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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

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Thursday, 8 June 2000

Legislative Council

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am

The CHAIRMAN: (Hon Muriel Patterson): On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask your co-operation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers. May I remind members of the public - I am afraid we have none so far - that we can only use accredited media. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee, and for each adviser to please state their full name, contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet, \$74 765 000 -

Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.

Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Mines.

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

Mr P. Conran, Assistant Director General, Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr M. Cole, Management Accountant, Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr G. Hay, Acting Assistant Director General, Public Sector Management.

Mr J. Lightowlers, Acting Assistant Director General, Public Sector Review.

The CHAIRMAN: At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form.

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the minister care to make any observations before we start questioning?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: We now have the session open for questions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I understand that the Ministry of Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the coordination of leave liability across government agencies. The minister would be aware that the Premier issued an instruction that by 30 June 1999 all agencies were to have reduced their leave liability by 10 per cent. The minister would also be aware that a large number of agencies did not achieve that target. Some agencies increased their leave liability; the Education Department increased its leave liability by about 8.7 per cent. In view of that target not being met, what does the office intend to do about it?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Mr Wauchope has reminded me that the Public Sector Management Division is being interviewed by this committee tomorrow. We could give the member an answer now but it is more appropriate to raise the issue during that time. Perhaps it would be better if the questions that relate to public sector management were reserved for tomorrow.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can I raise a question in relation to chief executive appointments?

Hon N.F. MOORE: We have an unusual set of circumstances this year because normally Public Sector Management is within the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet and is part of the estimates hearings in relation to that department. However, for some reason this year, the committee has decided to deal with public sector management separately. The people here today are here to talk about the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. They are prepared to talk about public sector management tomorrow. The committee has made a decision to split them that way, so I ask that questions about public sector management be asked tomorrow. There may be some difficulty in deciding which is which, but we will do our best.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is the matter of credit cards handled by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet or by the PSMO?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I am not sure what the member is asking in relation to that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I would like to know who is responsible for the number of credit cards that are presently used by public sector agencies?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The credit cards, as with all items of expenditure and means of purchasing within agencies, is the responsibility of the chief executive officer of the agency. Guidelines are set by Treasury. They are governed by the Financial Administration and Audit Act, but at the end of the day, the CEO is responsible for making decisions about who is issued with credit cards. Comments have been made by the Auditor General and others that it is probably the most efficient and accountable form of purchasing.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many credit cards are out there?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I do not know off the top of my head. A number of parliamentary questions have been asked on this issue; I do not know whether they have been answered as yet. Again, that information would lie with the individual agencies. It would be a matter of going to the agencies to get that information.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is there no central point where records are kept of the number of credit cards in use by government agencies?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I am not aware of any.

Hon MARK NEVILL: What additional support is the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet supplying to Independent members of Parliament rather than small parties?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I think that is determined by the legislation.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is that right?

Hon MARK NEVILL: It is a serious question.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As I remember it - and I am not sure it is still the case - the legislation identifies a political party by the number of members it has. If a political party has been defined as having a certain number of members, it is entitled to be recognised as a political party and to receive certain benefits. That is how it used to be. I am not sure if that is still the case.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The minister is referring to what is called an "official party".

Hon N.F. MOORE: Official parties are entitled to a certain level of government support.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The National Party qualifies for that because it has over seven members. Is that the threshold?

Mr WAUCHOPE: If a party has a certain number of members in the Lower House, under the Salaries and Allowances Act it qualifies for certain benefits. Members of Parliament, generally speaking, have been entitled to the same conditions across the board. It has always been a difficulty that the entitlements do not distinguish between an Independent member of Parliament or a member of Parliament who belongs to a political party.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Perhaps I should not say "entitlement", but use the word "facilities". I have had to purchase my own fax machine because I have not had access to a fax without annoying other people. I also have to use the parliamentary library photocopier. I do not know what consideration is being given to Independents in the other place, but are any facilities supplied to Independents or small parties that do not reach the threshold?

[9.10 am]

Mr WAUCHOPE: This issue has arisen since the change in the composition of the Legislative Council after the 1996 election. A number of issues have been considered, including resourcing the Parliamentary Library with additional staffing and providing additional facilities by way of faxes, photocopiers, computers, etc. It was believed at the time that that was best handled through Parliament, and an argument was mounted that additional funding should be provided for that purpose. I do not believe that funding was provided, and at this stage some of those facilities have not been provided. With respect to the specific question about Independent members, a number of issues have been considered, but no decisions have been made at this time.

Hon MARK NEVILL: My next question is about the contract with BTI Australia Pty Ltd for members' travel. I fail to see any benefits in that contract. I find it creates a lot of paperwork when I book flights at short notice or change flights, which I often have to do. Why does the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet not issue members who require air travel in the country with a credit card and a budget within which to work, rather than just a fairly cumbersome system of unlimited travel in which there is no incentive to book flights ahead or take advantage of possible cost reductions.

Mr WAUCHOPE: The BTI contract was based on providing a service for government as a whole. In that respect it probably does not work well for members of Parliament. The experience over the past couple of years has pointed that out, and we have acknowledged that. Although the ministry is bound to the BTI contract, we have said that members can open an account with Ansett in their own name and deal directly with the airline. We have agreed to pay the monthly invoices received by members as account holders on a number of conditions. If the member wishes to discuss this with me later, I would be happy to work out an arrangement that might work for him.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to the Barrack Square redevelopment on page 1122, under works in progress. Can you provide me with a breakdown of the \$19m estimated total cost and what has been spent so far?

Hon N.F. MOORE: As far as the budget papers are concerned, \$14.7m is expected to be expended this financial year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What is it being spent on?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I do not have those figures at the moment. The total expenditure is for the belltower, the refurbishment of the jetties and the building of the pavilions - the total refurbishment of Barrack Square, of which the belltower is about \$5m. If the member puts that on notice, I will get the exact details.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Have you finalised the admission fees for visitors to the belltower?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Not to my knowledge. The irony of this is that members opposite are suggesting that we should not have one. Then when somebody suggested that a fee must be charged in order to maintain the facilities, they said that people should not have to pay to go in. As I understand it, the intention is to charge a minimal admission fee to maintain the facility. It will require maintenance because it is a very large building and it contains the bells from St Martin in the Fields Church. It will need to be maintained in a way that should not be a burden on the taxpayer. We believe that many thousands of people want to visit the belltower, and I am sure they will. It is estimated that a minimal charge - I have heard figures to the tune of \$5 for adults - will be charged to maintain the building. I do not believe a final decision has been made on that; in fact, I am sure it has not.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is no estimate of revenue from the collection of fees contained in this budget?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Not to my knowledge.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Are the people who are currently visiting the belltower charged to do so?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No, not that I know of.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you provide us with the number of people who have visited the belltower so far?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Can you put that on notice? I am pleased we are dealing with the most fundamental issues affecting Western Australia.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The minister cannot even answer questions about where the money is being spent in the estimates. He should not get stropky with me.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am not getting stropky. If the member wants to know how many people have visited the belltower -

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The Premier said that they could not keep the crowds out.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That may well be the case.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Page 1122 refers to electorate office fit-outs. What assumptions were used to determine the figure of \$1m for electorate office fit-outs as part of new works?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The \$1m estimated cost is based on the normal turnover of members of Parliament at a state election combined with the fact that some members of Parliament wish to take the opportunity at the end of a parliamentary term to relocate for one reason or another. The rules provide for that. We have cash flowed that on the basis of when we expect the cost to hit. As members would appreciate, following an election, members of Parliament can take some time to decide where they want to locate their electorate office. It is quite a lengthy process in getting the Valuer General and the Department of Contract and Management Services involved in assessing the location. We expect that a lot of the cost for the fit-outs for electorate offices will not land in the next financial year, although there will be an election in that period. The majority of those will land the year after.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How many fit-outs does that entail in terms of this year's budget? I would have thought that if the process started this year, there would be a higher figure with the estimated total cost and the estimated expenditure in this year. Can you provide a break-up of how many new members you expect and how many members you expect to be relocated?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is the member asking the director general to anticipate who will win and who will lose?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am asking him where he got the assumptions from.

Mr WAUCHOPE: Perhaps I can answer it in a reverse way. The average fit-out cost is somewhere between \$50 000 and \$60 000. If that is divided into \$1m, it will give the member an idea of the numbers we might expect. It is our estimation, but it might be higher or it might be lower.

Hon MARK NEVILL: What are the main impediments at the moment in reaching the various native title agreements around the State? I understand the Premier's department deals with that. One of the issues that I have been getting feedback on is the quality of the anthropological work that is being done. Is that an impediment, and what other impediments are there to securing some of the native title agreements which have been negotiated?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will ask Mr Conran, who heads the native title unit in the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, to respond.

[9.20 am]

Mr CONRAN: There are a number of impediments to agreements. The member is correct. We have certain guidelines which have been set down for what we refer to as connection reports; that is, for identifying the people who make the claim in an anthropological manner. We do that for public accountability reasons. Significant monetary issues flow from any native title agreement we might reach; that is, an agreement dealing with future act matters and issues of extinguishment. It is critical for public accountability reasons that we be certain we are dealing with the correct people in an area. We require extensive anthropological material. On occasion we receive material that is not of the quality required for us to meet our due diligence or public accountability requirements.

Another impediment has been the impact of the Miriuwung-Gajerrong decision. In the first instance, the meaning of the decision was uncertain. Issues arose about the ownership of minerals and other resources that made negotiations very difficult. Those issues have been clarified in part by the Full Bench of the Federal Court in that it has made extensive changes to the original decision. We are working through that decision to ensure we understand its meaning correctly. However, presuming that law stands, it will change the way in which negotiations proceed. In a sense, negotiated outcomes would be much easier to achieve if the full court decision were to stand.

Hon MARK NEVILL: On which claims is the anthropological work almost completed or completed to the required standard?

Mr CONRAN: The Spinifex claim meets the requirements of our guidelines. We are in negotiations with other areas, including the Balangarra community in the Kimberley. We are awaiting some material from that community. We are also in negotiations with claimants in the Yamatji region and awaiting some material. We have indicated a desire to reach a negotiated outcome on a number of matters, particularly in the central desert area and in the Ngaanyatjarra Land Council claim area. We would like to proceed to settlement when we receive the required anthropological material. The council knows our criteria and we expect them to be met. We have also been considering anthropological material relating to the Martu claim. We have not been satisfied that that meets our criteria and the claimants have undertaken that they will review it and seek to achieve the guideline standards we have set.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Is the unit in a position to evaluate the amount of anthropological work being done on these claims? It appears to be taking an inordinate amount of time for these anthropologists to put together a reasonably straightforward exercise in many areas. Is this a go-slow campaign or are anthropologists charging exorbitant amounts and not producing the goods? Can that be monitored?

Mr CONRAN: I am not sure we are in a position to comment. We usually organise a peer review of that material. Although we can make assessments in house, we usually refer anthropological material to anthropologists for their review.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I refer again to native title and page 1101. I note that \$4.8m has been allocated for the establishment of the Native Title Commission. When will that come on line?

Mr CONRAN: The establishment of the Native Title Commission in its full-blown sense is subject to the Native Title (State Provisions) Act not being disallowed by the Federal Parliament. Certain parts of that legislation relating to infrastructure are not subject to disallowance, and implementation of those parts has commenced. Objections in accordance with that legislation can be referred to an independent body established by the State. Two magistrates have been appointed to hear those objections, although we will proceed to the establishment of the state Native Title Commission to deal with infrastructure matters in the next few months.

Hon N.F. MOORE: This is an opportunity for the Australian Democrats and the Labor Party in Western Australia to encourage their federal colleagues to agree to our legislation. That would make life much easier for many people in Western Australia.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Our views are on the record.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Members are entitled to change their minds - as the Democrats have been inclined to do.

Several members interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: If the Labor Party wants to continue to fight the issue of native title by using its numbers in the Senate to disallow the legislation, they will bear the consequences. They know that as well as I do.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I refer to the costings. Apparently \$550 000 has been allocated -

Mr CONRAN: For negotiations?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Yes. Does that relate to the infrastructure provisions or is it for negotiation of specific agreements such as the Spinifex claim?

Mr CONRAN: It is for negotiation or implementation of specific agreements such as the Spinifex and Balangarra claims.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I understand none of those claims has yet been finalised. How is that \$550 000 being used?

Mr CONRAN: I hope that the Spinifex agreement will be concluded within the next few weeks. A significant proportion of the funding will be spent to ensure that structures are in place that allow the Spinifex community to fulfil its various obligations under the agreement. We hope to progress the Balangarra matter as quickly as possible.

As a general observation, native title negotiations, whether they be in Western Australia or anywhere else, are very complex. Assuming it is finally negotiated, the Spinifex agreement will be the most comprehensive agreement covering the largest area subject to agreement in the country. It is breaking new ground in an environment in which we do not have any definitive rulings from the High Court about the law. We must also deal with all the complexities of the Native Title Act. I am not surprised there are delays in the negotiation of native title agreements.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: How much of the \$550 000 of estimated expenditure for 1999-2000 has been spent on the Spinifex community in some form and how much has been spent on research, administration and legal fees associated with that claim?

[9.30 am]

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

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I understand that this week the registered bodies were announced. Only about three existing land councils have been announced as registered bodies. Of the ones which were mentioned earlier that the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet is negotiating with, I think Yamatji has been approved but not a couple of the others. What impact will that have on the administration of native title? How will the ministry proceed now that many of the current land councils will not be entitled to negotiate?

Mr CONRAN: The principal groups that we have extensive negotiations with are Ngaanyatjarra, Yamatji and the Kimberley Land Council, which I understand have all been approved. As for the others, they must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. I think it would be premature for us to make any decisions on how we will best proceed with negotiations in those areas. We will deal with those various representative bodies as they exist until such time as they do not exist, and we will deal with issues beyond that when they arise.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: With regard to the relationship between the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet and the Native Title Commission when it is established, I note that all the costings and other aspects are contained within the ministry. Will the commission be financially independent of the ministry; what will the crossovers be; how will staffing be organised; and will the principles of separation of powers be observed?

Mr CONRAN: Yes.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Will the commission be established as a separate office and, once it is up and running, will it be costed as a separate office in the ministry?

Mr CONRAN: I anticipate that that will be the case. Once the commission is running, it will be set up quite separately.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I could not find a full-time equivalent staff figure attached to the \$4.8m for establishing the commission. How many staff will be employed by the commission?

Mr CONRAN: Could I take that on notice? It will in part vary depending on the decision made by Federal Parliament on disallowance. If all we have is the infrastructure provisions, it will be quite a small office, I would expect, of not more than 20 staff. If it picks up all of the state provisions, I expect initially staff numbers to be in excess of 50, and that figure might grow beyond that depending on the workload the commission receives.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: If that question is being taken on notice, could the ministry identify the separation between the commissioner level and the staffing level?

Mr CONRAN: Yes.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: One of the major initiatives for 2000-01 on page 1105 is progressing proposed investment by Japanese firms in new and expanded projects in Western Australia. Besides liquefied natural gas, what other projects is the ministry discussing with the Japanese?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The liquefied natural gas was fundamental to the major initiative. There are a number of potential projects which we hope will come to fruition, including the expansion of the Woodside and Gorgon projects. They will be huge, if we can achieve them. As the member will know, the Premier has been very active in seeking to bring those to fruition.

Mr WAUCHOPE: That major initiative refers specifically to LNG.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: What impact will taking on those negotiations have on the budget of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I do not think that there is any budget impact other than what is contained in the budget for the North Asia Office, which has been supporting the endeavours of the Premier and the Minister for Resources Development, firstly, to continue to encourage investment in LNG projects, and secondly, to try to assist the companies to find markets. The Premier has been particularly active in China, as the member will know, trying to encourage the Chinese Government to take Western Australian LNG as a replacement for coal-fired power generation in China, which would be a specific environmental positive for China. As I have said, if we can achieve one of those objectives, the budget impact would be of significant benefit to Western Australia. It will probably end up costing the ministry money if we assist the proposed projects, but certainly the economic benefit to Western Australia of the expansion of Woodside or Gorgon would be immense.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I understand that there has been an appeal on the Federal Court ruling on the Miriuwung-Gajerrong case on native title. Is there an estimate of the cost of defending that appeal?

Mr CONRAN: The claimants have appealed the decision, as is their right. The matter will now go before the High Court for an application for special leave to appeal, and then subsequently, if special leave is granted, it will go to a full-blown appeal. I cannot give a precise estimate of the expected cost of the whole appeal because it assumes that special leave will be granted. I think that is likely. Our costs will be a mixture of the costs of the Crown Solicitor's Office for officers handling that appeal and various counsel. The costs will quite clearly be some tens of thousands of dollars, but I could not say precisely. Inevitably the State will be caught up in a number of these appeal processes. This is perhaps the most complex legislation in Australia at the moment. It is inevitable that there will be many years of litigation to seek to interpret the legislation, negotiations and agreements that are reached in accordance with the Native Title Act and to determine common law. History around the world has shown that to be the case.

[9.40 am]

Hon N.F. MOORE: This continues to emphasise that a resolution of native title issues is difficult when a judge of the Federal Court of Australia makes a decision which is virtually reversed on appeal and then an appeal is lodged against that appeal. It is no wonder that people find it hard to invest money in Australia. It would be nice for us to know once and for all what is the law on native title. Currently, a decision has been appealed to the Full Bench of the Federal Court seeking a decision on native title. No doubt there will be an appeal against that, so in six months the law on native title will be different and six months after that it will be different again.

Hon MARK NEVILL: In 18 months.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Perhaps in 18 months as the legal process takes a bit longer than six months. People wonder why investors find it difficult to regard Australia as a good place to invest in resource development.

Hon GIZ WATSON: What proportion of expenditure by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet is made to the Government Media Office and what is the breakdown of that expenditure? The question may need to be taken on notice as the minister may not be able to answer it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I do not carry that information around in my head.

Mr WAUCHOPE: I can answer that question in part. The estimated cost of the Government Media Office is just over \$2m, which includes the salaries for the director and the administration staff of the media monitoring unit. However, it does not include the salaries for the media secretaries as they are charged directly to ministerial offices.

Hon GIZ WATSON: How many staff are employed?

Mr WAUCHOPE: Roughly 21; that is, the director and the support staff of the media monitoring unit. The media secretaries are located separately in ministerial offices.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I am interested to know whether any consideration has been given, in line with the Commission on Government's recommendation, to the allocation to parliamentary members of full-time research staff, rather than part-time officers?

Mr WAUCHOPE: Two to three years ago the Government approved the allocation of a 0.4 full-time equivalent research officer to each member of Parliament. I believe almost every member of Parliament has taken up that entitlement. Suggestions have been made to us that they should be full-time officers. That is a question of funding and no decision has been made at this time.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have two questions on two different topics. The first one relates to graffiti removals initiated by the Graffiti Task Force referred to on page 1103 of the budget papers where I note there is an increase in the estimate of removals from the 1999-2000 figure of 9 000 to a target of 15 000 in 2000-01. Does that figure reflect an increase in the amount of graffiti in the State? Who is on the graffiti removal task force? What percentage of those task force members are redeployees, in particular MetroBus redeployees?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The anticipated increase in the number of removals pertains more to the number of councils becoming involved in the program. The program currently offers support to a number of campaigns in Wanneroo, Stirling, Subiaco, Joondalup, Perth, Nedlands, Bayswater, Swan, Fremantle, Gosnells and the Towns of Cambridge and Vincent. The greater involvement of councils is leading to greater activity in the removal of graffiti. I do not know whether there has been an increase in graffiti. In answer to the second question, a significant number of redeployees have been used in the graffiti clean-up program and a large number of those have come from MetroBus.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What number of redeployees came from MetroBus? What happened to the most comprehensive retraining program for MetroBus employees, as promised by this Government and the Premier at the time MetroBus was sold? Is this an example of the most comprehensive retraining and employment placement program that this Government could initiate?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Madam Chair, I do not think -

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Come on, that is a fair question.

Hon N.F. MOORE: So you are the judge, jury and prosecutor now, are you?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I would like to be.

Hon N.F. MOORE: God help the country if you ever get a chance to spend any of the money.

Madam Chair, that is not a question that can be answered by the officers. It is not my portfolio. I will therefore take the question on notice and provide the member with an answer.

The CHAIRMAN: That is accepted.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The tone of the question is inappropriate for officers to answer. It is a political question and the member knows it. I will provide her with the information about the retraining program that the Premier talked about.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many task force members are MetroBus redeployees? I understand some 750 redeployees are currently on the Government's books and that a significant percentage are MetroBus redeployees. How many are MetroBus redeployees and what percentage are involved in the Graffiti Task Force?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I will have to take that question on notice as I do not have those figures in front of me.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: On page 1104 recognition is given to the success of the Western Australian exhibition conducted at Selfridges department stores in the United Kingdom during the latter part of 1999. How was the initiative developed? How much did the Government contribute to the cost of the exhibition? Who facilitated the Government's participation in the project? What were the major benefits to Western Australia?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will answer the first part of the question and Mr Wauchope will fill in the details. The "Western Australia - Land of Plenty" exhibition at Selfridges was an initiative of the Agent General's office in London. He met with Selfridges which agreed that Western Australian produce could be promoted in London, it being a major market and Selfridges being a major chain of stores in the UK. As a result of that meeting, a large number of Western Australian companies were chosen by Selfridges and invited to exhibit and sell their produce in Selfridges' London and Manchester stores. The promotion was extraordinarily successful at creating a recognition in the people visiting those two stores of Western Australia's quality produce. I briefly visited the exhibition at both the London and Manchester stores and saw that it was a very successful enterprise. I hope we can continue to have this kind of exhibition as Western Australia's produce - fruit, vegetables, wines, meat, seafood and other produce of that nature - is competing with that of almost every other country in the world. This State has much to be gained if it can establish itself in the huge London and European markets. People in that part of the UK market have large disposable incomes and want to buy the best quality produce, and we can provide that from Western Australia. The initiative was a successful attempt to get into that market, and Mr Wauchope may have some figures to demonstrate that.

Mr WAUCHOPE: The food halls in both London and Manchester stores registered record sales figures for the program over its two-week period. Senior buyers from Selfridges made a follow-up visit to Perth to meet suppliers and purchased an initial \$2m-worth of food and wine which will now form a part of their regular orders. The costs met by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet were fairly minimal. Apart from the efforts put in by the Agent General, a minimal cost was incurred by the department to produce a video of the event and it was used to promote Western Australia. However, there may have been some costs incurred by the Department of Commerce and Trade and I will endeavour to get those figures if the member so wishes.

[9.50 am]

Hon N.F. MOORE: I also add that the Western Australian Tourism Commission used it as an opportunity to put Brand WA in front of the London public, an area where we have concentrated our advertising campaign in recent years and which has been very successful.

The CHAIRMAN: I was at a business lunch yesterday and people were still talking about. It was very gratifying.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is any provision made in the budget for advertising by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr WAUCHOPE: There is no specific allocation for advertising as a whole. There is a specific item for the budget promotion, but there is none for advertising for general matters.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is that because the department does not do any advertising?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The way in which departments generally budget these days is on an output basis which includes costs from all sources, including advertising. We do not go down to line items to make up the budget.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We can ask about them here. I am asking how much was spent on advertising last year and how much is proposed to be spent this year?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I do not have those figures with me. We would be able to provide figures for expenditure on advertising last year, but I do not think we will be able to help the member with projected costs for this year.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: I refer to page 1112 and the Safer WA initiative. I wonder whether the minister can provide me with detail as to the encouragement and development of local solutions to local problems in respect of crime prevention, and the number of Safer WA committees that operate in Western Australia?

Mr CONRAN: The number of Safer WA committees has risen to almost 70 as of May this year, so the figure has almost doubled. The number shown in the budget papers is 55, so there has been some advance on that since the papers were prepared. On the coordination of activities we have taken the following initiatives: We have set up a project register which allows us to identify each of the projects in each area and then ensure there is an exchange of information between the various Safer WA committees so they can see what works in different jurisdictions and ascertain whether they are able to benefit from those initiatives. At the same time we try to encourage the committees to make their own decisions locally as to how they deal with crime issues in their areas. We also have a Safer WA newsletter which is part of the communications strategy and we are about to launch a Safer WA web site. We organised a workshop for the Safer WA district interagency working groups to allow state government officers, local government officers and community members to have their say on Safer WA issues. A significant number of people attended the workshop and we are anticipating another workshop in the coming year which should attract 150 participants. A major international crime prevention conference is to be held in Perth on 31 July and 1 August. It is being sponsored, in part, by Safer WA, the Ministry of Justice, the Western Australia Police Service, local government departments, the Western Australian Municipal Association and the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Has the funding for the Safer WA committees been commensurately increased for the new committees or have the existing funds been redistributed? I understand some committees had a reduction in funding.

Mr CONRAN: I will take the question on notice. I have some of the information here but I need to be more precise on the issue.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I was pleased to see that a web site for the Safer WA program has been introduced. It is a great opportunity for individual Safer WA committees to cooperate. I understand from the budget papers that has been established. Has there been any monitoring of the number of hits on the web site?

