



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# **Parliamentary Debates**

## **(HANSARD)**

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 28 May 1997

# Legislative Council

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am.

The CHAIRMAN (Hon Mark Nevill): For the information of members, this Estimates Committee will be reported by Hansard and a proof document will be available the following morning. Hansard will distribute documents for correction which must be returned on the A4 documents sent to members. The cut-off point for corrections will be indicated at the bottom of each page. It will also 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 seek the Minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the Committee's advisory research officer within three working days of receipt of the question.

I ask the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the Committee hearings information for witnesses form.

Witnesses: Yes.

### Homeswest

[Hon Mark Nevill, Chairman.]

[Hon Max Evans, Minister for Finance.]

[Mr G. Joyce, Chief Executive Officer.]

[Mr J. Coles, Director Finance.]

Hon BOB THOMAS: I refer to the ongoing inquiry by the Estimates Committee. My first question relates to information technology. What process has Homeswest adopted to implement appropriate information technology systems for its functions and needs? Has the agency ensured that any problems associated with the year 2000 have been addressed?

Mr JOYCE: With respect to 2000, Homeswest has thoroughly scrutinised its issues and has formed a committee. It is anticipated that we will have the software amended by about June next year, so we will be well in advance of any problems that may develop.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Does the department have proper accountability for ongoing outsourcing of information technology needs?

Mr JOYCE: We are currently engaged in a process called BIPAC, which is a government process in which we look at outsourcing the second wave of government hardware. Homeswest is obviously a big player. We are at the stage of due diligence where a contractor has been selected - CSC - and Homeswest is taking all the steps necessary to ensure that if it goes down that path there will be proper controls so that it gets a better deal than it currently has. There is a formal and thorough process to ensure we meet all the guidelines of the Auditor General and other requirements.

Hon MAX EVANS: Hon MAX EVANS: On big hardware issues for computers and so on, we are looking right through government, including my department. The next generation of computers will all be managed by someone other than a maintenance team because they are far more difficult these days. There is an obsolescence factor, and it is the way to go in future to have the latest technology. It is like the office computers members have, which are far more sophisticated than they used to be. I believe it will be a big improvement.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Are there appropriate systems for staff access to Internet?

Mr JOYCE: Homeswest has one Internet station and that has been restricted because of the cost. Homeswest has a system whereby people can access it if necessary, but we believe access to Internet needs to be controlled within the organisation so that there are no extravagances and people do not abuse the system.

Hon BOB THOMAS: What about the continuing need to upgrade information technology to take advantage of technological changes?

Mr JOYCE: We split that argument into two parts. One is hardware, and the Minister has just indicated that the totality of government is looking at outsourcing because it seems to be the best way to go, particularly with the obsolescence that arises so frequently. Due diligence is being applied very thoroughly to ensure that in five years - we are anticipating a five year contract - the costs will not be more than they are at present. We could not do that exercise any more thoroughly, and I am sure the decision we make will be based on a lot of evidence. Software is an ongoing problem for any organisation, particularly one the size of Homeswest which conducts about 150 000 computer transactions a day. It is a difficult task to keep up with software developments. We have conducted a review of our processes through the big IBM organisation, and carried out subsequent reviews to ensure the correct system is in place.

About two years ago we initiated a large conversion of equipment as our software comprised many different languages causing use and maintenance difficulties. We now operate a user-friendly system, which is well and truly in place. The anticipated finishing date for the program is 30 June this year. We monitor that system regularly, and we are on target to meet our software goals.

[10.10 am]

Hon BOB THOMAS: What information technology training is Homeswest providing for employees?

Mr JOYCE: Again it is ongoing issue. I think it was Bob Peters who said train, train and train again. Our attitude to software has been to develop training programs on an annual basis, and we review training twice a year to determine user needs by asking what they want. We take technical advice and institute programs. One cannot do enough training, and people like me must be constantly vigilant in this area.

Hon BOB THOMAS: What action has the agency taken to ensure that the controls over the recording of public property are adequate to ensure appropriate asset control?

Mr JOYCE: That pretty complex question has several answers. First, one must bear in mind that Homeswest is one of the biggest property owners in Western Australia with 38 000 rental properties and a large land bank. We have a system of internal control which is second to none which conducts thorough audit checks to ensure the asset is looked after properly. We regularly audit what we call our "strong room" against the nominal index in the titles department. An audit is currently taking place to ensure all the property we own adds up with that owned by government, a process involving participation with the Government Property Office, with which we exchange tapes to ensure the information held by that body is correct.

We are controlled by an ultra vires housing Act which prescribes that every property must go through both the Homeswest Board and the Minister of the day. At times we are critical of the process as it is arduous, but it places a strict control on all property transactions. Members should remember that property transactions are a large part of our activity.

As it is a cumbersome system, the Homeswest Board, which meets only once a month, delegates through a proper delegation system down to senior officers in Homeswest. We audit delegated instruments to ensure every officer complies with requirements. We maintain that delegation regime properly so no defalcation occurs, and I am satisfied that it is well managed. In fact, not one instance of fraud has arisen in my 25 years at Homeswest.

Hon MAX EVANS: When we came into Government four years ago, I set up the government property register. I am not being critical of Homeswest, but some agencies did not know which land they owned, particularly as no balance sheets were retained for the consolidated fund. The register indicates we have 180 000 blocks of land and 136 000 certificates of title. It was picked up through the entire Department of Land Administration system with the land owned by Homeswest, State Housing Commission and others. It was necessary to go through them all. It was a double-check on what was in the system, and property was brought into the register if it was missing and we now have a complete property register. It is interesting for new members to know where we stand in that regard.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I refer the Minister to the estate improvement program on page 908 of Budget Statements, volume 2. I commence by complimenting the agency on its work in this program. Reference is made in the Budget Statements to Kwinana and Lockridge, and the latter project has transformed not only the physical environment, but also the social environment. I am not as familiar with the program at Kwinana, but I have visited the very impressive Lockridge estate. However, social and financial costs are involved. The social cost is that Homeswest is diminishing substantially its housing stock in those areas, and a considerable financial cost accrues; however, a financial benefit is the rapid escalation of real estate values in places such as Rivervale, Redcliffe, Lockridge and Kwinana. I note a capital expenditure of \$3.6m on the redevelopment of 97 vacant blocks and the operational spending of \$13m on refurbishment of property. Will the Minister or his officers outline what income is being generated by the estate redevelopment program, and how is it being directed to address the replacement of housing stock, both rental and low income purchase stock, in the Homeswest portfolio?

Mr JOYCE: I thank the member for those comments because the estate improvement, if I can bore the committee with the jargon, is one of the biggest programs on which Homeswest has embarked. As the member stated, Lockridge and Kwinana are going well. We have been out for public tender for five other big areas in the metropolitan area; namely, Coolbellup, Langford, Balga, Girraween-Koondoola, and Karawara. We have had a very good response to the tendering system. We will be adding to Kwinana and Lockridge five other big contracts this year, and six other country estate improvement programs are involved. This program is indicative of the future of Homeswest. It is about converting public stock, particularly when we built large housing estates, which we all know created problems. It is a good program.

Mr COLES: To give some idea of the magnitude of the property income sales we received for estate improvement statewide - I do not have the detail for each project - the return from the redevelopment across the State was \$34m, which is substantially more than expenditure.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Does that income go straight back into replacement of stock?

Mr COLES: Under the commonwealth-state agreement, any sales we make from rental property must go back into the program.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: In the estimates for the coming financial year, \$3.6m is allocated for redevelopment and \$13m for refurbishment, a total of \$16.3m. Was last year's figure of \$34m profit after cost?

Mr COLES: No, that is total.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Therefore, the \$34m must be reduced by the expenditure by the agencies. Can you indicate the net figure to Homeswest?

Mr COLES: Obviously it depends on the project. In some cases I can provide the detailed costing if the member likes, but I am relying on memory here. Some of the programs in Kwinana have had a 17 or 18 per cent capital gain within the period of 18 months to which the member was alluding. Some parts of that project have had a profit margin in the range of 10 per cent; other areas have had a break even. One of the issues in determining overall profit is that the money for developing the land and building and refurbishing the houses is expended in one year but the money from sales does not flow through until perhaps the next year, so it is difficult to trail expenditure in one financial year through to income in the next. I can provide the details of that, but I am not in a position at the moment to go through it project by project.

[10.20 am]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I request that that information be provided. When do you anticipate proceeding with projects for which tenders have been called, such as Langford?

Mr JOYCE: We have just undergone the first stage of the due diligence process, where a panel interviewed the 17 tenderers for the five projects. They were short-listed on Friday, and we will announce them this week. The short-listed people will then have an opportunity to go through their tender in more detail with regard to costs and financial feasibility. That process will take a couple of months, because under our Act it must go through the board and the Minister. Once the tenderer has been determined, we will announce it and get going. We have anticipated some expenditure this financial year for those five projects. It will take a while to crank up and they will not hit their straps until the end of the financial year.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: My questions are about the estate redevelopment programs. I have some concern about the Karawara redevelopment, and I have written to Homeswest on several occasions. I have also attended public meetings - the initial one 18 months ago, which Mr Joyce attended, and a recent subsequent meeting. One of the problems is the social cost to a range of people who are very worried that they will have to leave this area. Recently, some guarantees were given to those people.

Karawara is a different redevelopment from the others in that discussions have taken place with Curtin University about whether some of the blocks of units that are proposed to be pulled down should be offered to Curtin University for student accommodation, because obviously Curtin University is interested in property at Karawara, which is adjacent to the university complex. I am told that 71 units are now being offered for sale to Curtin University that are outside the redevelopment area but still in Karawara, and that has raised some social questions about the position of current tenants. I am interested in a guarantee that people will not be forced to move if Curtin does purchase those 71 units.

I am concerned also about the density of tenancy in these estate improvement programs. I thought the original target was 20 per cent. The offer of an additional 71 units in Karawara would reduce the density to 14 per cent. Why is that the case?

I am concerned also about the Gillon Street bushland, which I believe is subject to a native title claim. If that is the case, what is the status of that claim, and how will it impact on the estate improvement program?

The Karawara fun factory and hall, which are two distinct community facilities, are subject to relocation as part of the redevelopment program. There has been some negotiation with the City of South Perth about that matter, but it appears to me from questions that I have asked that there is no guarantee that those facilities will be replaced.

Mr JOYCE: Homeswest has always stressed the point that the wellbeing of the tenants in these estate improvement programs is paramount. It is first thing we worry about. We tell all tenants that they do not have to move unless they want to. The experience of Kwinana and Lockridge is that we put our money where our mouth is. I do not recall any complaints from tenants that we have harassed them, invaded their privacy or treated them unfairly. The first thing I say to all project managers when they get the job is that they must have a real commitment to community consultation to ensure that the wellbeing of the tenants comes first.

The Minister answered a question in the House a couple of weeks ago which confirmed that we are negotiating with Curtin University for the sale of the 71 units to which the member referred. They are not high-rise apartments but apartments which are scattered throughout the redevelopment area. We think it is a good idea that Curtin University come into Karawara. It has a grandiose vision of turning Karawara into another Oxford. We do not quite agree with that, but we agree that it is fair that it buy some units from us at value, and we are also looking at some alternative units in the Bentley area.

We are not strictly mathematical about density, but 10 years ago we changed our policy on how we develop our estates and introduced what we call the 1:9 policy; that is, one Homeswest rental to nine private properties. We then extrapolate from that to a density of between 12 and 15 per cent, and that is what we try to achieve in our estates as we normalise them. I think the member referred to a density of 14. We consider that about right. In fact, we would go down even lower because our vision is to become self-effacing across Western Australia, and we will have done our job when no-one knows that Homeswest is present because we have merged within the community.

Gillon Street has been a controversial area. It has now been decided that that area will be urbanised. The City of South Perth has initiated the rezoning, and that process is now being undertaken. I am unaware of a native title claim. That is news to me. I cannot see how there can be a native title claim, because Homeswest owns the land in fee simple, and that is not subject to a native title claim.

Homeswest has negotiated a solution to the question of the community hall and the fun factory where we will demolish the community centre on the hill and relocate it to the regional open space opposite Gillon Street at a site to be determined. After close negotiation with the local authority, we have agreed that Homeswest will contribute \$600 000 - we have capped that. That will be part of the agreement with the City of South Perth and will take place during the early life of the project.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Your capping is fine, but do you have a guarantee of a matched grant from the City of South Perth?

Mr JOYCE: Yes. The City of South Perth has signed a memorandum of understanding that it will do that.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I have a number of questions about the Joondalup zone of the Mirrabooka region. Page 910 of the Budget Statements states that Homeswest has estimated for 1997-98 that \$18.4m will be spent on land acquisition, \$23.4m on land development and \$6.5m on land redevelopment. What is the expected expenditure for the Joondalup zone for each of those categories for 1997-98, if any? What increase is expected in the stock available for rental in the Joondalup zone in 1997-98?

[10.30 am]

Mr JOYCE: That is a difficult question. The member is alluding to a real problem for Homeswest. Applicants apply for accommodation in the Joondalup area, but Homeswest has very little stock and no land. It is a worry because the waiting list in that zone is getting long. Homeswest has had a good look at that and has decided, first, that some of the acquisition money will be used to buy land in Joondalup, but it is scarce and difficult to obtain. Secondly, the Minister has asked me to try to get those people who have specifically requested accommodation in Joondalup to go to other good areas such as Ellenbrook so we can get them off the list. The Minister has also asked me to get all those who applied from 1989 to 1992 off the list during this financial year. There is a recognition of the implicit criticism.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Mr Joyce has anticipated my next question precisely. I note that those being allocated two bedroom family dwellings in Joondalup in April 1997 applied for that accommodation in November 1987. They have been waiting close to a decade and that is the basis for my questions. I would like more detailed information about the plans for that zone. I note also that the listing date for two bedroom duplex accommodation for pensioner couples in that zone is May 1989.

My other concern is that, if we have this very scarce availability for two bedroom homes for families in that zone and there is a long waiting list, will that also put pressure on the waiting time for three bedroom family accommodation in that zone, which currently has a listing date of November 1990? That situation might be further exacerbated.

Mr JOYCE: It is because Homeswest is fairly bureaucratic about people changing categories. The criticism is fair; people should not be required to wait that long. Admittedly, the number is very small and the Minister has asked me to do something about it. Hopefully Homeswest will clear all those people who have waited too long this financial year.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I seek leave to have a series of questions incorporated in *Hansard*.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee will decide that.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What Homeswest funds are used to communicate with the media? Specifically, what funds are used to employ journalists to promote Homeswest's programs?

Mr JOYCE: Homeswest has a public relations section, which employs five people. More importantly, Homeswest has a real commitment to customer service; it recognises that the customer is the most important person. It has simple rules about answering telephones within three rings, answering correspondence in 10 days, including an acknowledgement, and attending the front counter within 10 minutes. Homeswest has a real commitment to talking to people and spreading the message.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is one of those employees a journalist?

Mr JOYCE: The manager, who was a journalist, has left, but the system includes two journalists.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In addition, does Homeswest employ a public relations firm?

Mr JOYCE: From time to time, Homeswest uses public relations firms for specific tasks, but generally those functions are undertaken in house.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does the Minister's office have Homeswest supplied personnel?

Mr JOYCE: An officer from Homeswest is in the Minister's office. That person deals with the public relations section of the Minister's office.

Hon MAX EVANS: Under the previous Government, most departments had one or two people in the Minister's office. I am the only Minister who currently does not.

Mr JOYCE: The 1997-98 budget includes the appointment of a journalist for a set period to go through the budget and the program and to spread the message as widely as possible through various processes. That will include a breakfast at which the Minister will announce the program.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is that in addition to the other two journalists?

Mr JOYCE: It is just for the budget program and getting out the story.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: What processes has the agency adopted to ensure appropriate accountability of private sector groups involved in the functions of the agency? In country areas there is the possibility of the private sector building the homes and then having Homeswest lease them back with some assistance from an agency.

Mr JOYCE: That is a complex question. Homeswest has a \$1b budget this year, of which about 79 per cent will be contracted out. It must therefore ensure that it gets a decent service, and several mechanisms have been put in place to achieve that. First, Homeswest is bound by government policy about tendering out through the Department of Contract and Management Services and the rules that apply. It also has a deep commitment to the public tender system; it sticks by the rules and ensures that everything it does goes out to public tender, except small contracts undertaken through quotes. It has a strong commitment to the public process to get the best price and quality. Once the contractor is appointed, Homeswest then ensures that it gets the contracted service. That is achieved through several methods.

Specifically in respect of the question of building dwellings, Homeswest has a post-occupancy evaluation system in which tenants are asked what they think of the houses. That system is very effective. Homeswest also conducts annual customer service surveys. That involves asking what tenants think of the service provided. The controversial area of maintenance attracts many comments. I hope I have answered the member's question properly. We have a real commitment to ensure that as we privatise a large part of our operation we get the service that we have contracted to get.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What processes has the agency adopted to ensure appropriate accountability of continued outsourcing, such as the internal audit function and project management of land development projects?

[10.40 am]

Mr JOYCE: In respect of the first part of the question, in this last financial year we have just contracted out our internal audit system. There was a public tender system with a very thorough due diligence process in which we adopted the principle of not necessarily going for the lowest tenderer. We had a very thorough assessment process through a committee and right through to the board of Homeswest. Ultimately we did go for the lowest tenderer because we felt that the firm had the best quality. We have appointed the firm, and the contract has been running for a year. We are very happy at this stage with progress, but we will ensure that we have mechanisms to assess its performance and to ensure that it is as good as we can get and that it brings benefits. One of the major changes we made in that process was to move away from the tick and flick type audit into an efficiency audit to ensure that the money we are spending in our complex myriad programs is properly spent and targeted.

