who are being subjected to abuse?

Mrs PARKER: We launched, I think in August last year, the results of work done by the Office of Seniors Interests with the Office of the Public Advocate to develop guidelines and protocols for agencies that were dealing with seniors to enable them to identify where there might be a risk of a range of abuses. We not only launched those protocols, but also, in an effort to ensure that they were circulated throughout the sector, applied and publicised, we funded the Council on the Ageing to establish a pilot project for their implementation.

Ms MORAN: The amount of \$150 000 was earmarked over two years and money is in this year's budget. It is a pilot program which involves training community workers to identify elder abuse and then to respond. There are two parts to it. We are closely monitoring the program. A training officer, who has background in handling elder

abuse cases, has been appointed. Part of the problem is awareness. People do not believe it happens. We understand that the situation with that individual was very complex. However, we are looking into it further. There is no simple answer and we must be careful how we deal with it. The pilot elder protection project will address the issue of awareness and education. It will also look at response mechanisms. That is the critical issue. We do not want service providers who do not know how to respond. The protocol to which the Minister referred is critical. It provides a way in which service providers can respond.

Ms ANWYL: What was the amount of funding for this year?

Ms MORAN: It is a pilot program funded with \$150 000 over two financial years. I think we spent \$115 000 last year and an additional \$35 000 is available for this year. We will be closely evaluating it.

The CHAIRMAN: Just before we go to the next question it is important that the Chair addresses the point that was raised a moment ago about the unevenness of questioning. Since this Chairman has been in the Chair the members who have had the call are Swan Hills three times, Mandurah twice and Churchlands once, but she has only sought the call once. The member for Perth has declined the call on one occasion and the member for Kalgoorlie has had the call four times. The member for Kalgoorlie is correct; she has had the highest number of calls.

Point of Order

Ms ANWYL: The issue is not the number of calls. The issue is the number of questions asked when a member has the call and the amount of time that is devoted to them. Thank you for clarifying the record but I would also like to have you rule on the point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: I am trying to move off this quickly but when members want to ask a brief series of questions on an output I have allowed that.

Committee Resumed

Mr NICHOLLS: On page 1059 output 3 refers to the recently launched campaign on smoke alarms in seniors' homes. Is there any cost to government in respect of that program? Is there any intention to expand that program throughout rural Western Australia? I understand it has taken place only in the metropolitan area.

Mrs PARKER: There is no direct cost to government and the expansion of the program depends on the willing and active participation of Rotary groups. It is an initiative of Rotary that has been supported by the Office of Seniors Interests and the Emergency Services Department. It really is dependent on Rotary involvement. The take up rate of that and the interest by Rotary clubs is very encouraging.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do you expect it to expand through the rural areas?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Division 71: Women's Policy Development Office, \$3 656 000 -

[Mr Barron-Sullivan, Chairman.]

[Mrs Parker, Minister for Women's Interests.]

[Ms A. Norgard, Executive Director, Women's Policy Development Office.]

[Ms M. Robinson, Manager Corporate Services, Women's Policy Development Office.]

[Ms C.A.P. Kagi, Director Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, Women's Policy Development Office.]

Ms WARNOCK: I note that the budget has been cut by almost 15 per cent from \$4.293m to \$3.656m, with the real reduction being approximately 17 per cent. Is the Minister concerned that the suffrage celebrations will suffer as a result of this slash in funding?

Ms NORGARD: The reduction in funding is due to the dropping of a special allocation of \$340 000 for 1997-98 which was described as for various initiatives, and that drops to \$110 000. In addition, an upfront funding of \$300 000 for a community education campaign on domestic violence was provided in 1997-98 and does not continue. We do not believe it will affect the celebration of the centenary of women's suffrage. We have made provision within our office's budget allocation for the need to support the centenary. By managing funds we can provide sufficient support.

Yesterday I was at a meeting of the suffrage committee. It is most encouraging to see how well they are doing and how imaginatively they are approaching the celebrations and how excellently they are involving the wider community and sponsorship to make it genuinely a Western Australia-wide community celebration.

Ms WARNOCK: A dot point on page 1316 refers to the impact of changing work practices on women in Western Australia being an issue which the office is expected to examine. I therefore draw attention to the many headlines in recent months about Western Australian women earning 10 per cent less than their Eastern States counterparts. This has been getting worse for years. Given that this is so, I assume that some of the changing work practices might refer to this matter. Given that WA women continue to be the worst paid in Australia, what work is the office doing on this issue?

Ms NORGARD: We share your concern about that and have been working with the Department of Productivity and Labour Relations which has line responsibility for that issue. As the policy office, we work in partnership to achieve outcomes. That office's strategic plan indicates that the gap in earnings will be reduced by the year 2000, which is perhaps a little ambitious. We must first understand the causes and we are working with DOPLAR to come to grips with that.

We are also taking part in a national program to see what is happening to women all around Australia. Additionally, at the recent Council of Ministers for Women's Interests, Western Australia, through our Minister, was instrumental in putting a question to the Department of Labour Advisory Council on gender analysis and what is happening to women as a result of micro-economic reform and with regard to earnings.

One of our difficulties is getting a handle on the problem. One of the reasons for that is that gender disaggregated data are not routinely collected. The information we mostly understand is gleaned through research and other sources. We are trying to tackle a serious issue on several fronts.

Ms ANWYL: I am looking at supplementary advice about how \$2.6m was to be allocated to the budget last year on domestic violence prevention. Can we have that advice by way of supplementary information again this year concerning the whole output of the budget of the Women's Policy Development Office as it relates to domestic violence prevention rather than take up time now?

Ms NORGARD: Do you want the whole breakdown of the allocation?

Ms ANWYL: Page 1320 shows a total cost of \$2.4m. Can we have some detail of how that will be expended over the forthcoming financial year?

Ms NORGARD: We could give you the indicative expenditure as we see it now bearing in mind that we are in a program that very much involves community and social development. Sometimes our best laid plans are a little delayed. When that happens we work that to our advantage.

Mrs PARKER: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Ms ANWYL: Ms Norgard mentioned a moment ago that \$300 000 was allocated in the last budget for advertising related to domestic violence prevention. My understanding is that that has not been spent. When will we see an advertising campaign on domestic violence, which has been promised for more than two years? What amount will be devoted to that advertising campaign once it commences?

Mrs PARKER: The amount of \$600 000 in total will be allocated to that campaign. It is in its final stages of preparation. We wanted to ensure first that it was based on research. We also wanted to include consultation with the service providers and the community based people. Their feedback has been important in the process of planning that campaign. They had some comments on the timing of the campaign and whether the new services we are providing were in place before the campaign went to air.

Ms KAGI: It is in its final stages with a planned launching date of 26 August, but that is not public information.

The service providers and community based people wanted those new services that we funded, say, over the past six months implemented before we went to air with it. I am not unhappy with the process because it has been inclusive.

Ms ANWYL: Does the \$600 000 relate to the next financial year's advertising?

Mrs PARKER: No, that is for the whole project; it includes the preparation.

Ms KAGI: The expenditure includes concept development and advertising testing. We have commenced expenditure of part of that \$300 000. The public documents show that \$600 000 will be available, but we must use money available from this year to provide for the campaign for next year.

Ms NORGARD: It is an education campaign rather than an advertising campaign. It is aimed at attitude and behavioural changes.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I refer to page 1319. In the proportion of women members on government boards and committees one of your focuses last year and this year was to raise the decision making roles of women. However, I notice that we still have only 24 per cent with an increase to only 26 per cent. Why are we not getting more women in these decision making roles? We will not change anything until we do and it is important.

Mrs PARKER: It remains a focus. It is an issue of concern for us. I agree that the percentage is too low.

The improvement over the four year term of this Government indicates a substantial increase. One of the frustrations that I have as Minister in working with my ministerial colleagues in appointments to boards and committees is not that they are not prepared to make the search for women members, but that it is difficult to find women who are prepared to sit on boards. In one instance I asked a Minister to defer the appointment of a board because it had no women on it. I felt that it was a professional area that had a place for women. The Minister and his staff undertook a search and discovered a number of women who had the qualifications and professional experience to be able to make a contribution.

Each woman declined the offer to sit on the board. In fact, the Government had made every possible effort to ensure that we addressed that gender imbalance. However, the women did not wish to be involved in that way. I have certainly promoted the register of interested persons. I, people from the agency and my own personal staff carry bundles of application forms and not many occasions go by when I do not exhort women to put their names forward.

I have asked people from the migrant community, our non-English speaking community and the Aboriginal community to consider nominating. I have also indicated to women that they do not have to have professional experience in a field; it can simply be a management ability. I must also seek the cooperation of my colleagues. I agree that the proportion of women on boards is not high enough but we continue to work on it. As members of Parliament when we have contact with women in our community we must encourage them to nominate by emphasising the benefit, not just to themselves but also to the community as a whole, of having more women willing to participate on boards, etc.

Dr CONSTABLE: I refer to last year's budget papers at page 1071 where two evaluations were proposed; one relating to domestic violence regional planning process stage 2 and the other to the review of a government two-year plan for women. Have those been completed?

Ms NORGARD: Both of them have been completed. The domestic violence regional planning process has been very useful. It confirmed for us some of the issues that we had identified, such as the need to change the way things are done. It also pointed to some other areas where we needed to take action.

The second evaluation provided information on how to undertake the second two- year plan which is just beginning now and which we hope will be completed by the end of this year. They were both completed and both useful.

Dr CONSTABLE: Given that in previous years we had some follow-up on these evaluations, could copies of those evaluations be made available as supplementary information?

Ms NORGARD: Yes. Information in the domestic violence regional planning process evaluation is relevant to committees which we do not feel at liberty to make publicly available, except to those committees. However, we are certainly happy to release the executive summary and the recommendations.

Dr CONSTABLE: Is the second evaluation available?

Mrs PARKER: I will provide as supplementary information the executive summary of that domestic violence regional planning process and the relevant sections, but not the section specific to the committees, and the summary from the major survey.

Dr CONSTABLE: What about the other one?

Ms NORGARD: It was incorporated in a few other things so that the evaluation was not one document.

Dr CONSTABLE: Are you still talking about domestic violence?

Mrs PARKER: No, I am talking about the Government's two-year plan for women. We will provide that information to the member for Churchlands by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: I regret that there is not more time for questions on this division. Members are entitled to put any other further questions on notice.

Divisions 79 and 80: Works, \$35 507 000; Contract and Management Services, \$11 432 000 -

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

[Mr Board, Minister for Works.]

[Dr P.R. Schapper, Executive Director, Department of Contract and Management Services.]

[Mr P. Stafford, Manager, Financial Services, Department of Contract and Management Services.]

[Mr R.A. Harvey, Director of Government Contracts, Department of Contract and Management Services.]

[Mr M.M. Daube, Executive Director, Office of Youth Affairs.]

Mr BOARD: When CAMS was officially formed in 1996 it was the amalgamation of the then Building Management Authority and the Department of State Services. Although there was a transition period prior to that, CAMS was not officially formed until the middle of 1996. Having taken on the role of contract management on a whole of Government basis, CAMS operates under the Public Works Act. As a result there has been an amendment before the Parliament to rationalise the difference between procuring works and procuring goods and services which was the role of the Department of State Services. That amendment has not proceeded because it has been superseded by the review of the State Supply Act. For that purpose the accounts must be prepared as they would have been under the BMA, which is still operating under the Land Acquisition and Public Works Act, and the operations now of CAMS, which come separately. For the construction of public buildings the BMA operates under a separate series of accounts, and those new services provided by CAMS are operating under the new accounts. It is not an ideal situation. We hope that as a result of the review of the Act the process will be finalised this year.

Mr RIEBELING: I refer to page 161 of this year's Budget. The salary for the Western Australian Building Management Authority plummets from \$18.1m in 1997-98 to \$13.9m in 1998-99. At the same time the full-time equivalents are expected to increase from 296 in 1997-98 to 391 in 1998-99. Can the Minister explain the increase of 95 FTEs in this financial year that will result in a \$4.2m salary reduction?

Mr BOARD: Unfortunately the FTE figure in that area is incorrect.

Mr STAFFORD: The information on FTEs was provided to Treasury at the last minute and it got garbled in the process. The totals on the bottom of that note are wrong. The FTE - active work force numbers - for the BMA from 1997-98 to 1998-99 will decrease from 266 to 242.

Mr RIEBELING: What about these other figures?

Mr STAFFORD: Across the years? It plateaus at that.

Mr RIEBELING: Are any other figures wrong, before we start going through them all?

Mr BOARD: Not to my knowledge. We apologise for that.

Mr RIEBELING: On page 155 of the budget papers it is stated that the total cost of outputs will fall from \$6.24m in 1997-98 to \$4.4m in 1998-99. It is stated that this target will be met by savings in the cost of information technology. Can the Minister explain how the savings will be realised?

Mr BOARD: The decrease of \$2.1m, as you indicate, will be due to savings in the costs of information technology. These reductions are due to CAMS having substantially completed its program to replace large mainframe based business applications and subsequent savings as a result of moving to client server technology. Some of those original estimates are now being provided by service providers.

Mr RIEBELING: I understand there are some changes of technology. Can you be a bit more specific about how the \$2m reduction will be realised and by which agency?

Mr BOARD: We have been spending reasonable amounts of money on systems replacement. That program is concluded and we will not be making any systems replacements at present.

Mr JOHNSON: I refer to the second dot point under significant issues and trends at page 151 which refers to the Internet that you now have in place. How many access visits have you recorded so far? How many companies that have accessed the site in relation to possible tenders have taken up the opportunity to tender? How many have been successful?

Mr BOARD: At present we are developing contract information across the Internet. Although I may not be able to give you the total number of hits since that has been developed, I think we are running at about 80 000 hits per month on that site, and growing significantly. At present we do not have a process by which people can lodge their

tender across the Internet. However, that is being developed. With the complete development of electronic commerce which we see for the future, people will be able to not only find out the location of all contracts and what is available throughout Western Australia, but also lodge a tender and compete across the Internet. That is not fully developed here or in any other State. One of the difficulties is that it is not a state based system. It is not only a national based system, but also an international worldwide web.

Many of the protections, accreditation and models which we need to put in place to safeguard not only our own buying but also other businesses in the company are not quite developed. We have not completed a process by which we can do all of our trading across the Internet. However, it will be available for the future. It is happening quickly and industry is very keen to be part of it.

Mr JOHNSON: Do many people email your department for tender documents?

Mr BOARD: Yes. Part of the process that we have developed throughout Western Australia is one of communication. We have been turning many of the CAMS offices into shop front style offices from which people can receive contract and tender information. They are primarily interested in what is available and how they might be able to access it. That is the information that is being provided. Also, policies and guidelines, and information on how to compete in the contracting regime and how to get accredited is now available on the Internet. About 30 per cent of all tender information goes out on the Internet.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to performance measures for output 1 at page 154. Under "Quality" is a measure of ministerial satisfaction with advice provided by CAMS on a scale of 1 to 7. Will the Minister elaborate on his satisfaction and on this scale? How do we measure industry satisfaction?

Mr BOARD: My satisfaction with CAMS' input runs on two obvious levels. As the Minister for Works and Services I rely heavily on information being provided to me from CAMS on what is evolving in what is now a partnership between the Government and the private sector. This has been an evolving process. As you know, since taking office more and more works and services are being contracted out. The Department of Contract and Management Services - the old BMA - does not construct anything any more. It is all done by contract, as is the maintenance of all government buildings. Every week I have advice on how this is evolving, not only through our own agencies, but throughout the public sector.

That is support to my own ministerial office almost on a day to day basis. I rely heavily on that advice and I am extremely happy with the advice that I have been given. There are trends and significant issues that we need to address. I have formed a number of advisory councils, the Building and Construction Advisory Council and the Small Business Procurement Council, in which both CAMS and the State Supply Commission are involved. They help me change the way we go about our contracting regime to make it user friendly. One of the issues that we have tried to get through to both the business and the ordinary community this year is that this is not always about the bottom line but about better results and better practice. If I can achieve that through not only outside advice but also internal advice, we are doing it.

If you had sat in my chair over the past six months you would have seen we have changed a number of policies and programs to make it easier for business to access the way government procures its goods, services and construction.

Dr EDWARDS: Getting back to my question, given that ministerial satisfaction is subjective and given the way that you have rightly praised your department, how do you bring some objectivity, and what exactly is on this scale of 1 to 7?

Mr BOARD: The way to bring objectivity is to consult with clients. The clients are the community and the business community. We have had selling to government forums throughout Western Australia in which a couple of hundred business people have participated and of which I have attended no less than six. At a forum the other morning nearly 500 business people attended. These forums are question and feedback formats. I also constantly get feedback from business forums, councils and bodies that represent small, medium and large businesses throughout Western Australia on this process and the way in which CAMS is working and their satisfaction with CAMS.

Given that more than 100 000 contracts a year in Western Australia are entered into, it is likely that a few contracts will be entered into with which people are not happy. We do not always get it right. However, we are evolving and we are learning from that process and the feedback leads to change.

Dr EDWARDS: How do you differentiate between ministerial satisfaction and industry satisfaction, given there is a large overlap? You are relying on what industry says to assess your satisfaction and you are asking them. How do you tease out those two?

Mr BOARD: CAMS conducts surveys of its clients and we work very heavily on the results of those surveys. A satisfaction rating is asked for in those surveys and that has resulted in that process.

Mr RIEBELING: You are giving the rating of more than five but you are assessing your own work and saying you have done really well. What is the purpose of that? You are not giving the results of a survey; you are rating your own department between one and seven. I do not know why we use seven, perhaps CAMS does not use the average scale of 10.

Mr BOARD: The performance measures for output 1 refer to requests from my office to CAMS.

Mr RIEBELING: It says "ministerial satisfaction", so you are the one doing the rating.

Mr BOARD: That is right. I am very happy with the support that I get from CAMS.

Mr RIEBELING: Why not just write that you are happy with the department? Why bother putting some sort of fictitious five out of seven? It is just one of those measures that does not mean anything.

Mr BOARD: It probably means more to rate it as five out of seven than saying we are totally happy, because there is always room for improvement. A rating system would be a helpful indication to Treasury and those who are keen to see increased performance.

Mr RIEBELING: What does the little arrow in front of the figure five mean?

Mr BOARD: It means greater than five.

Mr RIEBELING: Is that six?

Mr BOARD: It is greater than five.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to output 7 at page 160 in respect of the government vehicle tender. I understand that a company now deals with government vehicles. I understand that all vehicles used in country areas must be disposed of through an auction system in the metropolitan area. Is there any reason that those government vehicles cannot be disposed of through the supplier that provides them, rather than being auctioned through one company in the metropolitan area? Is a predetermined amount agreed on as a reserve price that the Government is guaranteed by the auction? If more is gained does the auctioning company keep it or is it passed back to the Government?

Mr BOARD: We have a whole of government fleet disposal contract. Under the present contract vehicles go back through a central auctioneer for disposal. Through that whole of government contract we are able to get volume, efficiencies and savings. A close look at the Auditor General's report which came out last week will reveal that we are in fact tracking higher on our returns for vehicles than we estimated.

The rationale for that is that the vehicles are being sold more efficiently than they were privately. They are prepared for sale and are disposed of with private plates on them; in other words, they are registered. As a result, after a fixed commission to the auctioneer, the Government is receiving a higher return for its cars. We are examining new fleet contracts. I will be announcing them towards the end of June. When the disposal contract comes up for renewal I will consider that option because I could see there being advantages to country regions and cost savings in transport. I will take on board the issue of country disposal.

The CHAIRMAN: We have four divisions to get through in three hours. I do not know whether you wish to divide that time up now.

Mr JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I would like to ensure that we have adequate time to discuss the youth portfolio here. I do not want us to spend all our time on buildings, cars and various other things and have five minutes on the youth issue, which I think is one of the most important ones in here.

Mr RIEBELING: I understand why the Government does not want us to look at the Auditor General's report on vehicles but surely we will spend as much time as it takes to get all the answers. If the Government has not allocated enough time for this section then so be it.

Mr JOHNSON: The time is allocated in consultation with the Opposition.

Ms ANWYL: We also have Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs to discuss.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is it permissible, Madam Chairman, to deal with divisions 79 and 80?

The CHAIRMAN: As long as we do not vote on division 79 we can traverse the four divisions.

Mr RIEBELING: I am pleased that the Minister referred to the Auditor General's report. His reading of how his department is doing in relation to the contract differs from mine. Will the Minister comment on what the Auditor General said on page 21 of his report on the penalties that have been imposed?

Point of Order

Mr JOHNSON: That is not a budget item. Surely you are talking about the Auditor General's report?

Mr RIEBELING: I am talking about \$2m.

Mr JOHNSON: You are asking for a response from the Minister on the Auditor General's report.

The CHAIRMAN: Questions must be related to items of expenditure. As all members know, there is latitude within that. However, if there is a problem with a question the member for Burrup might like to rephrase it so it refers to items of expenditure.

Mr RIEBELING: I am referring to the expenditure in relation to the lease of vehicles.

The CHAIRMAN: That is clearly an item of expenditure.

Committee Resumed

Mr RIEBELING: If I heard the Minister correctly he said that the current contract is serving the State well and according to his documents we are earning approximately a 20 per cent higher return on our investment than previously. Was the penalty of \$2.1m incurred in January 1998, referred to at page 21 of the Auditor General's report, deducted from the return to the State? A comment at the base of that page indicates that in July and September 1997 it became clear that 1 000 vehicles to the value of \$22m would not be returned within the specified period.

What happened in that instance and what has been done about ensuring that vehicles are returned on time so that they do not incur a penalty? I understand that the Minister renegotiated the leases to avoid those penalties. Have the terms of the present lease been changed to avoid previous problems?

Mr BOARD: The late return of vehicles did not incur a penalty under the matrix financing arrangement. Although they may have, their return was negotiated so that they were rehired and no penalty was incurred. Having said that, they could have incurred a penalty and the late return of vehicles is of concern to the Government. It is a management issue that needs to be controlled. As I indicated in the Parliament, we need tighter management contracts. We have negotiated them and they will be announced in June this year. Late return of vehicles should be avoided under these new contracts.

In the transition to the financing and leasing of motor vehicles a number of issues have been addressed as we have gone along. One of those is that vehicles take substantially longer to be delivered than was first anticipated.

Mr RIEBELING: Should that not be a penalty against the contracted company rather than against the department?

Mr BOARD: Under the financing arrangements it is important that the vehicle is returned so that the person who is selling the vehicle maximises the return to the financing arrangements. If the vehicle is held onto for too long and has too many kilometres on it and so forth it will devalue the vehicle and affect the leasing arrangements for the next term. It is a contract based on performance. As the Auditor General indicated, we have performed very well. Significant savings to government have been made.

Mr RIEBELING: That is what I am trying to get at.

Mr BOARD: I agree. We are addressing management issues. They are in new contracts which will be announced in June.

Ms ANWYL: Referring to division 79 generally, you have talked about surveys which have been undertaken to help you attain the satisfaction level for quality of service. Is an overall cost of those surveys available? Are they market research surveys? Are they conducted from within the department or are they outsourced and, if so, what is the cost of that?

Mr BOARD: The surveys are conducted annually with approximately 500 suppliers. A predetermined survey form organised in CAMS goes out directly to those suppliers, and the results are put together. A whole range of questions are asked. The issues raised in the survey include satisfaction, obviously, performance indicators, ways in which our contracting can be improved and access by small business.

Ms ANWYL: Can we have access to the results of that?

Mr BOARD: I have no problem providing you with access to a survey form and the results of the survey.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you confirm that is by way of supplementary information?

Mr BOARD: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer you to page 160, output 7, and specifically to regional contracts. Having been involved in a couple of the presentations on the tender processes, I commend you. It is an excellent process and one that has been well supported in my community. How many contracts have been awarded in the past year for construction services in regional areas? How many of those tenders have been awarded to companies using the regional loading scheme that has been introduced? How many of the total number of contracts awarded in regional areas have been awarded to companies which have used the regional preference that we have instituted? Has there been any analysis of the number of local people who have obtained employment as a result of those regional contracts?

Mr BOARD: They are very good questions. I will make some general comments about regional buying and the way in which we are trying to develop our contracting regime in regional areas. I will need to provide some of the specifics of your questions as supplementary information because the information is not generally held within the budget process, but it is certainly valuable information.

One of our thrusts this year is to make country based businesses get a fair and an increasing share of government procurement. To effect that we have launched a regional buying compact, which is a significant compact across all government agencies and gives a 10 per cent advantage to regionally based companies competing against city based companies. To qualify for that they must have a business that is registered in the country, they must have employees there and they must have been operating for six months. The reason for that is to stop companies taking advantage of the regional process by very quickly setting up some sort of satellite operation, winning a contract and then returning to the city. That may have happened had we not had those safeguards.

The compact is proceeding well and is exceptionally well received in the country. There have already been a number of tenders. I cannot give you an exact number at this point but I will provide as much of that accurate information as I can. The whole purpose is to keep money in the country, to provide jobs in the country and particularly to maintain expertise and professionalism in the country. We are now seeing architects, consultants and engineers who may have drifted to the city going back to country regions and winning contracts and developing programs. Also, under the regional preference policy, a city based company - and this is an important issue - can still win a contract using a regional preference if it outsources at least 80 per cent of that contract in the local region. Either way the region wins because the majority of the work, goods and services, labour and so on must be outsourced in the country region. It is probably too early on in the program to indicate the long term success of it but it is well received. We are committed to it. I will give you as much accurate supplementary information as I can.

Mr NICHOLLS: Has there been an additional cost to government because of that preference system and, if so, how much? Is it considered to be a cost benefit to the community or are there concerns about the cost?

Mr BOARD: There will be additional costs to government. The majority of contracts in regional areas are awarded without using the regional buying compact. They are competitive in their own right. Because of where they are situated in the country they may have some advantage in a contract for a construction, for example, but most contracts are without preference. For those with a preference, there is an additional cost to government. We could be paying up to 10 per cent more for those particular purchases, whether it be 5 per cent in construction costs or 10 per cent in goods and services costs. That is up to a maximum of \$50 000 preference. The majority of contracts are way below that. It may cost more but on a whole of government basis we make that commitment to developing regional areas. If we do not make that commitment, we will see a continual drift of people to the city.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you provide any information about the additional cost?

Mr BOARD: In that supplementary information we will be able to indicate the number of agencies that have used CAMS applying regional preferences and indicate the value of those preferences.

Mr NICHOLLS: Will you be able to do that also on a regional basis?

Mr BOARD: Where they have been applied, yes. You would need to be aware that not all agencies use CAMS in the procurement of their goods and services. Many of them are accredited for doing their own purchasing. CAMS would not be holding that information but we will give you from a central agency's point of view those that have used CAMS.

Mr RIEBELING: I refer to page 247 and to the total amount of contracts of \$586m. The Minister stated a short time ago when referring to fleet management that he was getting higher than expected returns for the sale of vehicles. Will he explain that comment against what the Auditor General said on the actions that CAMS is now having to take to improve the resale value of the cars so that it does not default on contracts because of the collapse of the prices it is getting for the vehicles? My reading of the Auditor General's report says that CAMS has had to upgrade the vehicles so that it gets a reasonable price at market, contrary to what the Minister said 15 minutes ago. The costs

for each vehicle include repairs of about \$300 to restore the vehicle to a state of fair wear and tear, as required under the funding agreement, about \$105 for detailing, \$85 for the provision of SGIO Autocheck and \$160 for the provision of a warranty. I estimate that about \$3.25m will be spent on trying to get a reasonable price for the 5 000 vehicles, contrary to what he said 15 minutes ago. Could he explain that?

Mr BOARD: A whole range of issues affect the sale price of vehicles. The government contract is not isolated in that regard. The number of vehicles on the market - some people commonly refer to it as the "Hyundai effect" - has affected the resale value of a whole range of secondhand cars. A whole lot of issues affect the resale value, such as the number of accessories on a vehicle, the general wear and tear and whether the vehicle has had an accident, which is unpredictable when entering the contract. Although we try to average that out for risk management, whether a vehicle has had an accident will affect its price even though it is prepared well for sale. We are showing that by cleaning the vehicles, having SGIO checks, having plates on them and having them registered, we are getting higher returns and value for money beyond the additional costs of achieving that and, from that point of view, we are happy with that result.

Mr RIEBELING: You are still getting a lower return than the return you originally thought you would get?

Mr BOARD: The market is a fluctuating one; it is very difficult.

Mr RIEBELING: Yes, I understand that. I understood you to say 15 minutes ago that you were getting more than you originally thought you would get.

Mr BOARD: We are getting more and the Auditor General is showing that.

Mr RIEBELING: Is he?

Mr BOARD: Yes.

Mr RIEBELING: The Auditor General is saying the opposite.

Mr BOARD: No, we are getting more than people would get for a car that is not under the government contract. We are achieving better results through our approach to the sales under the contract than other methods are achieving for exactly the same sort of vehicle. If you have a look at the Auditor General's report, he is saying that for that standard vehicle we are achieving better results than the general marketplace.

Mr RIEBELING: My understanding of what the Auditor General is saying is that without those additional features that would not be the case.