Mr CONRAN: The web site has not yet been launched. It is about to be launched. As of last week it was not operating, but I have not looked this week. We will certainly be monitoring its use.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: So there will be an ability to monitor it?

Mr CONRAN: Yes; we will be monitoring it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As a matter of interest, the budget papers list the major achievements for 1999-2000, which includes up to 30 June 2000. If it is finished before then, the budget statement is totally accurate.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: My first question is to Mr Wauchope on services provided to members. Last year there was a trial period during which members' access to the State Law Publisher was paid for by the ministry. At that stage we were informed it was being paid for only for a trial period and we would be expected to pay for it ourselves from this year onward. Has that policy been reviewed, will we be expected to pay for it ourselves or will it continue to be provided?

Mr WAUCHOPE: Yes, the member is correct in saying that we looked at doing it on a trial basis. I have met with a couple of members of Parliament earlier this year and we are looking at perhaps making it available on an ongoing basis.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Secondly, when an answer was given earlier about anthropological studies, you referred to peer reviews by various anthropologists. I was wondering whether Mr Rory O'Connor was part of the peer review process?

Mr CONRAN: Not that I am aware of.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Knowing full well some members on the other side of the House are interested in the numbers of members of the community who like to see for themselves what this Government is doing, I refer to page 1114, output 6 on the Constitutional Centre.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is it still bankrupt?

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: How many visitors participated in the Constitutional Centre programs in the past financial year; how many visitors are expected at the centre this financial year; and what specific major programs or exhibitions are to be presented by the centre in this financial year?

Mr CONRAN: To April 2000, 21 056 people have attended the centre. We expect bookings for this year to total about 30 000. For 2000-01 we expect about 40 000 visitors. This will result from increases in education and community programs and a changing exhibition program. There are a number of extensive programs and I am happy to provide a detailed list to the member. Some of the exhibition programs are: Changing Constitutions, which will run from August to January and is an exhibition on both the Commonwealth and Western Australian Constitutions and the ways in which they have changed; A Nation At Last will run from February to June and it is an exhibition on federation and its impact on Western Australia; there will be a permanent interactive room on the Western Australian Constitution; there will be a permanent hall for the interpretation of the Commonwealth Constitution; and there will be a number of travelling exhibitions. The history of the WA Constitution exhibition is travelling to Albany, and a roadshow held in conjunction with the electoral education national archives, Battye Library and the State Records Office primarily aimed at schools and community groups will travel throughout the State. A new schools program has been developed for years 4 to 7, with a secondary program for years 8. A number of seminars will be held in the community, and the Constitutional Centre will appear again at the Royal Show. It is an extensive list.

[10.00 am]

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I ask that the list be provided.

Hon N.F. MOORE: A detailed list of the activity will be provided. It has been a successful decision to create the Constitutional Centre, and one of these days the Opposition might acknowledge that it was a good idea.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Comparing June 1990 to the current situation, the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet has two fewer cars, yet it is paying an additional \$426 644. Is this a good financial arrangement? If not, why does the ministry not get out of the arrangement?

Mr WAUCHOPE: I am not sure what the question is getting to. If it relates to the increase in the leasing costs of our vehicles, two principal drivers are involved: First, the leasing costs and, second, the sale tax to be paid this year. Our vehicles go in cycles. We have a replacement cycle which depends upon usage. We have many VIP cars, and most of our fleet attracts sales tax. We are replacing more cars this financial year and this attracts sales tax; therefore, sales tax is a component. Leasing costs have increased, and this reflects the residual value reflecting the secondary market; namely, the second-hand car market is down.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What is the involvement of the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet in the Matrix Finance Group arrangement, and in monitoring its cost across government?

Mr WAUCHOPE: The Matrix contract is managed and controlled by Treasury. We have no involvement.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Given this current financial arrangement, will the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet stay in the Matrix contract?

Mr WAUCHOPE: As I said, at the moment, yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why? It is costing the ministry money.

The CHAIRMAN: The question was answered. It is in the hands of Treasury.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I asked about this agency.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member has continued to raise this matter for as long as I can remember. It has been explained to her on countless occasions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is because the Government cannot get out of the contract.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member refuses to accept what she is told.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister should stop defending the indefensible.

Sitting suspended from 10.03 to 10.16 am

Division 53: Fair Trading, \$7 794 000-

Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.

Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Mines.

Mr P. Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Fair Trading.

Mr. G. Newcombe, Director, Projects, Ministry of Fair Trading.

Mrs J. Butler, Manager, Financial Services, Ministry of Fair Trading.

Mr B. Mitchell, Fair Trading Policy Adviser, Ministry of Fair Trading.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask your co-operation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee, and for each adviser to please state his or her full name, contact address and the capacity in which he or she appears before the committee.

At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether he or she has read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form.

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Witnesses have answered in the affirmative.

[10.20 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Page 517 of the *Budget Statements* shows that the Ministry of Fair Trading had 209 full-time equivalents in 1999-2000. The Premier has instructed all agencies to reduce their leave liability by 10 per cent by 30 June 1999. In the department's responses to the generic questions provided to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations about leave liability, the Ministry of Fair Trading stated that it had not only met that target, but also reduced it by 38 per cent. That is most commendable. How did this impact on the agency's ability to deal with complaints, both generally and in the area of finance broking?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The obvious comment on this occasion is that the member has been complaining that agencies have not reduced their leave liability, even though this is the first Government to determine that the Public Service has a leave liability. An agency has now exceeded the requirements and she says that is commendable. However, she also thinks it will cause the department to not be able to properly carry out its functions. The member cannot have it both ways, although she usually endeavours to do so.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am not saying that I want it both ways. It is a straightforward question. The figure means that 30 or 40 per cent of the staff are absent from that agency at any one time. It is a reasonable question.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member has previously said, when an agency had not reduced its leave liability, that the Government should do something. I do not know what she expects us to do.

Mr WALKER: The advantage the Ministry of Fair Trading had in significantly reducing its annual leave liability was a departmental restructure. That resulted in a number of staff with significant accrued leave entitlements leaving the employ of the ministry. The biggest reason for that significant reduction was the nature of those employees: Many of them were near retirement age and had accrued significant amounts of leave. I cannot recall that any of those people came from the finance broking area. The reduction in leave liability had no general impact in the finance broking area.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What was the maximum number of people out of the agency at any one time as a result of the 38 per cent reduction in leave?

Mr WALKER: I do not have that information with me. I can endeavour to get that information. Obviously, the ministry was conscious not only of its obligation to manage and remove the leave liability but also that it must continue with its business. It made arrangements that ensured that the day-to-day work of the ministry was not impacted upon. I am not sure if the detail of the question can be answered. We can make attempts to do so, if required.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: From which area of the agency was most of the leave cleared?

Mr WALKER: The people taking leave came from across the organisation, but a core of about a dozen people took the opportunity of redundancy that was afforded to them as a result of the restructure. Some of those people had been with the organisation or the Public Service for many years. The core of the leave liability was certainly impacted upon by about a dozen people.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Page 508 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the enactment of the New Tax System Price Exploitation Code (Western Australia) Act in preparation for the new tax system. What role will the Ministry of Fair Trading play, if any, in monitoring the impact of the goods and services tax and price exploitation in Western Australia?

Mr WALKER: The Ministry of Fair Trading will assist the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which has the primary role. The legislative amendments were designed primarily to assist the ACCC in its work. We will provide brief advice when people telephone the Ministry of Fair Trading, but we will indicate that the ACCC is the key agency responsible for monitoring the goods and services tax.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Have any additional resources been provided to the agency to assist in that role and provide that advice? If so, how many and in what areas?

Mr WALKER: The department completely remodelled its telephone call centre during the course of the year. The call centre receives about 4 300 calls each week from people wanting information and advice and to register complaints. Last year, the centre averaged about 3 500 calls. The department has changed the nature of the call centre and employed people to staff it full-time. They are specialists in that area and have had training in the implications of the GST. The department is already receiving inquiries about the GST and, to date, the call centre has been able to carry the additional load.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Who is responsible for monitoring price increases by government agencies and government trading entities? Does the ACCC or the Ministry of Fair Trading have legal responsibility for that?

Mr WALKER: The Ministry of Fair Trading does not have a legal or statutory obligation or responsibility for that.

Hon NORM KELLY: Page 521 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the details of the controlled grants. The \$50 000 annual grant to the Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA) has been removed and funding to the general provision of consumer advice has increased by \$50 000. What ongoing surety of funding is there for the Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA)?

Mr WALKER: Since 1997, the Ministry of Fair Trading has provided \$100 000 each year to assist the consumer credit information advice service that is provided by the Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA). That funding has continued this year. The department has just made the second allocation to the service as part of its agreement to provide \$100 000 from this year's budget. It has no formal commitment. The funding comes from the recurrent funding provided to the Ministry of Fair Trading. The Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA) has, in the past, also been the recipient of fines penalties moneys awarded through the legislation. It has received approximately \$112 000 from fines penalties over the past couple of months. However, the department anticipates that changes in legislation and, hopefully, changes in the behaviour of organisations will result in less funding through penalties in the future. That raises some questions about the future funding of the Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA). At this stage, the department has provided the service with another \$100 000. The ministry has been providing it with funds since 1997 from the recurrent funding. There is an expectation that it will continue, although there is no certainty of that.

Hon NORM KELLY: Is that \$100 000 from the recurrent funding for the 2000-01 financial year?

Mr WALKER: No, that provision was in the 1999-2000 financial year.

Hon NORM KELLY: Is there any provision for 2000-01?

Mr WALKER: The ministry's budget for the next financial year is neutral, so the capacity of the ministry to fund the service will be equivalent to that of this year.

Hon NORM KELLY: Is there any commitment that funding for the Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA) will be forthcoming?

Mr WALKER: There is no direct commitment at this stage.

[10.30 am]

Hon MARK NEVILL: Will the ministry consider changing its registered corporations database so that it can be "interrogated", to use a terrible piece of jargon? I tried to ascertain how many Aboriginal corporations were registered under state law. However, it is impossible to distinguish between businesses, business names, Aboriginal corporations and sporting groups. I do not imagine changing the database would be a difficult task. Is it possible to sort out the groups within the register?

Mr WALKER: Although I cannot answer specifically, I can assure the member that we are seeking to improve and more effectively integrate all the information we hold in the ministry so it can be interrogated in that way. A new business names registration system was introduced this year. It was designed to enable us to go online in the near future so that people can transact with us directly 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is our aim to enable both the integration of data across the areas of the ministry and to provide the ability for interrogation to assist the ministry as well as the public.

Mr NEWCOMBE: The Associations Incorporation Act does not recognise a separate category. Aboriginal corporations can be registered under commonwealth legislation. The database could be interrogated, but the search is based on the name and purposes. That may not always show, for instance, for what are described as Aboriginal corporations.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I got the number of commonwealth Aboriginal corporations from the commonwealth Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, but when I tried to get it from the state list, it could not be extracted. I asked the person involved to add up what was on the first two pages and provide an estimate, but it was not possible to do even that.

Mr NEWCOMBE: If you follow that up with the ministry, we can provide some additional information.

Hon MARK NEVILL: At what rate are people using the ministry's web site? Has consideration been given to people who may not be computer literate seeking help with consumer affairs? Is anything being done in public libraries and telecentres to encourage the use of the web site by groups who would probably not usually use the Internet to find information?

Mr NEWCOMBE: We launched a redesigned web site in May this year which has a lot of additional content, including the capacity to download a number of forms, particularly business-name forms. In June 1999 we were getting 4 705 hits and in May 2000, about 5 500 hits. About 800 business-name forms have been downloaded. We also have online access to our register of encumbered vehicles which we have been promoting to dealers. In January 2000, 1 477 transactions occurred and in March 2000 there were 2 229 transactions.

We have also released a free online magazine called *FairBytes*, which is provided by email and which covers a range of consumer affairs issues. It has a subscriber list of about 500 people and is published quarterly. We are relatively happy with the performance of the web site and we are seeking to promote it through a variety of mechanisms.

We are conscious of the possibility of a skewed audience seeking Internet services. In all the work the ministry does, it is conscious of the need to target at-risk groups, particularly disadvantaged migrants, seniors and so on. The ministry does not see the Internet as the only source of distributing that information. Although we promote it among those groups, we also look at providing a range of other mechanisms to get the information across. We are also participating in each of the State Government's online initiatives.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I think two housing indemnity schemes operate; one is the home owners warranty and the other is run by the Housing Industry Association and another body. Does the ministry monitor the performance of those indemnity schemes? In my case, a builder has gone into liquidation and after a four-month wait it looks as though I would have been

better off taking out indemnity individually rather than waiting for one of those bodies to do the work. I am not sure they are performing well.

Mr NEWCOMBE: No formal monitoring has occurred of which I am aware. The Builders Registration Board, which is separate from the ministry, will have some involvement with it. However, I am not aware of the issue to which you referred as a problem. We would be happy to receive the details of any problem you have encountered.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: At page 508 the fifth dot point refers to the completion of the national competition policy review of various Acts. It also refers to a number of NCP reviews that must be completed. What is the outcome of the reviews that have taken place? What reviews are taking place? What is the cost to the ministry of those reviews and what impact will it have on the ministry's budget?

Mr NEWCOMBE: The list of reviews completed in 1999-2000 are as follows: The Auction Sales Act, the Builders' Registration Act, the Home Building Contracts Act, the Consumer Credit (Western Australia) Act, the Credit Act, the Employment Agents Act, the Land Valuers Licensing Act, the Real Estate and Business Agents Act, the Retail Trading Hours Act, the Settlement Agents Act and the Travel Agents Act. The review of the Travel Agents Act is a national review which Western Australia is coordinating. In 2000-01 it is planned to complete a review of the Debt Collectors Licensing Act and follow up the finance elements of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. That will see the completion of all our competition policy reviews. A range of reviews has been completed, so it may be simpler to provide a full written response on the other information you sought, because a fair amount of information is involved.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: I take it the ministry will supply the Estimates and Financial Operations Committee with a list, of which I will get a copy?

Mr NEWCOMBE: Yes.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: What has been the cost to the ministry and what impact has that had on the budget?

Mr NEWCOMBE: It is one of those matters that we fund through the strategic development directorate, which handles most of our policy work. It is dealt with in the ordinary course of events. We can provide figures for the average cost of each review.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Under output 1 at page 506 headed "Policy Advice and Development" I note that the costs have been decreasing. Although that is commendable, will that in itself reduce the effectiveness of the ministry's output?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: On page 507 it shows that costs have increased.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: At page 506 the actual cost of output in 1998-99 was \$3.3m. The estimate for this year is only just over \$3m and the budgeted amount is \$2.665m.

[10.40 am]

Mr NEWCOMBE: The answer to that question is no, we do not think it has had any impact on our effectiveness. We think we are doing better for fewer dollars.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: At page 513 of the *Budget Statements*, under major achievements for 1999-2000, mention is made of the implementation of a new business names computer system as an initial step to online processing. Has that process been completed? What does it provide to the small business person who might want not only to register a business name but also to determine whether a name he has in mind is not already registered?

Mr WALKER: The ministry was using a computer system that was a national arrangement established under the regime of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission. The ASIC indicated that it would no longer maintain the national database arrangement - it would maintain the database but not the computer system. Throughout 1999-2000, we jointly contracted with Queensland. South Australia has also used the Queensland system. That system has been implemented and has proved to be very successful. People can now come in and register their business name, as they have in the past. They can come in and effectively do that as a one-stop visit. On average, it would take between 15 and 20 minutes. I am pleased to announce that recently we have achieved a turn-around of one or two days for postal applications as well. Previously people would post their details and it would take up to two weeks to be finalised. As of a few weeks ago, we are achieving that within two days. That is being supported and commended by the Small Business Development Corporation.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Under major initiatives for 2000-01 on page 513 of the *Budget Statements*, mention is made about further developing online services which provide improved access and more effective transaction processing. What areas within the agency will people be able to have access to and interact with?

Mr WALKER: I will speak generally on that issue and perhaps Mr Newcombe may care to give the committee specific details. At the moment we cover a range of activities. We licence nine industries such as motor vehicle dealers, real estate agents and a range of small business operators. Currently, to renew and apply for licences, people need to fit in with our current business hours. Some services which we provide online are very effective. One of those is the Register of Encumbered Vehicles. That service is available to industry. We are hoping to put all those services online to enable a mother who operates a bowling club or a real estate agent operating in Perth or Port Hedland to obtain the necessary licence information or to change details about business arrangements. They will also be able to contact the ministry online if a

payment is required. We have developed a comprehensive submission which we put to Treasury this year. Unfortunately funding was not available for those arrangements, but we are making some incremental improvements and changes as we go along.

Mr NEWCOMBE: Initially, the focus will be in the area of business names. We have provided business names forms online for downloading, as well as a number of other forms. We are looking at making business names entirely interactive so that one can interrogate, make payments and also renew licences. The Register of Encumbered Vehicles scheme is already available for dealer access. We are looking to extend that to consumer access. At the moment, consumers who wish to check the database have to make a telephone inquiry. We are looking to make that database available for interrogation online. For businesses that require licences, we are looking to provide for interrogation of the database and also the licencing and renewal process online. One other area we deal with is tenancy bonds. The ministry is the largest holder of tenancy bonds in the State. We have been looking at how to enable real estate agents and other people who deal with those to also conduct their transactions online. Each of the computer systems that we currently have in place, including the new business names system, is compatible with online transactions. All the new systems we have been developing over the past few years have been targeted at that. The roll-out is dependent on funding and resource allocation. That is the direction we are moving in. The focus is initially on business costs and the capacity of business to deal online and for consumers to be able to make inquiries. We are looking at the possibilities of having online interaction with our advisory officers at our call centre so that consumers and business people can use the Internet to get answers to questions, rather than use the telephone.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I refer to output 3, business regulation, which is on page 511 and 512 of the *Budget Statements*. I note that the cost of output during 1998-99 has increased from \$7.1m to an estimated actual cost in 1999-2000 of \$11.1m. From information that the agency provided to the committee, that represents an increase of \$4.007m, or a 56.4 per cent increase. I understand from the information provided that, although it comes under the big business regulation output, a part of that increase includes the finance and valuation industry task force, an increase of \$101 000; the Gunning inquiry, \$420 000; and the Global and Grubb inquiries, \$2 150 000. That is largely why there has been an increase in this output. Can the minister explain why the Gunning inquiry and the Global and Grubb inquiry, which are one-off inquiries, have been put under the output of business regulation when these inquiries are not an ongoing business regulation function as such but, rather, one-off inquiries in both cases?

Mr WALKER: My understanding is that that was a decision taken by Treasury in compiling the budget documents.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Was the department advised why Treasury made that decision?

Mr WALKER: I understand that Treasury sees the supervision of two finance brokers as a business regulation. It thought it would incorporate the outputs.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In view of the additional costs as a result of these inquiries, is there a need for increased funding for improved business regulation generally?

Mr WALKER: As CEO, one of the challenges I always have with budget allocations is to demonstrate to the Government that there is a pressing need for that. All CEOs in the state public sector would identify pressing needs within their organisations. The work of the Gunning committee of inquiry may be instructive of the future in terms of the various regulatory functions that are currently performed. We will wait and see the outcomes of its observations; for example, those regarding the eight statutory boards and the committee it is currently reviewing.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Does the department get enough money to properly regulate all of the functions required under this outcome? Those functions are to develop, through consultation and cooperation, ways in which business and consumers might operate fairly and competitively, and have access to accurate and reliable information about their rights and responsibilities. Does the department get enough money to do its job properly?

Hon N.F. MOORE: That question could be asked of anybody, and everyone would say, "If you give me 10 times as much as I get now, I could do it 10 times better."

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Imagine the size of the belltower then.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The belltower money has been spent 700 times. It cannot be spent on every agency.

The CHAIRMAN: I was beginning to think it was a hypothetical question.

[10.50 am]

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is. The situation is that every agency, through the appropriate minister, is involved in determining the budget. Each minister puts forward what he or she believes is the appropriate number of dollars to run the agency. This agency is allocated funding on that basis; that is, the funding that is determined by the Government to meet the requirements of the agency.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: My question relates to the second dot point under major achievements on page 511. The ministry's initiative to take to the country an expo for seniors out of which Wise Choice grew is very commendable. Can I have some details on that? Is it intended to extend that plan to other regional centres?

Mr WALKER: As I understand it, that education campaign related to the Y2K situation. The project involved the

development of publications for consumers and traders, and it was done in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and Trade and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to provide information to the public. We opened the MFT call centre on the public holiday Monday after New Year's Day. It is important to indicate that not many significant problems arose from the Y2K issue. We have stepped up our visits and our work in our regions through the regional and education campaigns. Early last month we were represented at a two-day fair at Carnarvon. That was the first time the ministry had been represented at that event. About 5 000 people visited our stall on that day, which was a pleasant surprise. Most of the population of Carnarvon and the surrounding areas must have attended that function. It is something we are trying to improve on. We have five regional offices throughout the State, but it is also important to take our message out to field days and the like. The Dowerin field day is another example where we try to be represented.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: My other question on the major achievements relates to education campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Fair Trading. The specific campaign referred to in this passage is about water filters. From the point of view of consumers, it is good to have someone in the government making sure that things are safe and are guaranteed. How much time can be spent on this? I was pleased to see that the Ministry of Fair Trading acted very quickly during the Royal Show to combat the problems with some of the items in show bags which were threatening children's safety, particularly a gun in one case. Is that a proactive action of the Ministry of Fair Trading? Is that the sort of thing that it targets, or is it reactive?

Mr WALKER: We try to be proactive and identify things when they occur. Sometimes the catalyst may be a particular event. One example is the child who was inadvertently injured by a swimming pool skimmer box last year. We made arrangements after that occurred. We reminded industry of its obligations about that; in fact, prosecution action may arise from it. A proactive example in recent times relates to health clubs within Western Australia. The health clubs have been developing a policy whereby they offer memberships and, as an assistance to their customers, they take the annual membership payments on a monthly basis from their customers' bank accounts, through their credit card facilities and the like. We found that once their 12-month memberships lapsed, those people assumed that their contracts with the health club would lapse as well. However, they were not aware that some contracts provided for an ongoing deduction of membership fees from their accounts until the health clubs were formally notified in writing. Although that was a legally correct process, we thought that some consumers would be inadvertently misled by that and would not be aware of it. We wrote to the 96 health clubs we identified which were operating throughout Western Australia. About 87 per cent of them did undertake to ensure that all their documentation was clear in that regard. They also indicated that they would make sure that the issue was brought to light as part of their staff induction and training processes. The skimmer box example was a catalyst which gave us the opportunity to remind industry of its obligations. In the example of the health clubs, we saw it as an emerging issue which we took to the industry and to which, I am pleased to say, it has responded positively.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to page 504 and the Gunning Inquiry into Fair Trading Boards and Committees. Did the ministry request the Public Sector Management Act inquiry into the operations of those eight boards, or did it make any other recommendations to the Government about investigations into those boards?

Mr WALKER: The decision to call the Gunning committee of inquiry was made by the Minister for Fair Trading.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Did the ministry provide any advice on that to the minister?

Mr WALKER: We provided general advice to the minister about the issues associated with the regulatory boards that served with the ministry.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Has the ministry provided advice to the minister about the Gunning inquiry versus a select committee of this House?

Mr WALKER: Yes, it has.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Did that advice at any stage contain the suggestion that Penny Searle supported the Gunning inquiry?

Hon N.F. MOORE: As the member knows, a document was provided to me as the minister representing the Minister for Fair Trading about the issue of a select committee. The comments of Ms Searle were referred to in that document, and on one occasion she indicated either to the media or to the Gunning inquiry that she was pleased at the direction which the Gunning inquiry was taking at the time she made the comment. That information was provided to me by the Minister for Fair Trading. It has been referred to in this House on a number of occasions during debate. It is not a matter of whether Ms Searle believes that to be the case. She obviously indicated that, at the time, she thought the inquiry was going along lines which were better than she expected. She probably believed some of the propaganda that was being trotted out. She may have changed her mind again and said that she would prefer something else happen. That is her opinion and she is entitled to have it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When the minister says "propaganda", does he mean the propaganda being trotted out by the Government?

Hon N.F. MOORE: By the Labor Party, which sought to exploit this issue for all it is worth politically. Members opposite know as well as I do what Ms Searle said publicly at the beginning of the Gunning inquiry and they obviously know what she thinks now. That is quite irrelevant to the Ministry of Fair Trading.

The CHAIRMAN: We will keep the questions to financial matters, not opinions.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: This goes very much to financial matters, because if one of the roles of the ministry is to provide advice, I want to know whether it is providing correct advice to the minister. That is why it becomes important whether the ministry provided the advice about Ms Searle or whether that was given at some other point in the chain between the advice coming from the ministry and arriving with the Leader of the House. That is the question I would like answered: Who made that claim in the briefing notes? Was it the ministry or was it someone else in the minister's office or wherever?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The comments of Ms Searle were made on radio - I think it might have been Paul Murray's program. A copy of what she said was made available to me as the minister representing the Minister for Fair Trading in this House so I could respond to the motion to establish a select committee moved by Hon Ken Travers. I do not have a copy of what she said - I am going on memory - but she said something to the effect that she was pleased with the direction in which it was headed. If Hon Ken Travers is concerned about that, he can read what I said about it in *Hansard*. That is for this House to argue about, not for officers of the Ministry of Fair Trading to become concerned with. The minister provided me with that information.