Homeswest has been contracting out its land development process for a very long time. I hope that with the system we have in train and the way in which we have internal people identified to work with the professionals whom we have contracted, there is a proper system to ensure that we get the quality that we ask for. We have techniques, such as insurance, to ensure that all of our contractors are insured. We ensure that they have professional indemnity insurance. Ultimately the product that we provide out of our land function, even though there is a criticism from time to time, is of good quality and worthy of a public housing authority.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Mr Joyce spoke of controls over the recording of public property. He answered the question on the real estate property of Homeswest very comprehensively. What sort of controls are there for recording public property other than real estate? I refer to such assets as vehicles, mobile phones, office fittings, furniture and equipment. In view of the fact that there is a trend in some areas of public sector management these days to continually upgrade the benchmark value, be it \$500 or \$1 000, below which point assets do not have to be recorded, has Homeswest systems in place to safeguard against petty pilfering and to protect public property?

Mr JOYCE: That is a very complex question which needs time to answer. I will go through a couple of items mentioned by the member. Unlike other government departments we actually know of every car that we have; we have 181 cars as at today. The arrangements were privatised several years ago through a lease deal. It is probably the most efficient leasing system in government and the private sector. The system is very well run and I can guarantee it is very thorough. If an officer mistreats a car in any way a system is in place which ensures that the officer ends up with a rap on the knuckles from people like me. We make sure that we look after the fleet, because it affects the price that we get for the cars. In respect of other incidentals, the member is right; it is a difficult area, particularly for big bureaucracies like Homeswest. We have untold numbers of items like mobile phones, office equipment and furniture. We have a system whereby all our property is bar coded and electronically scanned. One hopes that the system keeps up to date and avoids pilfering. It is a difficult and resource intensive area, which takes a bit of maintenance. I hope that giving that detail satisfies the member that the audit is good.

Mr COLES: There is an official inspection of every bar coded minor asset. Two officers go round once a year and inspect to ensure that the assets are there. As the member rightly points out, people can write something on a piece of paper but unless someone has checked, we will not pick it up.

Hon MAX EVANS: I think Homeswest did not know what cars it had. They were put into fleet management. It had 9 500 cars and will eventually have 12 000 cars under fleet management. Nowadays they are all accounted for; in the old days they were bought under recurrent expenditure and sold under recurrent income, and there were no assets shown. It should be well controlled now by Homeswest.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I direct the Minister's attention to the disability home units of which Homeswest has been building quite a number. I commend it on this move. It has given a wonderful life to many people. I saw recently one little group in Albany. The wheelchair access in the units was not designed very well. Someone would need to be very skilled with a wheelchair to negotiate the dog leg into the bathroom. What proportion of the Homeswest budget is allocated to this area or does Homeswest provide as needs arise?

Mr JOYCE: I am disappointed to hear the first part of the question. Homeswest is really committed to housing people with disabilities. We spend a lot of time hopefully getting it right. We employ occupational therapists on contract to make sure that we get those access areas right. I am not disputing the point. Obviously we have made a mistake there. It hurts to hear the member tell me that. I thought we had the system thoroughly covered. I take note of that in the complex at Albany and will see what went wrong.

Generally speaking, we have an increasing commitment to housing people with disabilities. I maintain that within the organisation it is one of the best things we can do as public housing providers. Each year our budget is

increasing; bearing in mind that it started four years ago with nothing formally, although we were doing things informally. The budget has increased dramatically over those years. Although the numbers are still small - I cannot quote them now but can provide them to the member - there is an increasing commitment to make sure, particularly in respect of the deinstitutionalisation argument, that Homeswest is there with its houses as soon as the services are available. Homeswest is really in front of the game with housing. In many ways the easiest thing to do is provide the house; the real difficulty is to provide the services.

Mr COLES: Last year we launched what we call an access home loan program for the disabled. Some \$6m was assigned last year and \$6m will be assigned this year specifically for those people who wish to purchase a home that requires alterations because of the purchaser's disability. This program has proved quite popular. We have people with specific skills to assist them with the design of their homes.

[10.50 am]

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I thought the homes were wonderful, although they did not have wheelchair access. I thought it would be money well spent if access were provided at the construction stage. Are people given an opportunity to purchase these homes?

Mr JOYCE: Mr Coles referred to the access scheme. People with a disability can come off the street and are given access to home ownership. The rules within that scheme, particularly shared equity, make it affordable to most people on limited income who have a disability. In addition, the right to buy scheme offers a discount for long term tenants. If a person happens to have a disability we can apply certain concessions to try to help that person get into his or her own home. The organisation is committed to home ownership for all people who want it, provided they have some financial wherewithal.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: At what stage is the tender process in the Coolbellup development?

Mr JOYCE: Coolbellup is one of the five groups that we have put out to tender. We narrowed the tenders down on Friday. We will announce a short list of three. After further due diligence and submission we hope to announce the result in a couple of months.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I note a reference in the capital works program to the Keystart program continuing to operate on a sound commercial basis. Will the Minister comment on the mortgage foreclosures that were reported in *The West Australian* this morning?

Mr JOYCE: Homeswest is concerned about the criticism that has been lodged against it in the article and in questions in the Legislative Assembly. We consider Keystart to be a terrific scheme. We argue that it is the best run scheme in Australia. The member might recall that in the eastern seaboard there were three failures of home fund lenders in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. We have put 20 000 people into home ownership for \$1.5b since the scheme started in 1989.

The Keystart scheme has provided funds to 10 000 people for \$800m. It is a terrific scheme in that these people cannot get access to commercial lending and without Keystart they would be in either public or private rental. It is filling a gap in commercial lending, and where public and private rental comes in. We lend on 100 per cent of the home's value or on a minimum deposit. There is some risk, however it is low. There is some suggestion the risk increases exponentially; it does not. An analyses of the failure shows it is a straight line. There is some failure and some risk on the book. Notwithstanding that, we argue that it is well and truly justifiable when 98 per cent of those people end up owning their own home.

Taking notice of that criticism, Homeswest recently introduced a safety net. Those figures that were given in the newspaper this morning will reduce very quickly once this new program hits its straps. The safety net will apply where a person gets into trouble - generally through loss of employment or marriage separation. We will look at the loan, extend the period, and put them on a trial. If it works we will go into a shared equity process whereby Homeswest or Keystart buys back some of the equity. We have introduced a safety net to avoid even that small number of people who have been hurt in the past. We hope that number will dwindle to a very few.

The member might recall when Keystart was originally introduced it was a low start scheme; that is, the outstanding monthly arrears capitalised against a person's income. We have converted all those low start mortgages to credit foncier. We have a sound scheme that operates well and is popular. It is increasing dramatically. This year we allocated funds for 3 000 more new starts. It hurts me a little to hear the criticism about the scheme. Homeswest conducts briefings on how it operates, because it is a large organisation. They are generally well attended and we have received kudos for them. I hope they are of value to members.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Does Homeswest extend loans where an applicant for a Keystart loan or any other loan is employed under a workplace agreement which needs annual review?



Mr JOYCE: A workplace agreement is not an issue. We assess eligibility by multiplying a person's annual income 2.6 times - that ranges up to \$58 000. We then look into a person's outgoings. We say that a person's payments should not be more than 31 per cent of income, and the person's other outgoings should not exceed 35 per cent. They are international yardsticks. We think we have got the formula right for putting people into housing property. That is not to say that down the track a separation or loss of work will not hurt. We have introduced this safety net to try to pick up those people.

The CHAIRMAN (Hon Mark Nevill): In what country areas is Homeswest having difficulties reducing waiting lists?

Mr JOYCE: The major growth areas in the country are Busselton, Mandurah, Kalgoorlie, Broome, Albany and Bunbury, and to some extent Karratha and Kununurra. Busselton, Mandurah, Kalgoorlie and Broome would be the four highest demand areas for Homeswest and where we are worried about the time people are waiting.

The CHAIRMAN: What action is Homeswest taking to address those problems?

Mr JOYCE: Our corporate goal in the country is to assist people within 18 months. That is different from the metropolitan area, because we believe people have other opportunities in the metropolitan area. Particularly in little country towns we do not believe that a person should wait any longer than 18 months. We do not meet those guidelines every time. However, when we set our annual programs we go through those waiting lists to ensure that we are complying with it. I hope that in most cases we do comply with it.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have trouble where you have surplus stocks in country towns?

Mr JOYCE: We have a large program of selling off surplus stocks in country towns and there is some criticism of that. The Minister has recently asked me to do a couple of things: First, where a little country town can establish that a demand exists and we are selling off the property, we will replace it with a new one. That will be subject to the local authority or country town showing there is demand. Second, we are trying to get the local authority involved with our joint venture programs. That will come from Homeswest and also the Rural Housing Authority. Some fair criticism exists that our stock in little country towns is old and we do not face the same pressure to upgrade as we have in the estates improvement programs - even though we have five large estate improvement programs in the country. We recognise that criticism and we are implementing a replacement program where we modernise our stock, so it is more acceptable to the community. There is an argument that people will not put their names on the list because Homeswest stock is not good enough.

[11.00 am]

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Minister to ensure the agencies provide the answers to the questions within the time limits that have been set out.

I have six questions which I did not ask, and I will place them with the questions of Hon Tom Helm.

Hon MAX EVANS: Is that the privilege of the Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. I thank the officers for their contribution this morning.

**Division 32: Fisheries, \$20 023 000-**

[Hon M.J. Criddle, Chairman.]

[Hon E.J. Charlton, Minister for Transport.]

[Mr B. Mezzatesta, Manager, Financial Services.]

[Mr P. Millington, Executive Director.]

[Mr J.C. Nicholls, Director, Strategic Planning and Corporate Services.]

[Mr C.W. Thorn, Director, Regional Services.]

HON SIMON O'BRIEN: What processes has the Fisheries Department adopted to implement appropriate information technology systems for its functions and needs? Although I have five questions which will indicate the specific areas I am interested in, I ask the officers to not limit their answers should they feel it is appropriate to give more information. Is the agency assured that any problems associated with the year 2000 have been addressed?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I will give a general picture. The Cabinet has looked at this from a whole of government situation. It has gone to each agency to ask it to do an assessment of how it affects its operations. Obviously there is a two point action plan: One is to look at the issue department by department and the other is to look at the overall government response.

Mr NICHOLLS: We are currently assessing the year 2000 issue to establish to what extent it is an issue for all software programs. Results of this analysis over the coming months will identify the extent of the year 2000 problem for the department and strategies to address it.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Are there proper accountability systems for ongoing outsourcing of IT needs?

Mr NICHOLLS: Standard procedures are to be followed where services are outsourced. Those procedures are in accordance with guidelines that have been developed in consultation with Contract and Management Services, or CAMS as it is colloquially known. These guidelines are followed for outsourcing of any services required by the organisation.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Are controls in place for access to the Internet by employees of the Fisheries Department?

Mr NICHOLLS: Access to the Internet is limited, and it is covered by policies within the department. Those policies are based on a demonstrated need for access. They are signed off by the divisional managers who are responsible for IT management.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Will you comment on the continuing need to replace or upgrade technology to address technological change?

Mr NICHOLLS: An IT strategic plan has been developed which looks at ongoing requirements to service the demands for at least the next five years. That plan has been endorsed by the corporate executive and we are in the process of implementing it. That includes future requirements for software and hardware.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What procedures are in place for IT training for employees when the ongoing change is implemented?

Mr NICHOLLS: The IT training is picked up as part of the global vote for training within the department. The adopting and bedding down of new IT systems involves training people and developing their skills so that they can effectively operate the new systems within the organisation and the divisions which must access those systems.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Does the Fisheries Department place a high value on the training, in particular IT training, of its employees?

Mr NICHOLLS: It places a high value on training and a similarly high value on training people in IT. It is absolutely essential for those who are managing our database because they are critical to the organisation in performing its functions.

HON JOHN HALDEN: I refer to the pilchard industry and the fishery on the south coast. What is the current status of the fishery in Bremer Bay in Albany?

[11.10 am]

Mr MILLINGTON: At the Minister's request the department and industry are currently engaged in extensive discussion with the pilchard fishermen on the south coast. Our information indicates that the overall stock for pilchards is fairly healthy and the overall breeding stock on the south coast is in fairly good shape. However, what happens with these fish is that in the juvenile phase - that is after they have hatched and start to move - they move into one of three separate areas off the south coast. These areas are off Albany, Bremer Bay and Esperance. Although there is a common breeding stock somewhere to the east, once the fish have entered into one of those three locations, that is where they stay for the rest of their life until they are exploited. The history of the fishery has been such that the exploitation rate on the Albany stock has been quite high.

We have what is known as four year classes in the fishery to allow for a fair amount of robustness in the stock. If there is a class failure in one year, it is compensated by the other three years. Unfortunately, in Albany there have been three successive years where recruitment has been somewhat low because of the high exploitation rate. Under the management regime of the Fisheries Department, which is a quota managed system, the fishermen face a large reduction in their catch in the quota year they are in and in the subsequent year.

Following discussions with the industry it was decided that management measures be put in place to allow Albany based fishermen access to some stock which is available in Esperance to assist them in their difficulties this year. The department is hopeful that recruitment will be better this year and that the Albany stocks can build up.

In Bremer Bay the stock is in far better shape than in Albany. It has not had such a high exploitation rate. Currently we are negotiating with the licensees in Bremer Bay on whether so-called pool quota, which is quota owned by the Government, will be assigned to the people who have access to Bremer Bay on a permanent basis in future years.

Overall, the department still has to finalise a decision on an ongoing restructuring package which will address the high exploitation rate in Albany and spread the effort across the three zones. When that is finalised, the Minister will make an announcement to the industry.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: I understand a proposed new management plan 199 will allow the fishermen at Albany and Bremer Bay to move to Esperance to fish in that area. As Mr Millington said, there is a quota regime, but it is likely that it could place the Esperance fishery under stress. Is the assumption I have made correct?

Mr MILLINGTON: On the basis of biological advice, I do not consider it would place the Esperance fishery under stress. The quota which is currently assigned to fishermen who have access to Esperance is below what is called the maximum sustainable yield. In fact, the combination of the total of the quota which is assigned to those fishermen and the quota which is put aside for government use is way below the sustainable yield. The assumption in paper 199 is that if we move some effort across to Esperance and assign what could be called "government quota" to the fishermen from Albany who will fish in Esperance, the effect on the stock will be minimal.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Is it practice that those fishermen will move to Esperance this year? Has the industry been consulted about that particular move, and what is the view of the industry?

Mr MILLINGTON: The Minister has yet to make his announcement on the final phase of the management plan. I understand that for this year that is certainly the intention. There has been extremely intensive and extensive consultation on this matter, which started with the flagging of a potential problem at least three years ago by the management advisory committee. The fishermen, especially in Albany, have been given a number of signals that it is a potential problem. A number of consultation meetings have been held between the fishermen, the Minister and the departmental officers and I am aware the Minister has spoken to a large number of fishermen from Esperance, Bremer Bay and Albany on the issue.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What does the department intend to expend on public relations in the 1997-98 budget? Does the expenditure represent an increase on the current year's allocation? How many full time equivalents are involved in communications, public relations or media relations? How many of those FTEs are journalists? I am referring to the table on page 378. I presume it comes under corporate services. These activities of the department could be included in another line item in the budget.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is generally termed "public relations", is called "community awareness" by the department. It has a lot of functions which go beyond what one calls public relations. It includes education and awareness programs for both the commercial and recreational fishermen. Five FTEs are engaged by the community awareness branch. I am happy to provide further information on the cost of, and the budget allocation to, that unit.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Are any journalists included in the five FTEs?

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, there are some journalists.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Will Mr Nicholls give me the details of exactly how many are journalists?

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: If that is the case, perhaps the Minister will take on notice my next question; that is, can he indicate the department's total expenditure on advertising for the coming financial year and draw a comparison between that year and the anticipated total cost of advertising to the end of this current financial year? Are new campaigns to be launched by the department to explain a change in the figures? I am keen to find out exactly how many journalists are employed in every area of the agency. Is there an officer, or officers, of the department employed on the ministerial staff?

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Minister to ensure that the supplementary information is provided to the committee.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It depends on which way the member's question is directed - if members are cynical like me, they would say which way the member's question is loaded. In every government department there is, in increasing proportions, a greater demand on communications and making people aware. This relates to the question by Hon John Halden about consultation. Significant emphasis must be placed on the way departments, particularly the Fisheries Department, approach not the professional side, but the recreational side of the industry. A great deal of effort is required not only in the preparation of plans, but also in consultation to make sure that the public is made aware of the decisions which are made. It could have been considered propaganda or just the Government selling a message. However, those of us who have responsibility for those portfolios have an increasing requirement to do that, even though it will sometimes be criticised as a Government wasting money. In my time representing Fisheries in this House a significant increase has occurred in the amount of activity under this portfolio. I cite, for example,

the Shark Bay issue, the northern demersal fishery, and the change of zones. An enormous change is required in the way the Government delivers its message on the professional and recreational sides of those activities.

[11.20 am]

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will not dispute that with the Minister. However, the only way we can assess whether the department or Government is going over the top is if we have all the information on what is being spent by the department on behalf of the Government in communications of this sort. The community will then be able to assess whether the department and Government are going over the top. Will the Minister indicate also which companies will be employed by the department to wage this communications strategy with the community and the amount that will be provided to each of those entities?