Mr BOARD: That is why we add them.

Mr RIEBELING: You cannot say that you are happy with the price. No doubt when you signed the contract there was an estimation of the resale value. As I understand your contract, a penalty is imposed on you if the resale price does not come up to that level. If you could reach that level without the expenditure of any money, no doubt you would be happy. As I read it, the Auditor General is saying that without the improvements you cannot reach the level that was estimated when you signed the document. You are expending more to achieve the same end in order to avoid a penalty.

Mr BOARD: As a businessman, if I had to spend a dollar to make an additional two, I would do it. As a result of better preparing our vehicles for sale, we are tracking above the marketplace. We are not only recouping those dollars but also getting a better return. It is an investment.

Mr JOHNSON: My question covers both divisions 79 and 80. On page 152 a major initiative for 1998-99 at the second dot point is to implement a new form of tender documentation for all WABMA contracts. Similar words are used under the same heading on page 244. Obviously if it is a major initiative, it is not merely a new coloured tender document; it must be something quite significant. What is the difference between this new tender document and the previous one? Is it a simpler document for people who want to tender or does it cover more of the financial background of those people seeking government tenders?

Mr BOARD: The issue was raised earlier of access to government contracts by small business in particular. This is one of the ways in which we are able to address this very significant issue. The costs of continually tendering are the time spent filling out forms and the component of satisfying the tender arrangements. That must be done every single time there is a tender. In a particular area there could be dozens of contracts every few months put out for tender, which people want. We are moving to producing what are called shell tender documents; that is, only basic outlines are required. The reason only that is required is that the organisation will have prequalified itself with the agency concerned. In other words, there will be a prequalification process, probably happening in the first tender arrangement, in which bodies will be able to demonstrate that they are capable of the work, that the quality is there,

that the value for money is there, that they have accreditation, that they have quality assurance and so on. All of that information would be already known to the agency, so the next tender document might be a shell document across the Internet - which will be developed - in which those bodies would be able to compete cost effectively, cheaply and quickly because they would be prequalified.

Mr RIEBELING: I am trying to work out from these documents how the State is better off with the vehicle leasing plan. The Auditor General's report refers to a saving of approximately \$4.87m, presumably through not having the capital cost of purchasing the vehicles. The contract you have signed has a maximum value of vehicles of \$250m and a minimum value of \$200m which it cannot fall under, as I understand it. The Government says that there is a saving of \$4.87m because of the benchmark interest rate of the Treasury. Do you know what that benchmark interest rate has been for the past three years?

Mr BOARD: It is 2.55 per cent below the Reserve Bank benchmark.

Mr RIEBELING: Is \$4.87m accurate?

Mr BOARD: As far as I know it, yes.

Mr RIEBELING: According to the Auditor General the operational risks associated with the lease are similar to those of owning the fleet yourself. Is that true?

Mr BOARD: We are achieving great savings at the moment.

Mr RIEBELING: I am trying to track down where they are.

Mr BOARD: If you are trying to find a hole in the Matrix Finance financing deal, you will be very hard pressed because it is returning good returns. That is what the Auditor General said. If you look at his press release, you will see the whole thrust of the report is that we had done very well out of it financially. There are some risks. There are risks in many contracts the Government enters into. The nature of contracts is that nothing is always totally secured. I wish it were. It would be a perfect world if it could be, but at times we need to make management decisions having regard to the changing nature of the marketplace. As I said to you earlier, we are aware that some management controls in the day to day operations of the fleet could have been better. We might have achieved even more efficiencies. I believe that the new contracts we have put in place will do that. If you were to be sitting here next year and looking at the operations of fleet, I hope I would be able to report an even stronger return.

Mr RIEBELING: I hope that next year you will be able to tell me how much it is worth to the State. You are saying that we are better off under this new system than under the old system. I am trying to work out how much better off. A number of statements made by the Auditor General need to be quantified.

Mr BOARD: According to the Auditor General's report, the Government is achieving under this financing arrangement 20 per cent less rental costs than would have been the case had it not entered this financing arrangement.

Mr RIEBELING: That assessment is based on what facts? We are told that the price of the resale value of cars is dropping. Whether it is caused by Hyundai's involvement in the marketplace is superfluous. I am told we have saved \$4.8m because of interest rates. The expected rental costs for each vehicle are summarised to a certain extent on page 32 of the Auditor General's report. It shows that the average vehicle rental over a 24 month lease is \$107 across the agencies. I calculate that it costs about \$11m per annum. Is my calculation flawed?

Mr JOHNSON: I expect so!

Mr RIEBELING: I based it on 9 200 vehicles. How many vehicles do you have? The other members of the committee think it hilarious. If you can tell me how many vehicles we have got, the members who think it is a silly question can get it right.

Mr BOARD: We have about 9 200 vehicles in the contract.

Mr RIEBELING: It costs \$107 every month to rent.

Mr BOARD: I will provide in a supplementary form information of exactly what the rental costs are across all of those vehicles, because there is great variation there.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

[Mr Sweetman, Chairman.]

Mr RIEBELING: In relation to the fleet management, is it possible to provide supplementary information on the broader picture of the \$586m worth of contracts that are listed in output 2? Is it possible to get a breakdown of the

contents of the contracts and the cost of each to the State this year? How have the fleet management problems that the Auditor General identified been solved? Page 22 of the report states that because of the large number of vehicles to be handed in on the same month, there will be an even bigger problem this year than the problem with the 1 000 vehicles last year. If supplementary information can be provided, I am happy with that.

Mr BOARD: Yes, I am more than happy to provide information on both those issues.

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

Mr NICHOLLS: In reference to division 80, output 2, is there any requirement for government agencies to give a preference to the purchase of goods or services produced or manufactured in Western Australia?

Mr BOARD: We have a buying local policy which encourages agencies to look to trying to source and procure Western Australian goods and services. We are of course restrained by national and Australian and New Zealand competition policies which tend to fly in the face of in any way giving an advantage. Under the national competition policy we are entitled to give an advantage when we are buying internally; in other words, where there is no interstate competition, we can provide an advantage to a regional company over a city based company. However, where there is interstate competition, under the national competition policy there must be a level playing field. It is one of the issues that confront us. I will say quite openly that Western Australia applies the spirit of the national competition policy probably more than any other State. I believe that companies in this State have been disadvantaged as a result of our being very willing to apply the entire spirit of the national competition policy. One of the aspects we can look at and address by giving Western Australian companies some preference, while still complying with the national competition policy, is the way in which we regard our contracting. Aggregation, in other words the size of the contracts, is an issue. There has always been a belief in government that big is beautiful. Experience has shown that is not necessarily so. There are times when we can break up our contracts, which means that local companies may have some advantage because of their location, rather than retain aggregation which at the outset seems to provide some savings but may not on a whole of state government basis realise those savings. We are looking at it as we go along. We have a real thrust this year to try to make sure that as much of government procurement as possible stays in Western Australia.

Mr NICHOLLS: You indicated that the national competition policy, which was introduced some four or five years ago, precludes the State in its tendering process from giving preference to goods that are produced or manufactured in Western Australia above goods from New Zealand or other States of Australia.

Mr BOARD: It does not preclude it. What it says is that the Government cannot give an unnatural advantage to intrastate competition. Under that national competition policy the States are required to examine all of their Acts and regulations to make sure that they contain no anti-competitive programs or regulations. Of course huge financial bonuses are applied by the Federal Government to the States once they have complied with that. If the Government brings in a program or a policy which gives our State an advantage over an interstate competitor, we are not complying with the spirit of that policy. As I said earlier, this State has probably been a little exuberant in complying with that. In many ways we can look at the way in which we package our contracts to make sure that some of the smaller based Western Australian companies have an opportunity at least to compete.

Mr NICHOLLS: If we applied the competition policy in a very significant way, as you described, we would not be able to give a preference to goods that are produced or manufactured in Western Australia above goods that may be imported from New Zealand or produced or manufactured in other States of Australia.

Mr BOARD: When all other things are equal, there must a level playing field so government cannot give an unnatural advantage.

Mr NICHOLLS: Would giving a preference to goods produced in Western Australia, as we do with regional policy preference, be giving an unnatural advantage?

Mr BOARD: If the price, the service, the back-up and all the other entitlements within the contract were equal, then under the spirit of the policy government would not be able to give an advantage to a local business or a Western Australian company. However, as I indicated, it is very important that we make sure that government gives every opportunity to locally based companies. It is a matter of the way in which it seeks its contracting, so it does not unnecessarily shut out or require something in that contract which cannot be met locally.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do you consider that the competition policy effectively undermines the campaign we have undertaken in this State for many years of buying goods produced or owned by Western Australians?

Mr BOARD: One of the disadvantages that the Government has - as I keep explaining at forums around Western Australia - is that most individuals or even privately based companies do not have to have the same accountability and transparency as a Government. You can decide who mows your lawn and who services your car; you do not

need three quotes or need to explain that to anybody; you make that decision. We in government do not have that luxury; we must be equitable, open and accountable to all and the decision must be transparent. That creates a whole range of programs and bureaucracies that add costs. That is the liability of government decisions, and to make sure that people see justice in the process. We favour, support and promote buying Western Australian. In the spirit of the policy that has been signed we cannot give an unnatural bias to Western Australian companies. However, I am looking at making sure that as much as possible stays in Western Australia, and we can do better at it.

Mr RIEBELING: I refer to page 252. Why has the Minister cut the FTEs from 130 in 1997-98 to 120 in 1998-99 and to 100 in 1999-2000? Has the Minister allowed for redundancy in this budget and, if so, where is it shown? Why does the average salary when divided into the FTEs fall from \$50 000 in 1997-98 to \$49 750 in 1998-99 and to \$43 810 in 1999-2000?

Mr BOARD: The only thing that is likely to change in CAMS is the outsourcing of Supply West, which is likely to take place in the 1998-99 financial year. That relates to those figures and employees. There are no provisions for redundancy payments specifically. If there were any redundancies, the costs would be met within the current salaries and wages amounts that are shown; no additional amounts would be required. Those overall salary reductions include salary increases through workplace agreements this year. I will give as supplementary information an exact explanation of the reduction.

Mr JOHNSON: In division 80, on page 244 the last dot point refers to the expansion of the Cadets WA program as being a major initiative for 1998-99. I wholeheartedly support the program. What exactly is that initiative?

Mr BOARD: The member for Kalgoorlie has probably some issues in the Youth area, which is actually covered in division 80.

Ms ANWYL: Have we moved on to Youth?

Mr JOHNSON: We are doing divisions 79 and 80, which was agreed.

Mr RIEBELING: Youth comes within division 80.

Mr JOHNSON: We have not taken any votes yet, so we can jump around between 79 and 80.

Mr BOARD: Mike Daube heads up the Office of Youth Affairs. He is here to assist in the Youth area. We are particularly proud of the expansion of the cadet program, not merely through its natural expansion. We have close to 60 new cadet programs established under the Youth Training Scheme. We expect to have between 80 and 100 established by the end of this calendar year. The existing programs expand as cadets go into their second and third years. As you can imagine, we have first, second and third year cadets. As the pyramid gets bigger, more and more young people are in each of those programs. That requires additional funding. Some announcements will be made in the next few weeks about the existing federal cadet program and how we will be managing that in Western Australia. We will be announcing also within a couple of weeks some additions to the six existing cadet programs, which are the army, navy and air force cadets, emergency service cadets, St John's Ambulance cadets and police rangers. We will be bringing in new strands of cadets that we expect will be taken up very quickly by a number of schools. All in all, we could be in a position this time next year to be talking of about 150 cadet programs under the auspices of the Youth Training Scheme. Our goal is that every secondary school in the State, whether it be a government or independent school, will have the opportunity to start a cadet program if it chooses to. It is certainly not compulsory but if it chooses to, we have made resources available for expansion over the coming years.

Mr JOHNSON: You say that there may be some more strains of cadets. You have named the three armed forces, police rangers, St John's Ambulance cadets and emergency service cadets. What are the others?

Mr BOARD: There are six current cadet programs in Western Australia. We are launching a new program within a few weeks.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not want to spoil your press release.

Mr BOARD: It is not exactly a secret; it is shared with another Minister. I want the opportunity for the Minister to be part of the launch. It is an exciting program.

Mr JOHNSON: How many extra strains are there?

Mr BOARD: There is one new one at this stage but that does not limit us in the future from having further programs.

Ms ANWYL: Output 6 on page 251 includes the cadet budget. Is it right that a significant increase of \$800 000-odd has gone towards the cadets program?

Mr BOARD: Yes. We have moved out of our trial period into a period of rapid expansion of a number of programs.

Some existing programs have moved into their second year and the first programs in the trial have moved into their third year. We are increasing not only the number of programs but also the number of young people who are involved at any one school. That requires a significant increase in funding.

Ms ANWYL: Not all of the \$3.9m will relate to cadets, will it? I am looking for a breakdown of what it is applied to, because we have so little detail here.

Mr BOARD: The reason that there has been a bulk amount in two significant areas - one being policy development and coordination and the other being youth programs and initiatives - is that is exactly what the Office of Youth Affairs was set up to do: To create some new programs; to try to plug gaps; to create initiatives that were not already in existence; and not necessarily to take on areas that were the responsibility of other portfolios. That has been ongoing; in fact, we will be launching some programs shortly. In that \$3.9m is a notional allocation of about \$2.07m for cadets, \$800 000 for community service grants, \$500 000 for a leadership program, \$250 000 for youth advisory councils, \$250 000 for a youth entrepreneur enterprise program, \$50 000 for youth awards, \$50 000 for the operation of our champion for youth program, and \$50 000 for interactive voice response, which is a program where young people get advice and information.

Mr DAUBE: The idea is that young people should be able to phone in for information through a single phone line rather than having to phone around many different places to get information. We are working on that with the help of CAMS to see if that will work as a pilot across government agencies.

Mr BOARD: There is \$100 000 for a youth coordination network to promote more coordination of youth services in Western Australia. I stress that they are notional amounts. A number of those programs have not yet been launched. They are in their final phases of completion, as I have indicated in the Parliament a number of times. They may vary but those notional amounts have been given to those programs at this point.

Ms ANWYL: Is the network happening within the office or is it involving a third party?

Mr BOARD: It will involve third parties. You would recall that when we were in Kalgoorlie you mentioned that you felt that Kalgoorlie had missed out on a number of youth grants. That is because it had not applied. One of the issues we are looking at is ensuring that young people - particularly in regional areas - have help in accessing a number of the government policies and initiatives. Some of that will require third parties. That can be done through that program. It can be done through our youth grants program which comes not only in the \$800 000 community service grants to community service organisations but also in our youth grants themselves which are predicted to be \$1.25m for 1998-99.

Ms ANWYL: Is that in output 5?

Mr BOARD: Yes. We expect to develop a stronger network of youth coordination for the delivery not only of our programs but also of services from other agencies. At this stage we feel it is somewhat uncoordinated, and we can do better at it. We have provided an amount to help with that coordination.

Mr NICHOLLS: I assume that youth development comes under output 6, which refers to the cadet program. Are youth groups which are not cadet units but which meet the criteria for youth development funds able to access those funds and, if they are, would they be funded under the cadet unit program even though they are not cadet units? How many are funded if they can access the funding?

Mr BOARD: The cadet program is a stand alone program. Our office already funds other community youth programs, such as scouts, guides and a whole range of community service organisations working with young people. This year I have increased their funding quite significantly because I want them to play a stronger role in the development and delivery of those services. I am also encouraging them to be part of the new statewide leadership program in which I want them to expand their services to help provide young people with leadership capacity through that program. They will be playing a role in that.

All of those organisations also have access to our youth grants program because the youth grants are available to community organisations, local authorities and individuals. Many of them have applied for and received grants on top of our annual funding because they want to be part of a service delivery in our new programs. The majority of those agencies have had additional financial assistance this year. Much of it has been targeted to helping deliver the service that we want to deliver. You will be pleased to know that it included non-government and non-service organisations. For example, we have decided to increase YACWA's funding this year. We are providing more resources in the youth area than we have ever done before.

Mr NICHOLLS: If a group meets the criteria laid down for the cadet program but is not called a cadet unit, is it eligible for funding, or must it be called a cadet unit?

Mr BOARD: The funding for cadets is for cadet programs. Any other organisation delivering training for youth can apply for funding through the Office of Youth Affairs for what it does. In the main we deliver funding to them. The cadet program is a stand alone program. I do not bring any program that wants to call itself a cadet program into that program.

Ms ANWYL: The cadet program is school based, is it not?

Mr BOARD: Yes, it is school based because we are trying to access young people who are not already or naturally part of some other program. We are trying to attract young people who would not otherwise be involved in a program.

Mr RIEBELING: Why in the financial statements on page 253 is the funding for plant, equipment and vehicles cut from \$426 000 in 1997-98 to \$356 000 in 1998-99 and to \$156 000 in 2001-02? The same answer may apply to my next question. Why on page 252 are user charges and fees expected to fall from \$24.9m in 1997-98 to \$21.2m in 1998-99 and to \$4.5m in 1999-2000?

Mr BOARD: The majority of that question would be answered again by the outsourcing of the Supply West operation. May I explain why we feel that it is something for the future? The current operation of Supply West has not met the expectation of Government because it has lost funds over a long period of time. We are in a position at the moment where we have minimised the losses of Supply West but the reality is that Supply West type operations, whether they be government or non-government, will disappear with the advent of electronic purchasing and the speed of delivery of items. They will be overtaken by the central warehousing of large amounts of a variety of goods. That is not unique to Perth or Western Australia; it is a worldwide phenomenon. The closing of Supply West will be the result of technological advances as much as anything else.

Mr RIEBELING: That might explain the plant and equipment funding. What about the \$20m reduction in income? These advances will cost \$20m a year, will they?

Dr SCHAPPER: Supply West operates merely as a business unit within government. The outsourcing of it will see the funding of it flow between the outsource supplier and the relevant department, almost entirely the Education Department. The funds will not necessarily flow through CAMS as a cost centre.

Mr RIEBELING: Will the Education Department take over its own contract?

Dr SCHAPPER: No, CAMS will establish a contract which takes the place of Supply West as a business operation. The purchasing from the contractor by the Education Department will be between that department and the contractor and will not necessarily flow through CAMS.

Mr BOARD: It is not a loss of revenue. It is just that the revenue will not be flowing through CAMS as a middle man, as it were; it will be directly from the agency to the supplier.

Mr RIEBELING: Was not the brilliant new innovation to have CAMS controlling all government contracts?

Mr BOARD: Yes, but you are talking about a contract, not the physical operation of a warehouse, which will be overtaken by technology. Government - as is the rest of industry and the rest of the world - will be moving towards buying across the Internet because it is a lot cheaper. Agencies will be buying directly from suppliers. Yes, there will be some whole of government contracts but not necessarily a warehouse that holds anything from biscuits to computers. The flow through from that warehouse will be seen on other agencies' individual budgets. It will not be through CAMS as a broker.

Mr JOHNSON: Do cadet groups that are not connected with schools receive the same sort of funding? I refer to cadet groups like the TS Marmion group in my locality. Under significant issues and trends on page 244, the penultimate dot point states that young people are demanding greater participation and consultation in the decision making process of government. Are they achieving what they are setting out to do?

Mr BOARD: The Federal Government operates currently about 53 programs in Western Australia under the army, navy and air force cadets which are not under the auspices of our Youth Training Scheme. They receive funding in a different way from the funding we provide to our school based cadet programs. The funding is traditionally paid for uniforms, transport and things of that nature. From that point of view, we believe that many of those federal programs are disadvantaged when compared with the state program.

It has been my intention to try to create some equity and to make sure that those federal based programs are funded on as equitable a basis as the state programs. To some extent we have been achieving that. I expect that shortly an announcement will be made federally which will see Western Australia trial a program which will create a great deal more equity.

Mr JOHNSON: You did not answer the second part, but on the first part, what is the difference in the funding between the state funding of the school cadet programs and the federal funding for the TS Marmion type groups?

Mr BOARD: The school based youth training scheme programs receive \$450 per cadet per year which goes to a governing community based body of school and parent representatives. That money is allocated by its program in the way it sees fit. It has to be spent under guidelines on uniforms, transport etc, but it is \$450 per cadet per year. In the federal program they receive no cash allowances whatsoever. All of the value is in instructors, uniforms and things of that nature so they have to raise their own funds for any additional work they want to do.

Mr JOHNSON: Is there a dollar value in that?

Mr BOARD: The Army says it is contributing in excess of \$450 per cadet per year. The Navy says about \$900 and the Air Force would probably go even higher. That is complicated because it links the whole cost of administration federally into the program, the cost of the Army personnel who are involved, of existing Army equipment and so forth and the loss of time. Put it this way: If I were a young person in Western Australia I think I would be better advantaged under the youth training scheme rather than the federal program in a cost sense, whereas the training provided in the federal program is first class. We have to make sure there is equity and that young people have access to any program they want to be part of, and that there is a distribution of funds that is seen as being fair across the board.

Because we have expanded our program so dramatically we have left many States behind. This has created quite a challenge for the Federal Government and, as a result of that, we will find a combined program type announcement shortly. I do not want to go down that line because it is something that we are particularly proud of and I think in a few months' time you will see a greater distribution of resources to those federal programs.

Mr JOHNSON: And the second part of the question? Are young people meeting the demand of greater participation?

Mr BOARD: You would be aware that we have established youth advisory councils throughout Western Australia. Sixty local authorities have agreed to establish youth advisory councils. As I said here, I think there are 25 in operation. I launched the Gosnells Youth Advisory Council last night and we hope to have 60 by the end of this year. This will be a network of young people representing either schools or major youth groups coming to the shire. They will be part of a network of advisers to the Government on issues facing young people. They will be asked to look at issues in their own areas and how we might be able to resource those councils by initiating programs that they want to deliver themselves or that young people want to be involved in. They will also be used by the councils themselves, the shire, and other interested bodies. Other Ministers already want to use the youth advisory councils in their portfolios. We will be looking at a program to extend that next year whereby each of those youth councils will send one representative to a youth parliament here in Perth. We hope to have individuals who will link into the existing youth parliament and make it wider and broader, and they will help us with policy development for all of youth affairs across Western Australia. It is a permanent and genuine mechanism by which young people will have an input, both regionally and on a statewide basis.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a pity, Minister, that the local member was not invited to the Gosnells launch.

Mr BOARD: Unfortunately I did not do the invitations. Had I known he was not invited, I would have made sure he was but I was only a guest myself.

[Dr Edwards, Chairman.]

Ms ANWYL: In relation to output 6, page 251, almost half of that budget of \$4.02m is being spent on the cadet program. Is some research being done into the overall participation rate of the number of eligible young people who participate? Do we know that percentage?

Mr BOARD: Every young person at school - and even those who are not at school - who particularly want to be involved in cadets in years 9, 10 and 11, and there are already some outside that in year 12 and year 8, can be; there is no limit to the number of young people at this point. We have not said we will restrict the growth of the program.

Ms ANWYL: We need to make the point that that is if their school is a participator.

Mr BOARD: Yes, that is right.

Ms ANWYL: Not all schools have the program.

Mr BOARD: No, but I am expecting a lot more schools will participate as the program grows and as new programs come on stream. There is an upper limit from that point of view. In terms of evaluating numbers, we are continuing to make the program more meaningful as it evolves, to add to it, and we are also continuing to evaluate the retention

rate of young people in the program. It is still in its infancy from that point of view. The school based non-service programs are reasonably new. It is probably a little early to conduct a definitive analysis. However, I am encouraged by the number of new schools wanting to come into the program and the expansion of the programs within individual schools. It is not a panacea for all youth training. It is not something that meets everybody's needs, but for a lot of young people it is something which is of great interest.

Ms ANWYL: I accept that, but let us look at performance measures; we know there are six cadet programs on track now and there will be eight next year. Am I reading it correctly?

Mr BOARD: There are six types of cadet programs. There will be seven types of cadet programs.

Ms ANWYL: What is the eight that we have here?

Mr BOARD: The six is not cadet programs.

Ms ANWYL: What is it, then?

Mr BOARD: The six is youth programs.

Ms ANWYL: What are they?

Mr BOARD: I think I mentioned a number of them to you. We have cadets.

Ms ANWYL: You gave me a breakdown. This is the whole problem, Minister, in trying to read these budget papers. An awful lot of guesswork must take place. You gave me a breakdown of the \$4m and how that was to be spent. We have about seven -

Mr BOARD: Yes. If you have a look at those, a number of those are new programs, not even launched yet, but I have told you about them.

Ms ANWYL: Right. Secret, I know.

Mr BOARD: They are not a secret. I am being as open as I can, and I have given you the allocation of programs that have not been launched yet. I have indicated a number of times in the House that we will be involved in these programs this year. There is a notional allocation of funds to those programs.

Ms ANWYL: The quantity actually refers to the whole output rather than to cadets. In terms of quality, how do you arrive at a customer satisfaction of 75 per cent with a projection of 80 per cent for next financial year?

Mr BOARD: The Office of Youth Affairs conducted a survey. I might ask Mike to elaborate on the extent of the survey.

Mr DAUBE: We commissioned an external independent survey of organisations, both government and non-government, that have contact with us. The 75 per cent figure and the 70 per cent in the earlier output come from that survey. That is what the organisations in contact with us have told an independent agency, and there is some more detail in that. We will be repeating that survey on an annual basis. We give the independent agency the names of agencies and they pick whoever they want; we do not have any scope to bias their work.

Ms ANWYL: May I have a copy of that survey by way of supplementary information?

Mr BOARD: I am more than happy to provide you with a copy of that.

Ms ANWYL: That is fine, but what about young people themselves? Have they been surveyed on their satisfaction? After all, the young people are the customers.

Mr BOARD: If we have done anything in the last 18 months it is consult with young people. We have had 33 major youth forums throughout Western Australia which have led to the development of these programs. When the Office of Youth Affairs was established in mid-1996, the purpose was to consult to ensure that many of the programs being developed met the expectations of young people and sorted out many of the gaps. While keeping in mind that we were not going to be a panacea for every other ministerial portfolio, we wanted to create some programs that met expectations and filled some of the gaps. There you see the development of those programs that I have outlined to you before and hopefully the expansion of some existing programs. On top of that we have conducted other youth surveys.

Mr DAUBE: We have been involved in a number of consultations and more special issue consultations will be held soon. For instance, we will hold a joint consultation with the Health Department shortly on mental health issues, and one with the Office of Road Safety on road issues; and we ran one with Aboriginal agencies for Aboriginal young people. I think that was one of the first. We are trying constantly to consult with young people. We have

not been able to conduct a major statewide survey of young people, a major Australian Bureau of Statistics style survey, because (a), that would be very expensive and (b), we are still a new agency in our role. It is something that we have to work up to, to find out what we can do and what we can do with other government agencies. We are planning something like that at this moment.

Ms ANWYL: I accept all of that. The only performance measures included relate to the customer satisfaction quality of the survey. Is it right that it relates to a survey of agencies rather than young people?

Mr DAUBE: In that sense that is correct. You try to give an indicator, which is really the best you can do here. Of course, a lot of those non-government agencies represent young people. They are organisations that involve young people; they include the peak agencies and so on. We thought that was the best way to do it, and that it was quite courageous to ask them what they thought of us, not doing it ourselves but through an independent agency. We have figures indicating around 70 to 75 per cent satisfaction, and we have to increase them.

Mr RIEBELING: In relation to the same output, I was pleased to hear that the Commonwealth spent a lot of money on administration and you do not spent any on administration. It was good to hear. I wonder if that is true and how much of the cadet program is spent on administration. How many students are involved in the six programs? I hear what you say about the surveys. My contact with young people indicates that the people who join cadets, for instance, are not kids who are likely to be at risk of offending, and that kids of that nature are not interested in cadets at all. What sorts of programs does your office have for kids who are harder to deal with than the good kids, so to speak?

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

Mr BOARD: Firstly, I disagree with your premise that kids at risk are not joining the program. We work on the premise that every young person is at risk these days and locality, socioeconomic or regional areas do not stop young people being at risk. They are at risk. You might be pleased to know that, if you consider Aboriginal kids at risk, there are a large number of Aboriginal kids in the program. In fact, over half the kids involved in some of our cadet programs are Aboriginal kids and we are very proud of that. I take issue with your premise that the programs are not attracting those young people.

Secondly, we have funded a large number of programs through new grants of over \$1m in the past year. These programs are being developed; many, and the majority of them, are for those you consider "at risk kids". We are funding those programs through the youth grants program. I do not have a statewide program like cadets for those I consider at risk kids and I am not sure I can even tell you who is at risk. We are working in suicide prevention, coordinating with other agencies, we are working with many of those at risk kids.

We are working with Family and Children's Services, the Ministry of Justice and the Health Department. For example, our champion for youth is spending much of his time with those at risk kids, trying to motivate and assist them as part of our program. As a new, developing agency we are not taking the role of every other agency involved in this area. What we are trying to do is add to them, coordinate them and come up with some innovative programs to deal with all young people. We consider them all to be at risk.

Mr RIEBELING: What is the answer to the other two questions about administrative costs?