[11.00 am]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Have the agency's fees and charges for the next year been set?

Mr WALKER: A list has been forwarded to Treasury.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do any include an increase of 10 per cent or more?

Mr WALKER: Some provide for a 10 per cent increase, but not more.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is that as a result of the GST?

Mr WALKER: That is correct. However, the vast majority of the ministry's fees will not increase.

Hon N.F. MOORE: All government agencies are required to look at their fees and charges and to determine what percentage increase they will charge to take into account the requirements of the GST. In some cases it will be 10 per cent and in others it will be less.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would like a list of the agency's fees and charges and details of the impact of the GST.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That question will be taken on notice.

Hon NORM KELLY: I refer to unconscionable conduct in retail tenancies. The ministry is required to provide information to the minister by this month. Has that occurred? Does that advice include recommendations for legislative changes?

Mr NEWCOMBE: Advice on this issue will be provided to the minister this month with a view to his taking it to Cabinet. It will meet the time frame.

Hon NORM KELLY: The annual report indicates that it should be done before June. Why is it running late?

Mr NEWCOMBE: It will be finished by the end of the financial year.

Hon NORM KELLY: I refer to output measures on pages 512 and 515. There appears to be a consistent reduction in targets for timeliness. The explanation is that the reduction will be accompanied by a commensurate reduction in response times for service delivery. These measures are useless unless we are given an indication of what the reduction in response times will be. Reducing targets from 95 to 85 per cent might be valid if we were reducing the number of days from five to two. I would like details of the reduction in time frames for each output measure.

Mr WALKER: It is a genuine attempt to improve our level of customer service. The previous target in registration services for licensing was 95 per cent. That was a percentage for renewal applications for settlement agents' triennial certificates processed within 14 days of receipt of all required information. Each three years those licence holders must apply for a renewal. The target was 14 days and we tried to achieve that in 95 per cent of cases. We now want to finalise 85 per cent of cases within eight days. In advice services, 95 per cent of all conciliation files were closed within 16 weeks. We want to provide a better service and close 85 per cent of all files in eight weeks. Unfortunately, this reads inappropriately. We are trying to provide a far better service. It would have been useful had that information been provided. I am happy to provide those examples to the committee as supplementary information.

Hon NORM KELLY: I would appreciate that.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: On page 523, under the net appropriation determination, provision is made for GST to be charged on sales of \$20 000 and GST input credits of \$690 000. What do those totals represent? I would like that contrasted with the other side of the coin.

Mrs BUTLER: The GST input credits are credits we will claim back from the Australian Taxation Office for the goods and services we purchase. The estimate is \$690 000, but we do not know how accurate that will prove to be. We have estimated it as best we can on purchases made in the past year. The \$20 000 receipt on sales is the amount we expect to have on hand at the end of the financial year; it is moneys yet to be returned to the Australian Taxation Office. We will be submitting a monthly return, and that is one month's receipts on the fees and charges.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Is that why the \$20 000 is shown in appropriations?

Mrs BUTLER: The moneys are there because of the process that Treasury uses to provide this format of documents. It is an estimate of what we will have in hand - it will be cash in the bank. Our cash requirements from Treasury next year will be reduced by the amount of cash in hand which we have but which must be returned to Treasury.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I refer to hire car contracts. When one goes to towns like Halls Creek one is stuck with one hire car operator. The small print often makes one wish there were another choice. Has any progress been made in getting standard conditions when hiring cars? In some cases, the vehicle is not insured if it is taken off the bitumen and the hirer must pay for the first \$4 000 or \$5 000 worth of damage. Some of the conditions are ridiculous. It is not as though there is any choice. Has any action been taken?

Mr WALKER: I am not aware of that detail. Our concern would relate to any misleading statements or misrepresentations. Given the geography of our State, competitive forces do not always exist. As long as a contract is a commercial contract and the information is available to both parties, there would not be any apparent breaches of the fair trading or consumer affairs legislation.

Mr NEWCOMBE: Hire car contracts are being reviewed.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Is there no standard contract?

Mr NEWCOMBE: There is no standard contract, and the ministry is not currently working on that issue.

[11.10 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Does the agency keep a record of the types of complaints right across the board through the advice line and the actions taken on them?

Mr WALKER: Our new telephone advice line provides us with far greater opportunity to identify the various issues. We are currently working on it to try to provide some data so that we understand the nature of the complaints and particularly to pick up early trends and indications so that it is far more effective. Prior to the establishment of the call centre, such data was not as easily available. There are issues in groupings, certainly with the formal complaints we receive, which number about several thousand a year. They are allocated according to the nature of the complaint, the area it relates to and the circumstances.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many formal complaints has the ministry received on overcharging and the goods and services tax?

Mr NEWCOMBE: The ministry does not deal formally with GST complaints. They are referred to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which has statutory responsibility for them. Therefore, we do not have statistics on them. We have received about 100 calls relating to GST which have been referred to the ACCC.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am not sure whether the ministry has a role in business regulation, but the Builders Registration Board and the Builders Disputes Committee are separate agencies which are experiencing massive delays in dealing with complaints from consumers. I am aware of the Bill before the other place, which seeks to provide some additional funding. Between now and the passage of that legislation, is the ministry looking at any mechanisms for reducing the long delays, and what I expect will be increasingly long delays, in those agencies dealing with building disputes?

Mr WALKER: Yes. Last week I accompanied the registrar of the Builders Registration Board to a meeting with Treasury, the purpose of which was to seek funding to enable the Builders Registration Board to effectively handle disputes pending the adoption and passage of the new legislation which will provide secure ongoing funding for the board and its disputes committee process.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When does the ministry expect that money to be available?

Mr WALKER: I imagine in a matter of weeks, if not sooner.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: In last year's budget papers the ministry indicated that it expected 66 per cent of competition policy reviews would be on target with the state timetable and it had a target of 100 per cent. This year the ministry is estimating it will be only 60 per cent and its target is now down to 80 per cent, but it is indicating that the timeliness of completing reviews is expected to improve as the reform agenda nears conclusion. Does this have any potential impact on national competition policy payments to the State? Why has the target been reduced to 80 per cent? Surely, if the timetable is nearing an end, the ministry needs to be trying to get to 100 per cent.

Mr NEWCOMBE: The answer to the first part of the question is no, the obligation for funding from the Commonwealth is to complete the program by the end of this year, which will be done. The reason for the targets not being met has been essentially that the ministry has conducted a very extensive consultation process with each of its competition policy reviews. We have had some difficulty in finalising consultation with third parties. One example is the employment agents review, where we have been seeking comment from the Trades and Labor Council for over nine months, I think, and we have not been able to receive the final input. We accept that there has been a delay, but it is because of the consultation process. We and the minister are very keen to ensure that there is full consultation. The delay will not affect the overall performance.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Page 507 of this year's budget papers shows a number of effectiveness indicators for informing business operators and consumers and getting responses. The first and second indicators, and the fourth and fifth, relate to the same points but look at them from the business operators' perspective and then from the consumers' perspective. Why

is it that the targeted percentage for consumers is significantly lower than that for business operators? Surely the Ministry of Fair Trading should be able to achieve the same targets with both the business community and consumers.

Mr WALKER: My initial observation is that the percentage figures are relatively high. We would like to increase the figures, and that is what we are trying to do. We have put a lot of time and effort in recent times into public awareness and education campaigns. We will continue to do that. However, we do find, and regrettably it will always be the case, that some consumers are not aware of their rights, nor indeed their obligations, in respect of some transactions. We will continue to work on that awareness, even though the figures are relatively high.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the ministry targeting its resources more to consumers than business operators as a result of those figures?

Mr WALKER: Yes, we have identified and allocated significantly more funds to community education this year and next year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Will the ministry provide some details on that?

Mr WALKER: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank everyone for their attendance today.

[11.20 am]

Division 74: Western Australian Department of Training and Employment, \$242 962 000 -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, Chairman.

Hon N.F. Moore, Minister for Mines.

Mr I. Hill, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr K. Smith, Director, Financial Management and Analysis.

Mr R. Strickland, Director, Training Purchasing.

Mr L. Davies, General Manager.

Mr B. Lucas, Acting General Manager.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask your co-operation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers. May I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations.

At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form?

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Reference is made on page 1403 of the *Budget Statements* to skills centres. I note the estimated total cost of \$2.199m is the same as the estimated expenditure to 30 June 2000, but there is no figure for estimated expenditure for 2000-01.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I suggest the chairman look over the page under "new works" which refers to "skills centres - 2000-01 program". The entry referred to by the member on page 1403 is the 1998-99 program which expired in that year.

The CHAIRMAN: My question relates to general funding for skills centres. Is it true that Western Australia has not taken up funding from the Australian National Training Authority for skills centres in the past two years?

Mr HILL: I believe we have taken up the funding through the vocational education and training sector. Western Australia has taken more than its fair share of the national apportionment. That is true not only of Western Australia, but also across the rest of Australia. There has not been the same take-up of funds around Australia but we recently submitted some proposals to ANTA to fund centres in schools.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand the amount that ANTA allocated to the skills centres program has reduced from \$10m to

\$7m because States were not taking up the ANTA funding. I am not talking about any allocation to schools, but, rather, skill centres funding. I understand also that a restriction in Western Australia, unlike other States, prevents applicants from applying for funding more than once, which is inconsistent with both the national policy guidelines and the practice of other States. Why does Western Australia have a policy which limits potential access by applicants who have previously received ANTA funding?

Mr HILL: I will have to take that question on notice to provide the information as I do not have it with me.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the department received any correspondence about the matter from prospective applicants who are keen to have a second go at the funding?

Mr LUCAS: The reduction across Australia in the allocation for skill centres funding is related to an injection of funds into new technology projects. A process has been established for the department to advertise its seeking of expressions of interest for skills centres. However, I am unaware of its terms and conditions.

The CHAIRMAN: Can that information be provided by way of supplementary information? Secondly, is it true that \$1.2m of commonwealth funding has not been taken up by the Western Australian Department of Training and Employment for VET in schools?

Mr HILL: The national allocation is \$20m. Our share is just under \$2m which runs out at the end of this year. At the end of this month, the ministerial council will consider a recommendation of the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs for that allocation to continue until 2001. However, all the funds are allocated each year on an agreed basis between the Education Department, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Does the department have a general policy for the replacement of hardware for educational purposes in information technology courses provided by technical and further education colleges?

Mr LUCAS: Yes, colleges receive funding through a range of mechanisms for equipment, including education technology; that is, through delivery and performance agreements and various other agreements with the colleges. Each college has its own policy for the frequency of equipment replacement which depends on the courses they offer and the equipment they use in those courses. TAFE colleges are at the high end of delivering multimedia and advanced electronics and technology courses which have a different requirement from courses at the lower end. There has been a fairly rigorous program of replacement, particularly of desktop computers in the colleges, and I think they are reasonably comfortable with where they stand in terms of the equipment.

[11.30 am]

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Are you able to give an indication of the maximum age they would see as appropriate for their hardware infrastructure?

Mr LUCAS: The department provides some of the infrastructure for the wide area network and also supports the colleges in their local area networks and their equipment beyond the wide area network.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I am probably using the word "infrastructure" in a broader sense. In terms of the hardware for the information technology courses, is a central register kept of the programs in each college and the maximum age of information technology hardware a college would consider appropriate?

Mr LUCAS: There is no central register but there is an asset system which all the colleges use which records the age and life expectancy of various systems. Replacement is not a centrally controlled function.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I would be interested in obtaining for the committee whatever information is available about the age of the hardware. I would like to ask a similar range of questions about software and the regime for replacing software for information technology courses and keeping them up to date.

Mr LUCAS: The answer is similar; it is the responsibility of individual colleges to determine what their strategy will be. It will be governed, to a fair extent, by the sorts of courses they are offering, particularly in the case of the advanced courses where they might be using computer-managed learning systems or special application technology which changes very rapidly. For example, if they are using Microsoft-type products which are changing rapidly, then they would need to keep abreast of the latest technology.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Is the system based on a college making appropriate application for funds to the department for the replacement of hardware and software?

Mr LUCAS: That is the case for the large ticket items. A lot of funding goes out through delivery performance agreements and through various other mechanisms which are often on a pro rata basis. For large items of equipment they can make special application.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Have applications made by colleges been rejected in the past financial year?

Mr LUCAS: I am sorry, I cannot answer that.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Could that information be provided on notice?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is the question in relation to computer infrastructure?

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: That is right. It is important to make clear that the term "infrastructure" can be interpreted in various ways. I am interested in the hardware and software required for information technology courses and the regime for keeping the material for the courses up to date. It was explained to me that for major purchases, there is a system by which the colleges make application to the department for replacement of hardware and software. My question then was: In this financial year, 1999-2000, have there been any instances of colleges making applications for appropriate funds to replace their hardware and software which have been rejected? If there have been I would appreciate obtaining some information on that.

The CHAIRMAN: I think we can take that on notice.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: I refer to page 1388 and the reference to the updating of the state training strategies covering 14 industry profiles and nine regional profiles. Could we have some indication of the industry profiles and where the regional profiles are which are being updated?

Mr HILL: I would like to take the first part on notice. The regional profiles which are done - the industry profiles in nine regions - are whole-of-State and cover the broad sectors under which we fund or purchase training. They are regionally specific because we have found through our analysis, that in, for example, the Kimberley, the great southern, the south west and Peel, they tend to pick up better at the micro level and they are done in consultation with local communities, the Regional Development Council and so on. They help to form the state training plan for which they subsequently use the best purchasing trend.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: Has there been any direction by the agency to look at purchasing or bringing in training into the horticultural or viticultural areas in the south west or the great southern?

Mr HILL: Yes, there has. In September last year the minister launched the wine and tourism training and employment strategy. It devolves around four key strategies which are to develop and adopt sustainable skill development strategies; to investigate the feasibility of establishing a centre of excellence; to identify and provide access to employment opportunities in the wine and wine tourism industry; and to develop a training culture in the industry. This year's capital works budget sees \$300 000 being committed as part of a total budget of \$3.6m, with the focus being on Margaret River developing a centre of excellence given that it has 34 per cent of the State's vine plantings. However, that was not the only reason: Margaret River has a national and international reputation, it is recognised as a diverse tourist destination, it has strong community and industry support, an adequate regional population and options for suitable land have been identified. We define a wine tourism industry centre of excellence quite widely because it will capture not only wine, but also we hope it will run viticulture, wine business, tourism and hospitality courses. That will be the basic focus.

In respect of the country, there is a project team which involves the department, the Western Australian Wine Tourism Council and the Wine Industry Association of Western Australia, the last two being the regional representatives from the south west and the great southern. The team is looking at providing additional training in the Pemberton-Mt Barker area. Funding has increased in the great southern and it is projected to double between 1998 and 2000. We currently allocate approximately 100 000 student contact hours and that is the planned delivery for the year 2000.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I have some questions which relate specifically to the Carine campus of TAFE and its arts courses. Has funding for vocational arts courses been maintained over the past three years across all TAFE campuses?

Mr HILL: In 1997 the State Training Board endorsed a phased reduction in delivery from 7.7 per cent in 1997 to a planned level of 5 per cent in 2000. Although we now have a 5 per cent level for 2000, the level of effort and vision in performing arts is still above the national average. I would like to give some details about the original plan. In 1998 the figure was 1.133m student curriculum hours in the metropolitan area. The plan was to reduce that to 899 579 student curriculum hours across all metropolitan campuses. The revised plan for 2000 has gone up to 1.009m student contact hours.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: So there has been a slight increase in funded hours for arts courses across all campuses?

Mr HILL: There has been a reduction from 1998.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I think you said that there would be a slight increase in the coming year, or will it remain at 5 per cent?

Mr STRICKLAND: It is slightly higher than the original plan.

[11.40 am]

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Has that reduction in delivery been focused on specific campuses; if so, which ones?

Mr STRICKLAND: In the state training strategy and the overall structure of what was to happen, the Hough report of 1992 discovered that arts delivery was unfocused. A high proportion of art courses were undertaken for recreational, not vocational, purposes; namely, about 34 per cent of students indicated that their main interest was recreation not employment, as opposed to the average of 17 or 18 per cent for other sectors. The idea was to downsize to shift delivery to growing areas which we needed to service, such as construction, aged care, security and food processing. We consolidated around a centre of excellence at the Western Australian School of Art and Design and course delivery with discernible vocational outcomes. With that in mind, the other campuses in the metropolitan area - mainly Midland and

Carine - have become more feeder colleges. Some decrease in student contact hours occurred in Carine from 100 000 to 72 000. Its main focus is on the lower level courses.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: When the Hough report was prepared in 1992, 34 per cent of students were engaged for recreational purposes. Have those figures been reviewed since the redesign of the course?

Mr STRICKLAND: I do not have the latest figures. I have heard anecdotally that they have done so, as many evening courses were hobby orientated at the Central Metropolitan College of TAFE. The decrease at that college has been around such courses. I cannot give the latest figures.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the member like the latest figures provided on notice?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: We will take that on notice.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Students at TAFE's Carine campus are finding that courses they expected to be available in the second semester will not be available. Why has Carine found in the middle of the year that it must restructure the courses offered to students?

Mr STRICKLAND: Firstly, no decrease has occurred from last year to this year in the curriculum hours funded. Some increase in demand has occurred. I understand that a letter went out in error indicating that courses would not be available for part-time students. Since then, the managing director has met with a delegation of students and written to all students indicating that part-time courses will be available. A minor impact will be felt in the number and timing of electives. Some students might be serviced through the Western Australian School of Art and Design, but Carine will run part-time courses to satisfy the majority of students.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: My understanding is ceramics, drawing and painting will be offered part time.

Mr STRICKLAND: I am not aware of the specific courses.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Some of the more vocational orientated courses such as studio marketing and project development will not be available on a part-time basis to students at Carine.

Mr STRICKLAND: I am not aware of the exact course offerings.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We will find out for the member.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Mr Strickland referred to effort being refocused at CMC, and to the Midland campus being treated as a feeder college. I understand that students are referred to Midland or CMC to pick up part-time offerings if they need them. Has any work been done to ensure that places will be available at the colleges for students who cannot complete the part-time work?

Mr STRICKLAND: I understand that the Managing Director of the West Coast College of TAFE has been in touch with the Central Metropolitan College and made some arrangements. I am not sure whether he has been in touch with the Midland College.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Is there a differentiation in the fee structure for courses classed as recreational as opposed to vocational?

Mr STRICKLAND: If the recreational course is done as an adult community education course, a different fee structure applies as it is more fee for service. A component of delivery in art involves the students self-identifying whether they attend more for interest than vocation with a publicly funded vocation course. One does not know students' intent when they enrol for courses, but it is revealed in surveys post-delivery. A shift is occurring in recreational delivery to ACE course. It is a good system as more than 23 per cent of ACE courses are arts related.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Are any other courses being directed away from the Carine campus in the focus of delivery to other campuses?

Mr STRICKLAND: In art?

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Across the board.

Mr STRICKLAND: That decision is generally made by the college. We discuss in general and broad terms the sort of delivery we wish to purchase from them. Collectively, we try to achieve the state training profile through what we receive from all colleges and programs. The colleges have flexibility to respond to the local environment and to offer courses considered most suitable for the geographic area. Some shifts are made at the campus level, and that can be done without negotiating with us.

Mr HILL: No direction is given by us, other than in the arts area.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: The major achievements for 1999-2000 on page 1386 of the *Budget Statements* mention that the Aboriginal vocation education and training policy being developed to increase responsiveness to Aboriginal people's needs and requirements. What process took place to identify those needs and requirements?

Mr HILL: The process took longer than anticipated with about two and a half years spent in consultation with regional Aboriginal communities. This was site and region specific, and involved elders. One of the strengths which emerged was that they believed that if they were to have their people engage in vocational education and training, many of our marketing strategies needed to articulate in their languages. Something unique is happening this year. All vocational education and training is being marketed in brochures in Aboriginal languages and is set out in their colours; they have designed the brochure. It has support from around Western Australia. We are generally very pleased with the outcome, although there is room for improvement. The most recent national report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research benchmarked all States, and Western Australia had the highest percentage of all States of Aboriginal persons undertaking courses in relation to the general State population. We had the best retention rates as well. The problem still exists, which we will continue to attempt to address. The qualifications of those people tend to be at the lower end of the scale. They tend to be certificate 1, certificate 2 and/or preparatory courses.

[11.50 am]

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: On page 1388, under major initiatives for the ensuing year, 2000-01, mention is made of cooperation with the Department of Commerce and Trade to improve training and employment opportunities for people in remote and rural Western Australia. What form will this cooperation take, and once something has been identified, what will be put in place?

Mr HILL: The Department of Commerce and Trade is represented on a number of standing committees, one of which deals with this issue. We share information, particularly as the Department of Commerce and Trade is responsible, as it were, for the management of telecentres. Commerce and Trade is represented on the regional development commissions. We had a joint working party with Commerce and Trade on collocation, so that there is critical mass, particularly in small towns, rather than everybody being separated. Generally, given that department's mandate of responsibility for the regions, we work hand in glove with it. The sort of training and employment information we have tends to be used by that department more than the other way around. That is only because we have the skills and the system set up to glean that information. It is a collaborative and a cooperative working relationship.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Does Mr Hill believe it is a successful partnership?

Mr HILL: Yes, generally speaking. With all these things, we tend to disagree from time to time, but that is the name of this game. Everyone is interested in training and training outcomes, particularly if they have an employment focus. A good partnership has come out of Henderson. There is an interest in locating us at the maritime centre which it is hoped will be established at Jervoise Bay.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I refer to page 1390 and 1391 of the *Budget Statements*. The first dot points under both achievements and initiatives mention apprentice and trainee commencements. I note that the number of trainees is expected to increase by 10 per cent, but the number of apprentices will remain the same. Is there any explanation for that?

Mr DAVIES: There has been a plateauing of apprenticeship numbers. Most other States have had a fairly steady decline of apprenticeship numbers. We have managed to maintain the numbers. We are constantly trying to promote apprenticeships. The minister has just announced the Priority Access program, which will provide incentives and under which there is a requirement for people tendering for building contracts with the State Government to have a training philosophy; therefore, they will employ apprentices and trainees or have other strategies in place to promote a training culture. We have already seen examples of people taking on additional apprentices to meet the requirements of that arrangement, and they have been more than happy to do so. We continue to push for the increase in apprenticeship numbers. The traineeships are growing because of the new areas into which they are moving. They are seen as a good way to deliver training on and off the job. Therefore, they are moving into other areas - the new growth industries.

The CHAIRMAN: I refer to the comments made by Mr Davies. The apprenticeship numbers in this State in 1996-97 were 13 012; by 1997-98, the number was 12 784 apprenticeships; and by 1998-99, the number was down to 12 410 apprenticeships. I suggest, first, that that is not plateauing; it is decreasing, and it does not represent a push in apprenticeship numbers. Having said that, one of the areas of concern is completions of both apprenticeships and traineeships. I grant that there is an increase of 800 traineeships proposed in this year's budget. However, that is partly offset by the reduction in apprenticeship numbers. I am concerned about the anticipated rate of completions of both apprenticeships and traineeships. The figures that have been provided under point (c) on page 1385 of the budget papers show that last year there were 4 200 apprenticeship starts and, likewise, there will be 4 200 starts in 2000-01. From the figures provided, it is difficult to estimate the completion rate of apprenticeships, because depending on whether it is a three or four-year apprenticeship, it is difficult to estimate the completion date. Could I put on notice that I would like to be provided with the completion rates of apprenticeships for the past three years?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes. I guess that was a question, was it? It seemed more like a speech.

The CHAIRMAN: No, it was a fair -

Hon N.F. MOORE: The chairman made a lot of comments about a lot of things, and she finished her statement with a question. She made a few assertions in the first part of her statement, to which I will not respond now.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure the minister will find they are correct because they are based on the budget.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I always assume what the chairman says is correct - at first blush anyway.

The CHAIRMAN: Good.

Hon N.F. MOORE: However, the chairman must understand that the change in the way in which people train in Australia has been significant. It has been going on for a long time. The chairman should not continue to think in the context of how things used to be but how they are now. I presume that the end bit of the chairman's statement was the question.

The CHAIRMAN: What I would like provided to me on notice are the completion rates of apprenticeships for the past three years. Traineeship completion rates are easier to calculate in view of the fact that trainees complete their course in a one-year time frame. Based on the figures provided in the budget papers, the completion rates for traineeships for 1999-2000 was 44 per cent. Based on projections of starts and completions for 2000-01, the figure is 42 per cent. I have been advised informally, however, that the figure could be as low as 20 per cent. I wonder whether the chief executive of the department would comment on that and on whether the department is satisfied that a 42 per cent completion rate, if that was the outcome, is a successful completion rate?