Hon KIM CHANCE: Do the five FTEs to whom the Minister referred include staff engaged in the preparation of the Fisheries Department's magazine?

Mr NICHOLLS: We will provide that information.

Hon KIM CHANCE: In the more detailed answer to Hon Tom Stephens' questions, will the Minister indicate whether those persons who are engaged in that activity full time or part time can be delineated from any other function?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The department officials will include that information in their response.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: I refer to the pearling and aquaculture program on page 381 of the Budget Statements. What program is in place to develop the aquaculture industry in the next 12 months? A commitment was given by the Minister that \$8m would be spent on aquaculture over the term of the Government. To where will that money be allocated and from where will it be derived? What program is in place to assist fishers and aquaculture leaseholders along the coast in the next two years? It must be ensured there is a sustainable environment under which those fish leases can be operated. It will be one of the key areas of the Fisheries Department in the next few years as it moves into the new era of live fish and processed fish production from Western Australia.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: There is an increasing need for more fish farming in each form, regardless of the species. That has been a revolution and we are on the eve of reaping the benefits from that. Recreational fishermen have become professional in their approach. The technology available allows professional and recreational fishermen to take greater catches from the ocean, and the Fisheries Department will have to meet that challenge. The Fisheries Department over a long period has shown an outstanding capacity to monitor and take action ahead of crises. It is a tragedy to see places in other parts of the world that have been fished out. Western Australia is in a healthy position. There will always be debate about whether certain decisions should be made. However, we must ensure that we have a sustainable fishery and we must provide those involved in recreational fishing the opportunity to catch a fish while we protect the fishery as a whole. Enormous change is occurring and enormous pressure is placed on the Fisheries Department. The department must do things differently today from how it did them a while ago.

Mr MILLINGTON: We are fortunate that we are building on a three year program. The Government spent \$4.5m over three years on aquaculture in its last term; therefore, we now have the springboard to go forward. Carrying over from that springboard we have a program with a core of specialist staff who can take the issue forward. We have two infrastructure sites. The Broome aquaculture park had its first tenant at the end of the last calendar year and the second and third tenants have indicated strong interest. We hope to have them soon. That site will start to develop as a business incubator and a development opportunity in Broome, with an emphasis on marine and freshwater aquaculture in a tropical area in particular. We hope to turn over the dirt for a centre in Albany for the south west marine in the next few months. Work has already started on upgrading the Pemberton hatchery site. That involves leasing some land to private industry sources to allow them to do some value adding work, as well as an upgrade of the facility itself.

Besides getting those projects going, the emphasis over the next 12 months will be on a number of fronts; one is extension. It is no doubt evident to members in the agriculture sector that getting knowledge out to people who are interested but who do not have all the picture is extremely important. The four or five extension officers who are placed in our regional offices are having considerable success. We will continue to find highly qualified people and place them in those positions.

An exciting new initiative is the further development of aquaculture in the Ord River area, because we think that area has high potential. We are actively pursuing that area with the Kimberley Development Commission. Lake Argyle has great potential for aquaculture for barramundi or other related species. The other exciting prospect at the moment in the Gascoyne area is saline water aquaculture whereby the saline water potential is used for marine species in

inland areas and they are grown in a constant and sterile environment, hopefully with minimal environmental side effects and without the problems of wind, wave, theft and so on.

We are also trying to finalise issues related to translocation. We must establish a protocol which, while minimising the risk to the environment, allows maximum flexibility in aquaculture. We are almost in the final stages of signing a memorandum of understanding with the Environmental Protection Authority on how to do that and maintain integrity in that process. In order that people will know what is appropriate, we are finalising our regional management plan so that people understand the context in which their aquaculture venture can go ahead in their region. We are becoming firmly convinced in addressing this resource allocation problem that there must be a degree of rigour in the planning of the offshore Western Australian marine environment. Everybody must understand, as they do with land, what water is used for what purpose, and proper consultation must take place with all potential user groups about the activities designated in certain areas for the future in order to achieve community consensus and understanding.

[11.30 am]

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: The South Metropolitan College of TAFE is renowned as an excellent research centre. I believe the department has partnership arrangements with TAFE at the moment. What role do you envisage it playing in this new era of aquaculture?

Western Australia has the potential to supply marron but it cannot produce enough at the moment for the market. There must be inherent problems because many people have gone into this industry but have had difficulty maintaining viability. Marron is marketed as a gourmet seafood at the moment because of the shortage of supply. Is any research and development being undertaken to increase the quantity of product available in Western Australia?

Mr MILLINGTON: TAFE will be crucial in this area. It is a key player and one of the objectives in our strategic plan is to build partnerships. It is one of the groups with which we are actively building a partnership, using its capability, sheer experience and track record of success in producing fingerlings of various marine species. Various communications have passed between TAFE and the department, and I will supply that as supplementary information. The degree of understanding between the department and the Fremantle College of TAFE will be explained in a written answer. It is an active, cooperative and mutually beneficial arrangement. We are even discussing putting some of our staff at TAFE for further cooperation.

The private business development I indicated was being encouraged at Pemberton has as its preliminary aim depuration of marron; that is, putting them on site, cleaning their guts and exporting them. We will do work on marron in that area. We are also trying to kickstart a joint venture between the department, Agriculture Western Australia and a prospective private sector person, who has not been specifically identified, at Wokalup. We hope to establish the equivalent of a demonstration farm to walk and talk the message to people on the site instead of telling them what it is about. One of the problems with marron farming is that many people have only part of the story necessary for success. They often have their own ideas on how to do it, but if they can see an operation that is consistently and successfully producing marron and can participate in that production, hopefully that will lead to some success.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: We have heard talk of the south and north coast, but you have walked or flown over the central west coast, and it offers a tremendous opportunity. Is there likelihood of some of it being explored and worked on over the next couple of years?

Mr MILLINGTON: We are talking about both marine and fresh water. The nice thing about some of the central west coast area is that sites with a good supply of fresh water are ideal for marron because better growth rates can be achieved with the higher temperatures in the inland areas than in their natural habitats in the south west. There are a number of successful growers and as suitable sites are identified and developed, it will be an exciting venture. There are also developments in Jurien which point to one of the issues of coastal planning because there is a proposal for a marine park in that area. It will be a complex, but not impossible, exercise to make sure there is compatibility between a marine park and aquaculture, with further development of the aquaculture industry so that the plans people have had for the past five years to take the current feasibility farms and expand them using the product from adjacent hatchery, can go ahead. That is an exciting prospect.

Mr NICHOLLS: The additional \$8m is reflected in the pearling and aquaculture program to which \$2m a year will be allocated over the next four years.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Reference is made at page 381 to pearling and aquaculture. During the estimates hearings in the Legislative Assembly last week, the Minister for Fisheries indicated he would like to see more progress in the range of species of fish for which the necessary aquaculture has been developed. I understand and appreciate that the matter must be progressed fairly thoroughly and that great care must be taken because of the obvious and not so

obvious dangers of introducing disease through new species. We all want to see a much more rapid expansion in the number of species available for people who want to enter the aquaculture industry. I seek your advice on whether it is possible for these protocols to be relaxed or fast tracked where the proposed aquaculture development is to be established remote from any current fishing area or waterway; for example, an establishment in the wheatbelt or pastoral zone, where it is highly unlikely in the event that a disease or undesirable exotic species were introduced, that it could spread to a fishing industry. Is it possible to relax the protocols?

Mr MILLINGTON: I refer to my previous answer about the translocation protocol being developed with the DEP. In pragmatic terms, those we have assessed for the last decade as low risk have gone ahead in those terms. It is essentially case by case assessment. The problem was that the proposals were coming in thick and fast and we were trying to get some consistency into the process, which is why we tried to get the memorandum of understanding underway. The MOU will put a structure in place so that if someone wanted to set up a farm and move animals from A to B, various levels of assessment would be required. If it stayed at the lowest level, we would have carriage of it. If it was a low risk proposal, such as the one you are talking about, when it went through the assessment process by the expert that the proponent would have to employ to give us the advice, it would go through fairly rapidly, because it is on a catchment by catchment basis. If it was on the land and there was no internal drainage and it was a separate site, the risk would be judged low.

[11.40 am]

Hon GIZ WATSON: My questions are primarily about marine conservation. What budget allocations have been made and what actions will the department take to reduce by-catch, particularly of species listed as threatened or endangered under state and commonwealth legislation; and will this include the use of mandatory modified trawl nets with escape hatches?

Mr MILLINGTON: At the highest level, a national committee is looking at key endangering processes. The department has recently received two nominations which will affect the industry in Western Australia. One is with respect to school shark, and we will have to examine the southern demersal gill net and demersal long line fishery, which is the one that exploits them, because school shark is taken in the central bight. We will have to take that issue straight back to the industry. At its most drastic, it may involve imposing quite severe controls on fishing two degrees west of the Western Australian-South Australian border, where those animals are taken. I am pre-judging the issue; that is at its most drastic, and there may be other ways in which we can avoid it by time or spatial measures.

The other one is the endangering processes of inshore gill netting on dugong, turtles and crocodiles. We will be obliged to go back to six or seven fisheries in this State which potentially can take those species and discuss with them the extent of the problem and what they can do to avoid it. That is taking it at the highest level, where we will need to take direct action to deal with the issue. We will do that over the next few months.

With regard to the remainder of the commercial sector, funding is in place - I cannot give you the exact details - to commence a desk study to scan our fishing methods to determine the degree of by-catch, including of endangered species.

The industry is fully aware of the fact that it is likely to be severely criticised and unilaterally controlled if it does not participate. Therefore, it is on the agendas of the management advisory committees and the annual consultations as appropriate for all of the committees and the industry. If they choose to believe it is not a problem and it is a problem, it will be a problem for them. It is something that we as officials of the department constantly keep in front of them.

The last area, to which you possibly have not alluded, is the recreational sector. The department recently completed a study of the impact of recreational gill netting, and that is currently in the public sector. The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee had that on its agenda at its last meeting and it will provide the Minister with advice on the issue of attended and unattended netting shortly.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Given the precarious status of a number of shark species - you alluded to school sharks in particular - and noting that they are highly vulnerable as top order predators and also because of their long reproductive cycle, will the department move to have great white sharks, which are referred to at page 381, listed as fully protected under the Fish Resources Management Act; and will the department move to have the practice known as finning of sharks prohibited in areas under WA fisheries' management?

Mr MILLINGTON: We are pushing the agenda with regard to finning very hard. To ban the practice completely is not appropriate, because if the fish were caught, obviously it would be desirable to use their entire body, including the fins. Finning normally refers to the practice where a large shark, which because of its mercury or other qualities, including the fact that it is large and old, is not particularly palatable, has its fins taken off and the body is put back into the water. The department finds that totally unacceptable, and most of the industry is moving towards adopting

that view. Most of the fisheries around the State which target shark are moving towards a code of practice and/or rules, depending upon the fishery, with respect to finning, including practical measures such as the number of trunks on board must match the number of fins on board. That is the practical way of addressing that matter. The department's officers, including a number of experts on sharks, have been participating in discussions on protecting large species. I do not have the minutiae of the detail about the current proposal. If I can take that on notice, I will get back to the member.

Hon GIZ WATSON: What methodology is used by the department to identify significant threats to important fish habitat areas; and, in the light of this, why are the Abrolhos Islands regarded as a priority for a fish habitat protection area?

Mr MILLINGTON: I would like to give a comprehensive answer on that. I will take it on notice and give a written reply.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Given the acknowledgment of a general reduction in fish quality and of stock depletion, will the Fisheries Department be taking action to provide adequate, representative no-take areas, as have been implemented in other countries, in order to ensure the maintenance of marine species?

Mr MILLINGTON: The whole question of what is colloquially referred to as marine refuges is a hot topic of debate. I take issue with the underlying assumption that just by their nature, they will work, because we can debate that long and hard. The whole context of fisheries management in Western Australia over the past 30 years has been that at different times with different species and in different areas we have done exactly that. We have extensive nursery areas and closures around the State already, which provide a degree of protection, but not for everything everywhere; it is often species specific or time or spatially specific. It is certainly on our agenda. I chair the national committee of fisheries managers, which is a subordinate committee of the management committee, and we are looking at what national codes of practice or criteria we should use for refuges and what will be their benefit to fisheries management. We are looking at it, but it is a complex issue, and the underlying assumption that they will work must be subjected to some scientific rigour by asking: What is the objective, what species are we looking at, and will it be of benefit?

[11.50 am]

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Are workplace agreements in vogue in the department and, if so, how many people have signed them?

Mr NICHOLLS: At this point the department has not formally adopted workplace agreements. To the best of my knowledge we have no-one on a workplace agreement. We are looking at the position.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: The perception of the public is that the Fisheries Department has excessive powers. Does the department foresee managing self-regulation in the fishing and processing industries; if so, when, and if not, why not?

Mr MILLINGTON: Is the member talking about specific powers of fisheries officers or powers in respect of regulating the processing and fishing sectors?

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: The overall perception of the public is that the Fisheries Department is given excessive powers, more than any other department.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: From my limited involvement I will give a preliminary answer and then invite Mr Millington or Mr Thorn to be more specific. The department has enormously stringent powers to carry out its role. It is commonly known that fisheries officers have additional powers to those of police. The reason is that the department is trying to safeguard fish stocks around Western Australia. This is probably a good example of where instead of speculating on whether it is right or wrong we should look at the end result. Western Australia is unsurpassed in ensuring the continuation of fish stocks for both the fishing industry and recreational people. We are living in a time when we are lowering standards and initiatives all in the name of the right of individuals to do what they like. If we were to allow that in the fishing industry, given the numbers of people and the pressures, in a couple of years we would finish up in very serious trouble. The Government has maintained stringent controls and disciplines over people in the fishing area through legislative and legal capacities. It does not mean that there are not anomalies and that things cannot be improved. I would like members, and the public in particular, to take a step back and ask if it has worked. If it has worked and it is not broken, why should we want to change it?

Mr THORN: In respect of the powers of fisheries officers, members would be aware that the Fisheries Act 1905 was changed significantly in 1994. That new Act which is in force today considerably decreased the powers of officers at that time. Fishery management is essential for maintaining a sustainable resource. If we have input control fisheries, we can ensure that compliance with those input controls occurs so that there is not an excess of take over and above the sustainable levels in the fishery. In order to do that we need officers through the State. We have

80-odd fisheries officers in Western Australia policing the coastline, across 45 or 50 fisheries of various sizes. It is obviously a fairly large task. There is a need for legislation which is simple in its interpretation but which allows for the protection of those resources.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: The last part of my question was whether the department foresees managing self-regulation in the fishing and processing industries in time?

Mr MILLINGTON: The general processing policy is fairly laissez faire on where someone can process fish other than lobster. The current executive director and I certainly intend to engage in dialogue over the next 12 to 18 months with the industry. The Government has indicated that some amendment to the Act may be possible as a result of our working with it for a couple of years. We must ask ourselves with respect to processing licences other than those for rock lobster whether we need anything other than a registration process to see where licence holders are, so that we can inspect them if we have to and send information to them if we need to educate them. Other than that, free market rules may be more appropriate. The rules for rock lobster will be subject to a complete review under the national competition policy evaluations. That will be undertaken in the next 12 months or so. For the commercial sector the entire emphasis of the Government on management advisory committees and industrial cooperation and consultation, and the cost recovery and national competition policy review which we will have to undertake on the fisheries legislation, will mean that the thrust will be to simplify rules to make them more targeted and to involve industry in the review, but it will take time.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I referred briefly to the Auditor General's report which was delivered on 30 October. What steps have been taken to ensure that full accrual and fixed asset accounting systems will be in place by 30 June?

Mr NICHOLLS: The department has already prepared a first draft of its financial statements on an accrual accounting basis. With regard to the qualifications in the Auditor General's report on an accurate asset register, the department will complete before the end of this financial year a complete stocktake of all assets as a basis for verifying a comprehensive financial statement and for finalising a further draft and its financial statements on an accrual basis for 1996-97.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am acutely aware that I am the only member not asking important questions on fish stocks. I am sorry if I am being bureaucratic in my focus. The department has 300 staff in quite a few locations about the State. What sort of systems does the department have in place to ensure that there are controls over the recording of public property and accounting for the same? I am referring to assets under the umbrella of general asset control, including minor assets at about the \$500 mark at offices in remote areas.

Mr NICHOLLS: There is a comprehensive policy on what constitutes an asset and the way in which assets are to be recorded and managed. Rather than give a short answer now, I prefer to give a comprehensive response.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We can give a complete rundown of items such as the use of motor cars and equipment.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It comes down to all sorts of things like motor cars, mobile phones and other equipment. This is particularly important in an agency which spends a lot of time and man hours in the field or working in areas that are remote from St Georges Terrace. Often in the public sector a tendency exists to not place much store in stocktakes of so-called minor assets. Sometimes the benchmark on the value of items is as high as \$500 or \$1 000. Safeguards should be in place to ensure those assets are looked after. I am happy if it is more convenient for the department to provide me with a copy of its policy.