Mr BOARD: Only one person in the Office of Youth Affairs is responsible full time for the cadet program and another person spends probably 50 per cent of their workload on the cadet program. Unlike the federal program which has a very large administrative component separately for the Air Force, the Navy and the Army, we coordinate our program through less than two full time units within the Office of Youth Affairs. The whole thrust of this program has been community and volunteer based. Much of the work is being done within the schools on that volunteer basis.

Mr RIEBELING: How many kids are involved?

Mr BOARD: We have nearly 60 programs in operation. The programs vary from about 40 or so cadets up to 150 in a program. I say confidently we have over 3 200 cadets in Western Australia at this point, and growing. That is just in the youth training scheme.

Mr RIEBELING: In output 6 you tell us it will cost \$500 a participant. Presumably you know how many participants if you have worked that out. How many participants have you calculated that figure on?

Mr BOARD: We know that because we pay \$450 a cadet a year. That is a fixed amount and goes up and down with the number of cadets. Fortunately, it has been going up. The other \$50 covers the administrative costs and an instructor allowance.

Mr RIEBELING: If you have a cost of \$450 per participant, how do you budget if you do not know how many participants you have?

Mr BOARD: We are budgeting for a huge expansion. We know that we have X number of cadets in the system at the present time.

Mr RIEBELING: Tell us X. That is what I want to know.

Mr BOARD: I have just told you, 3 200.

Mr RIEBELING: Is 3 200 all your client base at the moment?

Mr BOARD: That is in the cadet program which you asked about.

Mr RIEBELING: Do you have other people in programs? Are there youths in programs other than the cadet program?

Mr BOARD: There are probably tens of thousands of youths receiving allowances under the scouts, guides, brigades programs, community service grants, and people who will be receiving awards program.

Mr RIEBELING: Do you have tens of thousands of them?

Mr BOARD: When you give a flat amount of money to a service organisation there is no guarantee exactly how many young people they are servicing.

Mr RIEBELING: I am asking the question on your figures, not mine. Your statement is the cost of administering and delivering youth programs per participant was calculated at \$485 last year. It does not say of the cadet program only and forget about the other ones. In all your programs you have estimated the cost per participant to be \$485. I am trying to work out how many people that is in relation to your budget of \$4.02m. I do not think I am being tricky or anything. I want you to answer to your own figures.

Mr BOARD: I appreciate that and it is a difficult figure. If anything, it is at the upper level because the most expensive individual program we have is the \$450 per cadet per year. That is what we have based that on in many ways. We could say, for example, that tens of thousands of young people have benefited from involvement in other programs such as our youth forums and that has brought the cost of delivery down to \$100 but we have calculated the cost at the upper level because we know it is an effectiveness measure. It is not a true measure of the cost of the delivery of the service in real terms. We are probably doing that per young person a lot cheaper but that is what the upper level would be.

Mr JOHNSON: We have two more divisions remaining and I know some members want to ask questions on those two divisions. Do my colleagues on the other side have many more questions on this one and when do they want to move on?

Mr RIEBELING: Probably when we run out of questions.

Ms ANWYL: I have a couple of very short ones on youth.

Mr JOHNSON: Should we set a time to go to the next division, a maximum of 15 minutes or something?

Ms ANWYL: I will be quicker than that.

Mr RIEBELING: I have no more questions on youth.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like another 10 minutes?

Mr JOHNSON: I want to move on.

The CHAIRMAN: If I have the concurrence of the committee, at 3.10 pm I will put the vote for divisions 79 and 80.

Mr NICHOLLS: Following on from similar questions, can you indicate the level of funding given last year to the scouts and the guides and the allocation for this year?

Mr BOARD: Last year the scouts received \$159 684 and the guides received the same amount. I have increased the funding to those organisations but I have not notified them yet and I do not think this is the appropriate way to tell them.

Mr NICHOLLS: If, in fact, it has been budgeted for, I find it difficult that you have not communicated to them what they will receive next year but you are asking Parliament to approve it.

Mr BOARD: It comes within our overall budgetary vote. How we split that up between the individual agencies is a matter for management, as is what they are achieving as individual community groups.

Mr NICHOLLS: Are you saying that you are only accountable to this committee for the global allocation and how you use that is your business?

Mr BOARD: No, that is not what I said. I said there is a global allocation for non-government community grants and the total is there. I told you that they received \$159 684 for 1997-98. I made a decision to increase their funding to a different level, as I have with virtually all of the non-government community grant groups, because I believe they are doing outstanding work. I will inform them of what the grant will be.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you indicate what services or things the scouts and guides have been funded for in the coming year?

Mr BOARD: Yes. I am quite happy to do that. The scouts and guides are continuing what the scouts and guides do but they have been examining their operations. There has been some concern in the organisations, particularly the scouts. The guides have taken on a new marketing program in leadership and adventure training and that organisation has really packaged itself to meet the needs of modern youth. The scouts, to some extent, have yet to meet that challenge and are looking at how they can develop along similar lines. The increased funding is to promote and support leadership and to help them meet the needs of modern youth.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not think they are called the Girl Guides any more. I think they have changed their name to 'the guides'.

Ms ANWYL: Which output does that come under? Is it output 5 or 6?

Mr BOARD: It is in community grants under output 6.

Ms ANWYL: Was that the \$800 000?

Mr BOARD: It is a very notional figure. In fact, it will be more than that.

Ms ANWYL: Can you provide a breakdown of the \$2.1m in output 5 and the youth grants area?

Mr BOARD: It is broken down to \$1.25m for youth grants; \$50 000 is the State's contribution towards MCEETYA - which is the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs - including a grant for the development of the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme which is a research area for young people that each State contributes funding towards; \$30 000 for the expansion and operation of the DotU website; \$150 000 for information materials and strategies; and \$40 000 for the operation of the Australia Day Council, which comes within that portfolio.

Ms ANWYL: Are the previously identified issues of major interest to the office - suicide, road traffic trauma and unemployment - still the key areas of policy development and coordination?

Mr BOARD: Yes. When we set up the Youth Ministers' Advisory Council - as apart from the Youth Advisory Council - we asked the council to look at some of the major issues which were coming through from the youth forums themselves. They separated themselves into subgroups and they were the major areas in which they wanted to look at how we could coordinate better services. We do not have ministerial responsibility in each of those areas. What we do have is the opportunity of talking to young people and ensuring that those portfolios are getting the message and playing a coordination role between the agencies. If there is an area in which I think we should be doing more - and better - in the next 12 months, it is this coordination area. What we have to do - not just in this portfolio but in many portfolios - is not necessarily look at having all of our programs agency based but look at the sort of result you need to get on the ground and who can add value to that result and maybe get out of our own agency barriers and all play a role in better coordination. I think our office is particularly well placed to do that in youth areas.

We saw an operation similar to that in the Aboriginal justice program in Geraldton recently where a number of agencies looked at supporting a particular program. They looked at an allocation of funds based on not what they could contribute but what needed to be done to resolve the issue or help resolve the issue. They set up a local coordinator on a joint funding basis who was able to coordinate and ensure that all the agencies played a stronger role. That is a model which can be adopted and it is the sort of thing in which the Office of Youth Affairs could play a very strong role.

Ms ANWYL: I am familiar with that and that is the sort of thing I suggested to you about Kalgoorlie.

Mr BOARD: Well, we are picking that up.

Ms ANWYL: Good. I asked you initially about the three identified areas. I am not sure if they are still a priority within the office. Can you point me to the planned achievements for the next financial year? Are there particular areas and is suicide one of those?

Mr BOARD: Mike has a long history in youth affairs, in and out of the office, and I will let him answer to add value to the committee's deliberations.

Mr DAUBE: Youth suicide is an area where you have to be incredibly careful about what you do. I do not know if you saw the letter from Professor Michael Carr-Gregg in the *Weekend Australian* about youth suicide prevention programs saying that too many people are ignoring the rule of "first, do no harm" with these programs. Some of them are a bit charismatic and may be counterproductive. You have to be very careful. We work very closely with the youth suicide advisory committee which is run from the Health portfolio. Sven Silburn is secretary of that and also chairs our Youth Ministers' Advisory Council advisory group on youth suicide. We have worked with those groups to find out what information materials people want and to develop those materials. We are now on our third reprint of them because we found a real gap there. We are working with that group to ensure good information is available to people who want it, and that, on occasion, we can provide grants where appropriate to address specific issues. At the moment, we are trying to find the gaps and are working up a pilot program for some possible intervention in that area. We are doing that jointly with a range of other agencies. We are planning joint consultations with the Health Department during the next few months on mental health issues because we want to talk with kids about their concerns and to hear from them. That is a priority. It is probably never going to be a big spending priority for us because our role is to bring people together to identify what is good and what is bad, and to be a source of expertise and a facilitator.

Ms ANWYL: If suicide is a priority, what are the other main priorities?

Mr BOARD: The other priorities are twofold. If you asked young people what their priorities are -

Ms ANWYL: I am asking you what the Office of Youth Affairs' priorities are.

Mr BOARD: The Office of Youth Affairs is reflecting what young people are saying they need developed in Western Australia. They want to change the image of young people. That is the single biggest thing coming through from our youth forums. Every single section of young people we talk to says it is sick of the negative images of young people; they say they are sick of the media concentrating on those negative images and that the vast majority of young people are doing normal young things, positive and constructive things with their lives. That is not getting through to the community and young people want that changed. They want to have a voice and to help resolve some of the issues. They want to play a role in the delivery of programs and they feel they can do that. These are our two major priorities. A problem is the coordination of other government agencies; I cannot take over what health, juvenile justice, sport and recreation, or education do and yet that affects all youth. What I can do is advise those agencies what young people are doing and saying and how we can best hit the mark to coordinate the resources better, to ensure that the delivery of service is better. That is our program. We have to play a role in employment and training and youth suicide, whether it be in the drugs area or a range of areas. We do not take ownership of it, we give young people a voice, we try to involve them in the delivery of the programs.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the rate of youth suicide declined over the last 12 months?

Mr DAUBE: Overall, it is staying constant. Around 50 young people a year in Western Australia commit suicide and that is something nobody would see as being amenable to immediate intervention. Unfortunately, this is short term intervention in areas where it is unlikely to have any immediate impact. You are dealing with 50 individual tragedies as well as an overall thing.

Mr BOARD: My understanding is that while the number is staying reasonably static it has moved to adult young males - adult being over 21 but below 28. There is a very disproportionately large number of suicides in that group. The number is also disproportionate in the homosexual community. There seems to have been an increase in that area and yet the total number is probably static.

Division 81: State Supply Commission, \$6 698 000 -

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

[Mr Board, Minister for Services.]

[Mr G.L. Duffield, Chief Executive Officer, State Supply Commission.]

[Mr J.A.J. Hawke, Financial Controller, State Supply Commission.]

Mr MacLEAN: The bottom dot point on page 1139 refers to the grievance handling process. In what way is this process changed, or will this process change, and what are the benefits?

Mr BOARD: This is a multi-faceted answer because the grievances come in many ways and at different levels. Keeping in mind that every time you have a tender eight people are involved and only one person receives the tender, there are often seven disappointed businesses which want to know why they missed out. A debriefing process has been put in place through the Department of Contract and Management Services - I mention that because it is part of the overall strategies - which sees many of the people who missed out on contracts advised why they missed out, what they could do about possibly winning the next one, how they might present their business in a better light, etc. That debriefing process will add value to this area. In the wider perspective, there are a number of bodies, such as the Building and Construction Advisory Council, and the Small Business Procurement Council, advising me on how we can best educate business on their application to government contracting and how they can present themselves in a way they can benefit from the Government's spending.

At the macro level, the Government is committed to the establishment of a contracts referee; that is, an independent, stand alone body where compliance to government policy on contracts will be established and where people can inquire at an independent level or take their grievance if there is any lack of compliance with State Supply Commission policies throughout the State. It is like an Ombudsman in the contracting regime. We are committed to the creation of that. That program has not yet been fully developed because we need legislative protection for the position and the State Supply Commission Act is being reviewed by the Crown Solicitor.

In part, that review is looking at legislative protection for the contracts referee. Under the State Supply Commission Act at the moment, the referee would be able to work only in the area of goods and services and not in works or construction. We need our contracts referee to be able to look at all government contracting, whether it be in works or in the purchase of goods and services. Once the Act is reviewed and we have some legislation in the House - I hope in the latter part of this year - we will establish that position.

Ms ANWYL: Has any research been done in this Budget on the cost to government of contracting out? If so, where is that? If not, can some be done?

Mr BOARD: Are you talking about contracting generally or any one particular contract and whether it returns quality outcomes?

Ms ANWYL: I am thinking of the trend in the community services sector to contract out what were previously government functions and that is replicated across a range of sectors. Has any thought been given to working out how much the contracting out process is costing individual departments in time, energy and human resources?

Mr BOARD: It is required that procurement plans, business programs and business costings are done up front as part of the State Supply Commission guidelines and policies. These must include the cost of the management of the program and the management of the contract itself. All of these things are estimated and looked into prior to the awarding of any one tender because the whole purpose behind the contract - contrary to what some people might want to make out - is better outcomes. If there is not a better outcome - and I have made it very clear across our own agencies and every other agency we discuss - if we are not convinced up front that there will not be a better outcome for the community then we do not want to enter into the contract.

There has to be a better outcome. It is not always in financial terms; it is about delivery and quality of service and world's best practice in the case of architecture and so forth. A lot of our public buildings today - like schools and police stations - are individually designed to be environmentally friendly. They use local products. We are receiving world's best practice from architects whom the Building Management Authority previously did not have in its work force. By contracting that work we are getting a much greater quality of outcome than we would if we did the work in our work force. Our research indicates that the construction of schools - if I can use that area - is coming in not only on time but under budget and a lot of those additional resources are returned to the individual school. We have seen good examples of schools getting additional hard tennis courts and things because other programs come in under budget. That is something we were not achieving prior to the contracting regime.

I am convinced we are getting quality outcomes, notwithstanding that there will be contracts from time to time. It is very difficult to evaluate that. However, there is a principle across government - certainly one that we are enforcing - that we do not outsource or contract unless we are convinced there is a better outcome for the community.

Mr JOHNSON: Does the State Supply Commission handle items bought through Parliament, like the laptops purchased recently? Would they come through the State Supply Commission?

Mr BOARD: Four years ago, the BMA did all construction for government and the Department of State Services was a central government buying agency for goods and services. Those two have amalgamated into the Department of Contract and Management Services. Sitting out here is the State Supply Commission, the body which creates policy and guidelines. It is a little bit like the EPA is to the environment. It creates a framework in which government contracting has to take place. It is also the umpire. Its job is to ensure that the agencies are accredited

and have quality accreditation to purchase on their own behalf and it educates agencies in the contracting regime. Those agencies which cannot do it themselves have to use CAMS as the expert contracting body. As part of this transition, a number of whole of government contracts are still housed within the State Supply Commission because it was previously the repository for whole of government contracts. However, as this transition takes place more and more agencies will do their own contracts.

Mr JOHNSON: Are you saying that the State Supply Commission is the ombudsman for government purchasing of services and goods but for Parliament House?

Mr BOARD: It happens on a statewide contract. The Government would pre-qualify a number of accredited suppliers for agencies to purchase computers. The individual agencies would buy from those accredited suppliers. I am not sure what company the Parliament uses. They use CAMS as a panel but I cannot tell you exactly who the supplier was.

Mr JOHNSON: I am not interested in the supplier. I just wanted to know how they did it and whether they used the same system.

Mr RIEBELING: On pages 1150 and 1151, can the Minister explain why the average salary - dividing the number of FTEs into the salary allocation - is expected to fall from \$66 200 in 1997-98 to \$64 930 in 1998-99, even though the number of FTEs has remained the same? On page 1151, can the Minister explain why plant, equipment and vehicles expenditure is being cut from \$358 000 in 1997-98 to \$247 000 in 2001-02?

Mr BOARD: Nobody is receiving less money. The reduction comes from payouts but our financial controller, Mr Hawke, will explain that.

Mr HAWKE: During 1997-98, one or two people have come and gone. There may be a small extraordinary payment there for leave and long service leave accrued entitlements. When we move to the 1998-99 Budget, we are looking at a stable FTE profile, bearing in mind the commission has been rebuilding itself over the last couple of years with a new focus. Nobody is receiving a cut in salary.

Mr RIEBELING: Is that even though you are allocating less for salaries?

Mr HAWKE: The total salaries still include normal pay but if somebody has some entitlements and leave, we pay out a little bit more in the year than we expect to. That is why there is a marginal adjustment there.

Mr RIEBELING: What about the plant and equipment on page 1151, \$358 000 down to \$247 000?

Mr HAWKE: The figures there are tied up with the motor vehicle fleet arrangement. For a short period we take vehicles onto our books and then they are disposed of through the auction process. For example, these may be insurance casualties. If a vehicle is involved in an accident, under the arrangement we pay for that vehicle and then we receive the insurance proceeds. There is always a little bit of carryover at the end of the financial year and we may have these vehicles on our books for a short time. It could be one or two months. The actual assets of the commission are very small. That figure is distorted because of the need to hold vehicles on our books. It is a proper accounting treatment.

Mr RIEBELING: I do not know how you manage to achieve that knowing you will hold more vehicles this year than the next. Are you expecting -

Mr HAWKE: It moves up and down. As has been explained in the Auditor General's report, agencies have had some difficulties getting their vehicles back. That issue is being addressed now. We are trying to ensure that active contract management takes place to improve the management of vehicles and the numbers that we have to take onto our books. I would expect this to be much less than what it is given the current arrangements that we are looking at putting in place.

Ms ANWYL: I understand the Government's position now is that it is preferable for agencies or individuals to use credit cards rather than other forms of credit raising or purchase orders, whatever they might be. Where in the Budget is the work the commission may have done on that, and is that a correct reflection of policy?

Mr BOARD: If there is an area in the Budget where the commission has been involved, the Government is moving to corporate credit cards because; one, they are far more accountable; and two, they are a lot cheaper to use. A government purchase order costs about \$40 per transaction because of the time consuming management of raising and filing it and so forth, whereas the cost of a purchase on a credit card is negligible. It is really a cost saving to government, plus it is more accountable.

Mr RIEBELING: How is it more accountable?

Mr BOARD: There is a record produced by the banks held outside of government.

Mr RIEBELING: Is that as compared to a record of paperwork held by the government?

Mr BOARD: It is accountable from the point of view that you have an outside agency also managing that expenditure and listing it. You have a safeguard to ensure that all government purchases are accounted for.

Mr RIEBELING: Is the system using the bank records more accountable?

Mr BOARD: We strive to be more and more accountable all the time; if we can use technology to help us then we will. There is a complete audit trail on every transaction with credit cards.

Mr RIEBELING: It is very difficult to get that information when you ask for it through freedom of information. It might be transparent for you looking at it, but it is not for us.

Mr MacLEAN: Dot point 1 on page 1140 is modern policy and guideline framework. It addresses the full scope of public sector purchasing and contracting. I take it that this relates to the establishment of the email contract lodgment and contracts being available on the Internet. Have there been any problems with that change of process? Are there any thoughts of upgrading?

Mr BOARD: The item does not relate only to electronic commerce and use of the Internet; it is a question of providing updated policy guidelines for agencies to use as we develop contracting. As the purchasing of goods and services throughout Government becomes more refined, so too does our policy development and our guidelines. We want to become more accountable and transparent and there is a question of creating a framework.

Our response to Commission on Government recommendation 11 is very strong. We expect at some time in the near future to have all contracting above a certain level on the Internet so that the community, business and anybody can see the extent of contracting in Western Australia and the types of contracts agencies are involved in. We expect that there will be a number of accountability measures. The Internet is a very exciting area, one which creates a lot of challenges for us. These are the challenges we discussed earlier of trying to keep our dollars in Western Australia when people can trade freely across the Internet; the problem of ensuring the people the agencies will be buying from are accredited and accountable, and then to ensure that we are receiving quality outcomes from that purchasing; and the legal framework - the transfer of signatures across the Internet does not have legal protection at the present time. A range of framework issues create a challenge and it is a challenge we have to meet because the Internet is here; it is the future and we need to ensure there are safeguards and probity for government agencies in their purchasing.

On the other side of that ledger is the way we will be able to save significant dollars. Small business will have greater access to Government agencies because of the way they can cut out in many ways some additional costs which may be incurred by some of the larger companies. There are a lot of advantages for Western Australia in going down the electronic commerce route. However, there are some challenges and we need to get our policies, guidelines and framework in place.

Mr MacLEAN: How would the recent announcement that the Federal Government was considering signing an agreement - I think the MFP agreement - affect the Government's purchasing policy to buy local?

Mr BOARD: All of these things are challenges. As the globe shrinks and as technology advances, it means that you can buy potato chips across the Internet and have them delivered to your home cheaper than you can buy them at the corner store. It creates a great many challenges for making sure that the Government's purchasing dollar stays in Western Australia. We do not have all the answers to these things at present other than to say that we are working with many national bodies. The Australian Procurement and Construction Council, of which I am chairman, is focused on this issue and is working with the Online Council and the Attorneys General in Australia to get a framework that works well. We are working with a whole range of Government bodies. The Department of Commerce and Trade, which has the Office of Information and Communication, is involved in this developing area in Western Australia and Australia. Western Australia leads Australia in this regard, and is at the cutting edge of the development of this in government agencies. Having said that, we do not have those safeguards and they are challenges to make sure that Western Australian companies have full access to government purchasing.

Mr RIEBELING: In relation to supply contracts and your ministerial office, and in relation to the last division as well, I understand there is a need for restraint within Government services and the like. How many vehicles are currently in your ministerial office and how many were there when your Government came into office? How many staff do you have?

Mr BOARD: Very few.

Mr RIEBELING: Fourteen?

Mr BOARD: I have eight staff.

Mr RIEBELING: How many have a car?

Mr BOARD: There were five vehicles when I acquired the portfolio. There are now three. That does not include my own.

Mr RIEBELING: The question was: How many, when we lost office, were allocated to the Ministry of Works and Services?

Mr BOARD: I am running at very low levels of ministerial support and have been very cost effective about the use of government vehicles and other equipment.

Mr RIEBELING: That has not answered the question. How many vehicles were there when Labor lost office?

Mr BOARD: There has been a change in portfolios. I cannot say exactly because I am the Minister for Works, Services, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs and Youth. I have support for those areas in my portfolio, whereas that would not have been the same in 1993. There would have been a different portfolio mix. I am not sure, but we are running radically less people for ministerial support than your Government did and that has been the intent of the Government.

Mr RIEBELING: Can you supply that information?

Mr BOARD: I can only supply it for my experience. I am not responsible for what other Ministers have done in other portfolios.

Mr RIEBELING: Can you supply supplementary information on how many vehicles were allocated to the Works and Services Minister, as they were called in those days?

Mr BOARD: I will supply the information on how many vehicles were supplied to the Works and Services portfolio. I will tell you that there is one vehicle in my Works and Services portfolio for ministerial support.

Division 82: Office of Multicultural Interests, \$879 000 -

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

[Mr Board, Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs.]

[Ms B. Robbins, Executive Director, Office of Multicultural Interests.]

Ms WARNOCK: I note that there is a 20 per cent reduction in funding, but it is 18 per cent on the straight figures. Can the Minister explain the reduction in the funding for the Office of Multicultural Interests, taking into account the additional funding that the Office received for Living in Harmony; because I imagine that is the difference. Can the Minister explain the reduction in the funding for the office on the basis of these forward estimates?

Mr BOARD: There have been no real decreases in policy area. In 1997-98, \$150 000 in increased funding was allocated to our Harmony program which was a one off bonus for that year. Other than that we have returned to normal funding levels.

Ms WARNOCK: How is this Living in Harmony campaign being funded because, judging by phrases like "contagious bigotry threatening the nation" and so on which is a phrase from *The Bulletin* today, we have not immediately begun living in harmony. I assume the Office of Multicultural Interests still has the job of promoting harmony in the community. How will that be done on the reduced budget?

Mr BOARD: It is not exactly a reduced budget. The \$150 000 was to initiate the program and many of the costs involved in initiating that program and getting it off the ground have been met and we are now well into the program. The ongoing administration of the program will be met through the normal staffing of the Office of Multicultural Interests. The exciting area is the fact that much of what we do and achieve is done by the community and by partnerships which we have formed in the delivery of that program, particularly with small business. You would know, as you have been to a number of events where we have passed on our Living in Harmony charter -

Mr RIEBELING: Did you not give it away on the back of a magazine?

Mr BOARD: Yes. We are quite proud to do that because we are proud of anybody who adds their name to that.

Ms WARNOCK: I am a great supporter of this, Minister.

Mr BOARD: I am convinced that a lot of non-government resources are happy to add to the expansion of the program, either in kind or financially. They will add to what will happen. This is a community response, not

necessarily a government response, and part of the program is to get some ownership in the community. An amount of \$10m is available in federal government funding that is yet -

Ms WARNOCK: We would love to see that. As the advertisement used to say, "I'd like to see that!" I have written to your federal colleague about that.

Mr BOARD: Exactly. I have been very disappointed that the Federal Government has not seen fit to obtain their response on a national basis. I am encouraged to think that they might adopt Western Australia's program nationally and as a result of that we might see some additional resources come into Western Australia as part of that federal allocation. I cannot put my signature to that because I do not know at this point. However, that is our intent and we believe we will receive some additional resources. A number of other bodies, such as Healthway, the Lotteries Commission and so forth, also fund community based programs and are very interested to see the success of this program. The program will expand this year without the additional allocation of taxpayers' money.

Ms WARNOCK: How will it be funded this year through the Office of Multicultural Interests? Is that through the normal expenditure in the office?

Mr BOARD: Yes, it is.

Ms WARNOCK: Do you not envisage a great deal extra being spent by the office itself?

Mr BOARD: I want to expand the program this year, but I am hoping to meet the costs of that outside of this Budget.

Ms WARNOCK: With sponsorship and programs like that?

Mr BOARD: Yes. We are starting to see people wanting to do that. For example, today I signed letters thanking some of Western Australia's largest companies - BHP and McDonald's - which will display the charter in each of their outlets. There is a whole range which I cannot recall off the top of my head such as Woolworths and Coles Myer. It is a reinforcement program and you must look at not only how to get value for money but what you are trying to achieve. You could put as much money as you like into one single thing but if it does not change or reflect on what the community is thinking, and if people think about this every time they walk into a shop, into Coles or into the Commonwealth Bank, and you can do it cost effectively then that is a good program.

Ms WARNOCK: How will you measure the outcome of this program? I am as interested in the outcome as you are.

Mr BOARD: That is a very good call. How do you measure any change? I do not know whether we need a change and I think that is the issue. I do not think we have a racist community in Western Australia. I do not think we have huge incidences of racial problems. We must remind people who question the value of cultural diversity what has been achieved by that. Legitimate questions are asked in the community about migration, which is very different from multiculturalism, and we must separate those issues. Legitimate debates can be had about the size of our migration program, where they go, etc and these debates are taking place. They are legitimate debates, but multiculturalism is a stand alone principle which must be encouraged and the cultural diversity which has been here since our foundation is something of which we can show the community the strengths. We do not need a lot of dollars to do that and if I were to advertise heavily on the television, I would probably be criticised by the Opposition for doing that as well.

Ms WARNOCK: Absolutely.

Mr BOARD: I must find cost effective measures of getting my message across.

Mr MacLEAN: On page 781, the last dot point states that relationships between generations in migrant families and between ethnic youth and the police continue to be issues. A number of my constituents have raised the issue of part time police officers. They do not want to make a full time commitment to become a police officer. They would be happy to assist, but not being sworn officers they cannot. The United Kingdom uses special constables on issues such as this. America uses non-active duty personnel. Has your department made any approaches to the Minister for Police on this issue of specifically targeting ethnic groups with part time officers or reserves?

Mr BOARD: No. It is not a responsibility for the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs. That is clearly within the Police Act and lies with the Minister for Police. However, we make representations - successfully, I might say - to the Police Service about its relationship with ethnic youth, some of the special needs of ethnic youth, the difference in cultural understanding of the Police Force which varies from country to country and how it might be able to effect greater policing in areas of concern. We have been involved in developing train the trainer programs with police, understanding that it is dealing with ethnic youth in larger numbers in some geographical locations. That is our role; not to develop the police policy for special constables. However, your suggestion may have merit.

Mr RIEBELING: On page 782, five major initiatives are listed for 1998-99. Dot points 2, 3, 4 and 5 of that section have received a funding cut in this year's Budget. The first one decreases from \$524 000 to \$407 000, the next from \$298 000 to \$147 000, the next from \$119 000 to \$94 000 and the next from \$245 000 to \$230 000. How can you possibly put it as a major initiative for this year when you have cut funds from each of them?

Mr BOARD: There are two reasons: Firstly, the \$150 000 that was a one off program was spread across those four initiatives and has been expended to a great extent. We do not have to put in more and more government money to expand and develop these programs. I expect to have support from outside of government circles. I expect to have sponsorship, particularly from the business sector, in the development of these programs. A major initiative this year will be seeing the greater community play a role in expenditure in this area and not rely on Government to achieve those objectives.