Mr HILL: Dealing with the first question, yes, we will provide the information on completions for the past three years. Dealing with traineeships, the completion rates vary, depending on whether it is an enterprise-specific traineeship as distinct from a small business general traineeship. We know, because it has been benchmarked nationally, that we have the lowest attrition rate of traineeships in Australia. Senator Carr of the Senate committee made that point to us when the committee was here a few weeks ago. The reasons are complex. We have done one study on the matter. That is a public document which we have also made available to the Senate. A completion rate of 39, 40 or 41 per cent could not by any stretch of the imagination be viewed as "successful". However, it is too simplistic to measure it in straightforward terms. Do we say it is successful when halfway through the traineeship a person leaves to take up stable employment? Is that or is that not a success? That debate is being had around Australia. The Department of Training and Employment has identified and put in place a strategy to try to minimise the dropout rate. It is an ongoing process.

[12 noon]

The CHAIRMAN: Is a study being conducted into why trainees and apprentices do not complete their training?

Mr HILL: Yes; that is phase 2.

The CHAIRMAN: Who is conducting that study?

Mr HILL: It is being done internally.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you aware of concerns that some employers could exploit trainees because they are paid a commonwealth grant of \$1 200? Employers are not obliged to keep trainees for the duration of the traineeship. In some cases, trainees are in employment for only a short period after the grant is received.

Mr DAVIES: We are aware of suggestions that it is happening in various places. The Department of Training and Employment removes trainees from those organisations when it finds evidence of that, which has happened. It is not so much of an issue if they are leaving to go into further training. However, if the employers are turning over trainees on a regular basis, we do not allow the trainees to continue and we no longer register trainees with that employer. The department insists that employers deliver training. In a couple of cases, people have been hired as trainees but they have not delivered the training. That practice is being stopped, and those employers are no longer eligible to have registered trainees in their organisations.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the Department of Training and Employment, or any of its staff, given approval for the waiver of the three-year mandatory term for people who have successfully completed a relevant pre-apprenticeship course in the trade of cooking, plumbing, hairdressing or upholstery? That three-year term is a requirement under the Industrial Training Act.

Mr DAVIES: That waiver has been approved in a couple of exceptional circumstances.

The CHAIRMAN: To whom were those exemptions granted and why?

Mr DAVIES: I cannot give the details.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that it is the responsibility of your division. Who were the exemptions granted to?

Mr DAVIES: I do not have the names of the people.

The CHAIRMAN: Please ensure that the information and the explanation is provided on notice.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That answer may be confidential because it contains information about individual people. Providing an answer might be difficult. I surmise that the information contains individual circumstances which people would rather were not made public.

The CHAIRMAN: That may well be the case. However, if the department has breached a section of its Act -

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am not disputing that. I am saying that the Chair wants information to be provided that may be highly confidential. She can continue to demand it; however, I suggest that the answer may be that it is confidential. It is up to the Chair whether she pursues it. It should be borne in mind that we might be talking about individual cases. This is off the top of my head; I do not know the details. I might be going down the wrong track. However, the Chair has asked for the information to be provided, and it will be, to the extent that it is possible.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not share your view because I think there is an obligation for that information to be provided to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. There may be a requirement for a special ruling on this matter. I have requested that information as the Chair of the committee. Unless we receive official advice to the contrary, the request still stands.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The information may have been provided to the department on a confidential basis. What can be provided will be provided. If there is a difficulty, we will sort it out later.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Pages 1384 and 1385 of the *Budget Statements* refer to the delivery of student curriculum hours. It is proposed that 24 million hours will be delivered to apprentices, trainees and others at an average cost of \$13.50 an hour. That will work out to just over \$9 an hour after the recovery of fees. Nine dollars an hour at 24 million hours is a large part of the Department of Training and Employment's budget. I have noted footnotes (b), (c) and (i) and have referred to the 1998-99 annual report. Does the cost delivery vary greatly from that \$13.50 for different courses and locations.

Mr STRICKLAND: The colleges are funded through a funding model which contains a lot of variations that recognise the different industries, levels of courses and regions. The department funds group sizes that vary from 16 to eight. The average group size in remote areas is 8.3 while the bigger colleges have almost twice that number. Loadings for remote areas associated with the cost of transporting goods and services and a range of other things also affect the cost of the courses.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Thank you for the background information. Footnote (c) says that the department has roughly 20 000 apprentices and trainees at any time. These are pretty big figures. The output description on page 1384 refers to the identification of training needs by occupation or industry. Elsewhere in the *Budget Statements* there is indication that closer attention will be paid to a couple of areas, such as the Kimberley or the great southern. Of these large numbers, how many resources are put into identifying training needs by industry? I have anecdotal evidence from manufacturers in my region that they can never get certain tradespeople, such as aluminium welders, when they need them, while others say there is a surplus in some trades. Could you flesh out the comment about identifying training needs and provide some indication about the size and nature of the resources that are put into that?

Mr HILL: I will explain the process and tell you how much is funded by the State and the Commonwealth. Western Australia has a network of industry training councils and industry advisory boards. That is common throughout Australia. Those groups are funded on an annual basis. One of their functions is to provide information about the training needs of industry to the State Training Board. That is complemented by analysis undertaken by the department, as well as analysis from Monash University, Syntech and the regional development commissions.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Is funding for the industry training councils part of this portfolio or does it come from another source?

[12.10 pm]

Mr HILL: It is within this department's portfolio and amounts to about \$2.7m a year.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Where is it shown in the budget papers?

Mr HILL: It forms part of the total figure; it is not separate.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there no separate line item?

Mr HILL: It is the primary advice source used by the State Training Board. We have put together for the board the state training plan for the year. Once it has been signed off by the board it will be endorsed by the minister. It contains the training packages that we purchase from training providers.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What mechanisms are in place to ensure the \$2.7m estimate - and information that flows from it - provides for accurate forecasts before we spend the \$216m on the training?

Mr HILL: The department has performance contracts with the industry advisory boards. The industry training plans submitted by them are evaluated. If, based on our information, we believe the trends they are identifying are skewed, we ask them to review the information. Checks and balances are in place.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Determining training needs for the future is a very difficult science, bearing in mind the changing nature of training and work. Processes are designed to get information from the widest number of sources possible to ensure that the State Training Board plan is contemporary and relevant. However, as Hon Simon O'Brien knows, due to the way work requirements are changing, what may be relevant today may not be relevant tomorrow. It is not a highly exact science, but the processes in place now should provide the best possible information to ensure training is relevant to the jobs that will be available when training is completed.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I refer to output measures at page 1385 of the *Budget Statements*. Reference is made to "Successful training completions - Module Load Completion Rate". The rate for apprentices and trainees is 81 per cent in 1999-2000, with a target of 81 per cent in 2000-01. To what does the 81 per cent completion rate refer?

Mr STRICKLAND: Rather than referring to apprentices who might have completed apprenticeships, the module load completion rate measures how many modules were successfully completed.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I am asking for the explanation because I was concerned that the Chairman's question indicated that the completion rate for apprenticeships was as low as 49 per cent. I am not sure how the 49 per cent can be equated with the 81 per cent in the budget papers.

The CHAIRMAN: I think I said that the official data shows that the completion rates for trainees is 44 per cent projected for 2000-01, whereas I could not ascertain the completion rates for apprentices because we would have to review the number of starts. I do not understand how we reconcile the 83 per cent completion rate, particularly if it relates to trainees as well as apprentices, given that trainee completion rates at best are only 42 per cent.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is the explanation I was seeking.

Mr STRICKLAND: We are measuring two different things. One involves someone who starts a traineeship, goes through all the modules and completes the traineeship. The module load completion rate measures the completion rate of the proportion of module enrolments commenced for the year. There are two measurements. One is a course and one is a unit level.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: At page 1395 reference is made to continued promotion and operation of skate facilities grants. Has a study been undertaken to determine the success or otherwise of these grants for skate facilities? Will it be funded in 2000-01?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Although the Office of Youth Affairs is included within the department's budget, it operates as a separate entity. This aspect of the major achievements for 1999-2000 relates to the Office of Youth Affairs. I could talk about it at some length; however, I am sure the Chairman would not appreciate that.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: My question also relates to youth affairs.

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with the Western Australian Department of Training not the Office of Youth Affairs. Although they come under the same minister, they are discrete.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: That is somewhat unfortunate. Perhaps at another time youth affairs should be included as a separate item so that officers from the Office of Youth Affairs can be invited to attend these hearings.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will mention that to the Treasurer because the present arrangement makes things a little awkward.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: It makes it awkward to ascertain specific details from the budget papers.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I hope the committee maintains the same discipline on every other occasion as it has on this occasion.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the minister for his observation.

The minister will be aware that the Australian Taxation Office ruled that the wages component of the host employer's fee warrants consideration for a taxable supply and the hirer of the apprentice or trainee will attract a GST cost. Therefore, a GST will apply to the wages component of an apprentice or trainee. If a group training company subcontracts the training of its apprentices to a TAFE college, the TAFE college will charge the GST to the group training company. Has the department written to the ATO regarding the ATO's ruling on the GST being applicable to the wages component?

Mr SMITH: No, we have not followed that through. We are still examining the rulings and assessing on what we should seek additional advice.

The CHAIRMAN: When were you first notified of this preliminary view of the ATO?

Mr SMITH: I have not received full advice about the outcomes of the ATO ruling. We are reviewing them through our consultants as the ATO provides rulings. The one to which you are referring has not come through to me, but I will follow up the matter.

[12.20 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Has the department assessed the likely impact of the rulings by the ATO on the uptake of trainees and apprentices by host employers? If so, what has the department found out?

Mr DAVIES: There has been no direct correspondence between the department and the ATO, although we have been part of the national negotiations. We have left it mainly to the Australian National Training Authority and the national organisation of the group training association to take up this issue. As yet, we have not rolled through all the implications because of other issues that group training companies are raising with us. We have not done any specific research into that because the host employers will have to be asked what their likely reactions will be. We have not had that feedback from the group training schemes themselves.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the minister see a role for the Department of Training and Employment?

Hon N.F. MOORE: In respect to the GST and its implementation?

The CHAIRMAN: In assessing the likely impact on employers.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Minister for Employment and Training can quite easily ask the department to provide him with advice if he feels he needs to have that.

The CHAIRMAN: In relation to the college management information system, how many of the computer servers are due to come to the end of their service life and require replacement by the end of the year?

Mr LUCAS: The current indications are that there could be three servers, not associated with the production system, but two development servers, and one server associated with an academic record archival system.

The CHAIRMAN: How many of those servers are used to support the CMIS applications?

Mr LUCAS: None of those directly. The two development servers are used in the further development of the product. A report was considered which suggested that there be a review of total CMIS servers and their replacement. That has been considered, but the strategy now is for the servers to be reconfigured and have memory upgrades, which means they will not require replacement.

The CHAIRMAN: Are any of the CMIS servers at any colleges in need of immediate replacement?

Mr LUCAS: Not to our knowledge. Once there has been a memory upgrade and some reconfiguring, they will be okay.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the likely cost to replace those servers?

Mr LUCAS: If we were to replace all 17 servers in the colleges, it would be in the order of half a million dollars.

The CHAIRMAN: Over what time frame is WADOTE expecting to replace all those 17 servers?

Mr LUCAS: It will be in the vicinity of four to five years. These servers are all able to be upgraded, so it is a question of the model of server.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you saying that over the next five years the department will have to find \$100m in order to meet the replacement of those 17 servers? In other words, \$20m annually.

Mr LUCAS: No. The \$500 000 is to replace all 17 of the servers. The servers cost somewhere between \$30 000 and \$60 000 each.

The CHAIRMAN: I turn now to the question of vehicles. In answers to the generic questions provided to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, which were given to all agencies, in respect of how many vehicles the agency operated as at 30 June 1999, the WADOTE listed a total of 98 vehicles, which included some vehicles with colleges still under the jurisdiction of the agency. The total cost to the agency for those motor vehicles was \$546 000. Currently, however, the agency has 78 vehicles at a cost of \$447 000. In other words, the agency has 20 fewer vehicles, yet it is only \$99 000 ahead. Will the minister explain why the department has disposed of 20 vehicles?

Mr SMITH: With regard to the 98 vehicles, the department has made a footnote for question 15 that it does include the colleges, TAFE International and West One. Some 64 vehicles relate to the department. Fifteen vehicles relate to C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE, and 19 vehicles relate to Kimberley College. The 19 vehicles for Kimberley College are now excluded from the equation in the following number of 78 vehicles - which is at question 16. Because the college is now autonomous it is no longer involved. The 15 vehicles for C.Y. O'Connor in relation to the 78 vehicles is now 19 vehicles. The department has moved from 64 vehicles to 59 vehicles, current or expected by the end of June. The agency has reduced the number of vehicles by five cars. The increase in cost for the department is in the vicinity of \$16 000. That is primarily due to cost increases for leasing.

The CHAIRMAN: Could somebody provide information on when the training records system was first introduced. How much has the system cost to date?

Mr LUCAS: The TRS was introduced in 1989. Expenditure to date has been around \$340 000. It depends on how expenditure is classified; for instance, whether it includes desktops that are used to access it and datatel lines and things like that. It would be about \$340 000 for the development of the system. The training records system is now called TRS Net. It is being made available online to various users of the system; there are just under 200 of them.

The CHAIRMAN: There has been talk about the TRS being redeveloped a number of times. Is that accurate? If so, why has the redevelopment continued to occur?

Mr LUCAS: It is like all systems, the technology - the back end databases - will eventually require replacement as new technologies come out. As a departmental strategy, we are trying to use Internet browser technology to provide user customer access into those systems to try to differentiate the front end of the system from the database application at the back of it. The reason for that is that a lot of the cost associated with changing the systems is in the implementation process and the dysfunction that can cause as they are rolled out. If we are successful in separating the front end from the back end, it becomes far less onerous for the users and becomes more mechanical in terms of replacing the back ends.

[12.30 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that the GST implementation has cost the agency \$740 000 and an additional \$500 000 will be allocated to the colleges, so that is well in excess of \$1m. I assume that \$1m is being taken out of operational funding or wherever. Where will that money be coming from and what has been cut back as a result of needing to find that money?

Mr SMITH: The funding is coming out of our recurrent funding. We made an allocation for it as a priority issue because

of the need to implement it, including the allocation to assist the colleges. Because they are autonomous, they needed to do their own implementation, albeit the department is very heavily providing support to them. Any information we have we provide to the colleges and their coordinators. The majority of the funding is from our recurrent funding. It was a requirement and therefore part of the priorities that were set within the budget.

The CHAIRMAN: Will there be an ongoing requirement for additional administrative support at the college level to ensure that there is ongoing GST compliance? What is the likely impact of increased resourcing, if any?

Mr SMITH: There will be ongoing requirements for administration. That is very clear. At this stage we have been working through the implementation and then reviewing what the resourcing requirement will be through us and through the college to see how we will handle that. At this stage, we are in the third phase of our progress of the GST implementation. We will not consider that issue until we finish the implementation and see the impact. We can then assess it and correctly assess what is required for resourcing.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the minister for his kind comments and I thank members for attending.

Sitting suspended from 12.32 to 2.00 pm

Division 55: Police Service, \$440 406 000 -

Hon Simon O'Brien, Chairman.

Hon Peter Foss, Attorney General.

Mr B. Matthews, Commissioner of Police.

Mr B. Brennan, Deputy Commissioner, Operations.

Mr D. McCaffery, Assistant Commissioner, Policy, Planning and Evaluation.

Mr J. Frame, Director, Human Resources.

Mr R. McDonald, Director, Finance.

Mr S. Jones, Director, Asset Management.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask your co-operation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations, and I ask members asking questions to extend the same courtesy. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee, and for advisers to please state their full name, contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form.

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: First, I will ask a question which has been raised with me. It is a perennial question relating to the allocation and staffing of police in the suburbs. The specific question relates to the Hilton area. It has been raised with me by a community group that, because of juvenile crime being committed in the daytime and the lack of response from existing police stations, the Hilton police station - a small local station - should be reopened. I am sure this sort of question is raised frequently with all members. Can the minister or commissioner respond to that proposition?

Mr MATTHEWS: It is a matter of ensuring that whatever resources we deploy in any particular location in Western Australia, whether it is metropolitan or rural, we do so in the most efficient and effective way. Part of that involves looking at the number of police stations we have and ensuring that they are in the right place. Ultimately, people want a police station on every corner; clearly that is not possible. It is a matter of rationalising that and making sure that we have a balance of police who are reasonably local and ready to respond, while at the same time maintaining some economies of scale which will provide coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the course of that, on occasions we will look at an area and decide that a police facility should no longer be there or that we should put in a police station, particularly in a new growth area. A good example of that is Clarkson. Clearly there has been growth north of Joondalup. We believe that with the advent of new housing, we will need to put a new police station in that area. Although we can accommodate an increase in the number of stations, we need to balance it out. On occasions - Hilton is one example - we will decide to close the station, because it is not in the best position and we can provide that service in a better way in a nearby location.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it possible to give some indication of what manpower resources are available on the streets in that area as opposed to the situation which existed a few years ago when the little police stations were manned?

Mr MATTHEWS: Traditionally we have tended to be fairly conservative about the numbers of police who are available at particular hours. Obviously, if that information were in the wrong hands, it would not assist us. We can provide a general overarching response about numbers and locations, by way of districts and subdistricts. We would be happy to do that, if that information is required.

The CHAIRMAN: I would appreciate that information being supplied on notice, but obviously I am not requesting anything that would be operationally sensitive.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can the commissioner advise me how the location of speed traps is determined?

Mr MATTHEWS: Does the member mean speed traps in terms of Multanovas?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes.

[2.10 pm]

Mr MATTHEWS: A committee is set up for the very purpose of analysing appropriate positions where they will operate. It is not just a police committee; it draws people from a number of groups, including the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia. They look at various factors, which are primarily about safety, such as whether accidents have occurred there before, residents have made complaints about speed or police officers have made observations about cars going too fast, and in the end they determine selected areas that they believe are appropriate to receive attention from Multanovas. As a general rule, that practice is followed, and the cameras are located there for a short time and are then moved to other locations. We advise the media of the general locations of Multanovas each day, but we do not advise the times.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is it possible to provide to the committee a schedule of all the locations over the past 12 months?

Mr MATTHEWS: I will see whether that is reported, and I anticipate it probably is, in which case we can supply it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is the use of Multanovas spread evenly between the eastern suburbs and the western suburbs or are they used more in some areas than in others?

Mr MATTHEWS: The locations at which Multanovas are deployed is driven primarily by safety factors. Statistically I have no doubt that it is spread equally south and north; and two cameras are deployed in rural areas.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Page 1082 has a graph headed "Major contributing factors to fatal road crashes", and paragraphs (e) and (f) refer to drink-driving-related fatal crashes and speed-related fatal crashes. Are you any closer to identifying drug-related crashes?

Mr MATTHEWS: Drug-related crashes are a difficulty in terms of detecting, by reliable means, the extent of drugs in a person's blood system. We can certainly do it by taking blood. We are hopeful that technology will come to our aid by providing a reliable and certifiable means of determining, perhaps by analysis of breath or some other observation, the level of drugs in a person's system. It is a concern, because on occasions when police officers have stopped drivers who seem to be impaired, they have been able to scrape through the alcohol blood test but there is always a suspicion that they have other drugs in their system which are accumulating and are impacting to cause a total disability.

Hon PETER FOSS: You might need to go back to the old straight line test.

Mr MATTHEWS: Ultimately we can do that. If a person is impaired, we do not need to rely totally on the blood alcohol reading. We can give a person a physical test and take steps that way. A concern for police agencies all over Australia is the impact of drugs. We know from some of the studies, even including those in our East Perth lockup, that up to 80 per cent of prisoners who have voluntarily given urine samples have evidence in their urine of drugs in their system, so clearly if these people were driving, they would be at risk.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I cannot see any information in your annual report about the turnover of staff in the Police Service. What are the trends in the turnover of staff?

Mr FRAME: The attrition rate this year is running at similar levels to previous years. The Western Australia Police Service has one of the lowest attrition rates of policing jurisdictions across Australia. A slight increase is expected this year as the out-turn at the end of 30 June, but it is certainly not a significant increase in comparison with the past two to three years. In 1998-99, 198 police officers left; in 1997-98, it was around 177; and as at the end of April, we had an attrition rate of 193.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Can you separate retirements from those numbers?

Mr FRAME: I can for the year to date ending 30 April, but for the previous years I do not have that information with me. In the current year, 67 officers have retired as either age retirement or medical retirement.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I am interested in the police who leave to make a career change rather than the ones who retire. Can that information be provided for the past three years?

Mr MATTHEWS: We can certainly provide the number of police who have retired and resigned, but we would not know the reasons that they have resigned.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon Mark Nevill, did you want to pursue that and obtain just the resignation figure?

Hon MARK NEVILL: Yes - the attrition rate without age retirements.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Frame, can you provide that information on notice?

Mr FRAME: I can supply that information for the period 1 July 1999 to 30 April this financial year: Of the 193 officers who left, 122 resigned.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Can you provide on notice the figures for the past three years?

Mr FRAME: Yes.

Hon MARK NEVILL: There has been a practice in the past of allowing some police officers who have committed offences or breached standards to resign. Are officers charged where it is appropriate or are they still allowed to resign and not face the consequences that other people would normally face by being charged?

Mr MATTHEWS: If there is evidence of criminal offending that is sufficient to bring them before a criminal court, they are charged, and that charge proceeds regardless of whether they resign. One of the penalties on conviction at a disciplinary hearing is dismissal, but as a general rule if a police officer resigned and it was not a serious matter, the disciplinary hearing would be discontinued. If the matter was more serious and it was still possible to effect some sanction, I believe it would be appropriate to continue with that hearing.

Hon NORM KELLY: Output 4 on page 1080 is traffic management and road safety. There is a significant increase in the number of FTEs from 895 to 1 009, yet the total cost of this output has been reduced by \$2.3m. What is the explanation for that?

Mr McCaffery: Yes, there is a significant drop in the actual hours and cost of providing that output, but the number of FTEs bears no relationship to that. The FTEs in terms of the actual cost and output are operational police officers only. The actual FTE number that is described further down the line is the actual FTEs across the organisation, including police officers who are carrying out what we would call clerical duties, and also unsworn staff. In effect, the operational hours are probably spread across 4 300 police officers, whereas the full-time equivalent figure is for a separate purpose and is spread across close to 6 000 FTEs, which is the total number of FTEs in the Police Service.

[2.20 pm]

Hon NORM KELLY: The Police Service has an average cost per hour for traffic management and road safety of \$53 in last year's annual report and a target of \$51. This question will probably have to go on notice: What is the average cost of operating Multanovas per hour as against the cost of speed surveillance by police officers? Also, what is the comparison of the detection rates of speeding for those two types of speed surveillance?

Mr MATTHEWS: I am happy to provide that information but I will have to do so on notice.

Hon GREG SMITH: It has been put to me that part of the reason that many fatalities occur on country roads is the response time for emergency services and intensive care being given to victims of accidents. Have any statistics been collected relating to the period between an accident and the victim receiving first-rate medical care as opposed to preliminary medical care?

Hon PETER FOSS: An article in the *Scientific American* related to the relationship between response time to accidents and the eventual outcome of the accident. Whether it has any effect on country accidents, I do not know. The response times to which the article referred had to be very quick if they were to make any major difference.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to page 1074. I note the allowance for the adjustment for non-cash items in superannuation. I also refer to page 1090. I note what is set out under current liabilities for this current financial year, the next financial year and the next three financial years after that in respect of employee entitlements. I also note the budget papers refer to an inflation rate, which is somewhat optimistic I would have thought, and a consumer price index rate for next year of 3 per cent. Firstly, do those figures disclose that no allowance is made for an increased number of police officers over the period set out in the forward estimates; that is, up to the financial year to 2003-04? Secondly, is it also the case - noting again the fact that Australia has inflation which is projected to be 3 per cent without taking into account the goods and services tax - that no allowance is made for wage increases?

Mr MATTHEWS: As I understand it, the budget does not include any additional police officers and it has no inflationary content. I would have thought that if there had been an agreement reached for additional salary payments due in forthcoming years, that would have to be taken into account. We do not have that situation.

Hon PETER FOSS: Two things are happening. We have a core function process, which, although it does not lead to any greater number of police officers in the Police Service, will lead to a considerable number of more police being available for police duties. The figures often do not tell what is the operational situation. During the whole time that we have been in government, large numbers of police have been taken off clerical and non-police duties and returned to police work. A member mentioned Multanovas. That is a classic example of where work has been carried out by people who are not sworn

police officers. Therefore, the total number of officers who have become available, and under similar projects in the future will become available, is significant.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: The fact is that the figures before us do not allow for any extra police officers in the period to 2003-04 covered by the forward estimates; nor are wage and salary increases budgeted for; they do not even take into account inflation.

Hon PETER FOSS: The figures do not show that over 100 police officers will become available for police duties as a result of the core functions project. Many things do not show in the figures. If the member wishes to have a proper appreciation of what the figures are all about and whether there will be more police officers available, to which the answer is yes, if the member reads this together with the Justice information, he will find that out. Merely looking at the police figures does not necessarily give the information the member is seeking.