[12 noon]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is a good question and concerns a procedure that every government department is always trying to streamline. At the same time flexibility must be in the system so that people can undertake their daily responsibilities efficiently. In Transport the administrative costs and energies directed into that process are enormous. It is important to maintain a balance between accounting for every cent and delivering the service to the public, which is what the department is required to do. That is not to detract from the seriousness of the issue Hon Simon O'Brien has raised. Mr Nicholls will provide the department's policy on that.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Aquaculture is seen to be the solution to many of our problems. One of the main sources of food for aquaculture is fishmeal. That must eventually put pressure on ocean supplies of food for an expanding aquaculture industry. As the industry expands, the cost of fishmeal and the aquaculture products will go through the roof. Will that limit the capacity of aquaculture to deliver large quantities of fish if our ocean resource is already fully exploited? Is there an alternative to fishmeal for aquaculture products?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The farmers will fix it, as they do all problems around the world, by cheaply and efficiently growing protein products as food for the aquaculture fisheries!



Mr MILLINGTON: In South Australia money is being spent on grain with oil additives to substitute pilchards as feed for the fish in the tuna farms. That enables them to maintain supply and product. The traditional notion that fish could not be fed anything other than fish is proving to be false. If the product is domesticated appropriately it will take fish or food. The law of supply and demand and good farm management will provide a consistent source of food which will displace wild capture fishmeal sources for a large number of aquaculture enterprises.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I refer to the appropriation and forward estimates table at page 377. What is the essential difference in function between items 50 and 52 trust accounts? How can either trust account be used to compensate or buy out licensed fishermen as a component of a revamped management plan introduced to ensure the continuation of long term protection of a fishery? Can either trust account be used for that purpose or just one? If it is just one, which one? How was the Windy Harbour Augusta situation resolved with the use of trust funds?

Mr NICHOLLS: The fisheries research and development trust fund is the operating or trading account for the department. Moneys allocated to assist either through the industry funded general fisheries agreement scheme or moneys which the State Government has allocated for FAS to assist with the voluntary resolutions of resource sharing issues, were previously reflected in item 50 but have now been separately identified under item 52, the fisheries adjustment scheme trust account.

I do not have the Windy Harbour figures. Part of the funds came from the fisheries adjustment scheme and the other part came from balances brought forward in the fisheries research and development trust account when the new fisheries Act was proclaimed. I can provide details.

Hon KIM CHANCE: In the longer term you would look to item 52?

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I refer to pages 378 and 379 which contain "expenditure" and "categories of expenditure". At page 378 an increase in the total of the funds is committed to programs generally. However, the bottom line figure is \$3.4m less than the current year's estimated actual. It is apparent at page 379 that the reason for that bottom line adjustment is mainly the \$5.9m adjustment to cash book balances. As almost \$6m is a substantial part of a \$20m budget, what has led to this adjustment?

Mr NICHOLLS: The \$5.9m in the cash book balance is made up of the following components: \$1.75m estimated to be carried over from the \$2m allocation for voluntary fisheries adjustment in 1996-97; \$1.5m to underwrite full cash cost recovery for 1997-98 from fisheries research and development fund balances; \$1.3m for projects that were funded in 1996-97 and will be finalised after 30 June 1997; and \$750 000 transferred from the fisheries research and development trust fund balances to top up industry contributions to the development and better interest account to bring the total contribution for 1997-98 to \$3.5m in accordance with the agreement between the Government and industry. Another \$600 000 is for a number of small items such as the implementation of a satellite vessel monitoring system and to fund the functions of the objections tribunal funding advisory committee and development better interest ministerial advisory committee.

[12.10 pm]

Hon KIM CHANCE: I found the layout of the two accounts on pages 378 and 379 of the Budget Statements awkward. One is a repeat of the other except to the extent that the categories account on page 379 contains a little more detail on expenditure and it then goes on to include revenue items as offsets to expenditure. It becomes confusing when one offset item - that is, the adjustment for cash book balances with which we dealt in the last question - is denoted with a minus symbol but the other offsets are presented as positives. It makes it very hard for somebody outside to read. The manner of presentation of the revenue items in that account is not normal accounting practice for the good reason that somebody who was reading consolidated accounts should expect to find revenue items listed in a separate account. Yet, in all of the accounts we do not have a separate account dedicated to revenue items per se. Instead we have what seems to me to be an unnecessary duplication of expenditure accounts, which are repeated in another form on page 382. Why could we not have one account for expenditure including the details, and another on the opposite page for revenue? It would make it easier to read.

Mr NICHOLLS: The presentation effectively represents a focus ultimately on the consolidated funding component of the total budget of the department. The presentation in that form is to give it that sort of flavour rather than the total expenditure of the organisation. It is a budget statement which the Treasury Department has put forward to represent expenditure from consolidated and other funds rather than an income-expenditure financial statement.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I know it is not your fault. I am having a grizzle at Treasury policy, that is all.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Hon Kim Chance has raised a good point. It certainly makes it difficult for people trying to get an across-the-line assessment of expenditure and income to meet that task. Obviously, there are examples of

industry funds coming in also. That always creates a problem. Perhaps we should recommend that the Estimates Committee look at that to see whether there is any way to improve that process.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The Minister may have forecast my next question. The other line item that I found to be awkward is the way in which the cash book adjustment is treated. On pages 377, 380 and 382 and others, that adjustment is treated as a component of revenue and other funding sources. It is clearly not either revenue or other funding of the relevant year. I said "clearly not"; perhaps that is debatable. However, I do not think it is revenue or what could be described as other funding of the relevant year and it is not proper accounting practice to imply that it is. In my view, it is a misleading and sloppy way to describe such a significant portion of the budget. I hope that the Committee will take advice on the way internal adjustments are to be presented in future Budgets.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It has been endorsed by Mr Nicholls that there are two ways of doing these things and we have other requirements to adhere to. That is why it has been done in that way.

Hon KIM CHANCE: In the context of what I think is a welcome new overall budget practice of eliminating the old division 47, the miscellaneous division, I was disappointed to see the practice re-emerge de facto in this division; that is, there is a line item "other expenses" of \$5.58m. That single line item encompasses almost 19 per cent of the agency's total expenditure. Is it necessary to allocate 19 per cent of the department's gross expenditure to an undesignated line item under "other"? The least we could expect to see is a separate accounting of what the "other" components might be when the figure is so large.

Mr NICHOLLS: We are happy to provide a detailed breakdown of the \$5.5m.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Again we need to examine whether the format could include an associated paper, especially for the benefit of members who have an interest in these things - other than incorporating them in the total budget papers. Perhaps we should consider making the information available in a simpler form.

Hon KIM CHANCE: In the second dot on page 380 under "Significant issues and trends" the continuing fall in the value of our fisheries production is noted. That fall is attributed in part to declining demand for western rock lobster in Japan and South East Asia. I understand that only about 13 per cent of our current western rock lobster catch or alternatively of that 30 per cent of the western rock lobster exports - I am not sure which is correct but that is the figure that the Minister gave in the Assembly Estimates last week - is exported to the premium markets live. However, the bulk of our exports are exported to the much less attractive tail market. The text of the division did not say so, but the imperatives to export live are even stronger to China I understand than they are to Japan and South East Asia. Why are we still dragging our feet and failing to target the most rewarding market, the live market, when other exporters of rock lobster, New Zealand for example, are predominantly live exporters?

Mr MILLINGTON: I take issue with the member's statement that we are failing to do it. Consistent history over the past decade has been that the rock lobster processing industry is doing exactly that. Ten years ago below 10 per cent was live, and a decade later it is 30 per cent. The market was essentially captured by the Japanese with some American; it has now spread to four or five different markets that are no longer captured by those. There has been a vigorous campaign by the rock lobster processing sector to keep on increasing the value adding for the special buyer for rock lobster. The problem comes down to the quality angle. If most of the catch is taken during the white season and it is not the proper colour, has soft shells and legs missing, there will be an upper limit beyond which it is not possible to supply the live market. It must be the very best grade possible. The wider agenda is difficult because it comes back to compliance issues. The Rock Lobster Advisory Committee and others are trying to explore how to hold rock lobster longer, possibly into the closed season, and then take advantage of value adding. It is a complex issue because it relates to compliance costs and the desire, for instance, for industry to fish in certain months where traditionally they have not done so for at least the last 20 years. We are actively discussing with industry the idea of stretching the season to increase the stock. There are institutional factors. Some fishermen are reluctant to do that for economic and social reasons. Perhaps I have skated around the issue, but it is complex and ongoing, and the bottom dollar is attracting the industry to do it. The incremental gain will flatten off eventually, because the product is not available.

[12.20 pm]

Hon KIM CHANCE: For people who are not involved in the crayfishing industry, the whites are the bulk of the catch in the early part of the crayfishing season, which does not attract a high price in the premium Japanese market. I do not include mainlanders with Hong Kong, but I understand that the Chinese market is not necessarily discriminating in the whites versus reds market. Is that fair comment?

Mr MILLINGTON: I understand that it is. The Japanese market for lives is almost dominated by reds. The market preference in the southern Chinese market is much wider. They are willing to take a wider colour variant. The other

issue is that the whites possibly are not of the highest quality because they are walking and the ratio of meat to size is an issue.

Hon KIM CHANCE: And they are more physically difficult to export.

Mr MILLINGTON: I understand that is so, but of course there are trade secrets about these matters.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Transport has a significant bearing on the ability to get the product to the buyer in pristine condition to meet demand and to reflect the premium price. We need to do a lot more and to do it much better. The Airfreight Export Council has implemented some changes, in consultation with airlines. Recently I met two airline operators who service that region. A year or so ago I went to Taiwan to try to encourage EVA airlines to come to Western Australia. This is a key issue. That is the reason we look forward to the new operator at Perth Airport being one component in a range of initiatives, such as cold storage, quality control, and opportunities of different packaging. We must compete with other nations and different climatic conditions, as well as time zones. We are working overtime to ensure that those factors are improved so that we can decrease the cost. It will then be more attractive to the Chinese market, which is growing in so many areas, including fish. The Chinese do not pay a premium price. Therefore we need to try harder to decrease the overall costs and to deliver the product more efficiently. We will reap the rewards if we are successful in those areas.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Is it correct that some Western Australian fin fish are being exported whole and processed overseas prior to being imported back into Western Australia? I have been approached by a Kalgoorlie-based fish retailer who is unable to buy sized fillets from his wholesaler unless he takes the imported product. I do not know whether it is a problem for the wholesaler, because I have not yet been able to inquire further. Are you aware of that practice, and is it a problem for the processing industry to not be able to supply wholesalers and retailers with sized fillets?

Mr MILLINGTON: I will take the bulk of the question on notice, because I am not aware of the practice. As a high cost producer, the trend in Western Australia is to export the premium fish for the highest value. The trend has been for the bottom end of the market to compensate with industrial fish, and sized fillets often seem to be at the bottom end. Patagonian hake, and so on, make up much of the fish and chip trade.

Hon KIM CHANCE: This was Western Australian fish.

Mr MILLINGTON: I am surprised about that. I will take the question on notice. If the member can supply some additional details I will provide a comprehensive answer.

Hon M.D. NIXON: I refer to the second point on that page relating to the value of state fisheries production continuing to fall. Has there been a reduction in tonnage or is the drop in value mainly due to the relative change in currency between the yen and the Australian dollar?

Mr MILLINGTON: I will provide a comprehensive answer in writing. However, I understand that point highlights the fact that the difference is mainly due to the relative currency valuations. There has been no decline in catch other than what one would expect in natural fluctuations.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The value of the yen is about the same.

Mr MILLINGTON: I understand that is the case.

Hon BOB THOMAS: We have drafted a number of questions which we intended to ask because they are part of our ongoing inquiries. The unasked questions, which we place on notice, are -

The CHAIRMAN (Hon M.J. Criddle): The Committee also has some generic questions. We would like the answers to those questions plus the answers to supplementary questions.

*Sitting suspended from 12.30 to 2.00 pm*

**Division 29: Agriculture, \$99 536 000-**

[Hon Mark Nevill, Chairman.]

[Hon E.J. Charlton, Minister for Transport]

[Dr G. Robertson, Chief Executive Officer.]

[Mr K.F. Goss, Executive Director, Sustainable Rural Development Program.]

[Mr K.H. Wilson, Manager, Financial Management and Analysis.]

[Mr R.L. O'Dwyer, Executive Director, Industry Resource Protection Program.]

[Mr K. Moore, Executive Director, Office of Policy and Planning.]

[Mr N.D. Thomson, Acting Manager, Budget Allocation and Evaluation, Office of Policy and Planning.]

[Miss K. Lynch, Principal Policy Officer.]

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome the Minister and staff of Agriculture Western Australia to this afternoon's session of the Estimates Committee. These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and a copy will be made available tomorrow, which may be corrected. Corrections must be back by the date indicated at the bottom of the page.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Are workplace agreements used in Agriculture Western Australia and, if so, how many are there currently?

Dr ROBERTSON: Workplace agreements are used. I would have to provide information in detail on notice. They are generally restricted to a couple of groups of people, who are staff at research stations involved in sessional work and one or two others. A small proportion of the staff in the organisation are on workplace agreements.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: Is the signing of a workplace agreement endorsed by the Government seen as a compulsory prerequisite for employees participating in flexible remuneration packaging?

Dr ROBERTSON: No.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: The policy of the Government is quite clearly that it will be the case. Why is it not in Agriculture Western Australia?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Acknowledging that I am not the Minister responsible for agriculture, certainly it has never been any aspect of any government direction or policy in my area of responsibility. It is used as one of the components for people in particular positions. It is a two-way affair to give flexibility and opportunity to staff. That is the line we have taken across government. Whether there has been any change to that policy in specific categories, I do not know. We can respond to the question in line with the first question.

Hon JOHN HALDEN: The Health Department has put out a document on flexible remuneration packaging which quite clearly and specifically states that the signing of a workplace agreement endorsed by the Government is a compulsory prerequisite to employees participating in flexible remuneration packaging. The Health Department has taken that view. Whether it is correct or not I do not know. Has the department looked at that issue; if it has, has it looked at the issue of WorkCover and, if so, has it been adequately finalised at this stage? If a worker is injured, does the worker receive merely the cash payment of his salary or cash and non-cash payments?

Dr ROBERTSON: The agency's enterprise agreement has a clause which covers flexible remuneration packages. It predates the formal government policy on the issue. That was offered to staff towards the end of 1995. As I understand it, no-one has taken it up at this stage because in the type of agency we are, there is very little benefit, if any, to the individual. Therefore, we have not needed to address the second issue that the member raised.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Industry resource protection is mentioned on page 117. There has been some confusion about the ongoing role of Agriculture Protection Board officers. That confusion has arisen not only with farmers but also with some of the officers. The so-called time being applied when advertising for officers states that so many hours will be allocated to particular services. What has occurred in the botanical gardens in South Australia and Victoria is part of a wider issue that is important for Western Australia. We must not see any diminution of the services of the Agriculture Protection Board. What programs are in place to ensure that quarantine services are maintained in country areas? How will the board manage those programs over the next four years? How will the board address those concerns and communicate the direction it is taking to country areas?

[2.10 pm]

Dr ROBERTSON: There have been some significant changes in the management of the resource protection program. This budget has an increased allocation of \$3.5m to specifically address the issues about which the member has spoken. In summary, agricultural industries in Western Australia are under increased pressure and threat from incursions of exotic pests and diseases. Subsequent to the World Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade the main avenue for countries to deal with trade restrictions - previously they used tariffs or blanket bans on products - is to fall back on the health or disease status of the country that is exporting the product. A much greater requirement is placed on, firstly, keeping the State free of diseases, because that will provide us with better market access; secondly, proving to the World Trade Office that we are free from disease and we are carrying out appropriate international standard inspections; and thirdly, detecting incursions - there are more and more people moving around - and identifying them quickly and responding rapidly. In the past many of the activities that were

carried out by former APB officers were routine control of pests that are endemic - Paterson's curse is a classic example of a pest that is endemic to a large part of the State. We have shifted the focus away from controlling and managing diseases that are well established and beyond eradication in Western Australia, to focus on surveillance and monitoring and responding quickly to incursions as they inevitably occur.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: There has been some talk that anthracnose, the white lupins' disease, was introduced by seed. We need a process to ensure that any seed imports are strictly monitored and quarantined. The second part of that quarantine protection relates to entry points into Western Australia. How successful has the move to Border Village been? I am concerned about the influx of air travellers. I know we have an honesty bin at the airport. However, if what is being found in boots of cars at Border Village translates into the additional air travel, I am concerned at what may be occurring at the airports. Other than maintaining a strict policing regime, how will the department accommodate these pressures on our quarantine service?

Dr ROBERTSON: It is our judgment that anthracnose on albus lupins probably came into Western Australia on an ornamental seed from somewhere like New Zealand in a small package through the mail. We must have much better surveillance at the airports and borders. Over the past 12 months we have invested a large sum of money at the domestic airport. A sniffer dog meets most flights coming into Perth. We are detecting more material coming in; however, it is not enough. This budget will allow us to invest in more dogs. That will ensure we meet all flights into Western Australia. We are also investing in back scatter detection equipment which will be set up to monitor unaccompanied baggage to identify organic matter inside a case, parcel, or box. With the probability that anthracnose came into Western Australia in a packet of ornamental seeds, we will put in place a dog at the Perth mail terminal to detect organic material coming in through the mail. In the coming financial year there will be a significant shift in investment in traditional areas to strengthening the quarantine barrier.