Ms WARNOCK: I refer to the budget papers of last year at page 651. It proposes two evaluations for 1997-98; namely, to assess the revised community relations grants program and to assess the language learning resource centre program. Were both evaluations carried out and, if so, what was the outcome of these evaluations?

Mr BOARD: Yes. Both evaluations were carried out.

Ms ROBBINS: In relation to the community relations grants program, we consulted with the wider community on those evaluations and made two fundamental changes: Firstly, to clearly delineate criteria that related to community relations and remove confusion for the purpose of the grants and, secondly, to remove a cap that previously existed at \$2 000 which enabled projects that sometimes are more substantial to be granted. For example, we gave \$10 000 to conduct a program of best practice of community relations antiracism programs in schools which will be documented and published by the Ethnic Communities Council. It tried to move away from the festive cultural grants and into work that related to the sorts of strategies that are incorporated in the Living in Harmony document.

In relation to the evaluation of the program that went to the language learning resources centres, about halfway through the three year grant program we discovered that they were being used effectively. They have progressed along the same lines. One fundamental change we introduced in the last round was to invite community groups as well as public libraries to participate in those centres and 96 centres have been recommended for grants.

Mr BOARD: It has been one of the more successful areas - a \$900 000 commitment over three years and we are in our third year of that commitment. There are 96 outlets now. It is a self help program which assists hundreds of thousands of people, whether they be the young or the elderly. It is encouraging that those people who have never had, or are frightened to have, access to the traditional language training can now go into the privacy of the library and at their own rate improve their English skills or learn languages other than English. That is a substantial outcome for the community and we will be evaluating that. A policy change was to not just restrict it to libraries, but to link some of the larger cultural communities and community centres that were already conducting language training to the library or program so that they were not available only for libraries, but also places where a lot of people gathered. A couple of places have taken up that additional access.

Mr JOHNSON: As a member of probably the largest ethnic group in Western Australia, I obviously have a great interest in this. On page 782, under major initiatives for the next financial year, the middle dot point states "continue to promote community harmony through participation in 'Celebrate WA' celebrations." There must be something more than "continue to promote" in mind if it is to be a major initiative for this coming year. What will that be or what new ideas will be involved in that?

Mr BOARD: This is probably the whole thrust of where we want to take the area of multicultural and ethnic affairs. The whole thrust of our deliberations now - and the community's deliberations, not just the ethnic community's - is to look at the Western Australian community as a whole and say that cultural diversity is part of our community. We are talking about citizenship as a whole of a community and that to some extent we should not just focus on celebrating multiculturalism but make it part of our mainstream activities.

Celebrate WA is the amalgamation of what was Multicultural Week and WA Week. When we celebrate what it is to be Western Australian, we celebrate all of the cultures that have come here to help our State grow. It is a widening of the program away from what some people might consider traditional ethnic communities to the whole community and celebrating what we have achieved; celebrating and adding value to that cultural diversity.

Ms WARNOCK: Referring to page 781 and the significant issues and trends, the third dot point states that there is considerable scope for using the language and cultural skills of our immigrant population more extensively to enhance the State's business and trade opportunities. I agree with that. What has been done, if anything, so far?

Mr BOARD: I think you were at the launch of the Valuing Diversity guidelines in which we promote - not only in government agencies, but also in the private sector - that for a long time people had a lot of additional skills in their

work force but the faster people could learn English, the faster they could hide those skills, the better it was. As the globe shrinks - we talked about the Internet in another portfolio today - and as we, particularly Western Australia, are trading more with other countries, we are starting to realise that those cultural skills and language skills can help us build those connections between other countries.

Ms WARNOCK: Are we doing it?

Mr BOARD: Yes, we are doing it. We have asked agencies to identify their language skills, ensure that people who have language skills and cultural backgrounds are involved in some of the management and developing areas, and identify those who can bring value to it. It is in its early phases and we have done a lot of evaluation, but it is an area which is exciting for us.

Ms ROBBINS: We have converted the Valuing Diversity document to one that is more appropriate for the business sector. We have rewritten it in a style that builds a business case, rather than something that is guidelines for the Public Service. In conjunction with that, we have developed 10 case studies on industries within Western Australia that show you how to do it and how to go about best practice in relation to it. That will be completed at the end of June. We are conducting our third seminar on productive diversity. We have established relationships with the Bilateral Business Association and the International Business Council of Western Australia.

Division 41: Conservation and Land Management, \$45 412 000 -

[Mr Sweetman, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Dr S. Shea, Executive Director, Department of Conservation and Land Management.]

[Dr J.C. Byrne, Director of Corporate Services, Department of Conservation and Land Management.]

Dr EDWARDS: On page 228 under recurrent expenditure, \$156 000 is allocated for "Amount Authorised by Other Statutes - Salaries and Allowances Act 1975". Why has that amount increased over last year's allocation, for whom does it pay and what services does it provide?

Dr BYRNE: That is the cost of employment of CALM's executive director.

Dr EDWARDS: My question relates to salinity, and I link that to page 228 under Significant Issues and Trends. What new money has been provided for salinity and what is the total amount of money for salinity in the Budget for this year?

Mrs EDWARDES: For 1998-99 it is \$10m. Those funds have been allocated under various other agencies as well; that is, Agriculture, the Water and Rivers Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection. I can provide that breakdown by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: That answer will be provided by way of supplementary information.

Dr EDWARDS: What allocation has CALM received from that \$10m and what will it be used for?

Mrs EDWARDES: CALM's allocation for 1998-99 is \$4.65m, of which \$1.25m is for management of crown remnants including conservation reserves; \$150 000 is for land for wildlife; \$2.5m is for key wetlands and natural diversity recovery program; \$500 000 is for biological survey and \$250 000 is for monitoring.

Dr EDWARDS: In the budget papers it states 3 000 hectares. How many pine trees will be planted? Can you give me some general information about tree planting, but particularly the maritime pine?

Dr SHEA: It is roughly 1 500 trees per hectare. Associated with that, we also plant 10 per cent of an equivalent area in a range of biodiversity trees. We hope to increase that by the year 2000 to between 15 000 and 20 000 ha. One of the keys to making these programs work is farmer acceptance and we have been overwhelmed by the response of farmers.

Dr EDWARDS: Is this for maritime pine?

Dr SHEA: Yes. The other tree planting programs that we do are replacing our existing plantations when they reach final harvest. We also act as agents for two Japanese consortiums and a Korean consortium and are planting out about 9 000 ha. In terms of tree planting, we expect that by 2000 we will have - "we" meaning private and public sector because there are 20 000 ha of blue gums going in the ground - something like 40 000 to 50 000 ha of trees going into the ground which is quite a significant achievement. Putting that into perspective, it took almost 100 years to establish 100 000 ha. At current planting rates, which are about 25 000 ha per annum, it will go up to 40 000 ha per annum.

Dr EDWARDS: What about oil mallees?

Dr SHEA: Oil mallees have been very successful. CALM has retreated from that because the farmers have been successful in forming a cooperative, incorporating an oil mallee company, and they have sufficient funds for an executive officer. We tend to talk more in terms of millions of trees because they are in hedgerows rather than square bits. I discussed this with Rick Collins, the oil mallee person, and we are talking about at least two to three million trees a year. That figure will increase over the next 20 years to the equivalent of, in total, over a million hectares of mallee. CALM's role in that initially has been to assist with some funding in subsidising seedlings. We are also involved in the selection of the highest content oil mallees and we also contribute a substantial amount of money to assist in harvesting technology. Overall, the program is quite significant compared to other States. I have a document which I could table which gives the history of the development of the program.

We have many examples where there is a drop in water tables, which was the original objective. The other significant point is the industrial and economic impact of this in regional areas. Albany has seen a significant impact on employment with that blue gum program. We expect that over the next two or three years both Bunnings and the large Japanese companies, Itochu and Oji, will be expending in the region of \$100m. We start exports next year and within three or four years we will be exporting a million tonnes of wood.

If the overall program is fulfilled, we will have 800 000 ha of trees on farms and that will generate, on a sustained basis, about 13 million cubic metres of wood a year. The possible implications, in addition to the beneficial effects on the environment, to rural Western Australia will be very significant. There is a significant possibility that we will be able to manufacture a significant proportion of that wood fibre in regional centres. The possibility is that we could create about 20 000 or 30 000 new jobs over a 20 year period if we have that manufacturing. People are sceptical about this program, but there is nothing new under the sun. Anyone who has had the opportunity to visit Bordeaux, which is a lovely region in France, will note that that program uses exactly the same species. One hundred years ago Napoleon III set up a program to establish maritime pine to stop wind blown sand and rising water tables. They now have a million hectares of maritime pine. That supports 30 000 people in a multi billion dollar industry. A real prospect exists. If we can become more efficient, we can capture the increasing demand for wood.

There are also interesting implications in terms of the greenhouse effect because we are one of the few places in the world which have the land base and the technical capacity to establish large areas of tree crops. We estimate that we will be able to sequester something like five to seven million tonnes of carbon per year from this program once it is fully established. There is a positive benefit there. The original program was started to reduce water tables. These other benefits are cream on the cake, but are very significant.

The CHAIRMAN: That information cannot be tabled because it is a committee. I am sure members would appreciate being handed copies of that if there are sufficient copies.

Mr MacLEAN: Can we have it incorporated into supplementary information?

Mrs EDWARDES: I am happy to provide it by way of supplementary information.

Dr EDWARDS: To what extent is the maritime pine planting affecting your debt restructuring? Can you comment on last year and this year?

Dr SHEA: We are about \$10m ahead in our debt restructuring. Cabinet agreed two years ago that we could modify our debt reduction program to accommodate the salinity program. Essentially, our debt reduction is \$10m ahead of schedule. With the permission of Government, we were able to manipulate our debt reduction program and our asset sales so that we could produce sufficient funding for the maritime pine program. The asset sales program has been quite successful. As we have reduced debt, we generate more funds because we are not paying back as much interest. We also reap the benefit over time even if we do not do anything, as Government loans are rolled over. The interest rates become lower and some time ago there were high interest loans. The debt reduction program is on schedule, but I would be less than honest if I said that everybody is content about the future economy. Another reason CALM is able to generate these large programs without calling on central funds is that we retain our own revenue and that is dependent, to some extent, on the general economy. I am not sure anyone knows what the general economy will do in the next year.

Mr NICHOLLS: One of the items in Significant Issues and Trends on page 229 relates to encouragement for the manufacture of end products of the highest value from log timber obtained from native forests. Is that timber that is felled or is it timber that is removed? Is that off cuts and that type of timber that is sometimes removed for woodchipping?

Dr SHEA: We were interested in value adding from the time the trees dropped where there are still significant amounts of wood left on the forest floor through to the process where we take out sawn timber. Three stages have

occurred in the timber industry. Up until the 1970s and early 1980s, it was essentially a green sawn structural driven industry. Over the period of the mid-1980s until the mid-1990s there had been very substantial investment. A large proportion of the timber now is kiln dried. One of the most exciting developments in the timber industry is what I call "a third wave of investment".

This is quite exciting. The medium and smaller operators, particularly the Italian sawmillers, have always been very creative. Consortiums of those sawmillers with furniture makers like BVR Factory in Fremantle are adding another layer of value and producing very high quality products. For example, a consortium which involves Whittakers, Bushmills and Bertolini sawmills has just signed a contract for \$60m for very high quality furniture to be made out of small offcuts which are normally wasted. In answer to your question, there are very significant advances. CALM's role has been in research and we still continue our research out of Harvey. For example, we have done the work on the drying of marri which has allowed BVR to produce that beautiful marri furniture which incorporates defects. Notwithstanding the economy, the reason that the hardwood sector of the timber industry has not suffered from downturns in the housing sector is because the majority are actually producing a different type of product. They are not dependent solely on the housing market.

Mr NICHOLLS: Are local manufacturing companies being created or is there simply a domination by the large milling companies in the amount of wood that is available and/or the products that are then manufactured as a result of access to that wood?

Dr SHEA: It is a very interesting question and I am trying not to speak for too long because what is happening really excites me. Larger companies like Bunnings have put capital investment into the kiln dried timber but the real innovation has been taken up by the medium and smaller companies. People like Dino Gossatti are talking about intakes of 5 000 to 10 000 cubic metres and selling an outdoor furniture setting to Harrods for £5 000. Jensen, the garden furniture manufacturer in Busselton, is exporting that beautiful outdoor furniture to America. Bunnings played a role in this, but others were involved as well. Small and medium sawmillers are linking up to get better marketing. One example is Jensen has linked up with Just Jarrah, but there are others - the linking of BVR with Dino Gossatti. Bunnings has sponsored a similar consortium to achieve the benefits of scale but it retains its innovation. What is exciting is that normally in this world of economic rationalism small is not beautiful, and I am conscious of that in many situations, but in this sense small and medium are very efficient, probably more efficient than the bigger approach. One of my dreams has always been that, given this fantastic, beautiful resource we have which can be produced forever, we have a real opportunity to create a tremendously job rich industry of very high quality, skilled artisans. That is starting to happen. Anyone who travels to the south west can see that.

Mr MacLEAN: Dot point 2 on page 229 refers to increasing interaction with private industry, individuals and government agencies. Most developments I have seen have a policy of clear felling and move in with a D9, knock everything down and restructure. The trees and shrubs that are reintroduced are usually foreign to the Australian natives or are foreign to the area. As you establish this interaction you will reach that level of interaction where you say to developers that you have these trees and bush clusters around, can they look after these ones and fit them into your subdivision?

Mrs EDWARDES: That note is dealing with the bush care community grants program. An amount of \$5m was allocated this year to Western Australian land care groups. It was a major component of the Commonwealth's natural heritage trust. It is not the issue to which you have referred. Bushplan, however, is the development or continuation or further refinement of System 6. It is being done by the Ministry of Planning and is something which would potentially pick up on the issue to which you referred. That will be a planning issue.

Ms WARNOCK: On page 229 it refers to the encouragement of the provision of funding of plantations by the private sector and overseas investors on cleared private land. As someone who seeks to minimise the timber taken off old growth forests - and this is not a new discussion between Dr Shea and myself - how far has this gone? Can you give me a picture of what sort of investment has taken place and what sort of plantings, if any, have taken place?

Mrs EDWARDES: In 1997 the industry was estimated to be worth something like \$46m in the south coast region alone.

Ms WARNOCK: Is that this particular section of the industry to which you are referring?

Mrs EDWARDES: The south coast tree crop industry.

Dr SHEA: I covered some of those points in my response to the member for Maylands who kindly asked me a question on tree crops, knowing it was one of my favourite subjects; but I should have expected the member for Perth to also be sympathetic. What is happening is quite revolutionary. We have seen 20 000 ha in the blue gum industry alone. Oji and Itochu have spent \$20m and will spend another \$30m in the next three or four years in tree planting. If we multiply 20 000 ha by about \$10 000 we have an idea of how much is going in and the substantial increase.

The member for Perth also knows that I have made the point to her before that this does not necessarily mean that there is a direct relationship between the timber offcut from native forest and that from farmland. The industry that is based on native forests is directed towards value adding ornamental timber, whereas *Pinus pinaster* is directed towards structural timber and, to a large extent, board products, and blue gum is primarily for high quality wood fibre for pulp. It does not necessarily follow that production of more timber from farmlands would take pressure off the old growth forests.

Ms WARNOCK: Will it ever? Is there any way of replacing the timber that is virtually the same as timber in old growth forests? I am looking to the long term, I am not talking about two years' time.

Dr SHEA: It is a very complex issue. The whole strategy since CALM formed has been to assist the industry to move from a structural producing industry to one that capitalises on the unique properties of the ornamental timber. As much as I would like to think that we can reproduce the colours and textures of jarrah, karri and marri and increasingly timbers from the goldfields, I cannot conceive that there will be significant amounts produced because it takes a long time to do that. At the end of the day, it is a political decision about old growth forests, rather than an economic one in terms of replacement. There is an economic consequence of closing down the old growth. That has been well documented in the RFA process and it is up to the community, through its representatives, to decide the various values. You cannot say that because we are producing more timber in the farmlands, therefore they will cancel it out. It is not the same thing.

Ms WARNOCK: You mentioned timbers from the goldfields and it made me think immediately of sandalwood. What I remember about the goldfields is that it is semi-desert country. Is there any attempt to replace the timber? What timber are we referring to from that area and do you have any plans for sandalwood?

Dr SHEA: As the member for Perth knows, coming from the region - as did my great grandfather - at the turn of the century three million ha of goldfields timber were clear felled to feed the mines for structural timber and for distillation. That area has returned to a very vigorous forest. In addition, there are another seven million ha of forest and woodland. I was at a tourism conference in Kalgoorlie not long ago and I made the point that sometimes we do not realise the assets that are at our doorstep. It is one of the most unique and wonderful things on earth. It is amazing that we are effectively growing a woodland forest in a desert. The amount of wood currently taken out for high quality timber is insignificant. If you estimated 13 million ha of forest and even if it was 1 cubic metre per annum, then theoretically you could take 13 million cubic metres forever. We would be lucky if we are taking out 40 000 cubic metres per annum.

Sandalwood is another interesting story. It is one of the earliest exports from this State and has been a significant contributor to this State's revenue and is still a very profitable business. We sell sandalwood into the Asian market for between \$5 000 and \$6 000 a tonne. The good news is we have done a lot of research. By retaining our revenues we have been able to pour money back into research and crack the technology of growing sandalwood in a plantation situation. The reason that it is so complicated is it is a parasite and requires a succession of hosts. We have not only been able to do that, but also we have been able to induce oil formation at a much earlier age. All of these processes have been patented.

Mrs EDWARDES: If ever you are in Kalgoorlie, I encourage you to visit some of the industries which have been established from using the timber from the area. Some beautiful furniture as well as musical instruments are being made.

Dr EDWARDS: The regional forest agreement is mentioned in the last dot point on page 230. When will all the reports that are the background material be finished and released to the public? How will the public input on the three approaches be considered? What do you estimate to be the final cost of the RFA when it is concluded, and what time frame do you envisage now that those approaches are out for six weeks? How long do you think it will be before it is all finalised?

Mrs EDWARDES: A time frame has not been set, and obviously the PCP is out for six weeks' consultation. The Federal Minister and I want to consider the public submissions that will be delivered during that period, as well as the comments and input from the public through the RFA open days and from the web page. I will provide the final cost of the RFA by way of supplementary information, but possibly it will be only indicative at this stage.

Dr BYRNE: This year the direct cost to CALM of the RFA is between \$1m and \$2m. As the Minister said, we can provide the precise figure.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide an indicative position of the cost by way of supplementary information. Obviously it is nowhere near final at this stage. The background reports have been available. There is only a social one at this stage.

Dr SHEA: I signed off on that this morning, so that is within publishing time - a week or so.

Mrs EDWARDES: It was going to be released during this period. Everything is available.

Mr NICHOLLS: Output 1 on page 232 specifically relates to rare fauna. What is the estimated number of species native to Western Australia that are considered to be rare or at risk of extinction?

Dr SHEA: There are over a hundred of them. The Minister will provide you with supplementary information.

Mr NICHOLLS: Are specific programs for research in place to preserve those seeds or species in some form so they can be regenerated, reintroduced into the wild or kept in their native area?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that answer by way of supplementary information along with the detail on the program.

Dr EDWARDS: Looking at the performance measures for output 1, the number of threatened species changes from +1 to -3; what does that mean? Will three species become extinct? How does that relate to the outcome of conservation?

Dr SHEA: I will check specifically. The actual number of threatened species varies according to our knowledge. We have a formal committee that does that. Some species come off because new populations are suddenly discovered and other species go on. That indicates a net change. We estimate that we might have one more threatened species, and in 1998-99 we hope to take off three.

Dr EDWARDS: When they are taken off, is there a procedure you go through, and do they implement a recovery plan?

Dr SHEA: Yes, we do. The Minister will provide more detailed information. We do a whole range of things, one of which I call "the krypton strategy" after Superman. If seeds are in a desperate situation we put them into liquid nitrogen. We have a threatened seed bank. Our objective is to develop recovery plans for all the threatened species. One of the greatest threats to a threatened species in our heath lands is that phytophthora, which causes the jarrah die-back, is running rampant. We have been able to claim additional funds from Government, and in the publicity we are spraying large areas with phosphite as a holding action to induce resistance in these species. A whole range of measures are being adopted. The objective is, as we are doing with the animal species, to have a recovery plan for each one.

Dr EDWARDS: Can the Minister table the protocol that is gone through before a species is taken off?

Mrs EDWARDES: That will be included in the supplementary information which I will provide to the member for Mandurah.

Dr EDWARDS: What consideration has been given to making that process more accountable, given that basically the public finds out about it after the committee has made its decision?

Mrs EDWARDES: You are not talking about it being more accountable, because it goes through a very stringent scientific process. You are talking about how the community can have an input with respect to that.

Dr EDWARDS: Yes, and to know this is being considered.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will take that into consideration.

Mr MacLEAN: My question relates to the Western Shield initiative listed on page 229. Will you outline the expansion and its effects, and is it intended to expand Western Shield into other areas?

Mrs EDWARDES: May I say in advance of asking Dr Shea to respond in more detail, that the Western Shield program has been highly recognised as a very successful program not only in Western Australia, but also nationally and internationally. I think it is one of the greatest success stories in Western Australia, particularly for the protection of our fauna, and it enables us to reintroduce fauna, endangered or otherwise, back into the wild where they belong.

Dr SHEA: The specific objectives of Western Shield are set out in the plan which has been endorsed by the Government. They are to increase the area to five million hectares. We have been able to do this quite efficiently. We have put on only one other staff member to achieve the implementation of Western Shield because it is very much an operational program where we use our people who are in place. The major cost of Western Shield is the baits. If we can reduce the cost of production of baits - we believe we can because 70¢ for a bait is a bit high when I can go down to my boutique butcher in Fremantle and get a couple of good sausages for that - we will be able to expand the program at a faster rate. We are particularly interested in expanding the program into the desert or into

the goldfields, and our concerns there are with cats. We have made significant progress now in dealing with that problem.

The other area into which we particularly would like to expand is the western coast up from Jurien and Mt Lesueur. These programs have been sponsored by Alcoa and other mining companies, and a number of other companies are expressing interest in funding them. Subject to that happening, we expect to achieve our five million hectare target significantly ahead of our schedule. We are already doing 3.3 million. To re-emphasise the Minister's point, I have been desperately trying to gain credit for the research because it has worked so well. I thought it would be a successful program; I am just astounded at the response. We are now getting complaints from farmers that chuditch are climbing irrigation pipes and blocking them, and people in Mundaring who have chicken coops are complaining about the native cats. It has been a spectacularly successful program, and I am absolutely confident that we will be able to reintroduce the whole suite of animals, except the ones that are gone forever, back into all those areas of Western Australia where we baited, plus some extra species. That means bringing back about 30 animals from the brink of extinction.

Mr MacLEAN: Five million hectares must include some private landholdings. Are you getting cooperation from the landholders? As you expand into more densely populated areas, do you envisage a problem with landholders in those areas? I refer specifically to the coastal dune system where you recently baited for foxes. A couple of landholders there approached me about it. Are you looking at managing the private landholders as you expand the program?

Dr SHEA: The answer is yes. Currently almost all our program is on public land. Because we are using a poison, even though it is a naturally occurring one, we are required by the Health Department, as we should be, to put extensive signage around and also to advertise in the newspaper. We are getting tremendous cooperation from farmers. We visited a farm down from Merredin a couple of weeks ago on the way to Kalgoorlie. In that area farmers have put up with not having dogs on their farms, to allow us to bait for rock wallabies. Rock wallabies were down to one, and are now up to 80 on that farm. I discuss with farmers the ways in which we could assist them with their program. If we can get the cost of baits down, I would like to provide baits free to cooperating farmers. We also want to look at the ways in which we can protect the sheepdogs, because they are a rather important part of farm operations. We are looking to see if we can buy them muzzles.

We are doing research with Murdoch and Curtin, looking at the possibility of putting an auto-destructive enzyme into the baits so that when they are put down they do not last for a long time. We are trying to devise a bait delivery system in those areas with patches of remnant vegetation. You can keep the dogs away but the crows pick them up. That is where these poor people lost a dog. I am personally attempting to design a fox wand. You can buy weed wands at Bunnings; we are trying to design a fox wand, which I am patenting, to deliver baits on a regular basis instead of hand delivering them. You cannot aerially drop them. There is a whole range of areas. I must acknowledge publicly here the tremendous cooperation we have received. Some dogs have been killed, despite all our care, and in almost all cases we have had a lot of understanding and sympathy from people. The success of the program publicly to some extent is part of our problem. We are creating black holes of lots of other animals, so we are tending to suck the foxes in. Other interesting stuff coming out of the study is that farmers adjacent to public land are getting a substantial improvement in their lambing rates. All of a sudden we are removing foxes. We totally underestimated the killing power of foxes; they are just absolutely destructive to any animal of about this size.

Dr EDWARDS: Who formally evaluates Western Shield and what methodology do they use?

Dr SHEA: In terms of the process, we set up a committee, which includes independent scientists, when we change the status of animals. In the recent removal of animals from the endangered species list to a less vulnerable but management dependent status, the committee was chaired by Dr Andrew Burbidge, who is one of our leading wildlife scientists with an international reputation. In addition to CALM people, the committee also had people such as Dr Jonathon Majer from Curtin University. The actual monitoring of Western Shield is a very important part of our program, and we have our own scientists and managers using a whole series of techniques from trapping to spotlighting. For example, in the Kingston study, which is a large operational study, we are using a whole series of different trapping types, such as pit traps, hellier traps and normal traps, each over a systematic period of time. We have a very large study in the Northam jarrah forest, over something like 300 000 hectares, where we are measuring the animal populations by trapping. We are also looking at things like reproduction. That is quite exciting now as we are seeing introduced animals, such as woylies, in areas in which they previously did not exist. We now trap animals with babies, which are surviving. That has also happened at Shark Bay.

Mr KOBELKE: I have a series of questions seeking some explanation of the accounts and how they are presented, as well as the actual final figures. I would like some idea of the structure of retained revenue or own funding, because a number of different figures are provided which I am sure add up if you know how to look at them, but I do not. At page 228 recurrent own revenue is listed at \$155m plus, further down under "Capital" there is another

\$6m, but in other parts of the papers, relating to operating revenues, the amount is in the order of \$160m. Yet at page 240 the retained revenue is listed at only \$6m. Can I have some explanation for those different amounts which I assume have slightly different definitions? I would like to know what they mean and how you can draw them together in order to reconcile them.

Mrs EDWARDES: With the new format of the budget papers, even if you have experienced hearings of the Estimates Committee with other portfolios, the situation is somewhat different for CALM because of its particular and peculiar funding arrangements.

Dr BYRNE: You mentioned the figure of \$155m on page 228. The table on page 228 is to help members understand how much of the money goes through the consolidated fund. An amount of \$155m will go through the consolidated fund, of which \$121m is automatically retained by CALM under net appropriations. The balance of \$34m, plus the \$156 000 mentioned earlier, is directly appropriated from the fund. That \$155m goes through the consolidated fund. However, later on, the total cost of programs - the total cost of an output - includes money that does not go through the consolidated fund. Such money CALM obtains in other ways. We have the power, for example, to do recoupable works and to keep that money. The Japanese and Korean projects are on a recoupable basis. That does not go to the consolidated fund, but increases the total amount of money available to CALM.

Mr KOBELKE: I think I understand the presentation on page 228, but that is not the question. The question is how to reconcile across the various accounts what could be considered own revenue or retained revenue and the different definitions used, because they appear in different places with different amounts. I am sure they can be reconciled, but I am not able to do so. I am talking about only the revenue earned by CALM itself.

Dr BYRNE: They can be reconciled. It is a bit difficult with the presentation to explain verbally the way in which they reconcile. Take some of the figures from the outputs, add up the figures and they reconcile with the accrual statements. We have prepared a chart for the Minister which shows how particular figures reconcile from the various statements. It is very difficult to explain the reconciliation in words. I would be happy to meet with you to go over that reconciliation.

Mr KOBELKE: Perhaps I could leave that part of the question and ask a series of other smaller questions. On page 237 under operating expenses and the category of "Other", there is an amount of \$117m. It seems a rather loose classification for two-thirds of the total operating expenses to be under that miscellaneous title. Can we have some clarification or description of it or a breakdown into other categories?

Dr BYRNE: CALM is one of those government agencies that makes the greatest use of contracts, and that \$117m is almost entirely for contracts. All logging operations are done by contract. Other agencies make less use of contracts. "Other" is a realistic interpretation. The statements are based on the audited financial statements in CALM's last annual report, but they are modified a little to try to get consistency of categories across the Government. CALM has very large contract use. For different agencies it would be more in proportion.

Mr KOBELKE: At page 238, the item on the bottom line is total liabilities and equity. In fact, it is a fairly large equity of \$1.3b. It does not seem to accumulate, which may reflect the fact that CALM does not own a lot of the assets it manages. On the other hand, land and buildings are detailed as a sub-item under non-current assets at a value of just over \$1.3b. Given what Dr Shea has already said about the huge growth in plantations - and accepting that many of those are on private land and therefore are not an asset of CALM - it still does not look as though you are revaluing the asset. Either that or you do not have a large productive asset that is growing.