Mr MATTHEWS: We are also of course part way through a very significant technology upgrade, which is aimed at increasing productivity and the amount of time police officers will be out on the street, investigating, patrolling and so forth, and reducing the time that they are tied up at their desks doing a lot of paperwork, which is cumbersome, and a lot of which is manual and antiquated.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am grateful that the commissioner has mentioned that. When we came into government, police officers were operating manual typewriters and did not have fax machines. Anybody who has used computers, wordprocessors and fax machines, will understand the increase in productivity of people who work in those circumstances.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to services and contracts on page 1089, where various figures are set out. Does the firm Forensic Behavioural Investigative Services have current contracts with the Police Service; and if so, in respect of what matters?

Mr MATTHEWS: No.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Will it have any in the forthcoming financial year?

Mr MATTHEWS: No.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What is the current number of investigators in the public sector investigation unit of the professional standards portfolio?

Mr MATTHEWS: The professional standards group comprises four groups, of which the public sector investigation unit is one. I believe there are about nine persons there, not all of whom are investigators because some are unsworn analysts and clerical staff.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: On page 1085 of the budget papers, output measure six relates to the investigation of offences. Investigations for property offences finalised within 30 days has a target of 12 per cent. Why is that figure so low?

Mr MATTHEWS: All around the world the clearance rate for property offences is very low. No agency to my knowledge has over a 20 per cent clearance rate, no matter how much effort and energy those agencies put into it. Therefore, the level of investigations being finalised, as outlined in the budget papers, is a realistic target to attain.

[2.30 pm]

Mr BRENNAN: That is right. Traditionally, property offences are much more difficult to resolve than offences against the person. Our clear-up rate for offences against the person is currently close to 90 per cent which, across Australia, is one of the best rates being achieved. In England in the past two years, with the DNA legislation becoming available, the resolution rate for property offences has increased markedly and is just short of 50 per cent in some cases. That is outstanding. Naturally, we are very interested in that science becoming available to us.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is that clear-up rate of 50 per cent for property offences, as opposed to 20 per cent, something the Police Service will aim for?

Mr MATTHEWS: One must be cautious as we are talking about a new type of investigative technique becoming available. Certainly, we would welcome the ability that DNA provides to improve clearance rates and I have no doubt that we can markedly improve the clear-up rate with that new tool.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: My next question relates to the output measure of the response to offences on page 1084. The time taken to respond to urgent calls for police assistance was 17.5 minutes in 1999-2000 and the target for 2000-01 is less than 17 minutes. Does that relate only to 000 calls and not 9222 1111 calls? If so, what is the average time taken to respond to 9222 1111 calls?

Mr MATTHEWS: Although most people requiring urgent assistance ring 000, on occasions, for one reason or another, people use another number to get urgent or immediate assistance. Assessment is therefore made in the communications centre as to how urgent a call is when giving it a priority. Naturally, some calls to 000 are non-urgent and they are not categorised as urgent. When the communications centre makes that assessment, the measure is applied against that. In essence, we hope to reduce the figure of 17.5 minutes to 17 minutes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What are the comparative figures in other jurisdictions for the average time taken to respond to urgent calls?

Mr MATTHEWS: I would have to qualify my answer to that question by saying that one of the difficulties with benchmarking in other jurisdictions is knowing their definition of urgent and the way in which they prioritise urgent calls. From my knowledge of New Zealand, the average figure of 17.5 is consistent and is about the time taken for a vehicle to reach a particular point and to address the issue at hand.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Returning to my original point about the time taken to investigate property offences, I suggest that many people in the community have a perception about the effectiveness of the operations of the Police Force and believe there is no point in calling the police in the case of a property damage offence as they will receive no assistance from them. Can the Police Service improve the public relations side of its operations by paying more attention to this fairly important area?

Mr MATTHEWS: Perceptions are always hard to turn around and are more a matter of attacking reality by asking ourselves how well we are doing and then addressing the perceptions. Sometimes we may be doing very well but perceptions have not caught up with that reality. What the public thinks is always an issue. However, we have taken significant steps to target crimes, particularly crimes that concern people most, such as burglary of the home. Specific groups are very much looking at intelligent policing whereby analysts examine what is happening in an area to determine the best method of attacking that area. We are moving away from the traditional random patrol of the streets to having small, highly mobile groups that can target an area or individuals with a view to improving the clearance rates. We have had some good successes. However, it is true that property offences are hard to solve. They occur often when nobody has observed what has happened and no clues are left behind. If people do not report these offences we will be completely unsuccessful as we will not know about them.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Even the commissioner, by his own admission, would accept that 12 per cent is very low?

Mr MATTHEWS: Yes, we can do better than that and it is an area we are improving.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to page 80 of the annual report which provides statistical profiles of both the numbers of police officers and the police to population ratio for the police regions. Can the figures of officers in police districts and in police stations be provided to me?

Mr MATTHEWS: We can provide that information to a district level and I am sure we can provide it to a police station level; however, I cannot provide it now.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would be grateful if you could take that question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is taken on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: The same caution applies with regard to the detail at the police station.

Mr MATTHEWS: Mr Frame can provide some details on that.

Mr FRAME: I can give details of police numbers by district now. In the metropolitan region districts there are 324 officers in Cannington; Fremantle, 382; Joondalup, 258; Midland, 222; Mirrabooka, 242; and Perth, 528. In the southern region there are 112 in Albany; Bunbury, 263; Geraldton, 168; Narrogin, 73; Northam, 153; Kalgoorlie, 202; and Meekatharra, 34. In the northern region there are 132 in the Kimberley and 174 in the Pilbara.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can the police to population ratios be provided on notice?

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is taken on notice.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do those figures relate to full-time equivalents or to actual police officers?

Mr FRAME: Full-time equivalents.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do all of those districts' police officers equate to full-time equivalents? I understand that police officers are allocated to different districts. Does that mean that number of police officers is attached to a particular district? Some police districts do not always have their full allocation of full-time equivalents.

Mr FRAME: Many factors are involved in responding to that question. The first is that with flexible employment practices there may be a concept of full-time equivalents, but it may be two officers working on a job-sharing or part-time basis. The actual number of officers, therefore, may vary. Another factor is, with the numbers involved, there may be an authorised strength of officers seconded to special projects, task forces and other groups in a district, region or even across the entire State. How many police officers are in situ at any one time at the stations is influenced by things such as training, study leave, sick leave and annual leave. Those things influence availability. The principle is that it is the full-time equivalent authorised strength for that district and other factors can come into play.

[2.40 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When those factors come into play, are they shared equally across all police districts or is it possible that levels may be kept up in one area and when officers need to be drawn away, they are drawn from other districts?

Mr FRAME: The district officer, as the local chief of police, has the responsibility for deploying staff within the district in response to issues that may confront a station, suburb or town - those are some of the considerations. Priorities across the State from time to time may mean that people need to be relocated. The chief of police has to make the decision on how to most effectively deploy, and notionally at Cannington, over 300 officers.

Mr MATTHEWS: As a general rule it would be statistically drawn at the same levels across the whole of the State, but for some things like special projects, it obviously makes more sense to pull people in for short periods from the metropolitan regions, or wherever the project is running, rather than from the Pilbara or Kimberley or an area like that. With that qualification, it is generally evenly spread.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you provide figures on how many additional FTEs have been allocated to each of the police districts in the past year or how many are expected to be allocated in the forthcoming budget year?

Mr MATTHEWS: Currently, we are developing a resource allocation formula across the State. The formula is intended to provide statistical advice on how many police we should have in any particular area - certainly at a district level - and we will use that formula to make sure that we are properly deploying, in the most efficient way, police officers across the State. In addition to the minister's earlier comments, a number of people will be released from what is called the core projects office - people who have been guarding prisons and so forth. With the Ministry of Justice taking over that function, it will release people currently tied up with that to be allocated to districts. Most will go to the metropolitan area and one or two others will go to other selected areas.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Have any additional police been allocated in the past year, or is an allocation being planned for the next few months for the Joondalup police district? Has the figure there changed, particularly in relation to the new police station?

Mr MATTHEWS: In terms of the core projects and the allocation of staff being released from those, we will allocate staff to cover the Joondalup district. In addition to those allocations, we will provide staff for the new Clarkson police station and the new domestic violence pilot program that is currently being run at Joondalup.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That will be additional?

Mr MATTHEWS: Correct.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do we have a figure for that yet?

Mr MATTHEWS: No, not yet. We are working through that now.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: My comments relate to items that appear under the heading of output description at the top of page 1085, including the gathering and securing of evidence, forensic services, etc. I noted the earlier remarks on DNA and technology advances. When can we expect to deal with legislation that will allow DNA investigations in the field and what are the legislative restraints on those, as the minister sees them? From our investigations in Britain, as tabled in the report, it was evident that one of the restraining factors was the time taken to train police officers in the collection of different types of forensic evidence. Is that incorporated in the current training or is it something that will be introduced? Will it require extra staffing allocations or will it be incorporated in the current courses?

Hon PETER FOSS: As the member is aware, existing legislation allows the compulsory taking of samples for DNA when a person is already charged and it is believed that it will assist an investigation. The only problem is that, due to an amendment made in this House, we do not allow people other than doctors and nurses to take the samples. I think it is a small problem and it is something that we may be able to deal with when we bring a criminal investigations Bill to the Parliament which will deal with all forms of criminal investigation. In that context, I hope we will be able to revisit that. That provides a limited ability to check DNA because it requires the person to be in custody for an offence. The criminal investigations Bill will allow a much broader range of reasons for collection and it is important to allow for wide-ranging sampling of people in custody in prisons. There is a capacity to take DNA samples in prisons for particular purposes, but not just for the purpose of establishing a DNA database. A national DNA database is being set up, the usefulness of which will be very important. It is one thing to have the power to collect samples, but it is another to have the tool. I think a national DNA database will be a very useful tool for the police. Not only is the legislation important but also a few things will have to be arranged nationally that will make it much more useful. To some extent, it is dependent upon what this House is prepared to do when the criminal investigations Bill comes before it. I have seen late drafts of it and I hope that we will have it before the House this year.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: What about training?

Mr MATTHEWS: Over recent years, the service has increased the level of training that has been going into forensic services, not just for forensic people but for general policing duties, so that when police officers attend crime scenes, they are not only more able to ensure they do not contaminate the scene by how they approach it - that is particularly important with the minute DNA samples that are collected - but also are able to improve the way in which they collect, handle and document the exhibits so that when they finally are dealt with, they are of value rather than being in any way depreciated. That training course runs for one month at a time. We have been putting police officers on the course constantly to effectively upskill the whole of the workforce to better cope with the issue. Once the DNA legislation comes into being and CrimTrac, the DNA database, is up and running nationally, I have no doubt that we will have to put additional resources

into the collection and handling of DNA samples because there is an element of back-capture in that. I think it will be a very good investment in a resource because the indications from New Zealand and the United Kingdom, where this has been done for some time, is that it will make an amazing difference, not only in crimes against the person, but also, as my deputy indicated before, in crimes against property when samples of some form of bodily fluid have been left behind.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: There was an announcement in the past 12 to 18 months about commonwealth funding of about \$40m. Will that money be spread among the States or will it be set aside for a central database? If it is not available, how will we finance the establishment of a database here?

Mr MATTHEWS: Unfortunately, no, it will not come to us. The money is not just for DNA sampling; it is also for other things. The money will be spent on setting up the systems of which DNA is a part. The money will be provided by the Federal Government. However, we will be able to gain value from that. As part of the increased money we received this year, we were allocated \$250 000 to assist with the DNA sampling process.

[2.50 pm]

Hon NORM KELLY: My questions relate to capital works outlined on page 1097 of the *Budget Statements*. First, I notice \$3m has already been spent on building the new police operations support facility at Midland. How has that been spent, and what is the expected completion date of the facility?

Hon PETER FOSS: Hon Norm Kelly saw the big hole at the end of the wall at the Midland Workshops when we visited the other day.

Hon NORM KELLY: I did not realise it was a \$3m hole!

Mr JONES: The funds set aside this year were for planning. The member will appreciate that it is a substantial complex with significant architectural, engineering and associated works and land procurement. We propose to tackle stage 1 in two sections. The computer-aided dispatch and related communications - CADCOM - facility will proceed to tender in late July with an expectation that BAE Systems will fit it out in February or March of next year, with likely completion and operation in July or August of 2001. It is our intention to proceed with the development of the forensic facility, which will store our DNA requirements and other forensic business, including ballistics, scene-of-crime officers and the drug receipt unit. The housing of mounted and canines and refurbishment of workshop 3 should proceed in February or March depending on the availability of the remainder of the land. The second stage is subject to a formal assessment by the Environmental Protection Authority. I anticipate that will be completed by November or December, which will enable the remediation work to proceed to keep within our time frame.

Hon NORM KELLY: What is the expected completion date of the South Perth-Victoria Park police station?

Mr JONES: It certainly will not be in the short to medium term. We had hoped to resolve the site issue by 30 May of this year, and we expect occupation by staff to be finalised by 1 November 2001. Therefore, construction will take place this forthcoming year and the following year.

Hon NORM KELLY: Last year's budget papers estimated asset sales of \$25m, and this year's budget papers estimate \$31m in such sales. The papers do not indicate what has been sold this financial year. Has the \$25m been realised, and from where will the major proportion of the next financial year's \$31m come? Does it include the former Maylands Police Academy site; if not, what is expected to happen with the Maylands site?

Mr JONES: This is part of a \$50m-odd land disposal process which the Police Service is undertaking. We had hoped to finalise the sale of the Maylands site this financial year, but that will not happen. Significant consultation needs to be undertaken with the community to ensure that its interests are best considered and reflected in response to the State's expectation to recover finances from that asset. We expected to finalise the sale of the old Perth girls school. We had a buyer who has now chosen not to proceed. We will go to tender on that matter in June. We will also work towards the disposal of the police headquarters site. That package is \$50m-odd in total. In the meantime, to enable us to continue with our capital program, Treasury has been very supportive in ensuring we have sufficient funds to manage the cash flow arrangement.

Hon NORM KELLY: Is the police headquarters site the Wellington Street site?

Mr JONES: No, that is the old Perth girls school site. Police headquarters are at the end of Adelaide Terrace, adjacent to the Causeway.

The CHAIRMAN: When will the service dispose of the headquarters property?

Mr JONES: We are currently talking to the East Perth Redevelopment Authority, which has title to the property as it is included in its precinct. We need to undertake a substantial amount of due diligence work on environmental, heritage and engineering aspects of the site. The authority is working on concept plans for the site. We hope to finalise a sale this forthcoming year or early in the next year. We have commenced negotiations.

The CHAIRMAN: Will that mean a relocation of police functions housed at that site, or a disposal of the ownership of the building?

Mr JONES: A sale and lease-back proposition will be pursued in the first instance. However, the long-term view of our current and previous commissioners is that the site is not particularly available to the community; that is, it is a difficult site

for ingress and egress. From our perspective, it is in the community's interest and our interest to be more available to people.

Hon PETER FOSS: Justice is keen to relocate the lockup in that facility to the new law courts complex on Irwin and Hay Streets, which would mean less movement of people. People are currently brought from various prisons to East Perth, and then taken to the courts. It would be considerably better for the handling of prisoners if they were kept in the complex.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: My question relates to page 1098 of the *Budget Statements* regarding recurrent revenue for firearms infringements. It involves an amount which is not significant in the scheme of things admittedly, but interesting nonetheless. The actual receipts for 1998-99 were only \$7 000. They are estimated this current financial year to be \$210 000, and they are budgeted for next year to be \$400 000. Why is that significant increase made in the current financial year, and why has the Police Service projected nearly a doubling of the figure for the next financial year?

Mr McDONALD: I recall that 1998-99 was fairly intense for our firearms branch with the gun buyback scheme. As such, the work on the issuing of firearm infringement notices and so forth is not as current as we would like it to be. It has been catching up. As it is only my recollection, I would like to confirm that statement.

The CHAIRMAN: That will be confirmed and relayed on notice. I, and I assume Hon Ray Halligan, interpreted the "firearm infringements" to mean the value in penalties in infringement notices written out. Is that correct?

[3.00 pm]

Mr McDONALD: That is correct. Firearm infringement notices are mailed out when a person fails to pay his firearms licence fee. A process comes into play and it is separate. The revenue is received after the firearm infringement notice is mailed out and the person pays the amount specified in the notice.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not so much a case that someone is found actively committing a firearms offence - that is, a person is caught with an unlicensed firearm in his possession; an infringement notice is generated automatically when a person fails to renew a licence.

Mr McDONALD: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: It would be appreciated if perhaps a paragraph or two explaining how that system works could be provided on notice, because it is news to some members in the Chamber.

Mr McDONALD: We will do that.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to traffic management and road safety and to the figures given for the operating revenues on page 1080 of the *Budget Statements*. Last year, the figure was \$4.830m; the figure for the forthcoming budget is \$2.405m. On page 1089, under operating revenues, the figure for this current year is \$19.601m; the figure for next year is \$12.130m. Could I have an explanation for both sets of figures, please?

Mr McDONALD: First, I will deal with the figures on page 1080. The situation with the 2000-01 financial year is that the road trauma trust fund figures, for which payment has been made to the Police Service in the current financial year to assist it to maintain its speed camera program, are reflected in 1999-2000. At the time of the preparation of the budget estimates, we had not received confirmation from the Office of Road Safety that it would continue to fund our program next year; hence the figures have not been allowed for. That is why there is the variation between the figure of \$4.83m and \$2.4m.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Has the service subsequently received that confirmation?

Mr McDONALD: I have sought advice on that. I have been told that the Police Service has submitted various project plans, and we are awaiting confirmation from the Office of Road Safety that they have been accepted.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Would Mr McDonald explain the second set of figures on page 1089?

Mr McDONALD: The situation is similar to that which I outlined. I think the variation in the figures is from \$10.2m to \$4.9m.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Yes.

Mr McDONALD: Most of that relates to the road trauma trust fund. If I take that on notice, I will be able to provide a more complete answer.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: The balance of the answer to that question is on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Again I refer to page 1089. Under revenue from government, reference is made to receipts paid into the consolidated fund. For the current year the figure is \$3.670m. The budget estimate is \$31.069m. Will Mr McDonald provide an explanation for that?

Mr McDONALD: The main reason for that relates to the land sales program, which was referred to a couple of questions ago. The amount of \$31m is estimated to be received. The amount of \$3.6m in the current year is a collection of minor revenues that have been paid in.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to the figures under revenues on page 1094. In the general scheme of things, it is not a huge amount of money. The figure for 1999-2000 is \$210 000, and the figure for 2000-01 is \$400 000. What is the reason for that variation?

Mr McDONALD: We referred to that previously. That is for firearm licence infringements. Under accrual accounting, administrative expenses are required to be separately detailed.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to the details of the administered transactions expenditure on page 1096 and to the vehicle immobiliser scheme. For 1998-99, the figure is \$1.607m, yet in the budget papers provided last year, at page 1114, under that very heading of vehicle immobiliser scheme, the amount is \$3.029m. Why is there a difference? Also, why is there a drop back from \$1.607m to \$655 000 for the forthcoming year?

Mr McDONALD: The vehicle immobiliser program was transferred to the Department of Transport at the end of last financial year. The accounting responsibilities for the program are now handled by that department. I will refer quickly to the \$655 000 that is shown as expenditure for the current year. That relates to payments the Police Service was asked to process for the first couple of months of this financial year. At the time the estimates were prepared last financial year, we were anticipating a larger degree of expenditure than was incurred. I would need to refer to my notes from last year, but I think we were anticipating that some of the expenditure that the Department of Transport was incurring for setting up the system and for the various programs it was required to put in place would be met by Police. However, I believe that there was under-expenditure by Police in that year, and a corresponding saving in its finances, and over-expenditure by the Department of Transport in setting it up.

The CHAIRMAN: Does Hon Nick Griffiths want to explore that point any further?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: No, but I have another short matter to deal with. I refer to the net appropriation determination on page 1098 and to the GST input credits - if I am allowed to use those infamous letters, "GST" - of \$11.662m. Is Mr McDonald able to say how that figure was arrived at?

Mr McDONALD: Yes. It might take some time, though, to explain the impact of the goods and services tax on the Police Service.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am aware of the current and forthcoming impact of the goods and services tax. I would like a fairly detailed explanation of how that figure was arrived at. If it is more convenient, I am happy for that to be placed on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: Is Mr McDonald able to provide a reasonable summary on the spot?

Mr McDONALD: I can. Unfortunately, the finances of the Police Service are somewhat complex. In explaining the impact of the goods and services tax, I should point out that that figure relates to the GST input credits that we anticipate receiving. Obviously, at the time the estimates were prepared, which was about three or four months ago, a great deal of estimating took place. We anticipate that that figure will largely hold. The following figure of \$3.629m is the anticipated GST receipts on sales that we estimate we will receive. I can provide a summary in written form, if that is required. As is the situation with everyone else, this is the first year that this will come into play for the Police Service. We are relatively confident about our calculations at this time.

[3.10 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Is that information sufficient for your purposes?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Yes. Did Treasury do the calculations for the Police Service?

Mr McDONALD: The Police Service did all the calculations. The goods and services tax has been handled largely by the individual agencies.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am looking forward to receiving the answer, which I am sure will be a benchmark.

Mr McDONALD: So am I.

The CHAIRMAN: Does Hon Nick Griffiths require a further part of that question to be taken on notice?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I would like information about how the figure was arrived at.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that the \$11.61m for 2000-01 and not the other figure?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr McDonald will communicate that to you.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I ask about the cost of vehicle leasing. Information provided to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations a week ago shows that at June 1999, the Police Service had 1 560 vehicles at a cost of \$16.73m, and now has 1 471 vehicles at a cost of \$18.341m. That is a reduction of 89 cars and an increased cost of \$1.63m. How many of those 89 vehicles were operational vehicles?

Mr MATTHEWS: To the best of our knowledge, none of those vehicles was an operational vehicle. They were administrative vehicles.

Mr JONES: The reduction in the number of vehicles occurred because we have tightened up the disposal processes. We have removed 40 administrative-related vehicles from the fleet. The remainder of the reduction was brought about by reducing the amount of time it takes the Police Service to dispose of vehicles through the current arrangements. A large number of our vehicles are fitted out in specific ways. To be decommissioned, the vehicles need to be returned to their state at the time of purchase. Therefore, all the decals, sirens and lights need to be removed. The vehicles are then submitted for auction. We have been able to significantly reduce the amount of time it takes to do that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is the loss of the 89 vehicles causing the Police Service any pain?

Mr MATTHEWS: Of those vehicles, 49 were reduced because of improved efficiencies in the sale and decommissioning process. It has made no difference to the Police Service whatsoever, other than to improve the way in which the cars are disposed of. Therefore, the cost of having them for that time has been reduced.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Are you saying that the Police Service was sloppy in that area and incurred an unnecessary cost?

The CHAIRMAN: Members should phrase their questions as open rather than leading questions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: There was nothing sloppy about that.

The CHAIRMAN: I draw the member's attention to the fact that she was putting a controversial statement to the witness and inviting him, by a yes or no answer, to adopt it as his own response. That is not the way we want to do things.

Hon PETER FOSS: Maybe we should ask Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich if she is still asking stupid questions. That would be the same sort of thing.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I obviously got the Attorney General worked up: Defending the indefensible. I am quite within my rights to ask these questions.

Hon PETER FOSS: My question was the same sort of question as that which the member asked. I asked: Are you still asking stupid questions? The answer is either yes, you are, or no, you are not. In any case, the answer means you were asking stupid questions.

We should always encourage departments, and this Government certainly does, to look at their processes to see if they can be improved and made more efficient. It would hardly be a grand incentive for departments to improve if the result was that somebody argued that it had previously been neglectful. There is no doubt that we have made major improvements to the situation that existed prior to our coming into government. One could spend a lot of time talking about how inefficient and useless the previous Government was. I think it is more useful to commend the Police Service for going through and improving its processes. An answer has already been given and it was ignored by the member: The reduction in vehicles has not had any effect on operations, for the reasons that have been given. I do not think the questions should be answered as the member is ignoring answers that have previously been given.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I disagree and I insist on my right to ask the rest of my questions.

The CHAIRMAN: I invite Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to pose a question to clarify any matters.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I understand that the loss of 40 vehicles was due to an internal efficiency arrangement.

Mr MATTHEWS: A review was done to see whether areas within the Police Service were under-utilising vehicles in comparison with the whole service and whether it could make do with a smaller number of vehicles, because of their cost. We determined that it could. The number was reduced originally by 25 and the rest were subsequently removed.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Irrespective of the way you look at the situation, the Police Service is 89 vehicles down at an extra cost of \$1.6m. How many police officers could \$1.6m buy?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is two different questions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can I get an answer?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon PETER FOSS: It is an argument.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What was wrong with that question?

Hon PETER FOSS: The fact that you do not understand shows how silly you are.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Members should not allow themselves to become overexcited. A question has been asked and I ask the Attorney General to briefly respond.