Mr O'DWYER: The move of the quarantine checkpoint to the Western Australia-South Australia border to cut off traffic that bypasses roads between the border and Norseman has been extremely effective. It has given us better control of traffic. Any stock that comes through the border that requires a quarantine inspection is directed to the Norseman stockyards. At this stage it is not economical to build stockyards at the border. The move has improved the quarantine approach. As Dr Robertson has stated, the industry resource protection program, which is headed by the Agricultural Protection Board, has three areas of priority: To improve quarantine, surveillance and rapid response capacity. All three played their part in combatting the recent anthracnose outbreak and other minor outbreaks.

The CHAIRMAN (Hon Mark Nevill): I do not doubt that the Border Village quarantine post has improved surveillance; however, the improvement would be marginal. It cuts out traffic only along the Balladonia road, which is 1 or 2 per cent of the total, if that. It does not address light aircraft flying into WA which refuel at Forrest or the fishing boats that are moving along the coast. Moving that checkpoint was more a result of the windfall of money from the federal Treasury. There was no evidence in that inquiry that relocation would address the relative risk of disease coming down the Warburton Road, the Tanami Road, the Duncan Highway or the Kununurra entry. I do not believe the marginal improvement has returned value for money in that investment in reducing the risk of disease in Western Australia.

Mr O'DWYER: I acknowledge the Chairman's points, especially in relation to alternative road entry routes within Western Australia and the light aircraft travel. This budget allows for a doubling of surveillance and checking at the three main road entries into Western Australia. We are looking at alternative means of checking the light aircraft ports. We do not see a great risk in the mining areas. If somebody brings in an apple and throws it out at a remote area airstrip, the risk to the industry is relatively minimal. However, we still must try to deal with it and reduce the risk to the State.

[2.20 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps training of the people at the roadhouses at Warburton may be a simple way of reducing risk.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am concerned about the processes adopted to implement an information technology system for your functions and needs. Have you addressed the problems associated with the year 2000 as it relates to information technology?

Dr ROBERTSON: We have been looking at the issue for some time. We have a formal working group in the agency which is going through to all systems and at this stage we think we are in a good state.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Will it be an expensive exercise for your agency?

Dr ROBERTSON: No. Fortunately we had a late start into many of the technology areas and many of the systems have been replaced in the past two or three years. At this stage we have not found anything that causes concern and we are well and truly into the process.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: On the assumption that you have some outsourcing for your IT needs, do you have a proper accountability mechanism in place?

Dr ROBERTSON: Yes, we certainly do. Anything that is outsourced is managed through a very strict contract that has the outcome against the dollars. They have been managed rigorously.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Do any of your employees have access to the Internet through your department? If so, is that restricted and how is it restricted and managed?

Dr ROBERTSON: Most of the staff in the organisation have access to the Internet. We are largely a science research based information organisation. Therefore, communications, interstate and internationally, are a very important part of the business.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: You indicated that IT is a fairly new phenomenon in historical terms in your department. Can you comment on any continuing needs you may have to replace or upgrade the systems to address technological change?

Dr ROBERTSON: I am sorry. Perhaps I misled the committee slightly. We have been involved with IT for a long time. We had archaic systems for a long time which we have upgraded in the past two or three years. Therefore, we have had involvement in it for quite a while. We have an ongoing recurrent maintenance program that we need to look at. However, we have invested significant resources over the last two years in a new financial management information system - the hardware and software associated with that. We will not need any big ticket items in the near future.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Are there any big IT training issues on the horizon? How big a workplace need and priority is IT training for your employees?

Dr ROBERTSON: IT training is an ongoing issue. At the moment we are spending a lot of time and effort training staff to manage the new financial information system. That is in part associated with a process to devolve the decision making and management of financial activities and, at the end of the day, purchasing to regional and district centres. Therefore, training is a big and ongoing issue.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am also interested in the systems that your agency has in place to ensure controls over the recording of public property. I am concerned about adequacy in asset control. I put a similar question to the Minister earlier about another department. In this day and age there is a tendency in asset management circles to classify various items of equipment as minor assets. Sometimes the benchmark for a minor asset can be as high as \$500 or \$1 000. Given an organisation of the size of yours, that can be a large amount of public property. What asset control devices do you employ and what is the frequency of stocktakes and so on?

Dr ROBERTSON: Stocktakes have been an annual event. That has been done routinely within the organisation. In the move to accrual accounting by all government agencies yearly, we have identified the need to significantly improve management of our assets that were not part of the business management system in the past. We are in the process of implementing a new asset management system. We have resources in the field right now that are doing a complete stocktake of all capital assets from Kununurra to Esperance. We have staff in 92 locations throughout the State. It is not an insignificant task to do that. In the end, the decisions that the member has referred to as important issues as to what is a capital asset and what is not will be made in the light of what we have and what we are using. In the past, assets valued at less than \$1 000 would not be placed on the capital assets register.

[2.30 pm]

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: What processes have been introduced to protect the intellectual property rights of patented and genetic engineering across plant and animal species?

Dr ROBERTSON: The organisation has been involved with the protection of plant genetic material for almost nine years. Therefore, in Australia we routinely seek plant breeders' rights for new material. Additionally, from time to time we have material with international usefulness or commercial prospects, and we take out the appropriate patent for the material, if it is a United States interest, or plant breeders' rights in other countries. When we give material to any other organisation for testing or evaluation we formally enter an agreement for testing, recognising our rights. From time to time we have other pieces of intellectual property that we protect by patents, but that is perhaps the exception rather than the rule. With most of the technology that we are dealing with it is in the best interests of

agriculture to apply it quickly to agriculture. Often these do not have an individual commercial intellectual property benefit.

Hon GREG SMITH: A wide range of boards, industry groups, task forces, review committees and other miscellaneous groups, committees and councils come under the Agriculture portfolio. What remuneration is made to each member? Is membership restricted? What criteria are used to appoint members? Are travel and accommodation expenses included in that remuneration or is that a separate cost?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That is a wide-ranging question and there would be much interest in it. Dr Robertson may like to provide that as supplementary information, if he does not have it at his disposal now.

Dr ROBERTSON: As the member indicated, a wide range of community or industry based groups interact with Agriculture Western Australia. It is not possible to answer the question specifically, because it is wide-ranging. Some groups work on a voluntary basis, and they probably dominate, such as many of the small producer groups. Land conservation districts have the largest number of members. We also have statutory boards and committees such as the Agriculture Protection Board and the Soil and Land Conservation Council. The processes for appointment are set out in the various pieces of legislation. The remuneration is set by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal for appointed officers and political officeholders. We can provide the details. Membership of a number of groups, such as partnership groups - both at the regional and program level - vary from time to time. The terms of reference and terms of appointment vary. In the main they are appointed by the Minister but sometimes on the recommendation of industry groups and other processes. Because they are not statutory boards or authorities and not covered by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, the Public Sector Management Office approves sitting fees and allowances.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Perhaps Dr Robertson can add to that detail the private investment in the partnership arrangements.

Hon GREG SMITH: Does an annual budget cover the breakdown of the costs? When putting together those figures, can you indicate which groups and councils are remunerated and which are not?

Dr ROBERTSON: That can be done. There is a precise budget for each arrangement managed within the organisation. They are based on a specific project, so the cost is fully transparent and accountable.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I am pleased that Hon Greg Smith raised this issue. It has concerned me for some time. I refer here to partnership groups. Those groups emerged as key role players in decision making within agriculture generally. I am concerned that this is a major deviation from the normal representative process of advice to the agency. There is no clear trail of accountability for the advice provided by members of the partnership group. No-one seems to take direct responsibility, other than the Minister, for appointing the persons who comprise the partnership groups. It appears that there is no person to whom the members of the partnership groups remain accountable; nor does there seem to be any channel of accountability.

I am extremely unhappy about that situation, as are a number of people in the industry, for instance, members of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. As parliamentarians and members of the Public Service, we are going through a process where we need to face up, quite properly, to increasingly stringent measures of accountability. Yet, in this important area of advice to the agency we seem to have no accountability other than that to the Minister. It would be irresponsible of me not to raise these concerns - not from my point of view but from the point of view of a number of people who are worried about the outcomes being delivered by the partnership groups and the level of accountability placed on persons making those decisions.

The wheat industry has a dispute on its hands regarding the future of the management of the Australian wheat industry and actions taken by certain representatives in an advisory and representative capacity of the WA Farmers Federation, at least. In the main, actions taken by some members were not approved of by members of the federation. It is irrelevant whether we agree with their actions because those people are representatives of the Western Australian Farmers Federation. Having taken those actions they then have to face the accountability process of the WA Farmers Federation annual wheat conference, which makes its own decisions. Whether we agree with it, that is the chain of accountability; yet no similar chain exists for people on the partnership groups, and that bothers a lot of people.

[2.40 pm]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: There is a chain of responsibility within the Agriculture portfolio and this new aspect is an innovative addition. On top of all the councils, boards and groups of people, which Hon Greg Smith referred to, this new part of the system is present in varying capacities. It is part of the agriculture industry and also plays a role in the research, development, planning and implementation of various responsibilities between the department and industry.

The other partner arrangements which Hon Kim Chance identified reflect the additional dimension which the Minister and the Government have supported. It ensures that a part of Agriculture Western Australia is taken to the industry, rather than having the industry come to the department. That has focused on communications to ensure that people can carry that link and have that direct input.

However, that has changed recently because Agriculture Western Australia is taking a scientific and specialised approach to those areas of responsibility. Many more options are available for agriculture today and the days that Hon Kim Chance and I might remember are gone. Consequently, there is a need to match a higher level of strategic and technical input and that is why the Minister has responded and put these people in place. At the end of the day the Minister is responsible for them, because they do not represent the Western Australian Farmers Federation or the plant breeding people; they are simply a link.

Having a panel that has some transparency and accountability is an option, because this is not so much about handling the money side of it; it is about the industry and policy. It is judged on its performance and the Minister is judged accordingly. That is the accountability process. The Pastoralists and Graziers Association President is a member of the wool strategy group; the PGA meat president is on the meat partnership group; and Alan Clark from the WA Farmers Federation wool section is on the wool group. That process has not restricted representation only to identifiable industry groups; it has included people who have been successful in industry, business, communications and other areas of the whole industry. Consequently, there is broad input. For example, the Australian Wheat Board was once made up of only wheat growers, but now, rightly or wrongly, it consists of other people. Some say there has been too much emphasis on finance marketing and so on, but it all comes down to the bottom line; that is, whether it succeeds or not. The process must be judged on its success. Change brings fear and questions. Whether it works or not, people will always ask why some people got there.

It will work. It must be tried and that is the basis on which it is being done. How it succeeds will be a matter of judgment. Coalition policy is to legislate for the partnership groups and a one year operation is presently being considered.

Hon KIM CHANCE: To legislate for the partnership?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Yes. If we want a mechanism put in place, that is what would be required.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Does that imply it has statutory power?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: No, not statutory power, but representation. Take the regional development commissions, for example. Those people are put on in a process and that process is legislative. If you wanted to do that you would have to go down that path with this.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: I refer to the quality assurance programs detailed at page 99. Some dairy farmers received payments during the time when their milk was being tested. An automatic system for counting bacteria is being trialled. How advanced are those trials? Is the testing being speeded up because some dairy farmers are concerned about the lapse in time giving a distorted figure? What benefits have now been derived from that quality assurance program?

Dr ROBERTSON: Western Australian milk exports products are mostly short shelf life products such as ice-cream, yogurts and fresh milk and they have the lowest bacteria count in Australia and, arguably, in the world. Because of that the natural life of our milk is many days longer than the natural life of the same milk in, say, Victoria. Therefore, it is important that the system be geared around monitoring the type and quantity of bacteria in those milk products. The automatic system is working and is providing rapid feedback.

The Dairy Industry Authority and the herd improvement scheme are considering the possibility of a shared investment in new laboratory facilities, probably in Bunbury, to upscale this whole activity of laboratory analyses and servicing to the dairy industry. The technology is being developed and what is referred to in the papers will be a large part of that. Some bacteria are resistant to pasteurising, so they must be included as part of the equation. The development of ongoing techniques is needed to ensure that they are kept out of our milk products.

[2.50 pm]

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: We have an opportunity for our white lupin to be used as a base, not only for herd improvement or production, but also for the growing aquaculture industry in Western Australia. How much work is taking place in collaboration with the Fisheries Department on trialling the lupin-based fishmeals into pellets for a number of animals, be it cattle or poultry? This is a very important aspect to consider. We are exporting the real value of the industry at the moment. Aquaculture is growing overseas as well as in this State, and there is a shortage of base feeding product, so wonderful opportunities exist. I hope Agriculture WA will pursue this vigorously in the future.



Dr ROBERTSON: That is a priority area within our legumes and oil seeds program. We have a project funded in part by the Grains Research Committee of the WA wheat growers. We are doing work with marron and yabbies, with Curtin University of Technology and TAFE regarding fin fish such as snapper and jewfish in developing the appropriate feed mix for them based on lupins. More recently, we started some work with a couple of large Indonesian aquaculture firms. They are massive importers of soya bean which they use in formulating aquaculture feeds, so we agree with the member that this is a very important prospective area for legume crops in Western Australia.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: If we got an excellent product off the ground, would we have the capacity to be a large miller of these animal or fish feeds?

Dr ROBERTSON: Definitely. We have some very efficient feed milling companies in Western Australia which are starting to export processed feeds. If lupin proves to be a good source for aquaculture feed, I am confident that those companies have the capacity to move in that direction.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: Hon Bruce Donaldson touched on problems in South Australia and Victoria, particularly in identifying diseases. Has the industry set about training officers to identify fireblight should it come into the State - heaven forbid it should - and what steps are we taking to ensure it does not arrive?

Mr O'DWYER: The agency has already undertaken training programs and at least 25 staff have been trained to identify fireblight in the main host plants. A surveillance program is underway in the high risk areas to identify any plants with fireblight disease symptoms. Some discussion is continuing among scientists in this regard. It is interesting that New Zealand tests involving samples from the same plants show more positive results than tests done in Australia. Independent testing is being sought overseas to confirm which testing is the more accurate. It is certainly a concern. We are looking carefully at the apple and pear industry, which is the most susceptible. For various reasons we import few apples from the Eastern States, largely because of other disease problems. However, it highlights the need for a good quarantine barrier.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: You said that we import very little fruit such as apples and pears. The fireblight found in the Eastern States was on ornamental trees or shrubs, the sort which go to nurseries and all sorts of places. We need to look at those places to protect against fireblight.

Mr O'DWYER: That is correct. We are targeting our initial surveillance in places such as the Botanic Gardens, Kings Park and areas with high risk cotoneaster plants.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The other backstop is that if we do not find it, the New Zealanders will.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: In answer to the generic questions provided earlier, my attention was drawn to a \$3.5m new policy item involving strengthening of the quarantine surveillance and rapid response. Mr O'Dwyer gave a fair amount of detail on that program earlier. A mood was evident that perhaps vectors of plant disease, such as those carried by people travelling by road or air, means the disease is hard to detect. How effective is that program? Does the Quarantine and Inspection Service have sufficient legislative teeth to do the job in its powers to detain, question, and examine goods?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Like the Fisheries Department.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It is a friendly question. Do you have legislative teeth?

Dr ROBERTSON: Over the financial year we have integrated the Department of Agriculture and the Agriculture Protection Board, which previously operated under different legislation inspecting different things, often overlapping and sometimes with gaps between the two. The Minister has indicated his intention to try to introduce legislation this year to integrate those agencies. A large amount of regulatory legislation requires examination to ensure no loopholes will remain. We intend to pick up many aspects in that examination. In addition, a review was conducted into the commonwealth quarantine service. Similarly, a number of issues arose and it was thought that the protection framework was not as good as it should have been in a number of areas. Another project as part of the \$3.5m initiative is to review all legislation as well as the commonwealth protocols, which are voluminous, along with our own to make sure they are compatible and that a complete quarantine net is placed around Western Australia. The short answer is, probably not, but the supplementary answer is that we will be working during the next 12 months to make sure it is addressed.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Are your officers' powers sufficient to deter people? I am aware of situations in which fruit is discovered in a person's possession. Obviously, the fruit would be confiscated, which is no big deal to anybody. However, we have the question of what happens. They could be told not to do it again. In that case, the offender might think it was worth having a go. On the other hand, the department could take them to court, which would be an extraordinary expense for it and the defendant. It is probably using a sledge hammer to crack a walnut. Has any

consideration been given within the new legislative approach being negotiated to provide for on the spot penalties? If someone has committed a quarantine offence, a ticket could be issued so they get a boot up the backside without imposing an over the top penalty or too much administrative burden on the department.

[3.00 pm]

Dr ROBERTSON: That is exactly the approach the department is endeavouring to take - infringement notices and on the spot penalties. At the moment, the two agencies can only respond to the situation by fining the person. This can only be achieved if the offender is caught and prosecuted. That can become very expensive and the waiting list for access to court is often very long. The intention is to move to an infringement notice system.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What is the time frame for that change?

Dr ROBERTSON: The department hopes that draft legislation will be completed before the end of this year. However, it might take some months more to finalise the regulations. It is hoped that the process will take no more than 12 months.

Hon M.D. NIXON: Page 100 contains reference to enhancing liaison with industry in joint efforts to improve the long term profitability of Western Australia's agriculture. Mention is made of initiating the Beef in Schools and community awareness projects. Have these projects commenced? If so, how effective are they and what are the details of the projects?