Dr BYRNE: Yes, that is a very apt and appropriate observation. Accrual accounting in government is very new and Western Australia is leading other States. Western Australia in the forestry area is leading Canada and the United States. The problem we have is that we are now at the cutting edge of accounting, and there is no accounting standard for valuing native forests. Last year the Australian accounting standards people came to Perth. We flew them over for a conference and we invited all the other State Governments to send their forest accounting people over so we could develop a standard.

The new standard will be issued soon and this year's financial statements will include the value of the forests. However, because there was no standard last financial year and we had to present something acceptable to the Auditor General, we ended up with no value for the forest because we could not put a value on it. However, at the end of this year our audited financial statements will include the value of the forest. In the future you will be able to see the increase in value. I agree with your point; these statements here do not include that value.

Mr KOBELKE: The answer certainly gives me some understanding, but does that also imply that the value of non-native forest assets - such as Gnanagara - is therefore diminishing, or certainly not rising, and that the bulk of the asset value in forest will relate to native forest?

Dr BYRNE: The plantations are not given a value either. The new accounting standard is called self-generating and regenerating assets, and includes plantations and native forests. Until now there has been no accounting standard for valuing plantations. Of course, the private sector also grows plantations and must value them in some way, but there have been a large number of different ways of valuing the plantations. The auditors point out that there is no accounting standard, so there is no value for Gngangara either. I would say that generally the plantations are young in the sense that they have not reached a steady state or mature phase. So, the value of the plantations is increasing.

That is a very significant item in the increase in value of CALM, when we are talking about forests and plantations in our State. We see a steady increase in the value of CALM's net assets. At the moment the accounting standards are deficient and we cannot show the value of plantations and forests.

Ms WARNOCK: My question relates to the Western Shield program. Minister and Dr Shea, I know that you know of my enthusiasm for the chuditch, from past years. You mentioned the goldfields, Dr Shea, and I am interested to know what native animals from that area are being restored, as the chuditch is in other parts of the State.

Dr SHEA: With regard to our research phase in the goldfields, we have not launched a large program there and it is our intention to do that. I guess the interesting thing about a number of these animals is that they used to extend right across southern Australia. I am not an expert but we are looking certainly at the numbat, the bilby and I am pretty sure the chuditch. As there are different animals in different places, I can provide a list of the sorts of animals we will be looking at. Just as an interesting aside, I always wondered how Aborigines survived in those very dry regions but when you think of the complete suite of these animals available you can understand why they had some good food.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr AINSWORTH: My question relates to visitor entry fees for parks, and page 235 is the closest reference I can find. Bearing in mind the spread of parks that are now subject to visitor fees and also the recent increase, what income is expected from these visitor fees in the current or coming financial year? Does that income outweigh the additional costs incurred at parks for providing people to police the entrances to the parks or any other facilities that have to be provided to cater for the actual collection of visitor fees? If there is a surplus over and above the cost of administering all that, what is it applied to?

Mrs EDWARDES: All fees which are generated by visitors to national parks go back into that national park. The funds expended on national parks far exceed the amount of money derived as income. The cost of recovery of those fees is nominal in comparison with the expenditure in the national park, and as a general rule it is carried out by the rangers themselves. In busy seasons and in some national parks casuals are employed to assist in that regard, but the cost is nominal.

Dr BYRNE: Collection of fees in national parks is about \$3.5m a year. It has been rising quite well in recent years. As the Minister said, the cost of collection is fairly nominal. We generally employ people on a casual basis at the Pinnacles and Yanchep to collect fees as cars go through. The actual cost of collection is generally a very small proportion of the amount. I can confirm, as the Minister said, that the money raised goes back into the national parks.

Mr NICHOLLS: Minister, I raise the issue of coastal erosion in the context of output 4 on page 235 for tourism and recreation services. I raise it in a number of contexts, but specifically in relation to the accident that happened at Margaret River and to the number of other recreational areas along our coast where erosion creates a significant problem. Does your budget provide for, or does CALM specifically have, any input into monitoring or managing coastal erosion as an issue or as a function within the Environment portfolio?

Mrs EDWARDES: Obviously we have a responsibility in those areas we manage but, of course, the Western Australian coastline is enormous. A lot of those areas are managed by local councils and obviously in some areas private land goes right up to the coastline. We have been working with WAMA to establish some guidelines for management of those coastlines by local councils, and providing our level of expertise to assist them to alleviate or manage the problem in the best possible way. I am not sure if the department is able to point to a specific amount in the budget for dealing with coastal care, or whether that cost is part of the management of those public lands that go down to the coast for which it has responsibility.

Dr SHEA: We are generally not collecting expenditure against that activity as such. It is simply part of the general regional management cost, so we cannot say exactly how much is spent on coastal regeneration.

Mr NICHOLLS: Who is responsible for dune rehabilitation and dune conservation along our coastline, particularly when primary dunes are removed for development or are simply degraded because of inappropriate use?

Mrs EDWARDES: In our area of management CALM is obviously responsible, but the rest of it is under Planning.

Mr NICHOLLS: By way of clarification, are you saying that Planning has the expertise to conserve dunes? I am talking about particularly the primary and secondary dune systems in some areas. I am talking about coastlines where either development is taking place or there is encroachment and destruction of those dune systems.

Mrs EDWARDES: That is something you must take up with Planning, it is not something I can respond to.

Mr NICHOLLS: As a Minister, do you see that as a serious issue of an environmental nature? Is it an issue that, from the environmental perspective, we should be aware of and take significant interest in?

Mrs EDWARDES: We have a close working relationship with the respective departments which have a responsibility in that area. Planning is the lead agency, and CALM and the Department of Environmental Protection also have a role, and we work through the interagency committee.

Dr EDWARDS: I relate my question to dot point 7 on page 229 dealing with management of forests, which mentions protection of forests from fires and protection of the community from fires. When will CALM respond to the report of the select committee on Perth's air quality? Does CALM have any concerns about the increased range of health effects that that committee has uncovered? When it considers the report will it take into account the findings to do with rural communities and the impact of smoke on them? How many hectares are planned to be burnt by CALM as part of its activities in 1998-99?

Mrs EDWARDES: With respect to the select committee's report, I will be coordinating a whole of government response among all the prospective departments and agencies, which will obviously include CALM. I ask Dr Shea to respond to the question about the hectares planned to be burnt by CALM in 1998-99.

Dr SHEA: I take this opportunity to say that in general terms we certainly welcome the work of the committee and the recognition that the vast amount of pollution we suffer from is not a result of prescribed burns. I do register my concern - as I have to my Minister - that while I appreciate people's desire not to have any smoke or haze, we live in the most bushfire prone zone in the world and the increasing constraints we face in terms of reducing fuels are making it very, very difficult for us to keep the record we have now in terms of bushfire control.

I wrote a recent editorial in *Landscape* which caused some concerns to members of another place, but I wrote it deliberately because the simple reality is that if constraints on prescribed burning continue to be placed on the department, then we will have another Dwellingup wildfire and people will be killed. Unfortunately, Minister, in that case you and I will be before the Coroner's Court and not the critics of prescribed burning.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide the information on the number of hectares by way of supplementary information.

Mr MacLEAN: The excuse for my parochialism is dot point 2 on page 230. I draw your attention to the Yellagonga Park lake system. The Water and Rivers Commission denies that the problem is caused by the amount of water that the Water Corporation draws out of the area, and has suggested it is the feral trees in the Gnangara pine plantation. Given the prolonged series of very dry summers and the beginning of a severe effect on other users of water, will the program for the withdrawal of the pine plantations be speeded up in the event of another dry season or will some other action be taken to ensure that market gardeners especially will not be affected next year as they were this year?

Mrs EDWARDES: With my other hat on as Minister for Employment and Training, I advise that an employment program was recently launched which will assist the regeneration of the native plants in the Gnangara Regional Park. This will achieve two things: Firstly, the conservation aspect and, secondly, provide employment opportunities for an increased number of trainees.

Dr SHEA: There is considerable technical dispute about what is responsible. Any vegetation consumes water, and the denser the vegetation the more it consumes. A culmination of factors has led to the reduction in the water table. We are in not just a two or three year drought.

Mr MacLEAN: It is about seven years.

Dr SHEA: It is even longer than that. I was working in hydrology 20 years ago and I could not get a calibration on my catchments, because water tables have been reducing for a prolonged period. In some cases water tables in the forest have gone down seven or eight metres. That is part of it, but there is a whole combination of factors. The good news is that by thinning the whole plantation, rather than clear felling small parts of it or speeding up the process of converting the plantation, we will reduce levels of water demand and they will be significantly less than they would have been if there had been native vegetation. That will contribute to reducing the problem with water, but there are other higher forces determining why we are not getting water at this stage.

Mr NICHOLLS: We have been talking about Western Shield and foxes. With regard to rabbits, I understand

Agriculture WA has released the calicivirus but does CALM play a role in the eradication or the attempted eradication of rabbits as well as foxes?

Dr SHEA: It is also significant because there is some evidence to suggest that our ability to kill feral cats is affected by whether rabbits are available, and that the cats are more hungry if rabbits are not available. We work very closely with Agriculture WA and I have talked to the scientists involved - including senior scientists who were recently here from the CSIRO - and they are completely puzzled as to why calicivirus has not taken off in WA as it has in the Flinders Ranges, where it has been spectacularly successful. The suggestion is that it may have been the timing. We are working with Agriculture and we are doing our own trials, for example, on the Peron Peninsula where we are stepping up the number of rabbits infected.

Also some interesting research is coming through from, I think, Agriculture WA suggesting that it might have a quicker way of spreading the virus. I would be terribly disappointed if we did not repeat what has happened in the Flinders Ranges because the culmination of removing rabbits, foxes and cats will have an enormous impact on conservation in this State, as well as on agriculture.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is CALM involved in any of the evaluation or monitoring of the levels of rabbits? From speaking with farmers, it seems that a lot of the crown land can harbour or, at least, allow the breeding of rabbits uninhibited.

Dr SHEA: Yes, that is true for private property as well. I mentioned the property we visited on the way to Kalgoorlie. One of the consequences of getting rid of the foxes that the owners had to put up with is a plague of rabbits. You can see their burrows everywhere. They just laughed at calicivirus. In areas where we are doing specific research - for example, on the Peron Peninsula - we are putting a lot of effort and time into monitoring rabbit populations and seeing what is happening.

I am optimistic that, apart from calicivirus, there are other vectors for myxomatosis. The way this area of science is developing I am very optimistic that we will be able to control them. Again, the effect in the Flinders Ranges is spectacular. Areas that were as bare as a baby's bottom have come back abundantly, sometimes with species they thought were extinct.

Dr EDWARDS: My question relates to page 232, output 1. At the bottom of the page in the table is the cost per hectare managed, which was estimated to be \$2.29 a hectare in this financial year and \$2.38 in the following financial year. This figure is really quite different from that in the annual report, assuming that it is comparing apples with apples. How is the difference explained?

Dr BYRNE: Could I have a page reference for the annual report?

Dr EDWARDS: The third column of page 54.

Mrs EDWARDES: Are you talking about the measure efficiency indicator of \$1 434 per 1 000 hectares?

Dr EDWARDS: Yes. That is effectively \$1.43 per hectare.

Mrs EDWARDES: The question is whether it is comparing apples with apples.

Dr BYRNE: I am afraid I need to take that one on notice and get back to you.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am interested to know the extent of dieback infestation in Western Australia, particularly in relation to our state forests, and whether that area is increasing. Are the current management practices in place, whether it be phosphite spraying or other means, containing the spread of the virus?

Dr SHEA: We can give you the specific figures. In general terms I believe the situation of the forests has stabilised. The area that has concerned me for a number of years is the heathlands, particularly on the south coast, where we have seen from past practices a quite rapid extension of the disease. The difficulties in that area are a unique susceptibility to the fungus and weather conditions that are very favourable to it. To give an idea of why it is so bad there and how hard it is to control, even little native animals are spreading it. Ironically, the more successful we are with Western Shield, the more we are worried about spreading dieback. Where little bandicoots have chewed the roots of a banksia and have then chewed other ones, you can see a little pattern of disease. That is how serious it is. The only way we shall get control, and this is almost science fiction, is by discovering why the phosphite chemical causes the plant to react. The possibility then, given the new technology of gene manipulation, is that we may be able to create some sort of an agent like a bacteria which could be sprayed on to induce these plants to become resistant.

Mr NICHOLLS: Are you still trying to develop dieback resistant plants, whether it be jarrah or other species, through hybrid testing? I am not quite sure what the researchers are doing, but I am referring to some of the research that Alcoa was involved in and I understand CALM is involved in.

Dr SHEA: We have been successful with Alcoa and, as a person who used to work with dieback, I must concede I did not think it would be successful. We have been able to demonstrate significant bred-resistance in jarrah, and we are actually putting those resistant genes, if you like, back into the population. We have also been successful in breeding resistance into *pinus radiata*. Again, I must say I was sceptical as a researcher, but it has worked very well. The difficulty though is not so much with these major species; it is with hundreds of species, particularly those belonging to the proteaceous family. There are so many of them that it is impossible to breed up a resistance.

What we are trying to do relates to your previous question. If they are at risk we preserve the genes, seed banks and so on and then hope that we can develop some sort of a biological control mechanism, but in a different sort of way. Instead of attacking the fungus, it actually creates resistance in the plant. A colleague in Canada from one of the universities I studied at is a physiologist. I am hoping to attract him here - I have not yet discussed it with my Minister - to do some work on the physiology of this, and try to link up some of this quite mind-boggling technology about gene manipulation with some of the physiological work in the hope that we can advance it.

Mr NICHOLLS: Finally, in relation to the rehabilitation work that is done as a result of mining along the scarp, where that rehabilitation takes place I understand they are reintroducing a total bank of native species as opposed to introducing foreign or exotic species. Are all those species dieback resistant or, as part of the mining process, is the dieback fungus removed or prevented from wiping out those forests once the rehabilitation takes place?

Dr SHEA: It is an area I used to work in so I can comment reasonably intelligently, but it is a complex question. Alcoa, to its great credit, has spent a huge amount of money developing hygienic practices, but it recognises that those practices cannot be perfect. Alcoa cannot operate its activities with the hygiene of an operating table, so inevitably fungus will get back onto the pits. On the pits the environmental conditions that were conducive to spread in the forest have really not changed, so there is much the same potential. Resistant jarrah is put back on, but they cannot breed all the shrub species to be resistant. The large proportion of the species, particularly acacias, are resistant. You see those ones dominating the understorey.

You can include a range of other species, which are susceptible, but if you do not get a development of a banksia understorey, which is a sort of vector for the fungus, there is a considerable amount of hope that these species will stay resistant. I have had many fights with Alcoa but also I have worked very closely with it over a number of years, and we have achieved some spectacular advances in minesite rehabilitation with respect to dieback from when we started 30 years ago. We now are quite confident that we certainly can grow jarrah to maturity on minesites.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not see where it is specifically referred to in the figures, but my question relates to the Gascoyne-Murchison rangeland strategy. I know that CALM will be a significant player in that overall strategy over five years. It may be that nothing shows up in the budget papers because in the first year nothing much of significance will be done in that area. I am curious to know whether CALM has mapped out any sort of forward strategy and what is likely to happen. How much will be appropriated in, say, the first year and where is it likely to be applied?

Mrs EDWARDES: An amount of \$6.8m has been earmarked for the next six years, for work with the Gascoyne-Murchison strategy implementation group to enhance the conservation estate.

Dr SHEA: I understand that in this first year \$2m will be available for repurchase, but also for looking at a range of other innovative ways to achieve the conservation objective. We are also very hopeful that we can use that money to lever up commonwealth money for the same purpose. That would be a significant amount of money. We met recently with Ian Laurance's committee and we are having another meeting shortly. We are certainly conscious of the fact that we do not want to be seen going in there and depopulating the pastoral region. The sort of model we shall use with this repurchase is, firstly, to work with the committee about the areas that have high conservation priority fitted into the strategy. Also, when we repurchase pastoral stations I am very keen on doing what we have done at Burnerbinmah; that is, keep the pastoralist on the station, destock it and then pay him to act as our conservation agent.

That is a much more efficient and cheaper way to achieve the conservation objective, but also it keeps the area populated. We have a major role to play, I think, in developing complementary industries to pastoralism to assist, particularly in the area of tourism. Also, there is the opportunity for us to use our section 16 reservations, under which we can actually pay pastoralists to assist us with managing areas of the station for conservation purposes.

Mrs EDWARDES: Further details on the funding arrangements are: \$2m for 1997-98; \$2m for 1998-99; and from 1999-2000 and the four years hence, \$1.2m for each of those four years.

Division 42: Environmental Protection, \$25 656 000 -

[Mr Sweetman, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Dr B.R. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer.]

[Mr G. Ticehurst, Manager Finance and Administration.]

Ms WARNOCK: I refer to page 400 and one of the major initiatives for 1998-99 -

Introduction of more streamlined assessment processes and enhancement of the department's capability using external consultants to reduce delays and increase the number of assessments of proposals, without compromising environmental protection.

This is a particularly important matter to me because I was very critical of the Government two or three years ago over what I thought were far too streamlined environmental assessments of the tunnel project. We were very concerned about the fact that we thought the environmental assessment process regarding the Northbridge tunnel project was far too streamlined; it was too short. We did not think it was nearly detailed enough and we regarded it as something of a sham that seemed to have been done too quickly. It is after all a very large project indeed. We have just heard recently, during these budget hearings, that the budget has gone up over \$400m. It was our view at the time, frankly, that it deserved something more than a lick and a promise.

I would like to know what exactly is meant by this more streamlined assessment procedure. If it will compromise the environmental protection with regard to various projects, obviously we are very concerned about it.

Mrs EDWARDES: Before I ask Dr Jenkins to respond, I indicate there is no way we will devalue the environmental impact assessment system in any way.

Dr JENKINS: You have raised two issues - the streamlined assessments and the involvement of consultants. With streamlined assessments - you may have seen some of the documents coming out of the department and the EPA - we are trying to identify, in advance, the environmental criteria that we expect proponents to meet. We have a schedule of trying to get into the public arena a range of clear indicators of acceptable environmental performance.

We have also introduced the concept of strategic assessments, and you may have seen for the Maitland and the Boodarie estates that we have defined, in advance of proponents coming into an industrial area, the environmental performance requirements they would have to meet. That means there is a very clear public record of the environmental criteria those proponents have to meet. If they can demonstrate that they can meet those criteria, then one of the concepts we have introduced - you would have seen it in our proposed changes to the legislation - is an environmental permit system, which enables not only those proponents to demonstrate how those criteria are met, but also the Minister to provide formal conditions that they must meet those criteria.

There would be public exposure of the environmental concerns, either through the EPA's documentation or through the strategic environmental assessment, and a proponent commitment to meeting those. When the EPA made its decision on an EPS - an environmental permit system - the public could then appeal for a higher level of assessment if they were not satisfied that the issues had been adequately addressed. At the same time as that appeal process, the conditions that would be placed on the proponent would also be available for public scrutiny. If we can achieve that process, the environmental requirements will be well known in the public arena and a lot of the time spent on case by case assessment will reduce substantially. We believe we have a process which would streamline environmental assessment, facilitate better environmental management, because the requirements would already be known, and also facilitate a faster process.

Dr EDWARDS: My question relates to page 398. Under the amount authorised by other Statutes - Salaries and Allowances Act 1975 - there is a figure of \$120 000. Is that the CEO's salary?

Mr TICEHURST: Yes, that is correct.

Dr EDWARDS: Why has it stayed the same for all those years? It seems to be low just by comparison to other divisions.

Dr JENKINS: The projections in Treasury forward estimates take in the existing salary arrangements. When there are changes, supplementary funding is automatically provided for those adjustments.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to the last point on page 400 under major initiatives, which is the redetermination of the allocation of Kwinana industry emissions limits while maintaining environmental standards. Is that indicating a change in some of the emissions that are allowed on the Kwinana strip, and will it result in any industries being

relocated or effectively told that they have a definitive life span and that they will need to wind down? If so, can you indicate which industries are likely to be relocated or wound back?

Dr JENKINS: The redetermination is changing the basis for the allocation of sulphur dioxide limits. If you look at the current determination, it is a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year limit. Industry clearly does not operate that way and in terms of environmental protection it is not necessary to have just the absolute limit. We have looked at a probabilistic approach to the allocation of sulphur dioxide emissions. In terms of the expected normal SO₂ emissions there would be a reduction for all industries but when there are emergency situations - these can happen over a few minutes or sometimes even a few hours and not compromise the environmental quality - we can allow for some of those emergency emissions. Therefore, the frequency distribution for sulphur dioxide would be lower for the regular emissions, but would enable what is generally occurring and allowed for in the overall policy of higher emissions that relate to emergency circumstances. There will be a profile of emissions rather than a single limit.

Mr NICHOLLS: Over what period will those frequencies be measured? Days, weeks, years?

Dr JENKINS: That is being determined at this very moment. We are working with industry going through the profile of emissions for the range of industries, to make certain that when we set the limits we match the nature of the industry also with the requirements for environmental protection in terms of the acceptable SO₂ levels around the Kwinana area.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is it anticipated that there will be a reduction in emissions or relocation of some industries as a result of this re-examination?

Dr JENKINS: We do not anticipate relocations. We certainly expect that, because of the limits industries have to meet on a regular basis, there will be a reduction.

Mr NICHOLLS: In SO₂?

Dr JENKINS: In SO₂. There will be a reduction in their emissions, not in their activity.

Dr EDWARDS: Is this part of reviewing the EPP, and do you expect the limits in the EPP to come down?

Dr JENKINS: There will not be any change to the EPP. The EPP requirements allow for a redetermination. You may be aware of the work that was undertaken about 18 months ago on confirming a more sophisticated air quality model, which takes into account to a better extent the problem of shoreline fumigation that exists along the Perth coastline. We have been able to incorporate that model into the overall exercise. As I said, the other key thing is to get a more realistic profile of SO₂ emissions from all the industries, which means we can get reductions on a regular basis but allow for the emergency conditions. Therefore, when we are managing air quality we can take into account the occurrence of emergency circumstances across industry.

Mr NICHOLLS: I move to a point at the top of page 401 dealing with environmental quality objectives, which relates to environmental criteria for Perth's coastal waters from Dawesville to Yanchep through a wide-ranging consultative process. Minister, can you outline the specific objectives and the extent of the area that this refers to? I am not talking about the area from Yanchep to Dawesville, but about the extent of coastal water it will cover.

Dr JENKINS: We have identified a study area from the southern metropolitan coastal waters study and the Perth coastal waters studies, which were undertaken in the early 1990s, and a set of environmental quality criteria that should cover all the nearshore coastal waters between Yanchep and Dawesville. That is the segment of waters we are looking at. I cannot give you the exact distance out from the coastline, but the key thing is to try to cover areas like Sepia Depression where the discharges from the Water Corporation come into the nearshore coastal waters. We have tried to take a logical unit to cover all of the major discharges going into the nearshore coastal waters. Draft versions of those criteria were set out in the southern metropolitan coastal waters study, and a commitment was made in that study that this information would be taken through a public process. This is an EPA process.

We have started consultations now with a range of stakeholders, with the idea that the EPA will come out with a set of environmental values and a set of criteria, which were in draft terms in the southern metropolitan coastal waters study, and identify where they would apply geographically. Clearly, there are some areas where we need to make allowances for certain discharges. Allowances need to be made for certain freshwater flows and nutrients coming from the Swan-Canning system. Clearly, the acceptable water quality criteria in port areas would be different from those in marine park areas where we want close to pristine water quality. The key exercise will be clarification of the criteria and then an understanding of their geographical application within that area.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can I make the assumption that you will look at water quality as the primary objective?

Dr JENKINS: Water quality and sediment quality.

Mr NICHOLLS: What about the marine life in that area? Is that simply left to Fisheries, or are you looking at not only marine life but also the seagrass, for example, in Cockburn Sound, the crustaceans that are obviously attracted to Comet Bay, and the area of the Dawesville Cut? Will there be any link at all to the Peel-Harvey Estuary or will it simply remain on the ocean side?

Dr JENKINS: In relation to the development of the criteria, which was part of the southern metropolitan coastal waters study, one of the key components was to get a link between ecosystems and water quality and sediment quality. If we can manage the water quality in the water column and also the quality of the sediments, as we now understand how that connects to the marine life we can protect that marine life. One of the major experimental programs in that study was specifically related to seagrass - trying to work out the environmental parameters in physical, chemical and biological terms that you need to maintain to ensure that seagrass will survive in those areas.

We did an emissions inventory for the entire coastline. For the Peel-Harvey and the Swan-Canning systems there was a definition of the current discharges into the nearshore coastal waters in terms of the key parameters. The major concerns were with nitrogen, but it was effectively at that boundary.

You would be aware that environmental protection policies that deal with the Peel-Harvey system have identified phosphorus loads, and we are now looking at nitrogen loads. The same applies to the Swan-Canning system. We have a process in place for developing a comprehensive management plan for the Swan-Canning system.

Mr NICHOLLS: What form will the consultative process take? Over what period will the research and this work be done? Specifically, when are we likely to see the results?

Dr JENKINS: The research work is now complete and is a published departmental document. We anticipate the consultation process to run for about 12 to 18 months. A specific definition of the steps is available in a public document setting out the way the Environmental Protection Authority will conduct the consultation process. I will send the member for Mandurah a copy of the details of that consultation process as a supplementary response.

Mr NICHOLLS: Could you provide details of the consultative process relating to the Mandurah area, which is of specific interest to me?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Dr EDWARDS: My question is about strategic assessments mentioned on pages 398 and 415 under the EPA's outcomes, specifically relating to the Western Agricultural Industries proposal for the west Kimberley. Is it of concern to the Minister that the EPA has said it does not have enough funds to carry out a strategic assessment, given that the memorandum of understanding refers only to environmental impacts and not baseline studies or strategic assessments? Are there any funds anywhere to correct that deficiency?

Mrs EDWARDES: The comment that the member refers to was from Dr Bernard Bowen. He indicated it was taken out of context. It is appropriate to get a statement from him stating correctly what he said. I will provide that by way of supplementary information. Obviously, the issues under discussion are not just the process which the proponent is now undertaking, but the wider issues that also must be considered. An interdepartmental committee has been established to ensure a more coordinated approach to those issues. That is one issue I have discussed with both Dr Bryan Jenkins and Dr Bowen from the EPA, keeping in mind also the timing of such issues because there must be also an assessment of water. Whether we wait and then build upon the work that they are doing has not yet been decided. However, we are conscious of ensuring that a strategic assessment is able to be carried out.

Dr JENKINS: In relation to the requirements on WAI, the MOU certainly implies that baseline studies will be required. We had a number of discussions directly with those proponents on the scope of the appropriate studies to deal with the issues, because we share the member's concern that there must be adequate baseline studies before measuring impacts. That is a clear understanding that WAI has also.

Dr EDWARDS: Is it possible to have something tabled on that? I have read the document a number of times and had discussions with the proponent. Although he says he wants to do it, it is not clear to me, and the MOU seems to talk only about the impacts.

Mrs EDWARDES: We can highlight that and provide it by way of supplementary information.

Mr NICHOLLS: On page 401, the third point from the bottom reads -

Development of environmental criteria for designing and assessing drainage proposals in the South West agricultural area.

What objective is the Minister trying to achieve? Is it to enhance the current drainage system that exists for irrigation, or is it for other drainage purposes?

Dr JENKINS: The major issue and dominant concern on the environmental criteria is clearly related to drainage and salinity. The other important issue is the rising water table. One of the aspects identified in the salinity action plan was that many areas that have biodiversity of conservation significance are in the lower part of most catchments and therefore under threat. We are concerned that if farmers try to solve the upstream problems with drainage there will be downstream concerns on what will happen to the environmental assets that we want to protect. A working group between the Department of Environmental Protection, Agriculture WA and the Water and Rivers Commission is trying to develop an overall mechanism for the review of drainage proposals. The department's responsibility is the development of the environmental criteria as part of that intergovernmental exercise. Hence, that is one of our major initiatives for this year; and that work is certainly progressing quite well.

Mr NICHOLLS: You will provide only environmental advice or policy guidelines for the program; you will not implement any programs or provide any funding to that initiative?

Dr JENKINS: That is certainly work that is possible. You will be aware that catchment strategies can be developed under a number of mechanisms. One of those mechanisms is the south west wetlands environmental protection policy. We would ensure that that policy would enable catchment strategies including the management of drainage and the protection of the downstream wetland, which is our concern under the EPP. The EPP will lead to the development of catchment strategies and on the ground implementation of that policy.

Mr NICHOLLS: How far north will this strategy come? Will it include the Peel area as well as the south west, or is it simply the southern parts?

Dr JENKINS: The south west district is the area that is covered in the salinity action plan, therefore it certainly includes the Peel area.