Hon PETER FOSS: The committee must understand that we are living in a world in which costs go up. This member has been told that on a number of occasions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Not by the Police Service. I would like to hear from the commissioner.

Hon PETER FOSS: The world is not different for the Police Service. When the cost of fuel goes up, it increases for everybody. The Police Service does not get a special deal.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How much does fuel cost the Police Service?

Hon PETER FOSS: You can ask the question if you want to know. You asked how many police officers could be provided with \$1.6m. It depends on the support that is given to those police officers. The question was ridiculous because it asks how many wages could be paid if no support were given to the service. It probably would have paid for an awful lot of police officers under the Labor Government because it gave them so little support. All it gave them was a bare room, no car and no fuel. A rise in the cost of fuel under the Labor Government would have made no difference whatsoever.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: This Government just bankrupts it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question has been asked and a response has been given. I think we can move on.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have not -

Hon PETER FOSS: That is the answer she is getting.

The CHAIRMAN: I will ask a question to clarify it for my mind and the record.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can I ask a question?

The CHAIRMAN: No, I am asking a question. I will come back to the member. Other members are here to ask questions and they will take their turn.

[3.20 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: I understand from the commissioner's answer that of the 89 vehicles by which the total number was reduced, 40 vehicles in the administrative area were disposed of.

Mr MATTHEWS: Yes, we reduced the number of vehicles in administrative positions. The other 49 were disposed of by effectively turning over quicker those vehicles that had come to the end of their 40 000 kilometres or two-year usage. We had them for less time; therefore, we did not have the number.

The CHAIRMAN: I was not aware of that. Of 1 500 vehicles, some will be being "turned around" at any one time, which of course reduces the number sitting unused by 49.

Mr MATTHEWS: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: That is to be commended. Observations have been made from time to time at these hearings and I make the observation now, not to the Government but to the Police Service management, that a way be found in which money can be saved, and it has been saved.

Hon PETER FOSS: On behalf of the police I appreciate that. One of the important aspects of good management is to commend people when they do the right thing.

The CHAIRMAN: I was offering credit where it was due.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I note under major achievements for 1999-2000 the proclamation of the Court Security and Custodial Services Act, which gave responsibility for court security, court custody, prisoner transport and the management of some lockups to the Ministry of Justice. I presume this has released police officers for other duties. Has it made any great difference to manpower?

Mr MATTHEWS: We are about to do that; the change commences on 1 July. The police members will primarily go out in the metropolitan districts, and I am sure it will make a difference.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Will it not occur in regional areas?

Mr MATTHEWS: No, those people will be primarily looking after prisoners who have been arrested and are being held due to action by metropolitan police officers. We will still have police officers at the most remote areas who will continue as they are at present. The exception is at one of the centres in the Pilbara.

Hon PETER FOSS: In time, it may well become sensible in some places to hand over some of those areas under this contract. However, at this stage in some discrete areas they are not full-time FTEs. Unless there is the capacity to re-use a person, not a great deal is gained from the change. The same problem occurred in other areas where a portion of an FTE was released. In time we will be looking at what we can do certainly in the major regional centres. That is not being done at this stage.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I note in the Western Australia Police Service annual report that domestic violence is responsible for at least 50 per cent of murders in Western Australia. I am encouraged by the changed attitude of the Police Service to domestic violence. I was particularly interested to note that training in this area at the Police Academy has increased by 50 per cent. What other training is being provided to deal with domestic violence?

Mr MATTHEWS: The Western Australia Police Service, like agencies all around Australia, has taken steps because, as the member correctly said, family violence, or domestic violence as it is more commonly called, is not only a source of considerable concern to the victims involved but it also has an intergenerational effect on young children who witness it, because they see the parents as role models and, therefore, learn the same practices. It makes a great deal of sense to tackle

domestic violence there and move from the position of where it was traditionally regarded as a private matter and not within the core functions of the police unless it was very serious, with physical harm being done to a person. Police officers attending domestic violence incidents are encouraged to take appropriate action, such as apprehending and proceeding against the perpetrators and to provide victim support to those affected, including the family. A number of women's refuge centres have been established. A pilot program is being established at Joondalup so that the court can examine all factors that impinge on domestic violence and related matters. Part of that is due to a change in the culture of the Police Service and its individual members. In recognition of that new role, if I can put it that way, of dealing with domestic violence, we are encouraging it through the academy and its various courses. It also requires managers and supervisors throughout the service on day-to-day occasions when talking to staff to emphasise that importance. It is followed up with the actual policy and practice of the services enunciated in the commissioner's directives.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I thank the Police Commissioner for that and commend the Police Service on that major change. People get very concerned about crime and safety and murders. The new policy is a very good improvement given that approximately half the number of murders are committed in a domestic situation.

I refer to trends and issues surrounding road safety. The effect of road safety measures that have been put in place are indicated by the reduction of fatalities per 100 000 people on our roads. That is very good to see. Clearly the Multanovas and seat belt vigilance have contributed to the increased level of safety on the roads. As the Police Service is concerned about the number of people who have admitted to driving with a blood alcohol limit in excess of 0.25 per cent, what action is proposed to reduce the incidence of drink-driving?

Mr MATTHEWS: Although much work has been done in education and enforcement of drink-driving penalties, it is one of those areas that can always be improved on. It is also more important that we continue to maintain the public perception - sometimes it is perception - based on the belief that at any time and in any place they can be stopped and breath tested to see whether they are under the influence of alcohol. We do that through running high-profile campaigns in education supported by enforcement, in which we use large concentrations of police officers in selected areas, often at "choke" points. We also encourage police officers as they go about their normal patrolling duties, if they are not committed to attending a task, to stop people in vehicles with a view to establishing whether they are driving under the influence of alcohol. That is the case in country areas where there is real concern over the level of fatalities and serious injuries on the roads. Attempts to reduce the incidence of drunk driving is a matter of constant vigilance reinforced by education. Our strategy is consistent with those of other States in Australia; it is very effective. However, at the end of the day there will never be police cars or police officers everywhere, so we must ensure we target the areas we think are most at risk. One of the ways we can assist in that targeting is to identify where we have apprehended people; that is, the licensees of premises who have provided the liquor for these people. Targeting those areas is a wider strategy because clearly they are serving people who are intoxicated.

[3.30 pm]

Hon B.M. SCOTT: My third question relates to school-based police officers. I cannot find a particular item in the budget. It is a proactive and commendable practice to have school-based police officers. The region I represent covers Rockingham, Kwinana and Safety Bay and they have been found to be a great addition to the school. Can the commissioner tell me the number of school-based police officers, and whether there is an allocation to cover that in the next budget?

Mr MATTHEWS: We have just over 30 full-time officers based in the schools; a number of officers do this work part time. I agree with the members statements. They are a very effective use of resources, not only in terms of addressing issues that are currently arising, but also in developing a good relationship with young people. We know that young people make up one of the two groups that understandably have most conflict with the police. It is important where we can to use the opportunities available to develop those relationships. On that factor alone school-based police officers are of value. It is a matter of balance as to how many police are used for proactive policing. Although the service has put significant resources into that area, it also needs to address the issues of responding to events and crimes when they occur. Although it would be lovely to have everybody doing proactive policing, we could never do that. Currently we have a very good balance with approximately 30 per cent of police officers engaged in proactive policing. That is a fairly high figure. It is a good investment and the results will be medium to long term rather than short term.

Hon NORM KELLY: How many officers are assigned to the vice squad at the moment? Are there any plans to change the numbers in that squad?

Mr MATTHEWS: As I understand it, six officers are assigned to the vice squad. Their duties are primarily in the metropolitan area. They do not, of course, operate in isolation from the other squads, particularly those involved in the crime portfolio. Unfortunately much vice activity is interrelated with drugs and other such criminal behaviour. Therefore, it is probably misleading to say that only four people are concerning themselves with vice, because many of the officers within the portfolios and even generally throughout the State are addressing those issues. Obviously the impact of the prostitution legislation will require us to look at numbers and strategies for vice investigations. When we have undertaken that analysis in the light of the legislation, we will either increase or decrease the numbers. However, I do not anticipate a marked change.

Hon NORM KELLY: On page 18 of the annual report it is stated that the Western Australia Police Service believes its management of issues associated with the sex industry would be greatly facilitated by the introduction of proposed new legislation. It goes on to say that the prostitution control Bill 1998 has been drafted and it is hoped it will be introduced into Parliament during 1999-2000. Given that that Bill was not introduced, but an alternative Bill was, are there any

concerns that the police will not have the full scope of the legislation that was specified here as being helpful to policing in that area? I am concerned about the limitations of the current legislation.

Mr MATTHEWS: The concerns about prostitution are two-fold. Clearly there is what I call the public concern; that is, the visibility of street walkers in highly populated public places, sometimes in residential areas, which involves condoms and needles associated with drug trafficking or use being left around. That aspect causes concern to the wider community. To the best of my knowledge - I must wait to see what is in the legislation - the legislation will address that. The other area of concern is the infusion of organised crime into the activities that are less public in the sense that they occur in a more covert way, often in brothels, depending on who is running the brothels and so forth. The legislation put forward initially contained a regulatory arrangement which would have assisted in that area. We now do not have that, but whatever legislation is introduced in the future will result in a better situation than that which we have had prior to its introduction.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: The second dot point on page 1072 of the *Budget Statements* makes reference to the upgrading of the statewide computer network. I note that all matters to do with computers involve continual upgrading. I take it there is a certain standard the Police Service wishes to achieve throughout the State. In general terms what is that standard? When is it anticipated that that work will be finalised?

Mr MATTHEWS: I will keep away from the technical side of it.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I wish you would, because I may not understand the technical side of it.

Mr MATTHEWS: The person who can answer this question in detail is Mr McCaffery. The Police Service was faced with a range of old and outdated equipment across the various areas of the State. There were inadequate data linkages to enable the computers to communicate. Much of the investment has gone into the latest Pentium machines, linked with fibre optics or, in some instances, via satellite. The network has been effectively completed. There are odd bits and pieces of work still left to do; however, it is largely completed. The Police Service won a gold technology award for the network upgrade. That was a source of great pride to the Police Service.

Mr McCAFFERY: Yes, we have achieved that. To complete what the commissioner said, we have a lease arrangement so that at least every three years we will be upgrading our network. Previously we had police officers working on green dumb terminals in remote country centres because of the inability to get decent fat pipes in the thin pipes - to keep it to non-technical terms - and also we were working on Windows 3.11 which was a totally unacceptable level of computerisation. We will be upgrading at least every three years as the leases roll over.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What is the cost of this continual upgrading over the three-year period?

Mr McCAFFERY: I do not have the exact figures with me, but the average lease for that period - Mr McDonald may be able to help me - costs about \$700 a year for a computer with software.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am looking at the cost for the Police Service as a whole; is that figure able to be provided on notice?

Mr McCAFFERY: Yes, I could take that on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have sufficient detail of the question?

Mr McCAFFERY: Yes, I have.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Like the Chairman and the minister, I also think it is commendable that the Police Service has managed to reduce its car fleet by 89 vehicles; however, that being the case, it has still left the Police Service with a liability of \$1.603m, which is the additional cost. Could the commissioner advise me where the Police Service is going to find this \$1.603m? Is any component likely to come out of operational funding?

[3.40 pm]

Mr MATTHEWS: I can answer that very easily. We received an increased sum of money in next year's budget - these estimates - and a component of that was to cover the \$1.6m to which the member has referred.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The Police Service was given additional money from Treasury to fund the increased leasing costs.

Mr MATTHEWS: We pointed out, as the member has mentioned, that there were increased costs arising from the lease of the vehicles. We needed that additional funding to maintain the number of vehicles required to provide policing services, and that money has been provided.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In view of the fact that the reduction of 89 vehicles has still left the Police Service with a substantial financial liability, will it remain in the Matrix Leasing Pty Ltd vehicle fleet contract; and, if not, why not?

Hon PETER FOSS: That question contains a suggestion that it is due to the Matrix contract.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is it a good contract?

Hon PETER FOSS: We have been through this before. One of the things that never seems to get through the member's head is that if the resale value of vehicles goes down -

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: However, it has never happened. No-one is seeing a reduction in the amount they are paying for vehicles.

Hon PETER FOSS: There has been a drop in the resale value of vehicles. Whether or not the member thinks there has been a drop, it is commonly known throughout not only Western Australia but also Australia that there has been a drop in the resale value of vehicles. Because of that drop, the cost of having vehicles goes up, whether or not there is a leasing contract. In fact, had it not been for the savings made on the Matrix contract, we would have been severely embarrassed by the fact that the resale value of vehicles has gone down. The good deal that came out of the Matrix leasing plan has saved the State a large amount of money. It is a point the member has never understood.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is 89 cars down and it is costing \$1.6m extra.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, it is not. The member seems to miss the point of what is happening in the world. Notwithstanding the answers the member gets, she ignores them and continues to ask questions as though she has not been given an answer. I have given her the answer. It maintains the case, whether or not she thinks it is the case.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Once again, does the Police Service propose to remain in this leasing arrangement with Matrix? If not, why not? If so, why?

Mr MATTHEWS: Yes, we do. It is a contractual arrangement. We are one of the government agencies which is bound by the contract. I take issue with the point the member made that we have a liability because we have 89 fewer vehicles. I do not accept that. We have managed to reduce ongoing liabilities by reducing it by 89 vehicles.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I take that point.

The CHAIRMAN: The extra \$1.6m cost has been made up for by extra funding?

Mr MATTHEWS: Yes, that is correct.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is there any guarantee of any further ongoing funding in the event that the leasing costs increase again next year? Is that part of the arrangement with Treasury?

Mr MATTHEWS: No, it is not.

The CHAIRMAN: As time marches on, we are getting closer to our last 15 minutes. I want to make sure that everyone has sufficient opportunity to ask questions. So far that has worked very well, and I thank members for the way they have cooperated.

Hon GREG SMITH: It was very appropriate that I follow Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. The question I want to put to the commissioner is a matter of interest question. Is the constant criticism and the negative publicity about the Police Service that we see having an effect on the morale of the Police Service in general?

Mr MATTHEWS: One must acknowledge that no police officer likes to pick up the morning newspaper and see instances in which individuals have let down the whole service by their actions - I must say that they are few and far between - or are affected by some aspect that has either gone wrong or has been said to have gone wrong, and sometimes an investigation has not gone wrong. That factor needs to be addressed by management and is being addressed, because it is important that police officers, who in the vast majority are doing a very good job, remain focused on the task at hand, keep their spirits up, and can look at themselves in the mirror and have respect for themselves because they know they are doing a good job. My task and the task of the police command is to make sure that when people take action that falls below the high standards to which we aspire in the Police Service, we take appropriate action so that they do not blacken the reputation of everyone else. If we have systems, policies or practices that are having an adverse impact on the public perception of how we work, we need to change them, and on occasions when that has been brought to our attention we have done that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: My experience with morale problems is that they are often due to a lack of resources and the necessary support to enable people to do their job properly. Is that a problem within the Police Force?

Mr MATTHEWS: Of course, everyone would like, when they have a need, to get more resources to address that problem. However, the Police Service, like everybody else in government, must be conscious that this money does not just rain from the sky but comes from you, me and every other taxpayer, so we use the resources that are given to us as best we can. If we can mount an argument to convince government that we need additional resources and we cannot do certain things without those resources, we will do that, but we first need to make sure that we are managing our resources as best we can.

Hon PETER FOSS: This Government has, as everyone knows, vastly increased the resources that have been made available to the police, and has vastly increased the number of effective police officers. It has been a process of continuous improvement since we have been in government.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: A number of agencies conduct surveys of their staff with regard to morale problems. Does the Police Service conduct such surveys; and, if so, can the results be provided?

Mr MATTHEWS: While I acknowledge that resourcing is an aspect of morale, so are a range of other things. In my experience, sometimes the teams that I have worked with have had the highest morale ever when they have had few resources but have been well managed and well driven. I am not saying that because I was managing and driving them, because it also applied to teams that I had nothing to do with. To take a situation outside the Police Service, even in

wartime when people are in dire straits and getting quite a pasting, if they are doing something to which they are committed and in which they believe, their morale can be very high. That is because the human constitution is complex and not just one factor alone impacts on morale. Obviously, as I said, having plenty of resources and support in an overwhelming situation is a consideration, because people feel like they are on a winning team, but morale can often be high even when the situation is dire. We do not do any surveys of morale.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We notice that when ministers change, the morale in departments also changes from time to time.

Page 83 of the annual report provides details of crime information. Can that information be broken down by district or regional area; and, if so, can that be provided on notice?

[3.50 pm]

Mr MATTHEWS: We can certainly do that but the information is on our web page.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Are the figures broken down?

Mr MATTHEWS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it freely available?

Mr MATTHEWS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I will not record that as a question taken on notice. Our research officer will obtain the information for the committee's record and the member will have access to it.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am happy for the answers to these questions to be provided on notice. I am revisiting fairly standard questions on the child abuse unit that were asked last year and the year before. How many cases were reported to the child abuse investigation unit in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 to date? How many cases of child pornography and child prostitution were reported to child abuse investigators, and how many cases of child prostitutes were reported to the vice squad? How many authorised staff are currently involved in child abuse investigations? Have all relevant positions been filled during this current financial year? If some positions have been unfilled, what positions are they and for what period were they unfilled?

Mr MATTHEWS: We will take those questions on notice. We are happy to provide that information.

Hon NORM KELLY: This question may have to go on notice: Is there any statistical information on how the cannabis cautioning system is working, with particular reference to the number of people who are eligible to undergo the cautioning system but are not undergoing it? Concerns have been expressed that police in certain districts are proceeding with charging people rather than diverting them to the education programs.

Hon PETER FOSS: Last month's information is available in Parliament.

Hon NORM KELLY: I think I have asked those questions before. The reason for the questions is that there seem to be areas of discrepancy in how the system is being applied when one compares Mirrabooka with Bunbury. I want to see if it is possible to obtain information on how the system is being applied throughout the other police districts.

Hon PETER FOSS: I will take the question on notice. I am not sure how much statistical information and anecdotal information we will be able to give the member.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: In the event of the Protective Custody Bill being speedily passed by Parliament, what resource implications will arise for capital expenditure on lockups in the event of their being used, other facilities, and personnel?

Hon PETER FOSS: According to what happened when drunkenness was decriminalised, there should be an improvement in resources rather than a problem with them. I would have thought there would be benefits from not charging people, not locking them up and not bringing them before a court the next day. Under the legislation, people who would not previously have been taken into custody until they committed a crime will now be taken into custody. Public drunkenness is, of itself, not a crime. Nothing can be done about intoxicated people, particularly young people, until they commit a crime. If they do not commit a crime, the police are powerless to do anything.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is any extra expenditure to be allocated to provide places for these young people to be placed in custody?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is in the Health budget.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: As I read the Bill, the police will be doing most of the work of placing people in custody.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, the police will take them into custody. The Bill provides that only as a last resort will the police maintain custody. The most important aspect is to return them to their parents or to another responsible person. I understand the Health Department is considering putting people who are detoxing from other forms of intoxicants through a centre in the same way as people with alcohol problems went through such a centre. I do not believe the police will maintain them in custody except in exceptional circumstances or when someone else is unavailable to take responsibility for them. The Bill is very strong on that particular provision.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the minister for his attendance today. I also thank Commissioner Matthews and his team for their attendance and cooperation today. It has been a long hearing and we appreciate their assistance.

Sitting suspended from 3.58 to 4.17 pm

Division 63: Justice, \$413 276 000 -

Hon Mark Nevill, Chairman.

Hon Peter Foss, Minister for Justice.

Mr A. Piper, Director General.

Mr R. Harvey, Executive Director, Offender Management.

Mr T. Simpson, General Manager, Prison Services.

Dr R. Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Policy and Legislation.

Mr P. King, Director of Financial Management.

Mr C. Smith, Director, Aboriginal Policy and Services.

Ms M. Brewer, Administrative Officer, Law Reform Commission.

Ms J. Williams, Commissioner for Equal Opportunity.

Ms P. Phillips, Acting Executive Director.

Mr D. Daly, General Manager, Community Based Services.

Mr D. Stockins, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Ms A. McLaren, Public Trustee, Public Trust Office.

Ms C. Ginbey, Assistant Superintendent, Nyandi Prison.

Mr. R. Warnes, Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Ms G. Lawson, Deputy Public Advocate, Office of the Public Advocate.

Mr E. West, Manager, Corporate Services.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearing on the Ministry of Justice. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members and witnesses give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their question or answer. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask your cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers. Full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. That also applies to members. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee, and for advisers to please state their full name, contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form.

Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

WITNESSES: Yes.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: At page 757, under major achievements for 1999-2000, reference is made to the completion of planning for the upgraded Bandyup Women's Prison in 2000-01. What are the details of the nature of the upgrade and how will it address the current muster issues?

Mr SIMPSON: The Bandyup prison is subject to an upgrade to the value of \$14.8m. The effect of that upgrade will be to increase the capacity of Bandyup by 82 beds; that is, there will be a new 72-bed unit plus a 10-bed self-care unit. In addition, there will be a substantial increase in facilities at Bandyup, including a new crisis care centre, substantial improvements to the health centre and increased industry programs and activity space. This will provide not only additional accommodation for prisoners in Bandyup beyond the current capacity but also far greater amenity for the prisoners. It will be focused on the needs of vulnerable prisoners through the crisis care unit which is modelled on the crisis care unit in Casuarina Prison. It will also enable a far better regime of constructive and rehabilitative activities for prisoners.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: What will be the capacity of the prison when upgrading is completed?

Mr SIMPSON: That will bring the design capacity at Bandyup to 167.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: How many prisoners are in Bandyup now?

Hon PETER FOSS: It will have a modified capacity of 224 and single bunking of 167. The present units at Bandyup are not suitable for double bunking.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What is the current muster at Bandyup?

Mr SIMPSON: The combined muster today for Bandyup and Nyandi prisons, plus the work camp is 189. I do not have with me the number within Bandyup now, but it is in the vicinity of 140.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Does Nyandi Prison have a capacity of about 10?

Mr SIMPSON: It has a capacity of 45 to 50.

Hon PETER FOSS: The capacity of the work camp is 10.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: For what capacity was Bandyup designed?

Mr SIMPSON: The design capacity for Bandyup is 85 beds as single-cell accommodation. Considerable modifications have been carried out to allow double-cell accommodation. However, we will be seeking, through this program of upgrading, to return Bandyup to single-cell accommodation.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: When will the upgrade be completed?

Mr SIMPSON: The upgrade will be completed in approximately two years.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Page 740 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the increase in women prisoners. Again, as Hon Muriel Patterson pointed out, reference is made to Bandyup Women's Prison on page 757 of the *Budget Statements*. The observation is made that negotiations were concluded on the establishment of a minimum security prison for women at the Pyrton site; it is the fourth dot point. What planning has been done in the event that the Pyrton site, for whatever reason, does not proceed?

Hon PETER FOSS: There is no reason why the Pyrton site will not proceed, in the same way there is no reason the Acacia prison site will not proceed.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is it the case that no alternative planning to the Pyrton site has been done?

Hon PETER FOSS: I do not intend to answer that question because one of the problems surrounding this issue has been the very negative attitude the Labor Party has taken to minimum security prisons for women.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to keep this session as objective as possible. The question was reasonable. Are any sites other than Pyrton planned?

Hon PETER FOSS: A number of sites have been considered all the way through. The problem is that to change at this stage would be extremely difficult and would delay it. It is now progressing, and I see no reason why it should not go ahead.

Hon GIZ WATSON: My question relates to juvenile offender management, referred to on page 760 of the *Budget Statements*, wherein the issue of Aboriginal mentor recruitment is raised. It also mentions an initiative for increased funding. By how much is the funding expected to be increased?

Hon PETER FOSS: Which item are you referring to?

Hon GIZ WATSON: The top bullet point on page 760 of the *Budget Statements* under the heading "Major initiatives, 2000-01".

Hon PETER FOSS: Aboriginal mentors?

Hon GIZ WATSON: How much increased funding will be provided?

Mr DALEY: The additional funding will total \$152 000. That will enable us to recruit additional mentors across all sites, particularly throughout the metropolitan area. It has been our experience that the most appropriate way to get through to young Aboriginal people is through appropriately qualified mentors who are accepted as role models. It breaks down some of the cultural difficulties of people from outside the group trying to run standard programs for all offenders.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I refer to juvenile offender management which appears also on page 760 of the *Budget Statements* and the rate of re-offending which measures the ability of rehabilitation and developmental programs to influence juvenile offenders. I note that the estimated figure is 51 per cent and the target rate is 50 per cent. Why is that target rate 50 per cent, which is one in two? The rate for adult offenders is about 34 per cent. Why is the success rate for juvenile offenders so low?

[4.30 pm]

Mr HARVEY: Recidivism rates are reasonably complex issues. The number we are looking at reflects a definition of re-

offending whereby a juvenile goes from a detention centre and is returned to a detention centre. Under output 8, the adult rate of re-offending is defined as the rate of coming back into the corrective services system. A person can either come back into prison or into community based correction centres. The figures in that sense are not directly comparable. That is not particularly clear, but that is the reality.