Dr ROBERTSON: Both projects commenced last financial year. *The West Australian* carried an article on the Beef in Schools program the other day. The Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation research revealed that there has been a large loss of skill in preparing meat on the part of younger people. The corporation asked the department what it could do. That has resulted in a program involving over 100 schools and supported by the AMLC and the Education Department. The AMLC provides ingredients for the schools, modern recipes and some contact with industry. The students learn to understand what a beef animal is, where the meat comes from and its price. It provides information to the students in addition to enhancing their cooking skills. Feedback to me from teachers involved in the program suggests that the impact on the students is fantastic.

A number of successful community awareness projects have been undertaken, including the Hungry Jacks promotion and the campaign involving agricultural industry information on milk cartons. In the next few days a major mural about the farming calendar will be mounted at the corner of Spring and Milligan Streets. The owners of an unused building site are putting up an enclosure on which a large number of school children will paint a series of murals about agriculture as the seasons change in Western Australia. The feedback we have received is that, although the budget is modest, these projects are having a significant impact and are putting agriculture and agricultural issues in front of the urban community.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: What is Agriculture WA's response to international consumer trends towards greater food safety? In particular, does the department have any research and development programs in support of organic food production?

Dr ROBERTSON: Food safety is absolutely critical in exporting products to the type of market to which Western Australia wishes to export; that is, generally the higher priced and more sophisticated markets. As part of the SQF2000 program, the department is undertaking projects with a number of industries involving a quality assurance approach to ensuring that all techniques used are compatible with the production of a safe, clean, green product. As part of that, the farmers must monitor and keep diaries as to exactly what pesticide, if any, they might be using and the withholding periods. It also includes the farmers organising mandatory testing of the product and providing the results. The issue is becoming critically important.

The department is also involved in two other activities: Firstly, a complete review by the Australian and New Zealand Food Safety Council of all the issues of food safety that have arisen as a result of events in the meat industry in the Eastern States in the past couple of years; and, secondly, quality assurance programs with a number of meat processing groups in Western Australia.

Agriculture WA does not have a program specifically focused on providing advice and services to organic farmers, but advice is provided through the normal channels. The department has a small reference point to provide specific advice.

An interesting issue is developing at the moment with Japan through the Australian Wheat Board in relation to a strong emerging demand for organically grown wheat in that country. The department has had discussions with the AWB in the past few days as to how that process might be managed and assured.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I had a discussion with an AWB manager a week ago about the transport chain. He said that Western Australia should be attracting a premium for its products. This State has an enormous untapped opportunity of attracting premiums on a whole range of products. Producers in this State have better procedures and use far fewer chemicals and insecticides than farmers in other parts of Australia and the rest of the world, but they have not managed to take advantage of that to the appropriate degree.

Another area in the food chain is not meeting the desired standard of assessment. That is, the products being presented to consumers, particularly cold storage products such as meat, can go through the total process - from production to delivery to the retail outlet and into restaurants - and will not need to be held for a specific period before being disposed of by a stipulated use-by date. It would overcome the problems associated with taking frozen produce out of cold storage and replacing it. Many of these problems are associated with that area and must be addressed.

[3.10 pm]

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: My next question relates to land care. What funding is available in the State Budget to implement the salinity action plan and to what extent is that program dependent on federal funding? Does this department receive any share of the funds from the one-off sale of Telstra Corporation Ltd for the implementation of the salinity action plan?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: As an introductory point to the question, the funding is nothing like it should be. That is one of the great indictments of the current Federal Government. Both Governments must highlight this issue. It simply must go where it will do the most good. A formula must be used that will guarantee some equity in the business. From where I sit, I do not think that will be forthcoming.

Mr GOSS: I will go through some details regarding the arrangements for implementation of the salinity action plan in the next financial year using state funds. I will then come back to what might occur under the Natural Heritage Trust. As early as March last year the agency made a commitment to the Minister for Primary Industry about how it would deal with salinity. The total commitment to salinity this year is \$10.3m from state consolidated funds. For next year, 1997-98, our intention is to allocate \$11.2m to implement the salinity action plan from the perspective of Agriculture Western Australia. As the member will understand, we are locked together with three other agencies in the total program. To implement that plan at \$11.2m next year - an increase from \$10.3m this year - we will take a share of the Cabinet decision that endorsed this salinity action plan. That allocated \$1m in 1996-97; \$5m in 1997-98; and \$10m thereafter, across the agencies. Agriculture Western Australia has taken \$474 000 of that funding in 1996-97, increasing to \$1 065 000, or an extra \$591 000, in 1997-98. The agency's share of the \$10m will be \$2m thereafter.

In addition, in the 1997-98 budget an extra \$300 000 is allocated to the state revegetation scheme. Not every dollar may go to the salinity action plan, but a large share will. This increases that program from \$500 000 to \$800 000 next year. The rest of the \$11.2m will be allocated to a range of significant initiatives for which I can provide further details, either now or later, if the member requires that.

Regarding the Natural Heritage Trust, the State Government has been very clear and quite persuasive in what it expects by way of a partnership with the Commonwealth Government in implementing the salinity action plan. That has been communicated formally through the Premier and at all other levels. It represents \$30m. As far as we are concerned, that case is still live and being considered. News is still to come in that respect. We expect the Commonwealth to consider that proposal alongside other large initiatives, which it has either agreed to in the past or will agree to in the future.

How the \$30m will be allocated and spent in Western Australia depends on the way in which the Commonwealth responds to the salinity action plan in its entirety. The action plan identifies quite specifically where the money should be spent. It puts most of it into a system of revegetation, ranging from biodiversity plantings, to land conservation plantings, to new farm forestry initiatives. It also specifies other things to support that implementation. We have been quite clear about where that money might be spent. The Natural Heritage Trust invited applications from the community, the agency and other organisations. Those applications have been received and the assessment process is about to start, and I cannot forecast the outcome.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Is the apportionment of that funding determined by the Federal Government?

Mr GOSS: Yes; it is, if we are talking about the Natural Heritage Trust. It will be determined by the assessment process that is already in place. The assessment is at regional level in this State and the ultimate decision lies with the board of the Natural Heritage Trust which comprises two commonwealth Ministers.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: One overwhelming initiative would totally surpass the funding from these sources - privately owned land. As part of a coordinated and properly constituted land care revegetation program, taxation changes should give incentives to landowners to put their money into this aspect. That would see a revolution in land care. It is a terrible indictment on this nation that we have a significant problem that has become progressively worse over the years; yet successive Federal Governments, which are responsible for the taxation system, have ignored one of the greatest potential solutions of all; that is, as part of an overall plan or catchment group, to have funds from private landowners going directly into this activity, in a coordinated and properly managed way and overseen by people with qualifications.

It is a total waste of financial resources when money is not used directly for the improvement and survival of the business which, in turn, will bring about a core benefit to the nation, simply because of lack of taxation benefits. It is a great opportunity for all representatives in this place to come up with a plan in the current debate about tax reform which the Prime Minister has opened up; to see whether this suggestion can be included as one of the components in that reform. It would be of enormous benefit and would not cost the Commonwealth Government anything. The nation would finish up with an asset that was much improved and production would be enhanced as well.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: My question also relates to looking after the land and trees and overcoming erosion. Calicivirus is mentioned in the documents. Is there a strategy to develop that virus further?

Mr O'DWYER: We are trying to establish where calicivirus is at present within Western Australia, by capturing rabbits and taking blood samples. The intention is to do a second level of releases where we think that will have maximum effect. The calicivirus did not spread in the dry conditions of summer and was not active anywhere in Australia through to March. We are still learning how to best manage it. It is not a silver bullet solution to the rabbit problem. It is another technique to be used, alongside the other methods, for controlling rabbits.

[3.20 pm]

Hon KIM CHANCE: I quote from an article at page 3 of the May edition of the Farmers Federation publication, *The Primary Producer*, by executive director Phil Chidgzy in which he was generally complimentary of the Budget. He said -

Changes to accounting procedures and presentation of the budget figures have made it nearly impossible to identify where funding reductions to particular programs may have occurred.

I must agree with Mr Chidgzy. It seems that every year we enter the budget period with papers prepared in a different manner from the way they were presented in the previous year. I am becoming more than a little frustrated with the process.

In the Assembly Estimates Committee last week the Minister for Primary Industry had to concede that the budget figures did not adequately present the facts within the rural community development program. I refer to page 103 where rural leadership training, as a line item, is estimated to cost \$6.8m in the next financial year. The Minister said that was not right; and clearly it is not right. That is one example of the manner in which the budget papers in their current form present so little detail as to be useless for any analytical consideration.

The lack of detail in the whole 1997-98 Budget generally must be separately considered by the Estimates Committee. I am not referring to Agriculture in isolation.

I refer to categories of expenditure at page 89. The line item, services and contracts, indicates an estimated \$5m increase or about 25 per cent. What are the principal growth areas in the services and contracts line item?

Dr ROBERTSON: The statements explain the growth items that appear in this budget. A completely different accounting process has applied to this year's budget estimate papers that were put before Parliament. The Agriculture Western Australia budget comprises the service delivery for the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation and the Agriculture Protection Board. Both are separate sections within the budget. However, the money in that is also appropriated through the Agriculture Western Australia budget. All the growth items such as that increase in services is related totally to the services and functions that were carried out directly by the Agriculture Protection Board last financial year, but are carried out by Agriculture Western Australia this financial year.

The figure under section 8 is a typographical or presentation error in the budget. The amount of \$6.8m is the total amount for community and development and the subcategories under that including rural leadership training. It covers a range of issues such as catchment management, rural development, and farm forestry development.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I understand that the department has recently installed, or is in the process of installing, a new accounting system. I could not find any reference to that in the budget except for mention of continued re-engineering of the agency's operations which appeared under "Significant issues and trends" at page 92. What are

the direct and indirect costs involved in installing the new accounting system, including the consultants' fees and new and updated technology costs for both hardware and software?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We will take that question on notice.

Hon M.D. NIXON: The program industry resource protection which starts at page 117 lists the major achievements for 1996-97. I note that no mention is made of the stable fly eradication program. At what stage is that?

Dr ROBERTSON: The program operated largely over last summer. An ongoing research project is aimed at identifying where the stable fly is breeding in the outer metropolitan area so that we can develop codes and protocols for the various industry groups involved in handling poultry manures or vegetable waste products to minimise or solve the problem. The two-year project began this financial year and we expect it to finish at the end of the next financial year. We have already identified the major causes of the problem and we are now working with industry groups and local government to implement processes to ensure we deal with the problem in the future.

Hon KIM CHANCE: At page 89 under categories of expenditure it is indicated that in the next financial year a reduction is expected in total operating expenses, whether we take that to be the subtotal line for operating or the subtotal line for recurrent services. That net reduction is achieved by an almost threefold increase in retained revenue from, roundly, \$22.3m to \$64m. To what extent does retained revenue mean fee for service? How much of the retained revenue is commonwealth source funding and how much is industry funding, noting that part of that answer is at page 113?

[3.30 pm]

Dr ROBERTSON: A very small proportion of that retained revenue comes from fees and charges for services. The principal components of the retained revenue are the net appropriations from the Agriculture Protection Board and the Rural Adjustment Finance Corporation - 15 and 12 per cent respectively. In addition there are the external industry funds; for example, the Grains Research Development Corporation, which is the largest, and the commonwealth programs, which are largely comprised of funding to manage the national barrier quarantine program in Western Australia and the National Heritage Trust. Mr Goss indicated the amount of money that is likely to come from the National Heritage Trust will not be known for some time, but estimates have been provided in the budget papers.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Is the retained revenue, other than that held in the trust account, held in a suspense account?

Mr WILSON: Under the new financial arrangements with Treasury, from 1 July next year the money will be put in against the appropriation. It is retained against the expenditure. The expenditure and revenue operate through the same bank account.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Therefore, it is not held in a suspense account?

Mr WILSON: No.

Hon KIM CHANCE: How is revenue which is not allocated to a specific purpose in the current year held by the department? Does the unallocated revenue remain in an unallocated revenue expense account?

Mr WILSON: No, all the non-departmental revenue that cannot be retained goes into a special account. It is set up in a non-retainable account at the Reserve Bank. Ours is retained in our bank account. There is no real unallocated revenue. It is either retainable or non-retainable.

Hon KIM CHANCE: The following questions will probably need to be taken on notice. What is the current status, value and control of outstanding revenue and expenditure invoices and debtor-creditor accounts? What is the current status, value and control of all outstanding cash advances due from public officers employed in the Minister's office, including ministerial advances? What is the current status, value and follow up action relating to outstanding departmental debtors? What is the current status of, and delay in, issuing accurate monthly statements to departmental clients? Is it accepted that the current system of issuing departmental statements of accounts is sufficient to ensure accuracy? How is the chief executive officer advised of the unsatisfactory nature and state of affairs of the department by the officer responsible for internal audit procedures?

Dr ROBERTSON: I will answer the last question. The agency has an audit committee which is required under Treasury guidelines. I chair the audit committee and through it the internal auditor reports regularly to me on issues which are outstanding within the organisation and the actions that have been taken to address them.

Hon GREG SMITH: I refer to "The Gascoyne-Murchison Rangeland Strategy". Out of the funding which has been allocated 51 per cent of \$6.54m and 48 per cent of \$13.85m from the rural partnership program which comes from the National Heritage Trust has been allocated to the Department of Conservation and Land Management reserves.

What does CALM intend to do with the money? If it is to be used to purchase pastoral properties, have arrangements been made for the ongoing costs of maintaining those properties?

Dr ROBERTSON: That strategy and the recommendations contained in it have gone to the Government. It has been announced in Parliament that Cabinet has made a decision to move towards its implementation and agencies are required to provide detailed costings and sources of funds for the next stage. At this stage, it is an indicative budget rather than an actual budget and it will be subject to finalisation in the next eight to 10 weeks in close collaboration with the Commonwealth, particularly through the National Heritage Trust and the Rural Adjustment Scheme.

Mr GOSS: CALM's intentions for reserves and reservations for nature conservation purposes is still in the same process as Dr Robertson described. Over the coming weeks some things will be sorted out. This agency will be taking a strong lead in getting those details finalised for a subsequent Cabinet decision. From our discussions with CALM, it has indicated it is looking at its options.

We should not assume that it will take the single option of purchasing land for a nature reserve. It will look at other options regarding management agreements and so on and it has made that clear to us in the consultations so far. I cannot speak for that agency other than to say that in discussions it has indicated it has a range of options available to it to achieve adequate nature conservation in the Gascoyne and Murchison regions. It is very aware of the need for ongoing management.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: In the discussions I have had on this issue it is obvious that emphasis must be placed on the pastoral leases in that region to ensure they have priority over the assistance programs. This will enable the leaseholders to maintain their operations. It was widely discussed by the Government when it considered the plan. A significant component of commonwealth assistance is involved.

Obviously, the success or failure of the strategy will depend on how far the Commonwealth will go in responding to the plan. Obviously, I have no influence over Cabinet on this issue, but it is my opinion that it is absolutely crucial that current leaseholders are given the highest priority to make sure they can maintain and operate their properties in the most efficient and viable way. They should not be caught up in the ad-ons which are part of that strategy.

Hon GREG SMITH: The worry for a lot of people is that they may find themselves competing with CALM to expand their enterprise. That is something we do not want to occur.

[3.40 pm]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We agree with that statement.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: What has been the status of the footrot program over the past 12 months? How many flocks are quarantined? What was the cost to the agency over the past 12 months for that program? Where does the agency see this program going in the next 12 months and what costs will be associated with it?

Dr ROBERTSON: I may need to take a couple of those questions on notice because I do not have the exact figures with me. Footrot was a major problem in Western Australia, peaking about three years ago. Hon Murray Montgomery chaired a review that set new directions for the program. With great cooperation from the farming community and some good work by the agency, footrot is under control. The last figure I saw was that close to 50 properties were in quarantine. That number has been decreasing constantly.

Next Thursday in Perth a major workshop will be held by industry and agency staff to plan the next two years' activities. We have made major inroads into footrot and it is important to keep that going. The budget papers indicate the agency will spend less money on footrot next financial year than it did last year. That is because the problem this financial year is less than half the size it was last financial year.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We can take it from that answer that the chairman of that investigation led a successful assessment of the issue and that there has been nothing but success ever since.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Commonwealth recurrent revenue from specific purpose programs is detailed on page 113 of the Budget Statements under the outline of net appropriation determination. In that account the sum of the appropriations for the National Landcare program is \$9.9m, and by comparison the present year's estimated actual is \$8.6m. That sum makes up the majority of the total land commitment in Western Australia. Now we know how limited the increased commitment to land care will be, how does the Government justify the significant expenditure of public money on the launch of the state salinity plan just before the election?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I dealt with this issue this morning when we discussed fisheries operations. The situation is the same in the transport field. When we embark on a new initiative that potentially has far reaching beneficial

effects, I say to people in transport that it is no good having the best idea in the world if nobody knows about it. People in the department come forward with innovative ideas, but good news does not travel quickly.

The member has heard me comment about *The West Australian*, which has been in negative mode for the past 10 years. We must try to get the message out about the initiative for salinity control that was outlined by Mr Goss a moment ago, particularly in view of the decision of the Government on the sale of land and the proceeds going to this initiative. Judgments will always be made about whether it is political advertising and whether it is over the top.

One of the great tragedies in government or opposition is that it is difficult to get a good initiative publicised. When it is put in a glossy magazine or brochure it is seen not to be carrying the message; if it is put in a newspaper advertisement questions are raised about who it reaches; and if it is done through a mail-out it is questioned whether that delivers the message. It is a challenge for all of us to work out the best way of getting the message across. I do not think we should underestimate the challenge we have to harness the community, because if we do not carry the community with us on these initiatives, the initiatives will not bear fruit.