Dr EDWARDS: Returning to page 398, reference is made to the significant increase in the number of schemes and scheme amendments to be formally assessed by the EPA. How many metropolitan region scheme amendments have been referred to the Department of Environmental Protection and the EPA? Which ones are they and how many have been finalised?

Dr JENKINS: Every scheme and scheme amendment by law has to be referred to the EPA. A limited number of those require environmental assessment. Every time a parking lot in a dentist's surgery is changed, it requires a scheme amendment. We do not see a need to formally assess those. As to the numerical answer to your question, we would need to do some research. That information is available; I do not have it at my fingertips at the moment.

Dr EDWARDS: Could that be broken down into the type of amendments, MRS down to the tiny ones?

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to the last point on page 401 which reads -

Development and implementation of several National Environmental Protection Measures . . .

Is there likely to be any major changes within Western Australia in conforming to or abiding by national protection measures and will that have implications on funding?

Mrs EDWARDES: That is a very broad question. The NEPMs are established and arrived at through the National Environmental Protection Council, which is a council of all the Commonwealth, State and Territory environment Ministers. A long process has been conducted prior to even a draft document being released. We have legislation which supports the status of the draft; even to that point it is worked through major stakeholders. After that, it goes out again to the major stakeholders and, obviously, the community has an opportunity to have an input prior to it becoming a final draft. The State ensures that stakeholders in Western Australia are properly informed of any impact on any of them, particularly the cost of implementation of any of those measures which generate from a final NEPM having been released.

Dr EDWARDS: My question relates to page 399 at the last dot point where Perth's Bushplan is mentioned. Who is - for want of a better term - the lead Minister for Bushplan?

Mrs EDWARDES: The Minister for Planning.

Dr EDWARDS: Given the role of the DEP with System 6, are there funds in this Budget for Bushplan?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes.

Dr EDWARDS: How much?

Mr TICEHURST: \$265 000.

Dr EDWARDS: At the top of page 400 there is reference to implementation of the state salinity action plan. What is the total amount of new money allocated in this Budget to the DEP for its role in the SSAP? What do you actually envisage by the words in the first dot point, "a need for better regional biodiversity information"?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is \$118 000.

Dr EDWARDS: Is that the total or new money?

Dr JENKINS: That is new money.

Dr EDWARDS: What is the total?

Dr JENKINS: The total would cut across a number of different divisions that contribute to the salinity action plan. One would need to detail the components of a range of programs. There is implementation money for the south west wetlands EPP to protect wetlands. However, that clearly also has benefits in terms of the salinity action plan. Therefore, in some areas there is money which is serving dual functions or we have EPPs that have funding which will also contribute.

Dr EDWARDS: Is it broken down as a contribution towards salinity, given various promises made in the salinity action plan?

Dr JENKINS: The promises in the salinity action plan are the ones that are separately funded and that is what the \$118 000 relates to. Looking at the issue for the regional biodiversity information, one of the tasks being undertaken is to consider the areas that warrant protection as priority biodiversity catchments; that is the reference there. We must ensure that we have a regional biodiversity perspective to actually allocate priorities amongst catchments.

Dr EDWARDS: Is there any overlap with CALM's work when you do that or do you work closely with CALM?

Dr JENKINS: There is integration with CALM's work.

Dr EDWARDS: With reference to page 400, what plans are there to increase recycling in country areas? When the fund is set up from the waste management levy will country shires be able to access that fund to improve or commence recycling in their areas?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes to both questions. Obviously, the major reason in establishing the landfill levy and restricting it to the metropolitan area upon which it is levied is that there are a large number of regional areas which do not have the same level of capacity "for markets". Also the number of landfill sites is not monitored. Therefore, the whole of Western Australia - whether they be local councils, industries or community organisations - will be able to apply for those funds. The first of those was advertised last week and we hope to be able to announce seven projects to receive and commence funding in the first weeks of July.

The CHAIRMAN: Could those funds be used as a subsidy by country shires that want to recycle and truck their waste to Perth?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes. The levy can be used for a broad range of directions and that is one of the aspects.

Mr KOBELKE: My question is about the landfill levy referred to on page 401. Will the levy apply only if the waste is going to landfill? Is it correct that if there is a diversion to other uses then the levy will not apply to that particular tonnage that does not go to landfill?

Mrs EDWARDES: That is correct.

Mr KOBELKE: As the Minister is aware, the Atlas tip is in my electorate. My understanding is that the landfill is diverted to a farming area where it undergoes aerobic digestion in the Gingin or Muchea area. Would that incur the landfill levy, if it is going to a land site but is not covered with soil?

Dr JENKINS: Unless the material is recycled, the landfill levy will apply. If the material can be used as compost, no levy will apply. If it goes, effectively, to land farming, that is another form of disposal and not waste reduction.

Mr KOBELKE: In this instance the point would be reached where it is classified as landfill if it is placed on land for some other use. If that is the case, what licensing would be required for that?

Dr JENKINS: Licensing of secondary use or of the landfill itself?

Mr KOBELKE: The diversion of normal, producible waste to being used through aerobic decomposition.

Dr JENKINS: With the recent changes to the Environmental Protection Act that occurred last year, we now license

all waste management facilities. If it is a waste management facility, which would represent the end point of that particular material, there is the opportunity for the department to license that facility.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to performance measures for output 1 on page 405; environmental policy development is mentioned under quantity with two policies developed in 1997-98 and three for 1998-99. Is that a reference to EPPs?

Dr JENKINS: Yes.

Dr EDWARDS: Which ones are they?

Dr JENKINS: If you look at the two environmental policy developments in 1997-98, the Swan-Canning EPP is one of those. I will have to check on what the other one was during the course of the year. As to the three targeted for 1998-99, the Western Swamp Tortoise is one of those which is nearing completion. We are also considering Marine Waters for an environmental protection policy. I will have to check on the third one. However, I can provide that advice in supplementary information.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Dr TURNBULL: Returning to page 400, in relation to the Natural Heritage Trust projects and programs, could the Minister explain how "an agreed and adequately resourced monitoring and evaluation strategy" will be developed and implemented?

Dr JENKINS: There have been negotiations with the Commonwealth on how to monitor and evaluate the NHT program. You would be aware that in the partnership agreement that has been reached between the Commonwealth and the State two levels of indicators are being developed; one at the program level which matches the major programs that the Commonwealth is undertaking with a matrix across to the State programs. For example, for the salinity action plan there are a number of performance indicators identified that will form the basis for monitoring at the program level. Also, monitoring evaluation will be undertaken at the project level. Therefore, individual projects are funded under the range of commonwealth programs and there is a need for monitoring and evaluation of those. There will be far more specific details for a specific project - what outcomes people were trying to achieve and whether those outcomes have been achieved.

Dr TURNBULL: Therefore, the DEP will become the overall coordinating body for evaluation?

Dr JENKINS: For the coordination of the evaluation.

Dr TURNBULL: Yes. Have you considered the methodology used in conducting evaluations in programs developed by the Blackwood catchment group?

Dr JENKINS: The Blackwood catchment group would come into the project evaluations. That group has applied for funding for a number of components of their overall catchment strategy. It has very clearly identified outputs that it wants to achieve. There will be reviews undertaken during the course of the program and at completion on whether it is achieving its specified outcomes.

Dr TURNBULL: Yes. That group has a very highly developed method of monitoring and evaluating work on soil types which is partly related to catchments and subcatchments. It monitors the topography and activity of the land.

Dr JENKINS: Yes.

Dr TURNBULL: Exactly how will you conduct your monitoring?

Dr JENKINS: No. Our role is to coordinate the monitoring and evaluation. The actual work that you are referring to is being developed by one of our staff who was seconded to the Blackwood catchment coordinating group. Therefore, there is a direct integration between what they are doing and the overall project objectives that will be part of the evaluation of that particular project.

Dr TURNBULL: I hope there will not be other systems introduced into something which has been developed already.

Dr JENKINS: As I said, we are the coordinators. Many of the programs have indicators developed already that will be used for evaluation and the projects also will have certain outcomes. As that work is being evaluated already, our role is to coordinate that into an overall evaluation on behalf of the State.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 412, performance measures for output 5, under quantity it reads -

Contaminated Site Remediation (project goals completed).

That shows seven for this year and 10 for next year. Can I have a list of the 10 sites?

Dr JENKINS: No, they are not 10 sites, they are project goals completed. It relates to Stephenson and Ward and the Omex site. We have developed a series of project milestones on the completion of those projects and are measuring the completion of those milestones as the quantity indicator in that area.

Dr EDWARDS: Can I have a copy of either what the milestones are likely to be or what they have been?

Mrs EDWARDES: Do you want a breakdown of the 10?

Dr EDWARDS: Yes.

Mrs EDWARDES: I can provide that by way of supplementary information.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 416 in the operating statement at the bottom of operating expenses - and again at the bottom of operating revenues - is the word "Other." Could I have a breakdown of "Other" in those two instances?

Mr TICEHURST: That is composed of grants from industries; recoup for services provided for project management work at Mt Walton; revenue collected from waste paper contractors; and proceeds from recovery and other user charges.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide the "Other" operating expenses to you by way of supplementary information.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 414, performance measures for output 6, under salinity and catchment management projects is the figure 2. Can you explain what that is? It shows also the average cost per salinity and catchment management project as approximately \$320 000. Given there is only a small amount of new money for salinity, is that large sum of money coming from across a number of programs?

Dr JENKINS: That is certainly funding across a number of programs.

Mrs EDWARDES: The issue is picking them all up. Specific programs were identified and then the identification of other programs which include elements of salinity.

Dr JENKINS: That is correct.

Dr EDWARDS: Therefore, for each program there may be some new money and some other money coming in from the different streams.

Dr JENKINS: That is correct, it is a combination of money.

Dr EDWARDS: What are the two projects?

Dr JENKINS: The two major projects are setting the environmental criteria, which is the smaller project, and we are also developing a number of drainage and catchment management programs that relate to the remainder.

Dr TURNBULL: This question may need to be answered by supplementary information: Can you tell me what the funding was for regional offices in Western Australia in 1996-97 and 1997-98? What is it expected to be in 1998-99? Could you list that according to each office?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Dr TURNBULL: Is there money allocated for resourcing of equipment for regional offices? When issues relating to problems with noise and so forth arise in my electorate, often we do not have monitors with which to do the work.

Dr JENKINS: The major work undertaken by our regional offices appears under the pollution prevention budget and there are separate allocations for each of the offices. The regional offices rely upon the central agency in Perth for noise and air quality monitors. That central agency has specialist pollution prevention groups to monitor noise and the environmental systems division to monitor air quality. The regional offices can call on that central pool of equipment.

Dr TURNBULL: However, my impression is that the equipment is scarce and difficult to have allocated to a regional area if the request for equipment is considered to be over and above the need.

Dr JENKINS: For example, we have set up stations at Bunbury and Busselton to monitor air quality. There is also work being undertaken in the Collie basin in cooperation with industry. We are certainly getting regional coverage on air quality. We are setting up an air quality network in the area around the Pilbara where there is a need for fixed equipment. Noise equipment is more portable. It is more effective to retain that equipment in a central pool so that it can be taken to locations when needed for specific projects.

Dr TURNBULL: I am concerned that the central pool may not have enough equipment.

Dr JENKINS: I am not aware of that as an issue. In many cases, particularly in the areas that you are concerned about, there is a delegation to local government and local government bodies often call upon us to provide additional equipment in that area.

Mrs EDWARDES: If you have a specific issue or time when it has been a problem, let me know and I can follow it through specifically.

Dr TURNBULL: Yes. If you are putting resources into regional offices, they should have the equipment that they need. If it is a central pool, that central pool should have enough equipment.

Dr EDWARDS: Given the decision in Kalgoorlie last week in the prosecution of Western Mining, what measures will be taken by the department to enable evidence of future monitoring to be used in court?

Mrs EDWARDES: We are seeking legal advice on that decision. I will reply to the member on any action to be taken.

Division 43: King's Park Board, \$15 413 000 -

[Mr Sweetman, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Dr S. Hopper, Chief Executive Officer, Kings Park and Botanic Garden.]

[Mr N. Power, Manager Business and Finance, Kings Park Board.]

Ms WARNOCK: As the Minister knows, Kings Park is no longer in my electorate. After a border realignment a few years ago, I regret that it is now in the Premier's electorate. Nonetheless, I retain a passionate interest in Kings Park as I am a member of Friends of Kings Park. It is a few hundred metres from where I live and also a few hundred metres from the edge of my seat. Like most Western Australians, I retain an extremely passionate interest in the development of Kings Park which I understand is now called Kings Park and Botanic Garden.

I refer to page 649 and draw the committee's attention to the second dot point there which reads -

. . . the establishment of an automatic irrigation system to conserve water and electricity and improve the day time enjoyment . . .

I would like more information on that.

Dr HOPPER: The automatic irrigation system in Kings Park was planned as part of the centennial enhancement project. It stems from the fact that until recently the 50-odd hectares of lawn in Kings Park were irrigated entirely by a system of pipes in the ground with manually shifted sprinkler heads. This required activation of the system during daylight hours only when staff were engaged to work. Consequently, in the State's premier park this was one of the worst models for water conservation. The driving reason behind automatic irrigation was the installation of a system capable of being activated by computer control at night. This avoids watering the lawns during the day, which inconveniences visitors; saves water due to less evaporation; and saves money using the overnight rate for electricity charges.

Overall, to cover the 50 hectares, it is a \$3m project. Also, because of the public's growing displeasure at seeing water being used during daylight hours, even though it is predominantly from a bore water system in Kings Park, we tried to fast track the system; and we intend to do that especially in the Fraser Avenue area where we are hoping for the implementation of the system by summer.

The disadvantage of the other system is that bore water has a very high iron content which clogs the pipes and requires regular re-jetting of the bores and drainage associated with the irrigation system. The advantage of automatic irrigation is it enables the use of collection ponds and aeration systems that decrease the iron content. Consequently, brown staining of monuments and path systems, and maintenance costs will decrease significantly.

Ms WARNOCK: On the Thomas Street side there is some kind of reservoir under construction. Can you explain what that is?

Dr HOPPER: That is one of two ponds required for the automatic irrigation system. The aim is to aerate the water and ensure a sufficient supply for the watering overnight of the entire 50 hectares of lawn in the park. We cannot do that with the existing bores. It would take a longer period of time than an overnight watering. Therefore, there are two ponds, one near Saw Avenue in Subiaco and another bigger one on May Drive. They provide the dual function of storage capacity and the aeration system that removes the iron oxide.

Ms WARNOCK: Is there any staff loss due to this new automatic system?

Dr HOPPER: I do not believe so. We will reallocate staff to higher priority areas. We need to appoint a couple of specialists in automatic irrigation systems and improve our skills in that area. However, the manual shifting of sprinkler heads should cease and staff involvement reduce to a lower key.

Ms WARNOCK: I have been concerned for some time about irrigation. I have lived next to the park for more than 30 years and anybody who lives near it and cares about it is absolutely horror-struck at the occasional incidences of fire. We do not talk about fires too often as we do not want to provoke any more incidences. Is there any suggestion that in the near future a better or quicker system will be developed for alerting the fire brigade, or for the staff to deal with the matter? That was a suggestion made to me by people with wilder imaginations than I have for dealing immediately with the problem of fire. Some people have suggested a total irrigation system for the park. I have no idea whether that would work or whether the cost would be totally prohibitive. What are the plans for the park on irrigation concerning fire?

Dr HOPPER: Fire is a recurrent problem in bushland throughout Western Australia. Kings Park has one of the highest records of arson. Unfortunately, we average 10 ignitions every summer which is quite remarkable. Our fire management system is under constant review each pre-fire season and we are progressively improving the system.

We designed the irrigation system so that on the boundaries of bushland we will be able to turn some of the sprinklers on the bush in the case of fire. We do not believe it is appropriate to have a sprinkler system throughout the bushland for conservation reasons, both because of the disturbance of the bushland that would eventuate from digging up all the lines, and because watering too frequently during summer would upset the ecological balance in the bushland itself.

Our strategy was to reduce fuel through an ongoing veldt grass control program. That is a 30 year task and we are 12 years into it now. We have an extensive network of firebreaks and a wonderfully vigilant public and trained staff also able to deal with fire. Also, we have an excellent relationship with the Fire and Rescue Service. In 95 per cent to 98 per cent of cases we get to the fire within 10 minutes of notification. Consequently, the fact there are 10 ignitions every summer is not well known because most fires are put out before they become a major issue.

Unfortunately, in our vegetation one can expect a more significant fire every 10 to 15 years. However, the two most recent large fires were caused by an arsonist working ahead of the fire crews and exacerbating the problem under difficult environmental circumstances. Therefore, we monitor our strategy and constantly seek improvements.

Another major improvement to be funded by the Government this year is a restoration project on the Kings Park escarpment. Part of that improvement will be a \$1m fire control system to be installed at the top of the scarp because the scarp vegetation is the most fire sensitive of all in Kings Park. It has many plants that are killed outright by fire and replace themselves only by seed. Therefore, we have conservation reasons for wanting to protect the scarp. Also the public safety risks posed by a fire going up a steep slope are significant. Consequently, there will be a major addition to our fire fighting capability along the scarp in the next year or two.

Dr EDWARDS: My question relates to what Dr Hopper started to talk about. What are the risks of the scarp at Mt Eliza? Were there any other factors that you considered apart from the ones you have just mentioned?

Dr HOPPER: The Mt Eliza scarp is an erodible landscape feature. It contains the State's first quarry. In the past, limestone was harvested for river embankments and some public buildings in the city. Consequently, it is an unstable surface. It has had various works undertaken on it since the turn of the century. In most winters we have detailed geotechnical advice and ongoing monitoring; there will be natural erosion on the scarp progressively until it is flat. The most serious risk is when the winter rains load up and increase the weight of the soil. Deep-rooted exotic trees, like the pine trees currently on the scarp, fracture the rock; and the combination of heavy soil and moisture loading with fractures in the rock leads to bigger landslides. That is a major issue and, naturally, we are very concerned to protect the public, particularly on Mounts Bay Road.

Therefore, we are implementing a tripartite arrangement with the City of Perth and Main Roads to erect a kilometre of high safety fencing along Mounts Bay Road west of the brewery. This was aesthetically designed and will contain rocks up to 200 kilograms falling from six metres. Most of our slips are of that order. They are relatively minor rocks. This container fence will stop people running over those rocks. A slip of that magnitude occurs at least twice a year. Larger land slips will be monitored with geotechnical inspections. The scarp project is focused on removing those perennial trees that cause fractures in the rock and replacing them with native vegetation, mainly small shrubs that have a smaller root system. Hopefully, this will increase the stability of the scarp.

With the help of Western Mining Corporation over the past two and a half years, we have conducted a research program on how best to tackle the problem. That involved vegetation trials, and a focus on the rarest animals in

Kings Park, which are a land snail and four species of trapdoor spiders that inhabit the crevices in the scarp. Therefore, in the restoration, our aim is to ensure stability and public safety, and to retrieve native vegetation, and to do that in a way that preserves the native fauna. I believe that, due to the combination of approaches, it is quite an innovative urban restoration project.

Dr TURNBULL: I refer to the operating statement of the financial statements on page 659. The revenue from government appropriations is much higher in 1998-99. Is this because of some special project to which extra money will be allocated?

Dr HOPPER: I can reply. However, Mr Power can provide further information. A major slice of that money relates to Bold Park. There is a significant allocation for capital works in Bold Park. The transfer of the land from the Town of Cambridge to the State is imminent, within the next month or two. We will then immediately implement a management plan for Bold Park. The Government has provided funding for significant bushland restoration and other necessary fire control works and the like to ensure the care and enhancement of Bold Park over the next few years.

Dr TURNBULL: What are the user charges and fees mentioned there?

Dr HOPPER: The main one currently in place is an entry fee for the wildflower festival.

Mr POWER: The general user charges and fees referred to are fine revenues for speeding in the park and the free of charge revenues. In the accounting treatment, that comes under user charges and fees. It refers also to supplementary services; occasionally we have excess equipment that we cannot trade in which we then sell.

Dr TURNBULL: Does that include any charges in relation to the nursery and the products from the nursery, or is that accounted for in a separate section?

Mr POWER: No. This year we project a figure of around \$40 000 from the sale of excess plants from the nursery and so on. That is also included in the section on user charges and fees.

Dr TURNBULL: Are there any royalties or other income streams from the unique products or technologies that come from the nursery, or are those scientific advances which are free to everyone?

Dr HOPPER: There is not a huge revenue stream at this stage. Three or four years ago we received \$3 000 for the first release of a Geraldton wax form. However, we are actively working now with Agriculture WA on commercial releases of hybrid leschenaultias to the European market; and for the centenary of federation celebrations we developed a kangaroo paw called Kings Park Federation Flame. We are about to tender for the commercial development of that kangaroo paw. However, experience has shown that it is not a major revenue earner at this point, even though countries like Israel are making a huge amount out of cut flowers using Western Australian wildflowers.

Mr AINSWORTH: My question relates to the fires in Kings Park, and was partly answered. What is the effect that the number of fires had on the spread of introduced weeds? How is the program being conducted for ridding the park of veldt grass? I presume there are other weeds apart from veldt grass. Probably the biggest drawback when driving past Kings Park is the vision of native bushland with an African grass growing among it. It spoils the whole visual aspect.

Dr HOPPER: Weed management is a major issue for Swan coastal plain reserves in general and Kings Park and Bold Park are no exceptions. The Minister and I had the pleasure of looking at Bold Park two days ago. The understorey is almost wall to wall veldt grass in many places. If we can consistently hit veldt grass every year, or every second year, to get rid of it in Kings Park, I estimate it will take 30 years; and we are 12 years into that program.

Mr AINSWORTH: What is the process? Is it elimination of the grass from a section or preventing it from seeding until it disappears from the seed bank?

Dr HOPPER: We have hit up to a third of the park each year with a grass specific herbicide. There are very few native grasses that we need to be concerned about in Kings Park. That may not be the situation elsewhere in the State. The herbicide is applied over a very narrow window of time when veldt grass is growing before it starts to flower. Between mid-June and the end of July is the only period of time to hit it. The strategy is to spray it one year. The long-term issue is the seed in the soil. It is no good spraying once and walking away because it will be back as thick within a couple of years. Therefore, as mentioned, we are 12 years into our veldt grass control and our estimates are that the abundance of veldt grass is about half what it was 12 years ago. It will take at least the same period of time again to get it down to very low numbers, if not eradicated.

Mr AINSWORTH: You said you hit it. Is that a reference to spraying the veldt grass?

Dr HOPPER: Yes.

Mr AINSWORTH: But not on an annual basis?

Dr HOPPER: No. Every second year on average.

Mr AINSWORTH: Are you saying that in between years the veldt grass is still allowed to seed?

Dr HOPPER: Yes, it would be. However, after spraying there will be a much reduced abundance and vigour of the plants.

Mr AINSWORTH: Is there a reason for not spraying it annually to get rid of it quicker?

Dr HOPPER: Simply the cost. There are 270 hectares of bushland in Kings Park. The Government has allocated \$245 000 next financial year and for the next eight years for management of Kings Park bushland. We will target weed management as a key strategy.

Mr AINSWORTH: If that sum of money was increased for the next two or three years, would there be a 100 per cent kill of the growing plant each year? I do not know the length of time that the seed stays viable in the soil; however, surely it would be possible to get rid of the grass completely in a much shorter time frame if you were able to spray in there.

Dr HOPPER: It would certainly remove the adult plants but the seed store is the unknown question. We have evidence that it is fairly long lived, therefore we would have to maintain vigilance. I agree if we could hit the whole park for two, three, four or five years in a row then we may get on top of the problem a little quicker than is currently possible. However, we are doing well given the resources that have been directed at the problem.

Ms WARNOCK: I direct the Minister's attention to page 650. Like everybody in politics, I am interested in numbers and the first to fourth dot points refer to numbers. The first one refers to tourism revenue improving significantly through the opening of the Aboriginal Cultural Centre. What has been the increase in park visitors as a result of that very good centre there? I have visited the Lotteries family area several times and I understand that public attendance has been pretty good. Also I would like to hear more about the fee for entry concerts and theatre events which some of us have attended. Could you give an idea of the difference that these three specific items have made to visitor numbers in the park?

Dr HOPPER: Firstly, we do not have specific figures on the increase in visitors to the Aboriginal Cultural Centre. However, advice from the lessees is that business has doubled since they moved from Hay Street to the Kings Park location. We keep in touch with the Tourism Commission about international visitation to Kings Park and that is progressively rising. We remain the State's number one single tourist destination. We are behind the Cities of Perth and Fremantle as general locations. We attract about 60 to 63 per cent of international visitors to the State each year. That number is close to 400 000 currently for Kings Park. The Lotteries family area has been so popular that we have not mown the lawn since October last year. It has been an outstanding success. For those members who are not familiar with the area, it is a small children's playground that is especially developed for preschoolers. It has a wonderful cafe where carers can sit, have a cappuccino and enjoy food; it has been outstandingly popular.

We have run an associated program in that area called Growing Up In Kings Park which is an environmental education program for preschoolers. We have processed 3 000 preschooler kids and 1 000 carers since October last year. We had to close the venue for three days to core the grass and try to give it a chance. It is a very popular development that is serving a very clear need and it forced us to ask ourselves whether we should provide similar facilities elsewhere in Kings Park. The main children's playground is another area earmarked for future enhancement. If that is done properly it could be equally as popular as the Lotteries family area.

Ms WARNOCK: The third question was the fee for entry concerts. I went to one of the shows this summer and it seemed to be well attended. Dot point four states that the Romeo and Juliet concert achieved significant revenue for Kings Park without major additional costs. Is the reason for that largely because the seating is free as one sits on a cushion on the ground?

Dr HOPPER: It is a very low maintenance venue. However, the public has been remarkably responsive to our requests to sit on the grass and take their rubbish with them. It is a superb venue for outdoor cultural events which we maintain as a matter of course for public usage. Therefore, the extra usage, unlike the Lotteries family area, has not led to significant deterioration of the asset. It has been able to withstand the level of visitation and deliver a much improved cultural service to the community.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to consolidated fund capital appropriation on page 653. What is the breakdown? I am

specifically interested in the fact that the estimate for 1997-98 was \$2.8m, this year it is \$11.2m and then we go back to \$2m and then \$4m and \$3m.

Mr POWER: The large increase refers to Bold Park. Page 662 refers specifically to Bold Park and all those items total \$8m. That is the amount of money allocated by the Government and that is the reason for the large increase in the funds. It is skewed by the Bold Park initiatives.

Mr NICHOLLS: Therefore, it is a one-off allocation to establish those items?

Mr POWER: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: Will it be recurrent funding after that?

Mr POWER: Yes. It starts off very high with the initial injection and then it decreases on a sliding basis until the program is completed in about 2004-05.

Mr NICHOLLS: It goes down at a great rate of knots over a year.

Dr HOPPER: Bold Park has been a little difficult for the agency to manage in the sense that negotiations with the Town of Cambridge have dragged on a little further than we thought. As I mentioned before, we will go on to a management plan for Bold Park. It may not be possible to spend the full \$8m next financial year. In fact, we may have to seek the Government's approval to extend and defer some of the programs to the out years so we can have a reasonable and progressive approach to upgrading Bold Park in line with community expectations.

Dr EDWARDS: Reference is made on page 652 to the work that is essential to establish Kings Park and Botanic Gardens on the State's heritage register. What is the basis for seeking listing on the heritage register? Is it natural heritage and cultural heritage as well as built heritage?

Dr HOPPER: Kings Park is listed on the national heritage register. My understanding of the State's heritage register is a little limited, but there are some advantages in terms of consultation, particularly through the City of Perth, in a site's being listed. We are very mindful that Kings Park has a number of monuments and historical buildings in need of an appropriate conservation plan. The broad thrust of our heritage work has been to commission such a conservation plan, which is in draft form at this stage, and then to proceed with works that ensure that that heritage is protected. In fact, our first work involves the old tea pavilion. It is the original tearoom, which used to be at the bottom of the scarp. The building is on the road to the administration building, half way along Fraser Avenue. The pavilion overlooking the river is 100 years old and is currently being restored to pristine condition. That is the intention of the program and my limited understanding of the State's heritage register.

Ms WARNOCK: Page 650 refers to research capabilities attracting a higher level of government and industry support. I would like details about these research capabilities. We have heard in previous years about some of the work of the research centre and of the important international work that it is doing. What is the group's most recent activity?

Dr HOPPER: The research group has four major research thrusts: Firstly, propagation research using advanced horticultural techniques such as tissue culture. Micro propagation involves very small components of tissue being cloned. Secondly, we have a world leading program in the area of cryostorage, which is aimed at plunging seeds or plant parts into liquid nitrogen at minus 196 degrees centigrade as an insurance policy, particularly for critically endangered plants that are under threat in the wild. It is a world leading program because plants have special problems. If you put a lettuce in the freezer, it does not survive. Tissues collapse if they are not treated correctly because of chemicals in the cell walls. It is a very tricky business plunging their temperature and then bringing them out as living tissue. We have had a technique that has been successful in achieving that with a range of endangered Western Australian plants.