Hon PETER FOSS: Children do not get sent to a detention centre except as a very last resort. The more successful we are at diverting offenders from a detention centre, the higher the rate of recidivism among those who go into a detention centre, because the only reason they go to a detention centre is that they have a high recidivism rate. Statistics can often deceive, because the more successful we are at diverting people away from detention centres and keeping it purely as an absolute last-resort punishment when everything else has failed, the more likely we are to get a higher rate. It is the same as when we diverted people away from the adult system for fines: We ended up with more expense per prisoner because the people we were keeping there happened to be those who more likely should have been in prison.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Is it possible to provide me with a figure of the percentage of those who are being diverted?

Hon PETER FOSS: At one stage we had a very good slide which showed the number of children in Western Australia at the vulnerable age, the number who come in touch with the juvenile system, the number who never re-offend and so on down through the various processes. I will try to get hold of it for the member as it is very encouraging. The amount of diversion for people who never re-offend and the number who are diverted without going into a juvenile detention facility is very encouraging. Because that slide graphically represents the numbers involved, it is a very good way of getting that point across. I am sure we can find that slide and give it to the member.

Mr PIPER: As an indicative value, the number of juveniles appearing in court has reduced by about 40 per cent since the introduction of the cautioning system and juvenile justice team program. The success rate of the juvenile justice team program is in the order of 95 per cent, so there is quite a high compliance with the diversion for juveniles and a significant reduction of juveniles going through court. As the minister indicated, the courts are tending to reserve detention for either very serious offences or persistent offenders; therefore, because of the very successful and fairly significant diversion of juveniles away from both court and detention, the ones going into detention are much more likely to re-offend because of their previous offending behaviour. It does not mean they are locked away and forgotten. The cost per detainee for juvenile detention is about three times the cost of detaining an adult offender, because of the intensive education and program content in the juvenile detention centres. All detainees have mandatory schooling. They have skill and case management programs at an intensive level, which recognises the nature of the juveniles who are going into detention. Notwithstanding that or the accelerated progression that we are seeing through our education programs for juveniles in Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre, for example, we still get these figures of re-offending because of the cohort that is going into detention.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a good sign that recidivism rates are increasing if the overall prison population rates are coming down; in other words, you are left with a harder core of prisoners. Is it also the case in the juvenile justice area that the number of prisoners is coming down?

Hon PETER FOSS: We had a major decrease, and it is now probably fairly stable. We have taken the benefit of the change in the process and it has now evened out. I imagine that from now on we will have a fairly stable rate of juvenile involvement.

Mr PIPER: Banksia Hill was designed to be a 196-bed facility when it was opened, but it was initially built for 120 beds. The occupancy has been quite stable, in many respects - perhaps surprisingly so - since it has been opened, with fluctuations down to the low 90s, and up to 100 or 110, so that population is reflecting the effect of that diversion out of the courts.

The CHAIRMAN: If a juvenile who has turned 18 re-offends and goes back into the prison system, how is that dealt with in the recidivism rate? Is it ignored and does he start with a clean slate when he becomes an adult?

Mr HARVEY: It does not so much affect juvenile recidivism rates, but it is ignored in the adult system.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Page 779 of the *Budget Statements* states that judges' superannuation liabilities are forecast to increase over the following years. What is the current liability for judges' superannuation, and what is the projected increase likely to be?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will table the figures rather than read them out.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The annual report for the Ministry of Justice has a new performance indicator which deals with the backlog in court services. I note with some interest that the Supreme Court has a backlog of 1 778 civil cases and 166 criminal cases as at 1 July 1999, and the District Court has a backlog of 347 civil cases and 1 548 criminal cases. The Magistrate's Court received 52 372 cases in 1998-99, yet the number of cases finalised in that same year was only 21 556. Why are there such massive backlogs in the court system?

[4.40 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: I do not think there is any backlog in the Supreme Court. It is not necessarily correct to call an outstanding number of cases a backlog. We amended the criminal law Act. We have reached the stage that practitioners are complaining that cases are coming on to be dealt with too quickly and they are not ready to deal with those cases. As I said, I do not believe there is a backlog of criminal cases in the Supreme Court, partly due to the fact that a large amount of the jurisdiction was moved from the Supreme Court to the District Court. We hoped to move some of the District Court

jurisdiction into the Magistrate's Court. I still hope that will happen. As a result of the jurisdiction move, the Supreme Court has been able to assist the District Court with the additional cases going through the District Court.

A number of reasons are responsible for the backlog of cases in the District Court. The Act to which I referred, which transferred a large amount of jurisdiction from the Supreme Court to the District Court, and the significant increase in the number of indictments preferred - which is principally due to the police catching more people and charging them - have resulted in there not being enough courts in which to list criminal trials. That last aspect was dealt with in January of this year when four more criminal courts came on stream at the District Court, which resulted in the Chief Judge of the District Court being able to list many more criminal trials than he had been able to previously; in fact, that has had an effect on the waiting list. It is still too long, and I would like to see two more judges appointed to the District Court. I am working on that. I have not been able to do it immediately for various reasons, but I believe we have the capacity to do that. The appointment of one will be assisted by the passage of the courts amendment Bill, because the person who was previously providing judicial assistance in the District Court was unable to continue to provide that assistance due to an interpretation of the provisions of the District Court of Western Australia Act. When that amendment is passed by the Parliament, Judge Greaves, who is the judge of the Liquor Licensing Court, will be capable of being reappointed as a commissioner in the District Court. I would also like to appoint one other judge. With those two appointments, I believe the number of cases on the list will be reduced to a very acceptable level.

I want to make clear that Western Australia is still doing well on a nationwide basis, although I would like to see us doing better than the other States on delays in criminal trials. I do not take any great satisfaction from the fact that the time for cases to be dealt with in the District Court has increased. We are taking measures to reduce that number. I congratulate the District Court because if it were not for the efficiency of the court, our figures would probably not compare with those of the rest of Australia.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister claims that there is no backlog of cases in the Supreme Court. The annual reports states there is a "backlog" of 480 cases as distinct from 1 778 cases still to be dealt with as at 1 July 1999.

Hon PETER FOSS: I do not accept that.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: On page 747, one of the major achievements for 1999-2000 is the development of Genisys, or the generic case management system, which is designed to meet the case management needs of all jurisdictions. Will the minister provide more detail on Genisys, where it will be deployed, and how it impacts on the listing intervals, the quality and quantity of trials and cases in all jurisdictions?

Ms PHILLIPS: The application of Genisys, which will replace the systems in the Supreme Court, the District Court and the Magistrate's Court, will contribute to the efficiencies and effectiveness of those jurisdictions. Genisys has already been successfully implemented in all our metropolitan courts. In addition to that, videoconferencing facilities have been built into the court sites at South Hedland, Bunbury and Geraldton.

Hon PETER FOSS: A good feature of Genisys is its adoption by a number of jurisdictions as being the benchmark computer system. It has now been adopted by the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Court of Australia. That has helped Western Australia to further develop the program. We are considering allowing electronic lodgment of documents with the court and for lodgment to be integrated with the Genisys system. This will be a tremendous service to people, especially country practitioners, although metropolitan practitioners will also find it extremely useful. The system has also been sold to the Malaysian court system. I have a chart that may be of assistance to Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, showing the reduction in the listing intervals that has occurred with the introduction of the extra courts in the District Court.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: On page 748, under the major initiatives for 2000-01, mention is made of videoconferencing and video links to key metropolitan and regional courts. Can the minister provide information on the benefits of videoconferencing, including details of cost savings and advice on which regional areas will be included in the extension?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will deal with the question generally and ask some of the officers to deal with the particulars. One of the main benefits of videoconferencing and video links, particularly in regional areas, is that there is now no need to move prisoners around. For instance, prisoners appearing in a court in Kalgoorlie can be remanded in the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison and the court can sentence them when the judge receives a presentence report while the prisoners remain in Kalgoorlie. The advantage is that counsel who appeared for them in the Kalgoorlie court are able to reappear for them without having to travel to Perth or to brief other counsel in Perth. It has also been used to save litigants a tremendous amount of money when witnesses appear in court remotely. One of the earliest cases involved a witness in the United States of America who was too ill to travel but was able to appear before the District Court in Perth as a remote witness. We have also been using it for remand prisoners. In the past the remand process was unsatisfactory as prisoners had to be remanded regularly in custody. They were required to be taken by prison transfer vehicle to the cells in the central law courts in Perth, kept there for a significant amount of time, proceeded through the court process, taken back to East Perth, and eventually returned to the prison from which they came. That remand process can now be conducted through videoconferencing. A duty counsel is now stationed at Hakea Prison who can advise prisoners and act for them on the remand process, which means there is no need for them to leave the prison, be transported by vehicle and locked down in the lockup. That has been a tremendous benefit to everybody involved.

[4.50 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the minister to provide more concise answers.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I would like to discuss the issue of legal aid funding. I understand that negotiations are currently under way with the Commonwealth Government to lock in the amount of legal aid funding for the forthcoming period. Could the minister advise how far those negotiations have progressed and the amount of legal aid funding that is likely to come from the Commonwealth Government?

Hon PETER FOSS: As far as the State is concerned, legal aid funding is very good, and that has to be made quite clear. This State is one of the greatest contributors to legal aid on a per capita basis of any of the States. We have increased the amount of legal aid available to the Legal Aid Commission of Western Australia. Some time ago the Commonwealth stated that it wished to operate its legal aid for commonwealth matters quite separately from the States. The federal Attorney General has said that he will take responsibility for and accept all the obligations involved in funding legal aid for commonwealth matters. So, strictly speaking, it is a commonwealth matter and the Commonwealth has made it quite clear that it is a commonwealth responsibility. However, the Western Australian Government is always keen to make sure that we do not miss out on commonwealth services and we have been making representations to the commonwealth Attorney General that the current formula that has been devised has obviously been devised in the eastern States because it does not fully recognise the extra cost of providing services in Western Australia and we believe we should get a better deal than we are currently getting under the increased commonwealth funding. I am making those representations to the federal Attorney General. The funding arrangement came out of a committee that was set up without Western Australian representation and it did not even visit Western Australia to determine the needs in various parts of Australia, and I believe that shows from the way the formula works.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I note in the table on page 769, output 14, legal aid assistance, that the application approval rate is currently at 74 per cent and the budget target for next year is to remain at 74 per cent. What are the main reasons for 25 per cent of the applications being unsuccessful?

Hon PETER FOSS: We do not appear to have the Director of the Legal Aid Commission here. I am not sure where he is. The Legal Aid Commission is an independent body and I cannot give members its answers. We give it money, but it decides independently what it will do. Without the director being here I cannot answer that.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Perhaps the Attorney General can answer generally. It is my understanding that there are still some areas, such as family law, where legal aid is very rarely approved. Does the Attorney General have any general knowledge of that?

Hon PETER FOSS: Family law is a commonwealth responsibility. The Commonwealth Government has made it quite clear that it will take responsibility for family law legal aid: It will provide the funding, it will set the priorities and it will determine the levels of service. The federal Attorney General has made it quite clear that it is a federal responsibility.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: On page 741 under major policy decisions there is an item for additional commercial lawyers of \$445 000. Is that related to legal aid or is it for some other reason?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is the Crown Solicitor's Office.

Hon GREG SMITH: My question refers to page 747 under major achievements for 1999-2000 and relates to dot point six. It mentions the South Hedland justice complex which is providing state-of-the-art facilities for the court and community-based services. Could you provide an indication as to the manner in which the facility is operating and the types of services it is offering? I also understand similar complexes are planned for Rockingham, Fremantle and Busselton. Could we be advised as to how they are progressing?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is one of our justice centres in which we provide all Justice facilities; that is, it is not only a court as it provides all community based and other services available through the ministry. It has the latest videoconferencing and electronic access. Therefore, South Hedland can link up with any other court which has videoconferencing. The court recording equipment is the latest available, and capable of being integrated with the proposed digital recording framework. That can be seen in the digital recording used in the District Court. It has video replay facilities for police suspect interviews and other videotaped evidence, and electronic security throughout the facility includes zone swipe card access. It has operated for eight months and the majority of the teething problems have been remedied. These were principally to do with the electronic aspects of the videoconferencing, airconditioning and security systems. The only other problem stems from a water leak as a consequence of cyclone Steve in March. The facility has been well received by everybody involved in the region. Videoconferencing facilities have been heavily used; namely, approximately 20 times by the refugee tribunals and frequently by the District Court. They are also used for family visits by juvenile justice, as families have carried out visits of juveniles by linking into Banksia Hill.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Page 741 of the *Budget Statements* reads -

The trend toward tougher penalties for criminal behaviour will result in more persons qualifying for aid under existing legal aid eligibility guidelines.

Does that not refer to the part of legal aid which is the State's responsibility? If so, why has the Government not seen fit to increase the allocation for the Legal Aid Commission?

Hon PETER FOSS: The Government has increased the budgetary allocation for the Legal Aid Commission over the years.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is the minister aware of what the budget papers say?

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes, I am.

The CHAIRMAN: The member will get a chance to follow up the question.

Hon PETER FOSS: For example, the allocation was \$9.7m in 1998-99, it was \$12.341m in 1999-2000, and for the forthcoming financial year it is \$11.838m. This is considerably more than previous allocations. People become eligible under Dietrich applications, for which support is always provided as supplementary funding through ex gratia payments, as the member is probably aware. That funding has always been in addition to the funding received by the Legal Aid Commission. If Dietrich application are made over and above the commission's base funding, supplementary funding is always provided. A significant number of such applications were made for some time, but I have not struck many of late. I wish Mr Turnbull, the Director of the Legal Aid Commission, were here to remind me of the number. I have not had any major Dietrich applications of late. If what is predicted in the papers occurs, the mechanism is in place to deal with it.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I will not read out what the budget papers further say in that regard.

Concerning deaths in custody, the minister would be aware of the recent tragic events, with a significant number of persons dying in custody. Page 757 of the *Budget Statements* makes the following observation -

An "At Risk Prisoner Management Strategy" was implemented at all prisons with a significant reduction in the number of prisoner deaths by suicide being achieved.

What further steps are being taken in the light of recent events or is the ministry leaving it at what has already been done? Is medical care still provided by the ministry or have other arrangements been made to cater for the health care of prisoners, particularly those at risk? If so, when did it commence? If not, is it being considered? If so, when is it anticipated to commence?

The CHAIRMAN: I will take that as the member asking five questions.

Hon PETER FOSS: Many questions were asked.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Let us hope the minister can answer one of them!

[5.00 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: First, a number of deaths have occurred. I have said that any death in prison is tragic whether it be from natural causes or otherwise: To die separated from family, whether in prison or not, is tragic. Unfortunately, one of the things that does not happen when people go into prison is that deaths do not cease to occur. A number of prisoners die of natural causes, and they will continue to die of natural causes whether or not they are in prison. A significant number of the recent deaths have been from natural causes. I completely reject the irresponsible statements that have been made by various people, without any knowledge of the events, that those deaths from natural causes are other than events that would have occurred in any event. That is distressing for the relatives and it is irresponsible on the part of the people who make those statements. Apart from the fact that we would like to have no deaths in custody through suicide, I do not believe that the recent number of deaths indicates that the number is unreasonable. Unfortunately, I know of no place in the world that manages to succeed in having no deaths in custody, but we will certainly try our best to achieve that. We believe that the method we have at the moment is the best. There was a significant decrease, and that continues to be the case.

We believe that the method of handling the situation is working; that is, with a crisis care centre, forensic case management teams and a prisoners risk assessment group. In the new Acacia prison, we will be building a similar crisis care unit. We have built, but not yet commissioned, a crisis care unit in Hakea Prison. We will build a crisis care unit in Bandyup Women's Prison. I believe that each of those units will be equipped to provide the latest in treatment for people who are at risk. I reject any suggestion that we are not acting properly or that the number of deaths recently suggests that the matter is out of control or is unreasonable. We have obtained a significant drop in the number of deaths in prison, and the prison service is to be congratulated for that. What it has achieved is remarkable, and the processes it now has are among the most modern and enlightened in the world.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any further omnibus questions?

Hon PETER FOSS: Does the member want the next question answered?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I do. Is the minister ready to answer it?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will deal with health services. At present we have a request for proposals for the provision of health services, and I will table that request in this Chamber. Two people are interested in providing those health services. We think that is a better way to provide health services than the system we have at present. I would be interested to hear at some other stage whether the member supports that process, because usually we are criticised when we try to provide our service outside of government. I would be grateful if I could get an indication from the member that he would support that. We believe that it may lead to an improved service. If that is the case, we will consider proceeding with it - that is the intent. If it does not produce that result, we will not proceed with it.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to the major achievements for 1999-2000 on page 772. The last dot point states -

Established a system to provide predictive modelling and simulation of future prisoner population and prison bed demand.

Given the system has been established, what result has it produced, with particular reference to the next four financial years? I am happy for the answer to that question to be taken on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: There is no need for that. The result has been extraordinary. We have been very accurate. I think we are now the only people in Australia with an accurate short-term prediction model. Again, the ministry is to be congratulated for that. Perhaps I should ask Dr Fitzgerald to give some ideas on the various models we have and the degree to which they work.

Dr FITZGERALD: The Ministry of Justice has developed models to better forecast the prison population. We experienced an atypical growth of 30 per cent in the prison population between 1997-98 and 1998-99, which was a substantial increase. It contrasts with the typical rate of increase of 5 per cent a year. We have now returned to that normal growth rate. That is some indication of what is happening with the prison population. The ministry has three forecasting models. One is a long-term forecasting model which looks several years ahead and draws on changes in the population. It includes things such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' population projections. The most commonly used model, which we will soon be providing on the Internet, is the short-term forecast. It relies on a number of factors, particularly the known number of prisoners coming into and exiting the system. The model includes a number of other variables which can be manipulated and provides a fairly accurate forecast of the prison population. That forecast is reliable for one or two years. The medium-term forecasting model draws on the flow of offenders through the criminal justice process. We know what happens at various decision points in the criminal justice process and we use that as a basis for medium-term forecasting trends. It is possible to use that model to simulate what would happen if certain changes were made to the system, such as changes in the average sentence length or in penalties for certain offences. It is not a perfect model - I do not think any forecasting model is - but it is one of the best in this country.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Page 757 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the Ministry of Justice's integrated drug management strategy and mentions the piloting of a prison drug-free unit and a project to expand the use of naltrexone, among other things. This committee has had an ongoing interest in related matters and has inquired into them. What will be the number of participants in the drug unit program and will it have any additional costs? I know the naltrexone program is only at preparation stage, but what will be the scale and cost of that program?

[5.10 pm]

Mr SIMPSON: The Ministry of Justice has allocated \$250 000 over 12 months to pilot the naltrexone program. Naltrexone is an opioid antagonist, which means it blocks the receptors to the effects of opiates so that they no longer produce the effects drug users are seeking. It has a similar effect for alcohol. It is important to remember that the use of medication is only a minor part of an effective treatment strategy. Having undertaken some research in the use of naltrexone elsewhere, evidence suggests that the use of a drug like that, combined with a range of support services designed to assist the people with the substance problem to deal with their personal issues and problems that lead to drug use, is an effective strategy. The use of naltrexone supports the non-use of the drug as the substance users address underlying issues. A substantial proportion of the \$250 000 is being directed towards the provision of counselling and other support services as well as naltrexone. The program is being delivered in the final three months of the prisoner's sentence based on evidence that the most effective strategy for the use of naltrexone is to focus on the period leading up to release from prison. Clearly, the danger period for returning to a lifestyle of drug use is immediately after release. The prison system will establish the prisoners on naltrexone over a three-month period and provide associated treatment support. Our prison-based program is linked to the Health Department's community-based program. We have arrangements with the Health Department that on completing the naltrexone program in prison, all prisoners will be referred to the community-based program run by the Health Department and, therefore, they will not only continue using naltrexone but also have the vitally important support in the community. The effectiveness of that and the outcomes it achieves will be fully evaluated. We will then be better placed to make decisions about whether the naltrexone strategy, as opposed to other strategies, should be used in a more widespread manner in the prison system.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: How many prisoners are on naltrexone? For how long will the \$250 000 program be run? What location is it being trialled at? Is it voluntary?

Mr SIMPSON: The cost of the program for 12 months is \$250 000 and it will provide treatment for approximately 100 prisoners.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I also asked about the drug-free unit.

Mr SIMPSON: The notion of a drug-free unit is to trial a place within the prison system where there is a high degree of privilege and desirability, thereby creating a strong incentive to be placed in that unit. However, it must remain drug free. The piloting of the drug-free unit is taking place at Nyandi Prison, which is the minimum security prison attached to Bandyup. It is intended that the confirmation of drug-free status will be supported by the use of dermal patches which are worn by people in the program 24 hours a day for a period of a week. It is possible to test to a far greater accuracy than with normal testing facilities to confirm the drug-free status. We have with us Christine Ginbey who is the assistant superintendent running Nyandi Prison who may wish to provide more detailed information.

Ms GINBEY: The drug-free unit has not commenced at Nyandi Prison yet. We are due to receive the first lot of dermal patches within the next fortnight. They will be allocated to prisoners on a random basis and prisoners will also be targeted by staff if the staff have suspicions of drug use. Nyandi Prison functions as a drug-free unit now; any prisoner who is found using alcohol or hard drugs is immediately returned to Bandyup and is upgraded to medium security. Because Nyandi is

such an attractive place for people to be, because of the amount of community work, rehabilitation and reparation that the women do, they want to be at Nyandi rather than at Bandyup; therefore they support the unit being drug free. Most of the information we receive comes from other prisoners who are supportive of Nyandi remaining a drug-free unit. Prisoners have told me that they support Nyandi remaining a drug-free unit because they find it hard to make a choice to be drug free prior to release in other institutions such as Bandyup when they see drugs being used by other prisoners. They want to give up drugs prior to getting out so that they can get on with their lives when they get out and get back into employment and re-establish family ties.

The CHAIRMAN: Is admission to this unit voluntary? Is it available only to women?

Mr SIMPSON: At this stage, the piloting of the drug-free unit is done within the women's prison. It is a concept we want to move to other parts of the prison system. Yes, admission is voluntary.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I understand that the agency had 509 cars under the vehicle lease arrangement at a cost of \$3 155 766 as at 30 June 1999. Currently the agency has 496 cars at a cost of \$3 980 887. In other words, the agency has 13 fewer cars and they are costing an additional \$825 000. How much of this additional \$825 000 can be attributed to a drop in the second-hand car market? How much of it can be attributed to the increased cost of fuel, what component can be attributed to the GST and what component can be attributed to increased leasing costs?

[5.20 pm]

Mr KING: The attribution of the cost to lease vehicles is outside the ministry's preserve. We lease vehicles. We have a fleet size of some 509 vehicles. Our fleet comprises broadly two types of vehicles for usage: One is for the judiciary, and the other is a passenger and light commercial fleet for inside ministry use. Our leasing costs have increased from 1998-99 to 1999-2000 by some \$600 000.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The figure provided to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations by the ministry only a week ago was \$825 000.

Mr KING: My figure is to year end at 30 June; the number provided previously was to the end of April. Fleet management is a function which covers a number of vehicles, and the costs of the fleet have remained stable. Leasing costs include not only direct leasing costs for the vehicles but also a disposal cost of the vehicle, which is a new initiative introduced into the fleet rate, plus the administration costs for a vehicle. The disposal cost which has now been introduced into the vehicle fleet is \$500 per vehicle over the life of the vehicle. There is now a \$9 per month administration charge on the vehicles to cover various administration costs of government. As to fuel and other costs, fuel costs have increased and our maintenance costs have decreased, and that is largely a function of fleet management.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would it be fair to say that you are getting less and paying more? If that is so, what does the agency intend to do about the future of its contractual arrangements with Matrix?

Mr KING: As to the first question, we are paying more on an individual vehicle by way of leasing costs. Essentially, we are managing our fleet to optimise the fleet to three levels. Clearly, judicial levels are part of a remuneration package of government, so I will leave those out. We have engaged a fleet manager. Our fleet benchmark is measured against three other fleets which are equally managed by the fleet manager. We have a fairly good understanding of our fleet profile and its usage. Over the past two years we have resolved the issue of knowing how these vehicles had been used. Now we work on a 98 per cent compliance figure with full log books and quarterly reporting. We have changed processes quite markedly when ordering a vehicle. We have focused heavily on reducing the accessory costs of vehicles to absolute minimum operational need. When a vehicle is ordered now, its whole life cycle cost is provided to an individual so that person can make the order and the decision. We have focused heavily on the other costs of the vehicle which are often hidden, of which maintenance is one and repairs is another. The bulk of damage to our fleet, which was therefore costly, resulted from car park-type incidents. Our insurance premiums were going to double at one stage. We have introduced a user-responsibility approach and the number of repairs that flow from that has reduced.