This is a big initiative; it has not been done before in this State. It was a first and we think it must be carried on. The Government is disappointed in the way the National Trust is heading. We supported the sale of Telstra to get this money on the ground. We must lift the expectations of the community: We want the community to demand that those funds finish up where they can be used.

Members in this Chamber have experienced over the years how little of that federal money gets on the ground. For many years Kevin Goss has worked to ensure those federal funds meet the demands of the catchment groups. The enthusiasm of people involved in those groups has been waning because they have had all the plans in the world, but they have not been able to implement them. We justify it in that regard. Perhaps we should do it two or three times more.

Hon KIM CHANCE: How is the sum of \$12.5m that is received by the department from services contracted by the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation comprised? Are these funds interest on earlier state lending or do they represent a repayment of loans?

Mr GOSS: I cannot give you an accurate breakdown of the \$12.5m from RAFCOR, but I can give a general indication. The moneys that are dispensed under RAFCOR's authority by and large come from reserves that are held in the State. One of them requires commonwealth approval because it is a commonwealth funded program and the other is at the discretion of the State as to how this reserve is spent. The corporation can forward estimate at any time and change its forward estimates at any time according to the circumstances of the day.

The predictions made at this time of the year are made on the best information available, but the corporation is able to respond quickly to any change in circumstances. By far the largest component of that money is available under two or three schemes that operate to provide direct incentives or grants to farm business development training, farm business development planning and implementation of those farm business plans.

With regard to the loans portfolio the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation has held for many years, the cost of that to the organisation is becoming less and less and is now at a very low level. The corporation has had a firm agenda over the past two or three years of reducing the loan portfolio it acquired from a major rural reconstruction program several years ago.

Most of those loans were moved to commercial lending authorities, agencies or companies, and it is left with a very small loans portfolio. It continues to work hard on reducing that level. I would not like to be pinned down on the figure, but the loans portfolio would have been several tens of millions of dollars and it is now \$2m or less. That gives an idea of the order of the reduction of its liability in that area.

[3.50 pm]

Hon KIM CHANCE: Where are those reserves held, and where can I find them in the budget papers?

Mr WILSON: The actual reserves in the trust account are not in the budget papers.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Why not?

Mr WILSON: I am not too sure why they do not appear in our estimates. I will check that.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We will provide as supplementary information the reason they are not in the budget papers and any other relevant information that could be made available.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Could it be that they are nominally commonwealth reserves?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I am advised it is not the agency's decision not to include them in the budget papers, but is a procedural decision by Treasury.

Mr GOSS: The Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation is a statutory authority which reports annually, as required. The full details are in the annual reports. One of the reserves largely comprises commonwealth funds which have been retained in this State because of the way RAFCOR has handled business in WA. It has been able to retain commonwealth money from the repayments on past loans.

The other reserve is very much state funds, and the two reserves are used in concert to handle all the programs under that statutory authority. Under RAFCOR most of the activity is handled on the basis of a state contribution of 10 per cent and a commonwealth contribution of 90 per cent. That is how the two funds work together.

Hon M.D. NIXON: My question relates to industry resource protection, and I see no mention in the programs of annual rye grass toxicity. Is there a continuing program to find a solution to this problem?

Dr ROBERTSON: There is an ongoing program and it is somewhat broader now than just a problem of grazing sheep. The member may be aware that problems occurred with rye grass toxicity in hay exports to Japan last year that needed to be dealt with. One of the issues involved is the impact of the rye grass toxicity on agricultural products, and the other relates to testing, immunisation and alternative pasture species. There are ongoing programs in rye grass toxicity.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I refer to farmers' debts to the Government. Is any list formulated annually or regularly by the department of the debts of farmers that will no longer be repaid to RAFCOR or any other agency in the Agricultural portfolio, and of farmers who have been relieved of the responsibility to pay back money owed to the Government from any source of obligation?

Dr ROBERTSON: The RAFCOR annual report identifies the debts. It is the only organisation involved in lending any funds to farmers. Mr Goss has indicated the outstanding liabilities over the past five or six years have reduced from a substantial amount to a small amount. If there are bad debts, and there have been very few, they would be outlined as debts written off in the annual report.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: There could be other sources of debts, through the Department of Land Administration or the Agriculture Protection Board, that have historically not been paid.

Dr ROBERTSON: There may be occasional late payments or debts with regard to Pastoral Board rates or vermin protection rates through the Agriculture Protection Board. They would be treated as sundry debtors and pursued in the normal way through the courts.

Hon KIM CHANCE: They are crown rates and, therefore, have priority.

Dr ROBERTSON: They certainly take priority over proceeds from mortgagee sales.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What funds does the department propose to expend on public relations in the financial year 1997-98? Will those funds represent an increase of expenditure in 1996-97? I am keen to find out specifically how many FTEs the department has allocated to the task of public-media relations, communications or whatever classification it is given within the department or agency, and whether any of those FTEs are journalists. If they are, how many are journalists? Does the department this year, and will it next year, work through a specific agency for advertising campaigns? If so, which agency and how much has been spent through that agency on advertising? What is the nature of the specific advertising campaigns in which the department is engaged?

[4.00 pm]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I will take that question on notice. For the benefit of the people in Agriculture Western Australia, the member asked a similar question of the Fisheries Department and probably other agencies also. The information will be made available in the proper way. I said earlier there are many additional demands on communications with stakeholders, particularly in this area, because in its operations Agriculture Western Australia has a great deal of private funding and partnerships. Obviously it is necessary to communicate along the way how the money is being spent, so those programs and partnerships must be publicised and promoted. The short answer is that that information will be made available.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does the department allocate to the Minister's office staff over and above that which is provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet; if so, how many staff are allocated and present in the Minister's office?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That information will be made available, along with the answer to the previous question. I suppose in the case of Primary Industry you could say it was all in-house!



The CHAIRMAN: The Committee has another eight questions which will be put on notice and provided to you.

*Sitting suspended from 4.02 to 4.15 pm*

**Division 77: Police, \$398 674 000 -**

[Hon Bob Thomas, Chairman.]

[Hon Peter Foss, Attorney General.]

[Mr R. Falconer, Commissioner of Police.]

[Mr G. Coffey, Executive Director.]

[Mr J. Frame, Director, Human Resources.]

[Mr T. Clarey, Acting Director, Asset Management.]

[Mr R. McDonald, Director of Finance.]

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome members to the 1997-98 consideration of the Police budget. Hansard will be producing a transcript of today's proceedings. The bottom of each page of the copy of *Hansard* will show a date by which witnesses will need to make their changes and return the transcript to the Committee. Have the witnesses read the witness information form and understood it?

Witnesses: Yes.

[4.20 pm]

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Page 753 refers to a review of the air support unit. Does that relate to the police helicopter?

Mr FALCONER: It relates to the whole of the air support unit of the police air wing including the police helicopter.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is the police helicopter currently in operation?

Mr FALCONER: It is having a routine service.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Does it currently have a sponsor?

Mr FALCONER: Yes; however, that will shortly expire.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Who is the current sponsor?

Mr FALCONER: Cape Bouvard.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is a new sponsor lined up?

Mr FALCONER: Not definitely; however, we have one interested, high level sponsor and some others at a lower level.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: When does the current sponsorship expire?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer that precisely.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What are the current maintenance costs for the police helicopter?

Mr McDONALD: Maintenance costs for the helicopter are paid out of the Police Service allocation. They are then recompensed through the trust. The effect on the Police Service allocation is cost neutral.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: How much money is involved?

Mr McDONALD: I cannot answer that question on the available information.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Has consideration been given to the use of a smaller helicopter within the force for general purposes?

Mr FALCONER: Yes.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is it intended that a smaller helicopter be acquired and so used?

Mr FALCONER: That is one of the proposals that came out of the current review.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Will that proposal be acted on favourably or otherwise?

Mr FALCONER: It is still under consideration; however it is desirable.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: When will the decision be made?

Mr FALCONER: In the near future.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Can the Minister provide particulars on sponsorship to the department from a number of sources, other than the police helicopter?

Mr FALCONER: Not in totality.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is on notice.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: My questions relate to the level of crime in the Willagee area. What have been the crime levels in the Willagee area over the past five years? What are the statistics for the incidence of various types of criminal offences, such as breaking and entering into residential properties or small businesses, armed robbery etc? What have been the policing levels in the Willagee area over the past five years? What are the statistics for the number of police patrols in the commercial area during periods of daylight and night time over the past five years? Has there been any difference in the levels of patrols in the commercial and residential areas of Willagee? What are the response times for the commercial areas in Willagee; are they comparable with other commercial areas in metropolitan Perth and are they in line with agency policy?

Mr FALCONER: We will take those on notice. However, I do not think we will be able to answer all of them. We will do our best.

The CHAIRMAN: When you answer can you tell us the smallest cell into which that information is broken down? For example, you have regional offices.

Mr FALCONER: Yes, district, subdistrict and stations.

The CHAIRMAN: When you answer that can you tell us the parameters of that district?

Mr FALCONER: This question underscores one of our fundamental problems; that is, our inability to crunch numbers down into geographical statistics to that definitive level. We will do our best within the system that we work.

The CHAIRMAN: Those questions are on notice.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to pages 748 and 752 and references to a new police training academy and comments made in *Hansard* concerning the decision on that. Is there a short list of preferred locations for that academy?

Mr FALCONER: No, we will call for expressions of interest. One of the underlying philosophies is our desire to collocate our own purpose built training academy with a tertiary institution. That is a limitation that is important. Some tertiary institutions have expressed interest. The Edith Cowan University commonly known as North Metropolitan College of TAFE at Joondalup has expressed interest very early.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is redevelopment of the Maylands site ruled out as an option and if so, why? Are there any prepared criteria on which the decision will be made for the new academy? Who will be responsible for assessing and making the final decision on the new academy? Has any design work been done, such as artists impressions, for a new academy?

Mr FALCONER: We have developed a full brief on that with input over a period by the architectural firm of Peter Hunt and Associates. We have a full brief to put forward to any contenders who express interest. The Maylands site is inappropriate. We could not build what we need for an academy on the Maylands site. Some heritage listed huts are located on that site. It is most inappropriate. The current training is excellent; and the academy is a disgrace. We need to develop this purpose built academy. We have done all the groundwork. When we go to industry we believe that there will be a lot of interest in building and developing the academy. We want to keep the design and construction process as open as possible. We have identified a brief through a proper process. The ultimate decision will be made on my recommendation to the Police Minister.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is it possible to get a copy of that brief?

Mr FALCONER: I am not sure whether that is available until we release it.

Mr COFFEY: The brief has been endorsed by the steering committee which comprises members from the Police Service, including the commissioner, and others from outside. At this stage government approval has not been finalised. It may be appropriate for that to remain in-house. We could arrange a briefing on the overall requirements of the academy for the member.

[4.30 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: It would be preferable if the member made arrangements privately with the commissioner to obtain that briefing.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: What processes has the Police Service undertaken to effectively manage the implementation of the vehicle immobiliser subsidy program?

Mr McDONALD: The Police Service is the host agency for the car immobiliser program. We receive the accounts monthly from the Insurance Council of Australia. We then have a process in place in which all the vehicles to which immobilisers have been fitted are compared with the vehicle information systems in our computing system to make sure that the vehicles qualify under the program and sufficient controls and checks are in place. Payments are then made to the various companies involved in putting the immobilisers in cars.

The CHAIRMAN: How does the firearm buyback scheme work?

Mr McDONALD: The Police Service has an allocation for that. It is commonwealth funded and an allocation has been provided in 1997-98. The firearms are handed in to the local police complex and are then transported to our ballistics section at Maylands. It verifies the firearm and so forth and information comes through to our accounts area. Payment is then made to the owner of the firearm.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: On page 742, the Budget Statements refer to "Core function - Prevention and control of crime (crimes against the person)". Reference is made under that heading to "participation in the drafting of the Telecommunications (Interceptions) Western Australia Act 1996". That Act was assented to on 16 October 1996 after it was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 21 November 1995. The Act still has not been proclaimed. When we debated the matter in this House in 1996 I asked the Attorney General about the envisaged proclamation date and he said it was a matter of regulations being drafted and approved by the federal Attorney General. Have the regulations been drafted? Have they been approved by the federal Attorney General? If not, why not? When will the Act be proclaimed?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer the part of the question relating to the regulations. However, I visited the telephone interception unit the other day. It is being set up and will be functioning in August this year. I will take the question on notice. However, my understanding from briefings is that the necessary legislative authority will be in place by the time we have all the equipment and the people there ready to throw the switch in August. I will take the first part of the question relating to the timing and the regulations on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am pleased to hear that it will come into operation. How many FTEs have been allocated to that function? Could I have a breakdown of sworn and unsworn FTEs?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer that at this time. I will take that on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am a bit concerned about that question.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: You should be.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am concerned it may not be appropriate for the people who are being investigated to know about the size of the unit. It helps for people to be in some doubt about the effort being employed against them. The less information people who are difficult to catch have about the surveillance being employed against them, the better.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: That is a valid point. However, it is overridden by Parliament's need to know.

Hon PETER FOSS: I know it is entirely up to Parliament to decide. If the member persists with wanting to know the answer, he will have the answer.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: It is my job. It is a question of balance. What is the budget allocation for the unit, because I understand it will require immense resources to do the job effectively? I do not want it to be a token effort.

Mr FALCONER: Neither do I. I will take that question on notice.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: On page 742 of the Budget Statements, three paragraphs deal specifically with the prevention of domestic violence. The Minister will recall that during debate on the restraining orders legislation in this Chamber earlier this year, I indicated that I could not see the retraining orders legislation working unless

budgetary resources were allocated to retraining people who work in the police and justice areas. What budgetary allocation has been provided in the Budget to cover the new restraining orders legislation.

Mr FALCONER: I do not know what the budgetary allocation is and I do not know whether Mr McDonald does either. However, we have issued a help kit to all our operational vehicles. One of our very competent policewomen who is on a Churchill Fellowship is travelling around the State and training people in the field. We now have district officers in every district in the State doing presentations. The training on domestic violence and intervention orders in the academy is philosophically different from that which existed not so long ago. Then we tried to separate the protagonists and get out of the place as quickly as we could. We have moved a long way from that. I will have to take the budget allocation question on notice. However, it is not so much the money as the commitment to a philosophical shift.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Changes had to occur. While the legislation is a good thing, along with that has to go a change in culture.

Hon PETER FOSS: Following our discussion on the legislation, I made a point of discussing it with the Minister for Police and the commissioner. I have raised this on a couple of occasions with the commissioner. He accepts what the member is saying. It is a matter of getting the Police Force thinking that way.

Mr FALCONER: We have enhanced in-service training enormously. That is about dollars and those figures are available. In the last two years, we have enhanced in-service training at the supervisory and managerial levels. Once again, shifts in the approach to dealing with these things are being reinforced or, sometimes for the first time, explained in a different format to the people who are managing and supervising our officers. That is as important at that level as it is at the ground level.

[4.40 pm]

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: The Armadale domestic violence intervention program has been in operation for a number of years, and Joondalup has an equivalent model. I asked a question earlier this year about the resources allocated to the Armadale program. I am concerned about the answer I received, because it was that the service offered to the police was voluntary. These are local workers involved in non-government organisations dealing with domestic violence situations. Many times they are asked to assist the police outside their normal working hours and they must work the following day in their normal jobs. This question applies to both the Police Department and the Ministry of Justice. Has consideration been given to providing more resources to give some relief to voluntary workers?

Mr FALCONER: A perennial problem is that no matter how well we educate the work force about the handling of domestic issues, invariably we must hand over to support agencies when the police step back. We deal with these matters in the first instance. I am not sure whether this is directly applicable to the trial at Armadale and the Joondalup model but I understand that the Armadale program was a prototype, and once it was completed the package was developed and put out across the agency.

Many external agencies receive minimal funding, and some are volunteers. Without that assistance and partnership we would have difficulty implementing the philosophies we espouse.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: It is important to consider these areas, especially the volunteer organisations. Assistance is provided by volunteers across government. The non-government sector puts in a great deal of effort to assist, and they cannot always predict when domestic violence will occur.

Hon PETER FOSS: I accept that a huge area of society functions with volunteers. The justice system uses a tremendous number of volunteers, and that is not a bad thing. The idea that we should collect more taxes and pay for everything would impose another burden on the community, and it could be a social aggravation.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Many volunteers assist outside their normal working time.

Hon PETER FOSS: I understand that, but do you suggest that we should cease using volunteers?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: No, I do not. However, you need to provide some resources so that these people do not need to work the next day, or something like that. Most domestic violence occurs at night. I am sure that the Commissioner of Police will attest to that.

Hon PETER FOSS: I understand what the member is saying, and I accept the desirability of that. However, again, I think a large amount of society functions on that sort of selfless attitude.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: The workers will burn out, and then you will have a problem.

Hon PETER FOSS: Part of the question is to encourage more people to become involved.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I refer to the core function, traffic management and road safety, at page 744. There has been some level of debate in the community about the use of Multanova cameras. I would be the first person to acknowledge the efforts of the Police Service to reduce road crash statistics and trauma. In our report to the Minister for Transport we suggested that it would be useful to identify the 100 most dangerous crash sites across the State and to place Multanovas in those areas. The most recent research from the University of Western Australia suggests that many people consider Multanovas as revenue raisers. The Multanovas have certainly slowed me down. They help to change the culture of speeding. Does the Police Service have any up-to-date crash statistics on the 100 most dangerous crash sites? If so, should Multanovas be placed at those sites?