Thirdly, we have conservation genetics. This involves techniques such as DNA fingerprinting - which is commonly used in forensic science - to help us in a number of applications in the conservation area. For example, we published a paper in an international journal recently about an extremely rare eucalypt called the Dwellingup mallee - known from one individual on a granite outcrop south of Dwellingup on the Darling Scarp. In trying to conserve that individual and species we had to ascertain whether it was the last surviving individual of a species that was becoming extinct or an extremely rare hybrid of two different eucalypts. If it were the last surviving individual we would do a number of things to try to restore a population and to get the plant ticking over back in the wild. If it were a rare hybrid then we would not be so worried about that, but it would be of scientific interest. Using our DNA fingerprinting technology, we solved the mystery and it turned out to be a hybrid that is now planted in a number of schools and being used as a flagship example of this sort of technology.

The last area - and perhaps the most important, and for which the laboratory is gaining national and international

recognition - is in the field of restoration ecology. One of the delights of working for Kings Park and Botanic Garden is the message of hope in the conservation area that comes from this line of work. National and state governments have committed to biodiversity conservation agendas. Trying to look after what remnants of bushland we have in the State and across the nation is by far the cheapest approach to conserving biodiversity rather than going into the very expensive processes that we do in Kings Park.

We have targeted a lot of our research to helping people repair and restore bushland in the urban area. We also work very closely with the mining industry, with agencies such as Main Roads - in restoring road verges - and with farming communities and the Department of Conservation and Land Management in areas as diverse as the wheatbelt through to an Argyle Diamonds mine site in the Kimberley. That last area is the active growth area in which we are trying to develop cost effective techniques that help the community look after the nation's flora.

Ms WARNOCK: Does the last dot point on page 652 relate to that when it refers to the proposals for the year? They include the extension of smoke seed germination for the regeneration of the jarrah and tuart canopy in the bushland.

Dr HOPPER: That is one of the key techniques we have pioneered in the restoration of bushland - applying smoke to the germination of native plants.

Mr NICHOLLS: Output 3 refers to cultural heritage management. The city engineer's or the town engineer's house, which I understand is vested in or owned by the Water Corporation, is a significant building in Kings Park and the City of Perth. Is that building likely to be listed under heritage provisions? Does the board see that building as adding value to the overall concept of Kings Park and the wider area of Perth?

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

Dr HOPPER: We have been in discussions with the Water Corporation for some years and recently at board to board level about an integrated program for the development of the precinct centred on our administration building and the engineer's house. I understand the Water Corporation intends to seek listing, if that has not already happened. The tenor of our discussions has been a collaborative use of the building that would pick up on heritage. We have gone no further than that. The Water Corporation is interested in the heritage associated with the water story. We are interested very much in offering our visiting public a heritage related experience in that precinct. Therefore, we are at the early stages of negotiation with the Water Corporation in planning what we might do together in that precinct.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 653. Funds are listed against botanic research, but how much other money comes in for such research, through grants, sponsorship or other avenues?

Mr POWER: We have estimated that about \$580 000 will come in by the end of June from external grants. That is held as a restricted cash resource within the agency just to deal with that area.

Dr EDWARDS: Is there any other sponsorship of research or any other money coming in?

Mr POWER: Money comes in directly from the grant funds - the external funds - which are restricted cash resources. The agency itself also allocates a significant level of funds to the research project, so it is not simply trying to raise all the money for research itself.

Division 44: Zoological Gardens Board, \$3 959 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Mr P. Mountford, Manager, Administration and Finance, Perth Zoo.]

[Mr C.B. Hyde, Director of Conservation, Perth Zoo.]

Dr EDWARDS: What is the trend with visitor numbers to the zoo? Is the zoo maintaining visitor levels given the competition with so much other entertainment and activities in Perth?

Mrs EDWARDES: Per capita, Perth Zoo beats any other zoo in the country, which is testimony to the tremendous work that is being done, not only by the Chief Executive Officer, Ms Burgess, but also by the zoo team and the people it has been able to attract to carry out the work.

Dr EDWARDS: Approximately how many people visit the zoo each year and are they repeat visitors or tourists?

Mr HYDE: Our visitation is approximately 600 000 a year. Last year it was a little over that; this year it will be

a bit under. That breaks down to 60 000 students through the secondary school system, and the rest are fee paying customers through the gate.

Mr NICHOLLS: I commend you on the zoo. The changes that have occurred at the zoo have been outstanding and are enjoyed by those visiting, particularly if they have not been to the zoo for some time. A promotion was undertaken involving people adopting certain animals. Is that still happening and how much has been raised as a result of that program or project?

Mr HYDE: The Perth Zoo Society, which is the fundraising body within the zoo, conducts an ongoing animal sponsorship program. I cannot provide an accurate figure on exactly how much has been raised, but it is not a significant portion of our income. Sponsorships are generally only small amounts of money per animal and that takes care of the bottom end of the sponsorship market.

Mr NICHOLLS: Have you had a reasonable response? I am looking for an indication of what level of response you have had from the community and whether that response has tailed off or is growing.

Mr MOUNTFORD: It is holding its own. It would not be more than perhaps \$60 000 a year. It tends to be provided as a service because people really want to be involved in memberships rather than corporate sponsorships. I do not believe it is increasing, but I also do not believe it is tailing away.

Dr TURNBULL: I commend the managers of the zoo on maintaining an absolutely wonderful facility for Western Australians. It really is a great experience. The new venture of picnic in the park at sunset, or jazz in the park at sunset sounds absolutely wonderful and I wish that I was in Perth at a time when I could attend. My question relates to the possibility of developing a zoo in the country.

Dr EDWARDS: Somewhere near Collie?

Dr TURNBULL: No, near Boddington. The project is very dear to the heart of the Boddington shire president at the moment and it is very close to my heart. I refer to the possible long term development of the Hedges goldmine area, which has beautiful facilities and will have a very big lake. Could there be a breeding facility or an area in which extra animals could reside that could be turned into a country zoo in the long term? Are there any proposals for that sort of long term planning?

Mr HYDE: Yes, indeed there are. We have been investigating a possible site for a country zoo for some time. There was a site near Boddington; I am not sure whether it is the same site as that to which the member has referred. The site we looked at had inadequate water supplies. The other extremely important issue in our considerations for the siting of a country zoo is the long term profitability of the zoo, because that is what will secure its future. The search for a property includes both environmental and tourism factors. At this point we do not have a property identified as sustaining a country zoo in the future, but the process is not complete.

Dr TURNBULL: Do you have a time frame for it?

Mr HYDE: The only time frame we have for it is that the zoo is undertaking a significant rebuilding of its current site. In order not to completely overstretch the people who are doing both tasks, we are going through the exploratory stages now but do not anticipate any real activity on a country zoo until at least the end of the initial five year capital works program within the zoo. It will be another two to three years down the track before we will be in a position to have the full processes available to concentrate on that. That does not mean it is not a high priority; it is simply something we cannot do right now.

Dr TURNBULL: Therefore, about five to 10 years from when Boddington first entered into this discussion would be about right.

Mr HYDE: That would be about the right time frame.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 1343. It appears that funding for the zoo is decreasing. Is that being matched by an increase in funding from the corporate sector or from sponsorship so that the overall total remains much the same?

Mr HYDE: Yes. We have not reduced the scope of activities in the zoo. We have acquired the money either through the gate or by a combination of gate takings and sponsorship raisings.

Mrs EDWARDES: The zoo has a very good business plan which has enabled it to provide the increased level of services. We have seen the new exhibitions that have been developed and so on. Obviously, the ability to attract funding from AlintaGas, the Water Corporation and private sector organisations has assisted. We will continue to monitor that over the next couple of years, along with all sponsorship from the private sector, to determine whether that will maintain the current funding level.

Mr MOUNTFORD: The business plan gave us the incentive to do a lot better ourselves, and we are. Both the admissions, which is our core business, and our sponsorships are very much up over the past couple of years. This is the government contribution, which has been pegged at a similar level. That has given us the ability to develop by our own means.

Dr EDWARDS: I extend my congratulations to the CEO on her new appointment. When does she leave and when will the position be advertised, assuming it will be advertised?

Mrs EDWARDES: Mr Hyde will take over as the acting CEO. Obviously the advertising process will follow. I understand that Ricky will officially join the Department for the Arts on 1 June but she is starting next week, spending some time there in a handover role from Dr Wally Cox.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 1344. A major initiative is the opening of a new lion exhibit and significant upgrade of several African savannah exhibits. When will the lion exhibit arrive and what is planned for the upgrade to the African savannah?

Mr HYDE: The opening of the lion exhibit is planned to coincide with the centenary celebrations in October. The lions are already in the zoo; we are simply building a new exhibit and moving them across the zoo, which frees up space for tigers somewhere else. We have a group of chimpanzees coming from Taronga Zoo for a 12 month stay, and they should be here very soon. They will be going into the African savannah area. The African cape hunting dogs exhibit will be moving because that is roughly the area in which the new lion exhibit will be built. It will be an extension of that exhibit.

The oryx have already been moved across to the rhinoceros side of the pathway to make room for the construction of the new African dog exhibit. The African dogs have been split into two groups. One is on its way to New Zealand. They have started to get a bit funny with each other, as cape dogs do. We are currently sourcing a new cheetah for the cheetah enclosure. There will also be minor work in the rhinoceros enclosure because we are expecting two females at about Christmas and we are looking to make a bit more room for them.

Mr NICHOLLS: I understand the orang-outang enclosures will be upgraded at some stage or may already have been upgraded. Is that likely to happen or is it a long term project?

Mr HYDE: Some work has been done on that facility to stop leaking roofs and to repair slides that were probably poorly designed initially and had become very heavy to operate - there was an occupational health and safety risk. Those works are all but finished - we have two or three slides to go and that job will be done. We have funds set aside for and plans to provide additional shade structures for the orang-outangs this year and we are looking at the aesthetics of the enclosures as well. Our project team is yet to come up with the final details of the design but funds have been allocated - there is a time line and a project team. It is certainly a priority; it does need some work.

As always, we must consider the bigger picture of how many orang-outangs we have, what sort of groups we have, whether they are better in a particular exhibit or whether we should abandon that and do something entirely new with the funds allocated. Perhaps we could redevelop that for a more terrestrial species that might be easier to accommodate in that area. All of those issues will be considered by the project team over the next few months.

Ms WARNOCK: I am particularly attached to the zoo, as I am to Kings Park. I refer to page 1352. I am interested in the reference to the zoo's proposing to continually improve customer services and satisfaction. If we preserve the species and it acts as a conservation laboratory then that satisfies me. However, I realise that we must attract as many visitors as possible. What are the intentions in the coming year in relation to that aspect?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is probably covered by much of what we have said about new exhibits and the like that we will undertake over the next year.

Ms WARNOCK: We have details of the upgrading of the African savannah and so on. Are new methods being developed to attract people to the zoo? There are other methods of attracting people, such as providing entertainment facilities and so on.

Mr HYDE: We are very aware that we need to broaden our attraction to the public. Our surveys indicate that people come to the zoo for entertainment. We are experimenting with new ways of presenting the zoo to the public. This year we will be experimenting with night zoo experiences over the summer period. That is a departure from what we have done previously; that is, holding concerts, film nights and so on. We will certainly continue with that, but night zoo experiences will be distinctly an after dark experience rather than an evening experience. Indicators from other zoos around the world are that that can be a significant drawcard. We will have a special attraction over the Christmas period this year - bringing back the dinosaurs - and we are attempting to incorporate that with a night experience. Past experience is that it is considerably scarier at night than it is during the day.

We have significant market intelligence building on our customers' needs and wants in the zoo, and we are attempting to adjust to those needs and wants as best we can and still remain within the constraints of being a zoo. One of the leading indicators in our market surveys is that the zoo is a quiet place to go and rest from the rat race. We must preserve that while we explore these other avenues.

Ms WARNOCK: I refer to the major initiatives on page 1344. I am interested in the acquisition of two female white rhinoceroses. Is the zoo having difficulties in finding a companion for Memphis? He seemed pretty lonely when I saw him recently. Why two - is he particularly choosy?

Mr HYDE: I have in my past worked with a few rhinoceroses - black and white rhinos, which, incidentally, are the same colour. My experiences with white rhinos indicate that the males are generally far more concerned about sun, shade and food than they are about females. Breeding results in captivity around the world would indicate that a pair tend not to breed; it tends to be a group issue. White rhinos are herding animals and I do not know that they can count, but apparently they know if there are more than two and that becomes the herd. I have also observed that one of the females performs an "auntie" role to the other. Perhaps the females are not interested in breeding if there are not two, because when the calf is born the other female tends to stand guard and, indeed, chases away the male and anybody else who comes too close during that period. There are several behavioural possibilities. I do not think anybody has done the behavioural analysis to know the outcome, but we do know that one female and one male tend not to breed in captivity, therefore having two is the normal practice.

Ms WARNOCK: Have you raised enough money to find those two ladies?

Mr HYDE: We are about three-quarters of the way to the target. We have enough money for one.

Mrs EDWARDES: We are expecting them to arrive by Christmas.

Ms WARNOCK: That is very good, I am pleased to hear that.

Division 45: Western Australian Department of Training; \$219 551 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for Employment and Training.]

[Mr I. Hill, Chief Executive Officer.]

[Dr S.E. King, Executive Director, Strategic Resource Management.]

[Mr L.B. Davies, Executive Director, Employment Initiatives.]

[Mr D.J. Beattie, Acting Director, Financial Management and Analysis.]

Mr KOBELKE: I refer to page 1188. What are the constituents of the two parts which are less retained revenue, both under recurrent and the capital; that is, the \$83.3m and the \$20.9m?

Dr KING: That is a budget summary, which amounts to a grand total of \$219.551m for 1998-99. That is the state funding, and it compares with about \$215m state funding for 1997-98. Because it is now a net appropriation arrangement where agencies are considered by Treasury to be retaining revenue, but not coming through the appropriation from a range of sources, we still have much greater spending power. In other words, we almost have the top line spending power but only the considerable state funding. The \$83m is largely commonwealth funding. It is perhaps better seen area by area within the budget statements. The output and appropriation summary on page 1192 breaks it up into three output areas and then adjusts off an amount for non-cash items.

Mr KOBELKE: I would like a breakdown of the \$83.3m and the \$20.9m to show the major constituent parts such as commonwealth revenue earned or sales of assets and so on.

Dr KING: We can walk through most of the key items. For example, the total capital funding available to the department will be \$30.7m and of that \$20.9m is expected to be commonwealth funding. It might be better to take the question on notice, but the \$83m is largely commonwealth funding on the recurrent and the \$20.9m is also largely commonwealth funding. Revenue is broken up item by item in the budget papers.

Mr KOBELKE: Can you provide that as supplementary information?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that as supplementary information.

Dr KING: It might be easier because it can be detailed.

Mr KOBELKE: I will go through the three subprograms and seek some comparison with last year. An organisational

restructure might have changed things or it might simply be the different accounting process. I refer to the first program, which is the strategic management and prioritisation of vocational education and training systems. The total cost of output is \$14.9m, whereas the total expenditure according to the budget papers from last year was \$16.3m. Can that be reconciled or explained? What are the FTEs? They are not mentioned in these budget papers, whereas last year the number of FTEs was given as 104. I am referring to page 1193 and last year's budget documents page 957.

Dr KING: We have not brought last year's budget papers with us. There is a close relationship in the content of the three programs last year and the three new output areas this year. The first output area is broadly the strategic management of the system and quality assurance. The second output area relates roughly to last year's training delivery. Similarly, the third output area relates to last year's employment area. I cannot provide the precise links but, for example, output 1 on page 1193 in the current papers provides 1997-98 equivalent terminology or amounts. I cannot provide the information now - although we probably can provide it - to allow members to match last year's configuration precisely. I can explain the slight difference between the reconfigured output 1 for 1997-98 and the estimate for 1998-99. Similarly we can do that for each output if that would be useful. I do not have the full match to last year's configuration with me.

Mr KOBELKE: I accept that and understand there is some difficulty. How is the reduction achieved - is it the result of efficiencies or cutting certain parts of the program?

Mr HILL: The \$450 000 decrease is largely due to the cessation of commonwealth funding for the Australian recognition framework implementation. All States and Territories received a one off implementation grant.

Mr KOBELKE: Is there any way of obtaining the FTE equivalents for output 1?

Dr KING: I do not have the FTE break up, but we can provide that information. Page 1196 contains a footnote with the FTEs for the configuration of the three subprograms.

Mr KOBELKE: As that indicates, because that extra polling is included, it is impossible to make a comparison. I would like the comparison program by program if possible.

Mrs EDWARDES: I am happy to provide that as supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: I would like similar consideration of output 2, which relates to the delivery of training services. I refer to page 1194. There is a decrease of nearly \$4m, which in real terms per head of population is a sizeable decrease. Was that decrease achieved totally as a result of efficiencies or will there be a reduction in some programs?

Mr HILL: That is straightforward. The adult migrant English program has been transferred directly to Westcoast College, which is the old North Metropolitan college. That is funded directly by the Commonwealth. The \$4.1m is allocated directly.

Mr KOBELKE: That will create a problem in a number of areas because the independent colleges are off budget and a large amount of their funding still comes through here. It makes it very difficult to get the full picture.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide whatever assistance we can.

Mr KOBELKE: I refer to the delivery of training services, output 2 on page 1194. No target is provided for the student curriculum hours delivered. Is that because of independent colleges?

Mr HILL: No. This was part of the negotiations with ANTA about the new agreement. We did not want to declare our hand until we had bedded down growth through efficiencies. In fact, that figure is 22.8 million student curriculum hours. That is a conservative estimate and we expect to exceed it.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it possible to provide other figures, such as the number of students? How will that compare, or do you not keep figures on actual enrolments?

Mr HILL: We certainly do.

Dr KING: We tend to use student curriculum hours simply because the number of students varies. We could have fewer students because more are doing full time study. Therefore, the student curriculum hours are a better measure of the genuine effort expended. It may be easier to provide the detail as supplementary information. If we take all delivery into account, for 1997 we had over 130 000 students across all types of training. Again, it depends on what we count and do not count. Therefore, it might be better to provide a breakdown.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it possible to provide those figures as supplementary information so that we would have for 1997 and projected for 1998 the actual number of student enrolments? I would also like the number of students who are

still of school age. Has there been any change in the number of 15 to 17 year olds outside the school program in VET but who have left school and moved over to training?

Mr HILL: Yes, we can provide that. It is still very minimal.

Mr KOBELKE: I thought that, but someone suggested there might have been an increase, which would have surprised me. I am interested in the figures for 1997 and what you expect will be the situation in 1998.

Mrs EDWARDES: I am happy to provide that as supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: The figures for apprenticeships and traineeships, and therefore the total number of new apprenticeships, are provided for the current year. What are those figures for the past two years? I wish to see how they are going, because it indicates firmly that they are basically the same.

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes. Again, I will provide that as supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: I refer to page 1194 and the performance measure for output 2. The number of international full fee paying students enrolled indicates that the target is the same as for the past year. We are all well aware of what has been happening in South East Asia and particularly in Indonesia. Has that figure been revised or do we still hope to attract the same number of students?

Mr HILL: We have not revised the figure at this stage. We are waiting for the third quarter. There still is throughput plan effect. We will have that information in the third quarter of this year, but we expect a decline in the ELICOS courses as distinct from the full time award courses.

Mr KOBELKE: I refer to the third and final output at page 1195 detailing this year's estimates. If we compare the employment and work based training we find a small increase, almost enough to keep up with inflation. Does that indicate maintenance of existing programs or are we seeing some change in the range of programs that come under output 3?

Mr DAVIES: The commonwealth programs have been changed and there have been some small increases in existing state programs. However, the youth employment initiative has been expanded; additional funds have been provided.

Mr KOBELKE: Therefore, the \$2.3m reduction, which occurs in total cost of output and also in the LEAP/REAP, is a direct reference to the reduction in commonwealth funding.

Mr DAVIES: Yes. It is the reduction in areas like the in work traineeship program, the national transition program, and so on - those programs that the Commonwealth has ceased funding.

Ms WARNOCK: I refer to page 1199 and the capital budget statement. I am interested in the \$2m to refurbish and expand the Alexander Gallery buildings in Aberdeen Street. I would like some detail about that - when is that likely to happen and what will it mean for that TAFE college?

Mr HILL: That was part of stage 6 of the WA School of Art and Design. The adjoining Alexander Gallery is the building site. That will form part of the total art and design centre. The \$2m is specifically for the Alexander Gallery buildings. An additional amount is being spent at the Central Metropolitan College.

Dr KING: The same page indicates the estimated expenditure this financial year on that same activity at about \$3.3m and \$2.2m next financial year.

Mr HILL: This follows on the arts industry Hough report, which goes back to 1993 and which involved very prominent WA artists. The Government is giving effect to the recommendation that would see the final closure of and our moving out of St Brigid's Convent - which we currently lease - and a rationalisation of what is to happen at Claremont School of Art.

Ms WARNOCK: When is this planned to happen?

Mr HILL: We hope to have it operating in the second semester of 1999.

Mr AINSWORTH: My question relates to funding for industry training councils, which I understand is a joint function of the Department of Training and the State Training Board. For this year at least both the automotive and the mining ITCs do not appear to have been funded, which leaves them in rather a difficult position. What is the reason for that? What are the funding prospects for ITCs generally in forthcoming years? Are there any plans for funding those ITCs in the future?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is correct that the ITCs are funded by both the Commonwealth and the State. Of the 16 ITCs, 14 are funded. The mining and the automotive ITCs are self funded.

The automotive ITC was originally run by the retailers and they decided to go out on their own. The ITC had previously been grouped with other ITCs but those involved were not particularly happy. They transferred to retail and then decided to go out on their own. The correspondence to the board stated that they wanted to be accredited as an industry funded ITC. As such, since that time they have not received any government funding. They have made representations to the Government and to almost every member of Parliament, to whom I am presently in the process of responding.

Consideration is currently being given to a recommendation from the State Training Board in respect of the change in funding for the ITCs. That is something about which a decision will be made and I will inform everyone at that time.

Mr KOBELKE: How much is allocated in the 1998-99 budget for ITCs and how does that compare with the 1997-98 budget allocation?

Mrs EDWARDES: The state grant is \$1m, the commonwealth operational grant is \$1.3m; that is \$2.3m in total.

Mr KOBELKE: How does that compare with the current budget?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is the same.

Mr KOBELKE: Have the ITCs been told their estimates so that they can set their own budgets?

Mrs EDWARDES: They have not been given any details.

Mr KOBELKE: So they are not in a position to plan for the forthcoming year?

Mrs EDWARDES: No, but obviously my concern at the moment is the State Training Board's request. I want them to be able to plan not only on an annual basis but longer term. That is essential to any organisation if it is to be effective and productive.

Mr KOBELKE: Are you aware of the final report entitled, "Industry involvement and investment in training: Moving forward"?

Mrs EDWARDES: Who prepared that?

Mr KOBELKE: That was the second report prepared by the State Training Board on the ITCs. I have forgotten who prepared the first report. The industry made extensive submissions to a second advisory group established by the State Training Board, which tabled that report. I understand the State Training Board has not accepted that report.

Mrs EDWARDES: The State Training Board has advised me that it has considered that report.

Mr KOBELKE: I understand that, but I also understand it has not accepted the findings.

Mrs EDWARDES: In putting forward a recommendation to me it would be fair to say that it has taken into account the issues that have been raised by the ITCs. I am aware of both.

Mr KOBELKE: I am sure you accept the importance of having industry involved in the training agenda.

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not hesitate in agreeing. One of the changes in vocational education and training over recent years - it will obviously continue - is the involvement of industry. Vocational education and training is industry led more now than it was even 10 years ago. The ITCs differ in their ability to respond to the needs of their industries. That occurs for a number of reasons. I support ITCs and the ability that they have to get closer to the ground. However, I want to see them being far more effective than they are at present and to give them some level of assurance about their funding so that they can plan and become more effective.

Mr KOBELKE: Given there is very strong support for ITCs and the incredible contribution already made by people who have expertise in particular areas and who make that contribution free of charge, the uncertainty about funding - even their continued existence - is not doing anything to support and encourage those involved.

Mrs EDWARDES: I hope the decision will be able to be relayed to the ITCs very shortly.

Mr KOBELKE: That decision could be to abolish them.

Mrs EDWARDES: The decision will be relayed to the ITCs. I said that I support the ITCs. I would also like to see them funded over a longer period. That gives the member an indication of the direction in which I am going.

Mr KOBELKE: They were very heavily involved in preparing that report, which seems to have been pushed aside.

Mrs EDWARDES: I am not in the process of abolishing them.

Mr NICHOLLS: My questions specifically relate to other projects on page 1200, with reference to land acquisition in Mandurah. Will you outline the extent of land acquisition?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr NICHOLLS: I also refer to page 1201 under "New works", under the subheading "South Metropolitan College - Peel Stage 2". It shows an allocation of \$7m estimated total cost. When will that \$7m be expended? The allocation underneath refers to a building trades facility of \$1.1m. Could you indicate when that funding is likely to start, and more specifically, when will stage 2 go to tender or when is construction due to start?

Mr HILL: I think 1998-99 has an allocation of \$200 000 to start the planning in stage 2. We do not have our forward estimates through to the year 2000 with us today.

Dr KING: My understanding is that for stage 2, there is a small amount of planning money of \$200 000 in 1998-99, and the remainder is expected to be spent in the following year.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide further supplementary information.

Mr NICHOLLS: Will you also provide by way of supplementary information the actual facilities that will be constructed, and the purposes for which they may be used?

Dr KING: I can comment on some of the intentions, although the planning phase may refine these, but the sorts of things that are being looked at with regard to the Peel Stage 2 at the moment are traditional classrooms and specialised training facilities, particularly focusing on demand in tourism, hospitality, retail, community studies, Aboriginal and trade training. We will look at support facilities for student services to complement the existing arrangements. These are some of the areas broadly being looked at now, so it is quite a large development.

Mr NICHOLLS: Could you also indicate whether any funding or plans will be made available to link up with Murdoch's microwave link at the campus, which is not in use at the moment?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: I would like to get a clearer picture of the amount of revenue that will come from charges and fees. There seems to be a minor difference which can be reconciled, because on page 1196 under "Operating revenues", the budget estimate for 1998-99 is \$7.95m, whereas on page 1198, the same title has an estimate of \$7.480m. The difference may be explained, but I would like to know how much is the total collection of fees contributing to the cost of services.

Dr KING: Those particular entries are not for standard tuition fees. I presume your question is about student tuition fees.

Mr KOBELKE: Tuition fees and the range of other fees and charges.

Dr KING: I will have to crosscheck that entry. Because of the statutory authority nature of the colleges, it is a rather odd situation. The revenue retained by them is not shown in the budget papers.

Mr KOBELKE: Not shown at all?

Dr KING: No. Treasury has intentions to make it transparent in the 1999-2000 papers to portray a fuller picture. Of course, those revenues collected from students will be visible in separate college annual reports which will be available.

Mr KOBELKE: What is the cause in the decline in the user charges and fees, and what user charges and fees comprise these in others?

Dr KING: The main drop envisaged in those fees and charges is revenue generated by TAFE International, which is an institution under the VET Act as part of the department. Ironically, the revenue for that comes into these budget papers, whereas the revenue for statutory authority colleges does not. You previously mentioned the student estimates. They were calendar year estimates for 1997-98, and as Mr Hill mentioned, those estimates have not been pulled down yet because we were waiting to get a better picture. The estimates here are for a financial year and it was soon enough, with the trend in the Asian currency crisis, to expect a drop-off of students to some extent in 1999, so the revenue estimate is down by almost \$2m, which is largely related to the expected drop-off in international student charges.

Mr KOBELKE: I refer to the figures on page 1197 under "Non-current assets". The figure for land and buildings is shown as \$13m. That seems very low because in these same budget papers we expend \$31m on capital, yet the total value of land and buildings is shown as only \$13m.

Dr KING: Again it is the situation that with the statutory authorities, the value of lands and buildings will be shown in the annual reports of those authorities. This amount is land and buildings directly under the control of the department. For example, we have a building at Prospect Place in West Perth in which TAFE International is partly housed, and now the value of Kimberley and C.Y. O'Connor colleges is added which are institutions under the Act, so it is a small proportion of the total land and buildings available to the VET sector.

Mr KOBELKE: I assumed that was the cause, but it shows that the actual budget figures do not make much sense as they stand. That is not your fault; it is the way they are presented.

Dr TURNBULL: On page 1189 at dot point five, it describes the establishment of a National Training Framework and the introduction of the New Apprenticeship system. Is the New Apprenticeship system a state or a federal program?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is a national program that commenced on 1 January 1998.

Dr TURNBULL: Could you explain the main differences and how that might benefit the employers? A lot of employers in the past have felt that apprentices are a drain on their business.