Lastly, at a broader level, to bring the fleet back to a right-sized fleet, several things are happening: First, there is a natural downsizing in the fleet as the prison transport contract locks in. Secondly, we have applied the approach of achieving a 10 per cent reduction in our fleet. We approached 10 per cent based on some of the profiling we did on our fleet to see how many business kilometres it was achieving and where the vehicles were. We believe there is still room for improvement, and that is our target, and that will come through in the response. Thirdly, we also have an outside-the-fleet management arrangement, where we have another fleet inside prison services, which largely comprises vehicles that are owned, such as tractors, trucks and the heavier prisoner transport vehicles, and we have now implemented fleet management across that framework as well. We recognise that the cost of vehicles, as you will see under the leasing arrangements on the open market as well, has increased markedly. That cost needs to be managed. Our whole focus has been to ensure that there is a relationship between operational need and vehicle type and size, and to address some of the housekeeping issues, such as not having darker coloured cars, which are more expensive to operate than lighter coloured cars. We have also benchmarked our fleet with our fleet manager on a range of issues, including whether we should have a single colour fleet or keep to our current stance of a fairly open fleet. We have had concerns also about the composition of vehicle type, which varies in popularity. We have a very even fleet at the moment. The last issue is that some vehicles probably need to be taken out of the leasing transaction because they have heavy fit-out costs. Those vehicles are mainly special purpose vehicles for prisoner escort and transport.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How will this additional cost be funded, and does the ministry intend to get out of the Matrix contract?

Mr KING: Vehicles, like any other input, are just another cost of operation. We have moved forward in our budget framework with regard to cost of operation, and this can be seen in the outputs. Vehicles are an overall cost of operating a division of the ministry and producing the outputs and they must be managed within that framework; that is our fiscal strategy. We have not sought specific funding recognition from Treasury for increased vehicle costs. We believe that needs to be managed within the ministry and there is an opportunity to bring down some of the overall costs to the ministry by limiting the number of vehicles. There are other initiatives with the opening of the government vehicles scheme, for example -

The CHAIRMAN: We will take those on notice.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: One of the major achievements for 1999-2000 on page 757 is a court security and custodial services contract signed with Corrections Corporation of Australia Pty Ltd. Notwithstanding the capital improvement costs, what savings will the Government secure by moving from the current arrangement to that contract with CCA? I am talking about the running costs under the contract.

Hon PETER FOSS: Hon Graham Giffard missed the history of this matter, and I have always made the point that the Government is not looking for savings, although we may very well get some.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: I have read the speeches.

[5.30 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: I know Hon Graham Giffard has read the speeches. The real benefit from this is that police officers are returning to doing police duties and prison officers are returning to doing prison duties. From our point of view, that is the major improvement and saving. I do not know whether there will be a dollar saving and I am sure that has not been the intent behind it, because we are not replacing that service with another service but are starting a new service of a different kind.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: If I may focus on the number of people who will be engaged under this contract, how many people went through the six weeks' training, and how many are considered to be suitable for employment? I understand that 112 people will be offered permanent employment and that there will be a casual pool of people. How many people will be full time and how many will be whatever are the full-time equivalents of the casual pool? How will that compare with the FTEs who previously carried out the service?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will deal with the part of the question which concerns the ministry; that is, how many people will be involved. The internal processes of the Corrections Corporation of Australia selection is not a matter of concern for us. What the company must do is satisfy the Director General that it is able to carry out its tasks. It does not necessarily mean that it will have more or fewer people.

Mr PIPER: About 50 prison officers will be returning to prison duties, and about 100 police officers will be returning to policing. In addition, the member will be aware that the bulk of the current court security function has been provided by contract for some years. A significant number of people have been employed by Chubb Protective Services Division, which has the security contract for the metropolitan courts. I do not have the employment numbers but a little under 300 people went through training and I understand that about 170-odd people graduated from training in accordance with the certifications provided by CCA instructors. That is a quite separate issue from the permits which need to be issued to undertake security work in accordance with the Act. CCA is in the process of submitting those people to us for our consideration and approval. We have not yet completed our assessment or issued permits under the contract for people to undertake that work. We will when we have considered the application. That is the process.

I do not have available the full-time equivalents for the contractor, but the member is correct in indicating that there is a mix of full-time and casual employment. If one considers the nature of the work, particularly the transport work and the fact that it is both diurnal and periodic in the week, it is one of those areas which has a very patchy or fluctuating work requirement. It does not take a lot of thinking to understand that police activity tends to be more intense on a couple of days towards the weekend when it comes to issues of public disorder, which, of course, affects the contractor involved in transporting people on behalf of the police, courts and prisons. All of those matters, and fitting in with the rhythms of the court process, require the contractor to match its work force to the available work. It is therefore a sensible approach to have both full-time and casual employees but I cannot provide a breakdown at this stage.

Hon GIZ WATSON: My question relates to the third dot point under the major achievements in 1999-2000 on page 772 of the *Budget Statements* which states that inspection reports on Bunbury, Albany and Wooroloo prisons were produced by the interim inspectorate. Who are the members of that inspectorate and have those reports been published?

Hon PETER FOSS: They have been tabled, which will answer that question. However, Dr Fitzgerald can enlarge on that.

Dr FITZGERALD: The interim inspectorate reported to me as the executive director of policy and legislation. The intention was to have an inspectorate at arms length from the prison service. To set up the interim inspectorate, I brought across from the United Kingdom Simon Boddis to lead the team initially. He had worked with Her Majesty's Inspectorate for several years and is currently with the Home Office although on secondment to the Lord Chancellor's Office. One member of the team was a prison superintendent, Mrs Jan Shuard. Three other members of the team had prison experience

but some had no recent experience. As members know, the report on the Bunbury Regional Prison was tabled in the Parliament last year and I believe the report on the inspection of Albany Regional Prison was tabled last week. A third report, on Wooroloo Prison Farm, has been completed and referred to the Attorney General who I understand will table it shortly.

Hon GIZ WATSON: At the bottom of page 780 of the *Budget Statements*, reference is made to an allocation of \$2m for the acquisition of sites for future prisons in the regions, particularly the planned replacement of Broome and Eastern Goldfields Regional Prisons. Is it anticipated that those will be private prisons?

Hon PETER FOSS: We do not know, and it is altogether dependent on what arises. There is no plan to make them private prisons. The Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison was provided by the local town council.

Hon GIZ WATSON: The site?

Hon PETER FOSS: No, the prison; and that is one of its problems.

Mr PIPER: It is perhaps worth commenting on the process for the benefit of members. It became clear, even before the increase in prison population in 1998-99, that forward planning for prisons had not been undertaken to the extent that we had firm site availability and a rapid capacity, or slow, depending on the muster, to expand the prison system.

The CHAIRMAN: It was a mess, in other words.

Hon PETER FOSS: That is dead right.

Mr PIPER: One feature that members will notice of this budget is a focus on forward planning in all areas. In fact, the Broome and Eastern Goldfields Regional Prisons have been identified as areas in which we must seek sites. We have been working through a proper consultation process with the Ministry for Planning and local authorities to ensure that we select sites that will be available and placed within regional and local planning in a way that they are built in an orderly and proper way. Similarly, we will seek to do that with additional sites for metropolitan and near-metropolitan prisons. This is part of putting our house in order and being in a position, when future funds or demand requires it, to move to establish prisons in locations where there are no prisons currently, so that the issue can be dealt with and put out of the way. So it is part of prudent forward planning. Planning for those two sites is quite well advanced.

[5.40 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: It is also fair to say that those two prisons are quite inadequate.

The CHAIRMAN: I have a follow-up question to that of Hon Giz Watson. When will the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services commence operation?

Hon PETER FOSS: It has to start on 18 June. A person has been selected but will not be available on 18 June so there will be an interim appointment between 18 June and 1 August. The person selected will become available on 1 August.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: I would like to ask some questions about the inspectorate and the interim inspectorate. I have had a look at the report for the Albany prison and there are a number of matters where the response in the Ministry of Justice document refers to budgetary constraints as being a problem with implementing recommendations. A couple of them relate to capital items such as the extraction of cooking odours from the facilities and an external shelter issue. Some of them relate to prisoner services such as the recreation officer and \$10 extra in phone credits. What planning the ministry has done to ensure that these issues are dealt with in the budgetary context in the near future?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will deal with the question from a policy point of view. If we had inspections of hospitals, primary schools and high schools in the same way that we inspect prisons I am sure we would come up with similar sorts of comments. There are things that, perhaps, if they had been properly designed in the first place, would not require extra expenditure now. I can think of a lot of high schools whose major problem is how they developed like Topsy over a period of time. If we sent an inspectorial team in as we did with the prisons they would come up with dreadful reports. The whole budget has to take into account the historical situation and make priorities. I do not think the mere fact that it has come out in an inspector's report and the fact that it would be the ideal result means that it will necessarily get the budget tick. As I have said, there are hospitals, high schools, primary schools, you name it, all over the State which, if we could replace them all tomorrow, would be wonderful, but there is not the budget to do it. It will be dependent upon the whole budget process. Certainly, as they have been identified by the inspector, it means that we have a better argument with Treasury, but if we get to the situation where every time something is reported by an inspector it gets done, I think that there will instantly be an independent inspector of schools, hospitals and you name it because they will all want to have one.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I think the minister has made the point very clear.

Mr PIPER: We have taken the interim inspection reports seriously. We intend that the Inspector of Custodial Services, when appointed, and the report produced, will be taken extremely seriously by the ministry. We will create a fully monitored action list that relates to all the things that come out of the inspections and that will form the basis of, and will be properly articulated in, our budget for policy consideration. They certainly will not be lost and they will be visible through the process. The consideration they get, as in the nature of all budgets, will be a judgment made at the time as to the available funds. They certainly will not be ignored.

Hon PETER FOSS: I think that we will find that when we get the reports for the Eastern Goldfields and Broome prisons that there will be some higher priorities. I think there are some more fundamental things wrong in our prison system than those at Albany and Bunbury.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: The point I am making is that they will be added to the list of capital works that need to be attended to but there can be no guarantee of priority.

Hon PETER FOSS: Precisely.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: At a couple of places in the budget papers reference is made to the domestic violence court at Joondalup yet I cannot see any specific funding allocation to continue that initiative. How is that to be funded?

Hon PETER FOSS: Part of the funding relates to the fact that it is a different process, rather than a different court. It is not an additional court as it uses the magistrate there. The funding principally comes from victims' services. Funding is also provided by Family and Children's Services and by the Police Service. The funding within the Minister of Justice is from victims' services.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Are issues like perpetrator programs, extra advocacy services and so on not expected to come from the Ministry of Justice budget?

Hon PETER FOSS: We applied for funding for the perpetrator program, but it was put into the Family and Children's Services budget. We do not know why.

Dr FITZGERALD: I cannot comment specifically on advocacy services, although I can find that information for the member. It is worth noting that other agencies contribute to the operation of the family violence court. For example, the Legal Aid Commission has provided a duty lawyer for the court, and a dedicated police prosecutor has been appointed to the court, although I understand that this involves some rearrangement of the way police provide services. The point is that resources are being reassigned to the court.

Hon PETER FOSS: Mr King has drawn my attention to the fact that the perpetrator program funding ended up in our budget.

Mr PIPER: The domestic violence perpetrator program does not have a separate item, so it is hard to find. It is within the offender management budget. It is administered through the community based services division of offender management, which will make the programs available. The family violence court is to some extent a prototypal pilot, and the project team is trying to establish a case management model for the court. The work was not done at the time the budget was submitted. The Ministry of Justice, through its normal funding for victims' services, perpetrator programs and the courts themselves, Family and Children's Services, through its service provision to families in crisis, and the Police Service are all contributing to the pilot. We will be better able to cost and seek funding once it has been piloted and established a little better so we have a sense of how it will work. It is going really well in a couple of aspects. The level of cooperation between the agencies to establish this program is particularly good. For example, the project officer who is running the project is on secondment from the Police Service, and is doing a particularly good job. There is encouragement in that sense: Getting agencies to work together to solve a common problem is one of the more vexed issues in government. This seems to be working well. I am encouraged by its status. Like all good ideas, it will prove itself; therefore, I believe funding will follow.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: Can the funding figure be provided on notice?

Mr PIPER: We can provide a supplementary estimate of the project cost, as opposed to funding.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I have a couple of questions about the Public Trustee. Page 764 of the *Budget Statements* reads -
Planned amendments to the Public Trustee Act will enable the Office to operate on a commercial basis.

Is this a forerunner to privatisation?

Hon PETER FOSS: No.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Page 784 deals with net appropriation determinations. Reference is made to proceeds from surplus public trust common fund interest. The actual for 1998-99 is \$4.745m, and the estimate for the current financial year is \$3m and \$2.368m for the forthcoming year. Whose money is in the common fund?

[5.50 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: That amendment will be introduced to change the current statutory requirement for a proportion of that money to go to the State Government. The money is derived from investment of moneys deposited with the Public Trustee. Many people have no choice in the matter because it is court-ordered investment. Currently, the statute requires that that money go to the Government. One reason that we are changing the operation of the Public Trustee is to try to make the return on the common fund comparable with the return on any other trustee fund, which currently it is not. Our whole intent is to remove the difference in returns that people currently obtain in the common fund by reason of the way it is structured.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Why is it referred to as surplus interest?

Mr PIPER: The Act refers to it in those terms. It has been a practice over many years, and in fact it is required under the

Act, that that surplus interest is returned to the consolidated fund. The proposal, which has been made public and which is clear, is to remove that practice and to establish not only the current common fund but also multiple common funds which will operate in a way that provides a better return to the individuals involved.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Are the amounts to which I referred arrived at by reference to a statutory formula, or are they arrived at on some other basis; and, if so, what is that basis?

Ms McLAREN: The rate of interest paid to the clients of the common fund is determined based on the cash rate normally, taking into consideration the amount of surplus interest which Treasury expects to receive. It is simply the difference between the interest that is paid to the clients of the common fund and interest that is earned by the investments of the common fund.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is that difference prescribed by the statute?

Ms McLAREN: The quantum of the difference is not prescribed by statute.

Hon PETER FOSS: What happens to it is.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Yes, certainly.

Hon PETER FOSS: The report has been tabled, and that point is raised in it. We have recommended that the practice cease to occur.

The CHAIRMAN: To what report is the minister referring?

Mr PIPER: The Public Trust Advisory Board provided a report on the operations of the Public Trust Office about 18 months ago, which was tabled and made public. It looked at a whole range of issues, including the operation of the common fund, and recommended the removal of that provision for the repatriation of surplus interest to the consolidated fund. It also recommended the adoption of multiple common funds, because the current common fund is essentially a cash management fund. People who operate or who have little choice but to operate out of the common fund operate only within that investment environment.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I was unable to isolate within the *Budget Statements* the amount of money the Ministry of Justice spends on consultancies. How much has it spent on consultancies into grievance procedures?

Mr PIPER: A single report examined the issue of prisoner grievance. That took place with the agreement of the Ombudsman. In early 1998, the Ministry of Justice significantly changed the process by which prisoners complained to the Ombudsman. The perception in the prisons was that prisoners were unable to make complaints. Since then, the number of complaints to the Ombudsman has increased significantly. The Ombudsman's office approached us and said that the ministry ought to be able to resolve grievances itself. An extensive report into that process was commissioned and we are now in the final stages of implementing the agreed process of multiple levels of review of prisoner grievances. Grievances will be reviewed at both the prison level and by a grievance resolution panel within the ministry. We can provide a cost of that study through the supplementary information.

Hon GIZ WATSON: How much does the Ministry of Justice spend on consultants?

Hon PETER FOSS: That information is subject to a regular report, which is tabled in Parliament every quarter.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Does it not appear in the budget as a separate item?

Hon PETER FOSS: It is not a separate item, but it is reported on regularly by government.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: Will court security officers employed by Corrections Corporation of Australia under the court security and custodial services contract undergo additional training? I understand that under the contract, officers will be dispatched to both the north and south of the State. What will be the situation with relocation costs for those officers and their families?

Mr PIPER: The legislation governing the court security and custodial services contract was passed by Parliament. An open and onerous responsibility is placed on me, as the chief executive officer, to ensure that permits are not lightly given and that they are maintained. The legislation also contains strong powers for removal, investigation and other issues relating to the performance of contractors undertaking these tasks. I do not have a forward training schedule for Corrections Corporation of Australia, but the contract requires that its officers maintain a suitable standard for the organisation to continue to hold that permit. I expect there will be ongoing training. They are also required to comply with all of the industrial agreements and frameworks within the area in which they operate. Some of the people have been recruited from regional areas. However, I do not know the specific arrangements for relocation of people. I understand some people are being relocated.

[6.00 pm]

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: I am aware of the issues faced by the parent companies of Corrections Corporation of Australia Pty Ltd, at least between February and May this year - I am not sure of the outcome of meetings in May - over the restructuring of Corrections Corporation of Australia and the injection of approximately \$200m. Is the Government concerned about any financial uncertainty the parent companies might face and the consequences for Corrections Corporation of Australia if that is the case? Has the Government undertaken broader probity checks of Corrections Corporation of Australia? If so,

have those checks led to any further discussions or negotiations between Corrections Corporation of Australia and the Government?

Mr PIPER: As Hon Graham Giffard is probably aware, Corrections Corporation of Australia is jointly owned by Sodexho from France and Corrections Corporation of America Pty Ltd. I believe Sodexho is well known and its involvement understood. As I understand the arrangements, Sodexho has the capacity to buy out Corrections Corporation of America. It is maintaining a very close interest and has a fairly significant Australian presence in its own right.

Corrections Corporation of America undertook restructuring that involved separating its prison services function from its so-called property portfolio. In other words, Corrections Corporation of America builds, owns and operates prisons and, therefore, it is a financier, builder and owner of significant property. It is true that its shareholders and the market generally reacted very badly to its attempted split. We have been sharing probity reports on all that information with other jurisdictions. I understand that in effect market forces have required them to "put it back together" again. We are keeping an eye on it.

Corrections Corporation of Australia has expended significant funds on the purchase of vehicles for prisoner transport, training, the fitting out of its offices, the purchase of technology and all the things required to establish the court security and prisoner transport contract. The company will not be paid until services begin. There has been no indication of any problems in managing its cash flow. The prisoner transport vehicles are of a very high standard; they are fully equipped with global positioning equipment and satellite phones - all the equipment needed to enable full and appropriate monitoring of the service's operations and location. It has made significant investments in computer technology to manage that equipment.

We are sharing information with other jurisdictions and we are monitoring the situation. At this stage CC of Australia has given no indication of even the slightest concern about its capacity to fund either the Acacia project or the court security project. However, we will, as we should as prudent contract managers, keep an eye on all those issues.

Hon PETER FOSS: That has led to a lot of expenditure with local manufacturers. Later I will table details of the money that has been spent in Western Australia as a result of that equipping.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I understand from what the minister is saying that nothing in the ongoing probity reports causes him any alarm with the way they are operating. In relation to the Metropolitan Women's Correctional Centre in Victoria, and the operations of Corrections Corporation of Australia there, have any allegations or concerns been raised about the operations of that prison that has caused the Western Australian Government any concern about the CCA operations in Australia?

Mr PIPER: Two recent incidents have caused comment from the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner in Victoria. We have discussed those issues with the relevant officials in Victoria and are well briefed on them. The member would be aware from the media coverage associated with that, that a notice of breach was issued over an incident where two police officers entered the Deer Park facility carrying their guns. As I understand the incident, they got half way between the gatehouse and the administration area and were turned around and had to turn in their guns. Clearly it is a significant issue. Interestingly, I understand that one of the public operated prisons had a similar incident in which the police officers were mixing with the prisoners in the prison while wearing their guns. It will be interesting to see whether they are defaulted under the same provisions. It is significant; it is a fundamental breach of the security facility. It is a breach of process which I know CCA is concerned about, and one which we have discussed with it. I know the commissioner in Victoria is also concerned because the breach order was issued. A breach order would not be issued without some concern. The other matter that was raised was an issue which related to a lock compromise between two areas of the prison. Some protected prisoners for a short time had other prisoners in with them. There have been a couple of other incidents recently. We are monitoring them closely. The provisions for Acacia prison and the way in which we intend to operate that prison are different from the way the Victorian Government has chosen to operate its prisons. The member would be aware from the debate in Western Australia that we will have on-site Ministry of Justice personnel who will undertake the contract management and contract monitoring roles on a day-to-day basis; we still intend to maintain that stance. We have also made it clear that we will be closely scrutinising all of the operating procedures associated with Acacia prison to be confident that they are in place and are appropriate for that facility. We are well and truly aware of the issues that have been raised in Victoria. We are staying close to them to the extent that if we need to, we will ensure, through our contract monitoring and contract management role, that we cover those issues.

Hon PETER FOSS: One good thing about all of this is that anything that happens in contract prisons tends to get highlighted, which is a good thing. It is something we would like to see with our government prisons as well - that we impose the same standards on them so that issues do not get swept under the carpet.

Mr PIPER: Notwithstanding the differences between jurisdictions and Governments around Australia, at an operating contract level there is a large degree of cooperation and information sharing between the various jurisdictions that work in this area. That has been agreed to by all the parties at the correctional ministers level and it will continue.

Mr CHAIRMAN: What progress has the Ministry of Justice made in developing seamless information gathering across the ministry, interfacing with the Police Service, and getting some timeliness in producing statistics?

[6.10 pm]

Mr PIPER: There has been fairly significant recent progress between the police and the ministry, in particular. The Crime

Research Centre has been contracted to undertake a number of statistical studies which have been published and which integrate the data between the Ministry of Justice and the police, and to some extent also some of the Bureau of Statistics data, and there has been a commonwealth grant to the Crime Research Centre, which we are co-sponsoring, which intends to take that another step further. We have also reached recent agreement with the police on a number of the issues of data identification between the systems which will be implemented in the new police computer systems, which they are very active in introducing, and in the courts and offender management systems within the ministry, to ensure that we can provide common data. It is a vexed issue because of the history, and also because in the past it has been very hard to compare statistics. We still also have the problem of periodicity; in other words, the Australian Bureau of Statistics tends to choose periods for some of its statistics that are different from the normal reporting periods, which means that we get numbers that say they are doing the same thing but in fact do not give the same answers because they are taken in different time periods, which is always difficult. Dr Fitzgerald is coordinating that effort.

The CHAIRMAN: Has there been any examination of overseas systems in formulating this system?

Mr PIPER: Yes, and not only overseas systems, because most Australasian jurisdictions, including New Zealand, are at the point of looking at new systems in all of their justice areas. Victoria let a recent tender for an integrated justice system; South Australia and New South Wales are looking at it; and the Courts Department in New Zealand has a tender out at the moment. All of those jurisdictions are sharing data models and definitions and looking at common strategies to the extent they can. As the minister indicated earlier, things like electronic lodgment with the profession require a standards approach, otherwise we will end up with the profession not being able to deal with courts in Western Australia but being able to deal with federal courts, for example. Dr Fitzgerald is charged with the issue of integrity of statistics, and I know he would love to comment on that.

Dr FITZGERALD: The ministry collects data from a number of different sources. Obviously we have data from the different levels of courts. We also have data from the juvenile justice system and the adult correctional system, both the prison side and the community-based services side. In order to develop a more integrated approach to statistical reporting, the ministry has developed a data warehouse approach. We are developing a database which will stretch across the whole of the Ministry of Justice. We hope ultimately to be able to link individual cases across that data warehouse, but that will require us to develop a system for matching individuals from one system to the next, and we have not reached that point as yet.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I relate this question to output 8 and juvenile offenders managed. Without reference to any figures, I note the daily costs for an individual detention. The daily average number of juveniles in detention is 135 and the total number of juvenile offenders managed in detention per annum has been estimated at 2 698 for this current financial year. How many of the 2 698 juvenile detainees currently in detention are there because of mandatory sentencing laws for home burglary?

Dr FITZGERALD: If I may give a little historical information, the legislation has been in place now for a little over three years. In that period, in the order of 90 juveniles have been affected by the legislation. Not all those juveniles have ended up with a detention order, the reason being that the President of the Children's Court has a discretion to make a non-custodial order should the president feel it appropriate. In a number of instances the president has made non-custodial orders, although the majority of orders have been detention orders. We conducted an audit in February of this year which found that 26 juveniles were in custody at the time whose offences appeared to relate to the three-strikes provision.

Hon HELEN HODGSON: If these questions are too involved I will be happy to have them placed on notice. A major initiative for next year is for amendments to legislation which would allow the Public Trust Office to operate on a commercial basis. I note from the outputs that currently the Public Trustee maintains a 20 per cent market share for naming the Public Trustee as executor. Is the Public Trustee intending to aggressively compete with trustee companies, and will it place the Public Trust Office in any position of conflict or commercial risk?

Ms McLAREN: The figure of 20 per cent relates to the number of people who die who have wills naming the Public Trustee as executor. There is no intent to increase the will-making activities of the trustee. Depending on legislative changes, there may be the ability to provide additional services which would be in the nature of support services to executors who may or may not be in competition with other trustee organisations because the bulk of our work is subsidised by the Government for people who would not normally pay commercial fees.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank all for attending the hearing today.

Committee adjourned at 6.19 pm