Mr DAVIES: The new apprenticeship system is designed to be more flexible and respond more accurately to all employers' needs. There has been no change to the VET Act or the introduction of section 7 of the Act. The existing apprenticeship system remains as it was, except that it introduced some of the features of the new apprenticeship system which are possible under the existing Act. Employers now have a choice of who the provider is and they have greater choice in negotiating with the providers to stage their training at times that are more suitable to them, and they have more choice in which units and competencies can be delivered during those training programs.

Dr TURNBULL: Do you think that will flow through to rural areas, particularly if you consider places like Collie and Boyup Brook? We have experienced extraordinary difficulties with some young people.

Mr DAVIES: That depends on what the problems are that you are trying to address.

Dr TURNBULL: It is them fitting into programs.

Mr DAVIES: The changes are not designed to address actual individual problems of individual students. The system in place with training administration bodies has been a little slow on the uptake, but it is now starting to kick in, for instance in your region, for someone locally who has responsibility for assisting young people and is having trouble with the system. That is starting to take a stronger effect now that the people involved have become used to their job and can make it work.

Dr TURNBULL: Where is that based?

Mr DAVIES: In Bunbury.

Dr TURNBULL: What section?

Mr DAVIES: They are part of regional training services. Mr Rogers is the person who is down there. I am not sure about the rest of his staff, but they are playing a monitoring role in assistance and resolving disputes and issues.

Dr TURNBULL: I understand that quite a lot of the assessment of the apprentice is done by the employer, and they fill out forms which describe their apprentice's achievements. Some employers feel that they have not full confidence in their own ability to benchmark and I think that the providers, particularly the private providers, may not give the employers enough support in this area. Do you think this is a problem?

Mr DAVIES: I am not aware of it being a particular problem although the system is changing fairly rapidly and the introduction of what we call RTOs - Registered Training Organisations - will be more involved with the overall assessment and certification. This will resolve some of the issues that people raise with us about a person's ability to do those assessments on the job.

Dr TURNBULL: Some employers have said to me that the providers have not actually visited the workplace. They visit the workplace to place the apprentices but they do not visit afterwards. Do you accredit the providers or do you have a system of ensuring that the providers are providing a service which is adequate?

Mr HILL: Early last year, the State Training Board set a policy on the accreditation and registration for training providers in this State. Nine standards are independently validated by independents prior to training providers being registered. Not all go for those nine standards, which means they are monitored more extensively from within the training accreditation council which is a formal body under the VET Act. Some training providers are accredited for all nine standards to make themselves self-managed organisations. By way of explanation, a university or a faculty within the university may get accredited for its MBA course which lasts five years, so within that, they are

only required to be assessed once every five years. The State Training Board imposed a three year limitation on training providers who are accredited for a period of three years. We can do spot checks on their ability to ensure they are maintaining standards which have been spelt out.

The issue which you raised and which Mr Larry Davies alluded to of the dramatic change in the system has created these new bodies called registered training organisations and has presented challenges for Australia, not just Western Australia. It is basically saying to industry that it must take responsibility for the standard it sets in their own industries, so national bodies consult with States and set national competency standards. Those are signed off by a national training framework committee. They go to individual Ministers from each State who seek advice from the accreditation council and then endorse them. Those packages go back to the States which decide whether they will adopt that package as a whole or adopt a hybrid model, because those packages allow up to 25 per cent of flexibility so that the course can be customised depending on the nature of the enterprise and what specific skills or competencies one seeks.

The large TAFE colleges or large private training providers such as Alcoa, Edwards Business College, CCI's Training Centre, and the Plumbing, Painting and Skills Technology Centre have a good credible track record within industry. It is not a problem for them to do assessments and issue qualifications. The challenge for Australia is how one deals with organisations which have a five or three person unit. It is that particular conceptual problem which the rest of the nation is currently dealing with. In the interim, those organisations will not be registered as RTOs. On the issue which you raised about an enterprise making the observation that training providers are not coming out to them, I suspect that there has been a breakdown in communication and not a clear understanding of the individual roles. If you can give us the names of people, we would like to follow that up.

Dr TURNBULL: I think part of the problem is that when it comes to costing packages, those costs are based on a cost of delivery which most likely reflects a city or regional delivery, and they do not take into account a rural delivery. It takes a long time for a provider to visit apprentice workplaces in rural areas. When their package for which they have to manage and deliver this course is at a standard rate, then a problem occurs. In your answer you have really hit at exactly what I am saying. If a problem exists with these people not visiting an apprentice workplace, that is partly related to the cost per package that the provider receives. In the presentation of packages for the delivery of apprentice training, can the payment per unit be increased if that unit is delivered in a rural area?

Mr HILL: In our entire funding model in the State of Western Australia we have weightings for the regions. Those weightings are allowed and catered for, so what we pay out per unit for the region, depending whether it is south west, the Pilbara or the Kimberley, is far more than what is paid in the metropolitan area. I do not believe it is the cost issue. I believe a breakdown exists in communication with people not being clear about what their own obligations are, and that is something we would be very pleased to follow up.

Mr KOBELKE: I share the concerns rightly raised by the member for Collie. Big problems exist with the whole new training agenda. Mr Hill is perhaps using the terms of Sir Humphrey when he suggests challenges exist. They certainly are very big challenges. That is a national agenda and I hope the Minister will continue, as she has in some areas, to look to the State's interests as well as trying to fit a national agenda, because the national agenda is creating a huge range of problems for us.

I will take up one aspect of the cost to employers that the member for Collie hit on at the start. Given that upfront fees are now payable on traineeships in areas where they previously did not exist, is any feedback coming to you or the department that discloses that employers are now being discouraged to take on new apprenticeships because of that upfront cost which previously was not there?

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not believe that is the case but I will ask Mr Davies to respond further. We are very conscious of the fact that bringing trainees in under the new apprenticeship system is not to say that trainees are the end of the line. It should be regarded as the first step to training which can go on to apprenticeships.

Mr KOBELKE: If the charges cause a disincentive, they will not even take the first step.

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not believe that there has been a disincentive.

Mr DAVIES: The numbers of trainees coming on board is still rapidly increasing, and the apprenticeship numbers have not changed dramatically. The fees for apprentices have not been changed, but an impost of fees has been imposed for trainees. Some people have not understood the reason and the rationale, but we have not had a huge backlash, certainly in terms of enrolment numbers.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you outline further the rationale for the introduction of fees and charges to the trainees or people involved in traineeships?

Mrs EDWARDES: Trainees were previously dealt with separately in terms of funding by the Commonwealth, and

once they came together under the new apprenticeship scheme, it was felt that some inequities would exist if they both were not under the one scheme and being charged the fee.

Mr NICHOLLS: So it is solely related to the amalgamation with the apprenticeship scheme and the policy that was in place for those people at a national level?

Mr HILL: When we raised fees for traineeships, in addition to what has just been said, Western Australia was one of the last States to introduce fees for trainees. Every other State has had fees for a number of years. It was an historical accident that they were not being charged here. It was seen to be fair and equitable that they should contribute to the cost of their training, given the training that is accorded to them and the payments that they receive.

Mr KOBELKE: With regard to group training schemes, how much money is in this Budget for group training? How does it compare with the funding for the current financial year?

Mr DAVIES: The figure is approximately \$2.3m.

Mr KOBELKE: For 1998-99?

Mr DAVIES: Yes. That is the commonwealth and the state figure, so it is matching dollar for dollar in the Australian National Training Agreement. It is exactly the same amount as last year.

Mr KOBELKE: Can we have some explanation of the changed arrangements for paying that funding, and what impact that may have on some of the individual training schemes?

Mr DAVIES: A study has been commissioned by ANTA nationally looking at a new funding model which is aimed at providing an incentive to group training companies to increase their numbers and to meet various commonwealth and state priorities. The system that has been developed and agreed nationally allows sufficient flexibility, mainly because of the Minister's insistence that conditions were in there so that group training companies in Western Australia and similar States which had the problems of distances and rural and fairly isolated locations were not disadvantaged. Each group training company under the new arrangement has the capacity to be funded at the level it was funded last year. We have come to an application of the national formula which means that no one will get less than 5 per cent below what they received last year, and all of them have the capacity to earn at least what they earned last year. It depends on their performance to be able to earn what they received last year, or maybe more in some cases.

Mr KOBELKE: On page 1191 at the third dot point from the bottom of the page, reference is made to the state employment assistance strategy and to funds to two major programs and a network of 45 community based projects. By way of supplementary answer, if it is not available now, what is the funding for each of those two major programs and the network of Joblink or whatever title is attached to them for 1998-99 and 1997-98?

Mrs EDWARDES: We can provide that information to you now.

Mr DAVIES: Each project under the arrangement will receive an increase of 5 per cent on what was received last year.

Mr KOBELKE: Are these the projects under the network of community based projects?

Mr DAVIES: Yes. The 45 community based projects mentioned are Joblink and the Aboriginal economic employment development officer projects. They have all received a 5 per cent increase in recognition of the fact that they have not had an increase for a number of years. That brings them up to a more effective operating level.

Mr KOBELKE: What are the other major programs?

Mr DAVIES: They are the two programs that are part of SEAS.

Mrs EDWARDES: They are the two groups just mentioned; the two directions.

Mr KOBELKE: Where does the enterprise specific training program come in? That is under a different area altogether, is it? I am confused. It sounds like there are two programs plus the network of community based programs.

Mrs EDWARDES: The network of 45 community organisations comes under two programs. The one that we were at last week was part of the Aboriginal program.

Dr TURNBULL: I refer to page 1190 at the fourth dot point under "Major Initiatives for 1998-99" with regard to the identification of priority industry skill areas. I have some experience in trying to identify a priority industry skills area in which the industry did not already exist. It was extraordinarily hard to get any recognition or any funding

for the need to have training programs in which the projects have not started. The example, of course, is Collie Power Station. Who identifies priority skill areas and are they now more prepared to look at prospective increases in the needs for big projects such as Geraldton? The Collie Power Station in the south west eventually got under way and the Worsley expansion training program seems to be running okay, but the example that I am thinking of now is Geraldton. I know we cannot do that yet because they have not announced they will do it, but would you say that the attitude of those people would now be more conducive to look at proposed areas of new skills needs?

Mrs EDWARDES: The State Training Board provides that identification. Over the past two years it has done that in conjunction with industry and the report has become known as the Worley report. So, industry is very much involved in the identification of the skills it looks at for the future.

Mr HILL: I will leave aside the comment about the attitude of the staff being more conducive, because we can debate that forever and a day.

Dr TURNBULL: I meant whatever body it is that makes the decisions.

Mr HILL: We have three; we fund industry training needs through a proper profile process. We negotiate resource agreement with training providers, whether they are TAFE colleges and/or private providers. We then have two competitive tender processes. One is called an industry specific tender. If we feel that the needs of industry are not being adequately met with the current training provision, we go to tender and we call for expressions of interest targeting the particular sector and spend what is needed.

The other one is enterprise specific. We attempt to encourage the enterprise to match us dollar for dollar. Some incentive exists and we would not want the sole commitment to be that of the training sector, so it has must be on a 50:50 basis. We are trying to leverage the taxpayers' dollar.

The consultation and analysis which are done in these areas are fairly extensive. They must be balanced against the priority areas for jobs or sectors which are identified by the State Training Board which maximise the number of people employed in Western Australia. We recently did a revamp in which the board found that a particular sector - without naming it - which was consuming an enormous amount of training funds, but its contribution in terms of the number of people employed in that sector was 0.6 per cent. Priorities in that area must be reallocated. That is the approach. Enterprise and industry specific tend to look at new and emerging industries. A number of examples exist in which a champion is not out there; in other words, it is not an established sector. Once we identify the sector as an emerging industry, we go out to the competition on that. We go to tender and invite expressions of interest to see what we can attract from the market. We are aware of that with regard to Geraldton. Some extensive work has gone into that with the college. We are upgrading some of the facilities there, but we are also holding back to see what will happen with An Feng. Will it happen or not; that has been happening for 12 months, but Geraldton college is well placed to take off, as it were, if that gets the go ahead.

Dr TURNBULL: I am pleased and appreciate that you have looked at the aquaculture industry as an emerging possible industry which will need training programs, and that you have introduced them in the south metropolitan and in the south west.

Mr KOBELKE: Can you give some details on the enterprise specific training programs? How much is in this budget and how does it compare with the amount in the 1997-98 budget?

Dr KING: The enterprise specific program commenced very much as a pilot program and it has now been merged with the priority skill enhancement program. It is much the same principle; it looks at areas where there needs to be skills upgrading or specialist training in partnership with employers and expecting industry contribution. The main subtle shift discovered from the experience of the enterprise specific program is that sometimes an employer expresses a lot of interest and says, "Wonderful, we can get some money to launch this training", but sometimes they find it harder to do than they originally thought. In the priority skill enhancement program, we recognised that and enabled a provider to put up their hand for the funding, or an employer or enterprise, in which we acknowledged that quite a lot of work would be involved in working with different employers in a field to determine the particular training needs and the best way to deliver them. We felt that some people had good ideas in the enterprise specific program, but then had trouble making them materialise. So, they needed a little bit of help from someone who could almost broker, develop or work with them and get the right mix of the training need and who could best provide it. We have started to develop more the priority skill enhancement program. The figures for 1997-98 for the enterprise specific area is \$150 000, and \$850 000 for the priority skill enhancement program. The 1998-99 estimates roll those two together and we have increased it substantially to roughly \$2.5m.

As I mentioned, some people have been finding their way with both programs, and we found that some activity was a bit slow to start and actually rolled into the beginning of this year. We have only just let the tender for the new priority skill enhancement program. We have visited rural areas in particular to explain what had to be done to be

competitive and to put in a submission. We had a bit of a travelling roadshow to go to rural areas and explain because some of the programs are pitched at regional areas - regional development projects we have called them - and also some of it at remote Aboriginal communities. We expect about 20 per cent of the 1998 calendar year funding to go to the regional and remote Aboriginal communities, 20 per cent to go to regional development projects, and 60 per cent to go to more priority occupational skills areas in the sort of areas mentioned in the papers as being priorities for extra training.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you for that full explanation. Are you saying that the 1997-98 budget was going from a figure of about \$235 000 to \$2.5m?

Dr KING: Yes.

Mr KOBELKE: It is a tenfold increase. On page 1189 at the second dot point, it states that the projections indicate that four out of five people will be employed in the service sector in 2011. Could you elaborate on what was said earlier about the negative aspect of too much money going into one area which did not have promise? Can we do something about the other area of how new programs are developed or additional funding into areas which will help people receive the training they need for that service sector?

Dr KING: With the intention of enabling providers to plan better, we have put out a 1998-2000 shift in the profile for delivery. This was put through the State Training Board and approved by it. We saw a shift in areas such as community service workers. That is quite a large area of training, but we were trying to get a shift into welfare and aged care because of their needs. That was one example.

Health was a priority sector, although it is relatively small. We had some needs in the security industry; that is, ensuring security systems work and the like, as a growing niche area in which there was a growing need for training, and also some in the cleaning industries. I am just looking at the ones that particularly fit the service area.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it possible to have a copy of that document?

Mrs EDWARDES: Absolutely. I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Dr KING: I might add that retail is another large area of anticipated growth with traineeships.

Mr KOBELKE: A point that was earlier raised on page 1190 relates to public funded training provision in some of the more remote areas of the State. Some of those remote areas have a big problem to get the numbers for classes. While a cost weighting exists to allow programs to be financial in those areas, a problem is often experienced simply with reaching the numbers that are required, and then when numbers drop out. A difficulty often arises in small towns when a program is run because it covers 80 per cent of the market, and consequently the same course cannot be run again even though it was a great success. I am wondering in terms of those sorts of management problems in the smaller or more remote centres whether you can address those to make services more readily available.

Mrs EDWARDES: You are right. That is one of the major issues that we need to monitor as we go into the competitive market. One of the things we stated quite emphatically in terms of the national training framework is that Western Australia is happy to implement the policy, but we will do it to meet the needs of Western Australians. That primarily allows us to be flexible enough to support regional and remote areas in which their costs are greater, the numbers are often smaller, and any impact on one program tends to impact on the whole. When we implement user choice as well, we are very conscious to make sure that any impact in terms of some of those programs going out to the private sector might have had an impact on the public sector being able to provide some of those other very strong community based-type programs which are essential to a very small town. It is one that we are conscious of.

Mr HILL: The issues you have raised are relevant. We believe that over the past five years the regional and remote communities with regards to IT, the presence of IT in all areas has been significantly expanded. A number of our regional colleges are now running the certificate courses on a cyclical basis. We are moving towards more flexible arrangements. We spend an amount of money to tap into the 49 telecentres which we used to administer, but are now administered by the Department of Commerce and Trade.

Mr KOBELKE: Is that West-Link you are talking about?

Mr HILL: No, telecentres. We use West-Link to broadcast from Prospect Place. Not everyone is comfortable with that medium. A lot of people still look to a face to face situation. We are currently in the process of developing an initiative which the Minister signed off on. We have chosen an online technology program. That will be the most significant initiative for the VET sector in Western Australia over the next five years. A taskforce is currently operating and that will be in operation - we would like to think we run the first pilots in the final quarter of this year - but that allows for delivery if you are on the other end of a telephone; not an ISDN line. That is the sophistication. It is a combination of making cyclical visits and of some distance education learning. It is Ausnet. It is telecentres

and the online delivery strategy, and part and parcel of that will be the Internet. I am amazed at a generation who perceive the Internet as mainstream. I do not yet see the Internet as mainstream. At the end of the day we will end up with some communities in which the population numbers are so low that it is not possible for us to deliver anything of significance. We are not tied explicitly to class sizes. While Susan King's team runs a very tight ship, the reality is that there is a lot of accommodation for remote communities.

Mr KOBELKE: Modern technology has been available, perhaps not in a sophisticated form, for 10 years or more. I believe it has fallen far short of the potentials that people have, and in my recent visit to remote areas, I found very little use of it. You may disagree with me, but if you agree with me that it is underutilised, what are the problems? Is it the lack of the sufficient amount of sophisticated course ware to be able to provide the courses that people really want? What are the reasons we have such a poor take up on using technology in remote areas?

Mr HILL: It was a poor product which attempted to replicate a classroom situation. That simply does not work. The new products being developed are interactive. I think that is one major issue. The second major issue was not sufficient investment being made in Australia in terms of staff training. Australia had an entire generation of staff in the VET system as this technology was unrolling. An assumption was made that they would pick up and be comfortable and deliver it. Of course, that has not happened. I believe those are the two single factors and they are being addressed.

Dr TURNBULL: Some of the telecentre operators have become extremely computer literate themselves and they encourage other people. It is very important that the telecentre staff receive very good support. I know your department is not responsible for those telecentre staff at this stage, but I still think the development of those staff and keeping close to those staff is very important in terms of encouraging the uptake of your products. That is my observation in the country. In an area where the telecentre manager is really switched on, you will get the place used.

Ms WARNOCK: Tomorrow morning I will talk in the estimates on Racing and Gaming - and this may be more appropriately addressed there - but as you may or may not know if you possibly read the sporting pages, an accident occurred at a Kalgoorlie racecourse last week and a young apprentice rider was killed. That was a subject of great regret in the racing industry, and it has caused the matter of apprenticeships and the apprenticeship training system to be raised, which is why I address it now. Are you aware of any apprenticeship training that has been discussed this evening in the racing industry and have you any views about that? I intended to raise it tomorrow in another context altogether, but I wonder whether you are aware of any training plans or any present apprenticeship and training in the racing industry.

Mr DAVIES: I have not followed up on that particular story. I can get back to you about what arrangement was in place for that particular apprentice. I am aware of the major initiatives within the racing industry that have been run by the Victorian Racing Club. They have been putting together a training package that I believe is accepted across the country which involves not only the use of standard training arrangements, but also they have developed a robotic horse to try to give people experience before they get on the back of a horse in a race. I will provide the additional information on that specific event.

Ms WARNOCK: I wondered if there was anyone particularly familiar with it because it is a subject of great controversy in the industry at the moment.

Mrs EDWARDES: I am happy to provide that further information by way of supplementary.

Mr KOBELKE: Relating to the last dot point on page 1191 and the expansion of the state youth employment initiative, can you provide some explanation of the expansion and if any increase in the actual funding has been allocated to it?

Mr DAVIES: The youth employment initiative received an extra \$0.5m this year. We are trying to do prepare young people for the changed world of work and to bring our current career advice and services to young people up to date and into the future. The feedback that we are receiving from a lot of places is that the advice they get in schools and from other sources has not been up to date with the changes.

The youth labour market has changed dramatically, and we are trying to provide young people with the view that opportunities are available, but they do not look like some of the opportunities that their parents are used to looking at. The program that we are developing will be targeted at a number of levels; to provide information to young people and access to one point of contact for those who need some assistance, and also to target parents and other providers of information.

Despite what young people might think, their parents have a fairly big influence on the way they see the world, so we are trying to get the message to parents and employers that the world is different and that we must be more creative about the way we look for employment and training opportunities. A whole range of programs including

a package of information for apprentices graduating give them some information about how to start up their own business or subcontracting because that is the reality for many of them. This is information that we have had fed back by people such as group training companies and other industry associations who say this is a real need. We are trying to respond to those needs about information and look at the world as it is today.

Mr KOBELKE: It follows on from that naturally to ask if we can have some explanation of what is called the expansion of VET in schools on page 1189. I think we are all aware of that, and I realise it is not a responsibility of the department; it primarily belongs to the Education Department. Could we have some explanation of what funding is available, does it pass through your department or go straight to the Education Department, how is the linkage currently formed between schools and training providers such as TAFE colleges, and particularly with the issues of accreditation between the Curriculum Council and the State Training Board, and what are those range of issues that need to be resolved in order to make that VET a success in schools?

Dr KING: I will lay out the general funding arrangements and then Mr Hill may wish to pick up on some of the Curriculum Council issues. The funding in this budget of approximately \$2.1m is the same as that for the previous year. It will come via the Australian National Training Authority from the Commonwealth.

Mr KOBELKE: To DOT?

Dr KING: To the department, yes.

Mr KOBELKE: And then to the Education Department?

Dr KING: Then split up between the independent schools which get \$300 000 per annum, the Catholic school sector receives \$0.37m, and the government school sector receives \$1.43m. It is split into proportions roughly the size of the sectors. It comes through our figures, now via net appropriation of course, but it comes through the department. We have agreements with the three main school sectors which have been over a four-year planning period. They have indicated their priorities and expected level of delivery.

We also have a reporting mechanism back from them and then we summarise and pass reports to the Australian National Training Authority as well, so they can monitor the developments nationally. I do not have the figures with me on the level of delivery to date. I could provide those if necessary, but the funding is roughly \$2.1m per calendar year; \$0.3m to the independent school sector, \$0.37m to Catholic schools and \$1.43m to the government schools. It is administered under resource agreements with them with a reporting requirement to us.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that further information by way of supplementary.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it possible to have it for the past two or three years because there were pilot projects, and I believe this is the first full year of operation.

Mr HILL: It was introduced in 1997 so this is the second full year of operation. The quality assurance and recognition arrangements for VET in schools has now been jointly developed by the Curriculum Council and the Training Accreditation Council. The arrangements will be based on the most recent arrangements in how we have addressed quality assurance for VET providers, and it is based on the Australian recognition framework. We are keen to ensure that any training which is done in schools counts towards the WA general certificate of education, and that it is of a quality which allows them to receive full credit for it when they join a VET provider. We are confident that will happen.

Mr KOBELKE: Is that work progressing satisfactorily, but yet to be signed off on.

Mr HILL: Yes, it is progressing satisfactorily.

Mr KOBELKE: The sixth dot point on page 1189 refers to the Commonwealth reducing its involvement in the employment assistance market. That has obviously impacted on some of the programs being run by the State. Will the Minister comment on where those problems have arisen? I understand it is a policy position of Government not to take up the void that may be created, but in some instances that creates considerable problems at the local level. I am not sure whether the opportunity has been available in a limited number of cases to extend the operation of some state programs because of the void created by the change in the commonwealth programs.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will ask Mr Hill to elaborate further. In respect to some of those areas, Mr Davies has already referred to some of the programs in which funding was reduced earlier, and he can go back through that if you wish.

Mr KOBELKE: That is part of the picture in terms of funding which previously came through the State, but a whole range of more direct federal programs have also been changed. Some of the Joblink programs were also tendering and picking up commonwealth programs which no longer exist. That has impacted on a range of services as well.

Mrs EDWARDES: I think it would be fair to say that we will continue to always monitor any gaps that might occur

in which we believe that it is appropriate to either build-in or to expand further the system, although we have a very strong policy of not picking up programs which the Federal Government has decided not to support, but we are always very conscious of making sure that those who are in need will be supported in some way.

Mr DAVIES: The whole contracting out of the Commonwealth Employment Services and the changes to a whole range of programs are being monitored as the Minister as mentioned. A large article on page 2 in *The West Australian* on Saturday reported on the hole that has been left in Karratha. We had another one when the Minister wrote to the federal Minister to highlight that they had neglected an area of need. I think Kwinana was one area which they had dropped all the services, and no one had picked up a contract. So there was area in which - the Government in Canberra might have thought it was close enough to Rockingham to be serviced - it really needed its own services, and Karratha was another example. Those sorts of examples are being highlighted.

We had a conference with all the Joblink and AEDO projects, or CES programs, about a week ago in which we discussed a lot of the issues and problems that they are facing. They are certainly facing some pressures in increased numbers, who are not at the moment being picked up by the commonwealth services, but it is still too early to tell whether that is because the Commonwealth had problems to get their systems up and running; all their computer systems have not been in place. Many of the agencies that have been given contracts have not opened their doors, or if they have, had not had all their systems in place to link in, because a lot of the new services require a pin number to get in. If they have not distributed those pin numbers to the clients, they will have a problem.

It is too early to tell where the problems will be, but we are constantly monitoring it and we are also encouraging the Joblink projects to look at the future jobs rather than go back to a direct referral approach in the standard sort of commonwealth way of doing a case management approach. We led the way in WA to show them that case management was the way to go, and we now think we need to move ahead again to show them the new direction. The Joblink projects take that sort of view to be more proactive in the way they deal with the issues, rather than get bogged down in worrying about what might happen with the commonwealth services.

Mr KOBELKE: I assume that the Minister would not disapprove or see any problem with Joblink programs pick up some of the flex programs as a direct contract or a subcontract from the Commonwealth?

Mr DAVIES: We negotiated with those that have picked up contracts to ensure that we are funding something completely different to the funding being provided by the Commonwealth. We want some value added for the state dollars, but we have no problem with them having a commonwealth tender. In fact, we encourage the network to access and effectively use all commonwealth money that is available.

Mr KOBELKE: While the nature of the commonwealth flex programs implicitly assumes that training may be a part of them, no requirement exists for training, and we get to see the number of dollars in the shake out of the market that may be used for training. Does the department have any indicative figures or estimates as to whether TAFE programs will be impacted upon due to the fact that commonwealth employment programs previously would, as a standard measure, buy training programs, and that we may find an actual reduction, at least in the short term, in the purchasing of training programs under the flex funding?

Mr DAVIES: Yes. Again, we do not know yet. We are aware of some issues with things such as the training for Aboriginal program that a reduction will occur in that area, although ATSIC had a meeting yesterday in Canberra where we put a position. The money for that program has not disappeared; it has just moved, and we have been trying to get to the bottom of how we can free that up and get it back into the system. We also commissioned a study within the department to track where all these changes are impacting so that we can get a better handle on what it is. It is very difficult at the moment because even the commonwealth staff who are left are generally quite unaware of the new arrangements and one must rely on getting information from Canberra which is not always forthcoming.

Mr KOBELKE: To what extent do the changes to the flex programs that relate to entry into training programs - I think it is flex 3, but I am not sure - help advise people and sign them up for apprenticeships and traineeships. The changes may mean major holes occur, and as you have already indicated, the state youth employment initiative tries to cover those areas. Do you see a need to cover that, or is the time in which we have our major intake still sufficiently months away to sit back and wait and make adjustments if you need to, or are you currently looking at the potential holes that might exist there?

Mr DAVIES: The flex 3 is about case management for most disadvantaged, but the ELTS program, which is entry level training support services, has established new apprenticeship centres. We have a concern about that because they created a region called "The Rest of WA". If you draw a line from Perth to Albany, it was anything else. The major contract for that is located in East Perth. We have yet to see how that will flow through, but we have our training administration bodies in place across the State. For the interim, they will provide some assistance to people until the contractors who have those contracts can get their act into gear. We think they will subcontract some of the

existing services that the State will provide to deliver their services in the more remote regions because the money that they are receiving will not allow them to establish offices in every region of the State.

Mr KOBELKE: Is that work spread reasonably through the year, or is it critical at the end of the school year to lead into the start of the new calendar year?

Mr DAVIES: It is certainly critical for apprenticeships at the end of the year, but traineeships tend to come on right through the year in a much more even spread. It is quite critical now for traineeships and in some of the more remote areas. In Fitzroy Crossing the other day we had to get someone to come in and help a remote community from Fitzroy to fill in the registration requirements for a number of new trainees that they were putting on through the community, but we are watching that, and in most cases we can provide the assistance.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