Mr FALCONER: We have set up a committee under the chairmanship of Mel Hay, Assistant Commissioner, Traffic Operation and Support, which also comprises officers from Main Roads. We take into account crash rates but I believe, and evidence and research elsewhere has indicated, that it is not simply about crash rates. Fatalities occur in areas which are not regarded as black spots. However, people say that those areas represent a crash waiting to happen because everyone drives there at about 15 km above the limit. The famous 85th percentile measures speed, and Main Roads has posted the speed limits. I am assured that the limits have been reviewed in the greater metropolitan area. Main Roads officers say that the areas are correctly posted.

Speed does kill. Last year the number of pedestrian, cycle and motor cycle accidents was about 42 over the odds, and that brought us well over the toll. If a motor car travelling at 70 to 75 km an hour, compared with one travelling at 60 km an hour, hits a pedestrian, the increased impact and harm to the pedestrian is more than the figures on the speedometer indicate. The Council of Australian Governments' report recently indicated that more Western Australians per capita admitted that they regularly travel at 10 or more kilometres above the speed limit than people in any other State. If we stick to the three major issues - speed, drink driving and seat belts - we will make an impact on the road safety statistics.

Hon PETER FOSS: We all remember from our school days that an impact relates to the square of the vehicle's speed. Many people think that if someone increases his speed from 70 to 80 km an hour there will be a less significant change because it is only a small percentage, rather than going from 40 to 50 km an hour. However, the faster one goes the more the increase affects the overall impact. Disregard for speed, as much as anything, is an indication of attitude, and if people are not prepared to obey the law in that area they will disregard it in other areas.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Does the Police Service have research data to quickly identify the 100 black spots?

Mr FALCONER: We have the services of a Main Roads representative who has all that data. He is entitled and is invited to bring that to the Table. However, that is not the only criterion that is taken into account.

[4.50 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: We appreciate your providing further information.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: Crash statistics reduce markedly with a reduction in speed limits, especially in residential streets. The City of Unley in South Australia conducted a five year study into the effect of reducing the speed limit to 40 kilometres an hour in the city's residential streets. Child and pedestrian injuries in that city reduced markedly. I am delighted that 40 kmh zones have been introduced around every school in Western Australia without the need for much police enforcement. The City of Unley found that over five years drivers' average speed fell below 40 kmh without very heavy police enforcement.

A number of Western Australian local authorities, including the City of East Fremantle, have approached me and other bodies to see if 40 kmh zones can be trialled for residential streets. The objections to such a move are twofold: First, Main Roads Western Australia insists on a hierarchy of Australian standards for entry statements and, second, the Police Service is reluctant to adopt such a measure because of the difficulty in enforcement.

If local authorities want to trial that, could they not base their policy on experience in other places? If a 40 kmh zone policy is accepted by the residents, without the need for much police enforcement, could we not encourage them to experiment with that? We know that when cars travel at 40 kmh fewer accidents occur than when they travel at 50 or 60 kmh. Is the Police Service reluctant to allow local authorities to experiment with 40 kmh zones in residential streets?

Mr FALCONER: That is a matter for the Minister for Transport and the Road Safety Council. A number of people are very interested in this matter. I would not mind if such a thing were trialled but the police would be concerned about two things. If the speed limit were changed the demand for enforcement may increase and police would have to patrol the hundreds, if not thousands, of kilometres of side streets. Secondly, local government may then want to

use speed cameras and other enforcement devices and difficulties may then arise because of the different enforcement rules in different municipalities.

Hon PETER FOSS: Perhaps I can ask the commissioner to look into the matter again and to take it up with the Police Service's traffic enforcement authorities to see if at least some form of controlled experiment could be carried out. Perhaps that may overcome the problem.

Mr FALCONER: I do not want to offend anyone, but these issues should be handled by the Road Safety Council. The Royal Automobile Club has joined that body to represent driver interests. I can do all the member asks, but after we look at the matter it will then be forwarded to the Road Safety Council. The matter then goes to a ministerial council. However, we will undertake to do what the member asks.

Hon PETER FOSS: I understand the final decision rests with the ministerial council, but it may assist if the commissioner were to take the matter on board anyway.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: I understand that \$20m is gathered annually from road traffic infringements and that most of that money goes to consolidated revenue. Does any of that money go to the Police Service so that it can assume the sorts of road safety responsibilities that the community is asking it to assume?

Mr FALCONER: One-third of the fines collected from speed camera and red light camera offences goes to the Road Trauma Trust Fund, which is now under the management of the Road Safety Council. The police have recommended that be increased to at least a half; at one stage the Minister for Transport generously said that 100 per cent should go to the Road Trauma Trust Fund.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: That was a Labor Minister.

Mr FALCONER: No, his name was Mr Charlton.

Only recently, and pleasingly, the Road Safety Council allocated some of those funds for the purchase of some specific technology that can be used only for traffic law enforcement.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: In answering questions about the new police academy at Midland the commissioner said that the project brief had been completed and that there was no preferred site but that a collocation with a tertiary institution was preferred. He also said that expressions of interest had been or were about to be called. Under the capital works program at pages 756 and 757 the estimate for new works for the academy is \$35m with \$1m to be expended for 1997-98. Will the commissioner explain the purpose of the estimated \$1m expenditure for the next financial year?

Mr CLAREY: They are the funds being made available to carry on the brief preparation and the planning for the academy itself.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I now turn to alcohol and drug related crime. Does the Police Service have an operational liquor squad?

Mr FALCONER: No, it does not.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Does it have an operational drug squad?

Mr FALCONER: Yes, it does.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Does it have a metropolitan liquor squad?

Mr FALCONER: A number of officers perform some administrative functions to support the Liquor Licensing Division, such as helping with applications for licences and the like, but they do not enforce the Liquor Licensing Act. This was part of the move to take from a small, supposedly expert group and to give to the general police the power to resolve those issues. That was done in the context of true empowerment and devolution.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Are there 16 police officers dedicated to policing the Liquor Licensing Act in the Perth metropolitan region?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer that question.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I ask that that question be put on notice. Can I also ask that a question about the area of operation of those officers be put on notice? If they exist can I be provided with some indication of the work they have done in the past 12 months?

Hon MARK NEVILL: How many firearms have been handed in under the buyback scheme, what is the date of that figure and what percentage were unlicensed firearms?

Mr MacDONALD: As at 16 May, under the scheme we have had an approximate total of 20 000 firearms handed in which were licensed, and 1 000 firearms which were unlicensed.

[5.00 pm]

Hon MARK NEVILL: Has the need for a permanent police presence in the Balgo area south of Halls Creek been reviewed by the Police Service, and what is the thinking on that issue or need at the moment?

Mr FALCONER: I will have to take that question on notice.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I can see nothing in the budget papers relating to police and citizens youth clubs. Have improved resources been allocated to those facilities? My knowledge and experience is that staff work very long hour in a stressful job, and do a useful job in those clubs.

Mr FALCONER: I will have to take that on notice, Mr Chairman.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What are the budget allocations for this year and the next financial year for compensation payments to sworn officers and former sworn officers who are medically unfit as a result of service?

Mr FALCONER: I will take that question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I note the comments of the commissioner to this committee some three years ago on the question of local government involvement in law enforcement, and also the most recent notation of advice from the Police Service to the WA Municipal Association as contained in WAMA's April newsletter. Has the commissioner changed his mind in relation to the role of local government in the area of law enforcement? Further, does the commissioner expect any savings to be made with police patrols as a result of the advent of local government security patrols?

Mr FALCONER: No, this Commissioner of Police has not changed his philosophy or policy regarding the relationship between police and local government. We do not expect to make any savings in relation to police patrols as a result of private security patrols supported or paid for by local municipalities. It is an enhancement and does not create any capacity for us to reduce our service.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Has the Police Service advised any local authority on the setting up of such patrols? Secondly, does the commissioner see any need for legislative changes to create a recognised role for such local government security patrol officers?

Mr FALCONER: In answer to the second question first, nothing has been drawn to my attention which requires legislative change. I am not familiar with WAMA's April newsletter, so I have no idea about the comments to which the member refers. However, we are dealing with one council which has put these private patrols in place, and we are monitoring that program for evaluation.

We have community policing crime prevention councils in every police district in Western Australia, overseen by a state council. The last time I attended that council, a number of representatives raised this issue. Our advice to these people was to wait until we examine what happens with the current trial to discover some measure of the reality of the program, rather than the perceptions, in terms of cost and benefit.

Hon NORM KELLY: Page 738 of the Budget Statements refers to the regional structure of the Police Service, and the metropolitan region has seen a staffing decrease of 181 FTEs for 1997-98. What is the reason for that decrease and how is it to be redistributed? Also, has any marked change occurred in weekend and night shifts, and how does this relate to the number of sworn or unsworn officers?

Mr FRAME: The metropolitan region has reduced the number of FTEs because that region allocation contains the Police Service probationary constables. On the completion of training, the recruits become probationary constables attached to the metropolitan region. At the conclusion of the probationary period, they are allocated to other regions or portfolios. Therefore, the reduction in the number of probationary constables at the completion of the 500 extra officers program, resulted in the metropolitan region indicating a decrease in FTEs.

Hon NORM KELLY: On a broader scale, has any change occurred in the numbers working during the days as opposed to weekend or night work?

Mr FALCONER: Yes, and more needs to be done in that area. We have conducted a review recently in this regard, and again we return to the availability of statistics. We are looking at better matching demand to service, and much of that relates to the shift allocation with the number of shifts and hours we work, particularly in the metropolitan area. Some movement is taking place in that area under Assistant Commissioner Kukera, who is the metropolitan region commander. We recently have put in place assistant district officers at inspector level, as we have been short

of these positions for some time. One of their duties is to ensure appropriate allocation of shift and matching resourcing to demand, and much of that matching relates to afternoon, night shift and weekends.

Hon NORM KELLY: Has there been any marked shift in response time relating to those reallocations?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer that question, but we could take it on notice. When making significant changes to the way we go about our business - without defending anybody - the capacity to respond very quickly has been shown by all sorts of research as not the best yardstick for good policing. We have models at Northam and Fremantle in which we experimented with the current system of regionalisation. We know it has not kicked in all the other districts yet, but we are more able to put people in the right place by the means of management and different mechanisms. We are applying this to the whole of the metropolitan area. Also, we have put district support groups in each of the metropolitan areas, which are task forces which can be targeted by the district commander based on his local need. A lot of that activity is not about reactive policing and response time, but putting police in place before they are called for.

Hon NORM KELLY: So you cannot exactly say, as a result of a lack of statistical information, whether response times are increasing or reducing?

Mr FALCONER: We can tell how quickly we answer a phone call to our VKI control room, but we do not have accurate statistics to show how quickly we respond. We can attempt to gather those figures, although I am not sure how much time and effort it will require. However, that is not the yardstick by which we should be judged anyway.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it your wish that the question go on notice?

Hon NORM KELLY: Yes.

Hon PETER FOSS: If it appears that the method of gathering that information will absorb an inordinate amount of police time, the commissioner can indicate that to be the case to the committee. He obviously will make his efforts. If it is not an automatic statistic, it would be unfortunate to spend too much police time on that matter.

[5.10 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: The Chairman of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations is not here. However, if that is the case, the commissioner should speak directly with him and we can go from there.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Page 739 makes reference to the road toll in 1996 and a reduction of three motor vehicle deaths. The commissioner alluded to the number of cyclist, motorcyclist, passenger and pedestrian deaths. The road safety program has appeared to emphasise cars. What sort of programs are being considered by the Police Service and the Road Safety Council to make pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists aware of their responsibilities on the road? All the advertising focuses on cars, but these people have an equal responsibility. I am concerned that perhaps we are not emphasising that area enough. That might be happening, but I am not aware of it. Will the department run any community awareness programs?

Do the accident statistics detail the number of stolen vehicle accidents that result in the death of the driver or some other person? If they do, are those statistics separated into those vehicles that were not being pursued by the police and those that were? I am not suggesting that the police should stop pursuing these offenders.

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer the last question at this time, but the information can be provided. It is not a large number. Some of those deaths are related to people fleeing from the police. I will take that question on notice.

Task groups are working under the auspices of the Road Safety Council investigating cyclist behaviour and safety, pedestrians and a number of other categories, and developing strategies, including education and enforcement. Those strategies are factored into this year's calendar for substantial expenditure on advertising campaigns. However, periodically the service undertakes enforcement programs. At this time of year, the bicycle group enforces the use of lights and pedestrians in the city area are also being targeted because they ignore red lights with gay abandon and at some risk to themselves.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Some motorcyclists act in a kamikaze fashion. I have always believed in the effectiveness of using headlights to make motorcyclists easier to see.

Mr FALCONER: One of the simple reasons motorcyclists behave the way they do is that they are hard to identify. That is why they speed past Multanovas, give the single finger salute and bare their buttocks - all at high speed. However, the simple but apparently troublesome solution is owner onus legislation. This is the only State in Australia that has not bitten that bullet.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand the Government is considering it.



Hon B.K. DONALDSON: The braking capacity of vehicles is often raised. I drove an FJ Holden that was quite capable of travelling at 40 or 50 miles per hour, but the braking capacity was poor. Modern technology has improved braking capacity by 300 per cent. I would like the commissioner's view of that.

The speed limit was raised from 90 kmh to 100 kmh on the Mitchell and Kwinana freeways. Is it true that there has been no increase in fatalities or major accidents on those freeways when compared with the number when the old speed limits were in place?

Mr FALCONER: I have no hope of answering the second question; I will take it on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: Can that information be provided?

Mr FALCONER: I am not sure. However, contrary to popular belief, there have been crashes and fatalities on freeways.

Car brakes are much better now than they were in days of the old FJ Holden. However, the traction of rubber on wet bitumen is not, nor is the human reaction time. The faster a motorist is travelling, the slower the reaction time. Mathematically, the impact factor increases almost exponentially at some point in time. People must be aware that, even in the best of cars with four-wheel disc brakes, a car takes a while to stop. The Police Service did a demonstration for the media with witches' hats and cars being driven by good drivers at 50 kmh, 60 kmh and 70 kmh on good, dry roads, and the difference in the reaction time was astounding.

Hon PETER FOSS: At certain speeds, one travels much farther during the reaction time than the braking time.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: Pages 755 to 757 refer to communications. What steps are being taken to upgrade communications not only from station to station but also from station to police officers travelling their region? I refer particularly to areas where communications are very difficult, such as forests in the south west corner of the State. During the past 12 months I came across an accident. Police officers were in attendance, but they had to travel about 15 kilometres to contact someone to remove the truck, which was across the road, and an ambulance, because a young lad was trapped. What steps are being taken to ensure that communications in those areas are upgraded to allow access to all services? That might involve more than one vehicle with long range communications facilities.

[5.20 pm]

Mr FALCONER: Two days ago I was at the communications area talking about this very issue. I saw an overlay of communications over certain parts of this State. The same situation applies to cellular phones; there is no total coverage. There is no current radio system. It is not just about money or availability of technology; it is about terrain and all sorts of weather factors that come into play. The other day we were even talking about satellite communications. Even in that area, until there are many more satellites, there will still be black holes in the State. There has been controversy over the powerlines required for them. We talk about cellular phones as an alternative means of communication in many of these emergencies; however, there are black holes in the south west. It was particularly noticeable in the cliff collapse. There has been public reaction against putting up additional towers in that area to enhance telephone communications as an alternative to police radios.

The bottom line is that this occurs not just in this State, but also in some other smaller States on the eastern seaboard which have exactly the same problem. Because of terrain and other factors, sometimes if people drive over a hump on a road, into a hollow and end up in dire straits, they are out of contact with the rest of humanity. There is no immediate short term response to that. We are working through a new emergency services communications system, looking at developing a better system and, more importantly, interconnecting with all emergency services. However, even with the best of technology and an integrated system and cellular phones, of which we have many, we will still have spots in this State in which people cannot be contacted. In fact, there is a small spot not far from here where people cannot be contacted. It is a sad fact of telecommunications life. Although I am not sure whether Telstra Corporation Ltd and Optus Communications will support me on all of that, they are the facts.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: How much will be spent in the next financial year on communications? What will the figure be by the end of this financial year?

Mr FALCONER: We can take the specifics of that question on notice. I will ask Mr Coffey to comment about the development of the emergency services communication program, which is the real issue.

Mr COFFEY: As the commissioner mentioned, last year the various agencies involved in emergency management - the police, St John Ambulance, the State Emergency Service, the Fire and Rescue Service of WA, the Bush Fires Board and the Department of Conservation and Land Management - worked together in a cooperative manner under the guidance of the Public Sector Management Office to develop an approach to improve the response to

emergencies. That went very well. Recommendations were made by the Minister to Cabinet which were accepted. Basically they were to undertake the implementation of three major projects. The first is to undertake call-taking and despatch; to develop an appropriate up to date centre which would utilise intelligent communications, modern computer aided despatch systems and automatic vehicle location for resource allocation; and to integrate it to a new radio network service. The second program dealt with changing the radio network to a digital trunk radio system, which would encompass only the metropolitan area, to support mobile data, automatic vehicle location and a secure voice radio service that would also interconnect to the other emergency service organisations later. The status of those projects is that Treasury and the Government have said that they are good projects, but further work must be done on funding them. That work is to be completed by the end of July for consideration by the Government in the next financial year. An amount of \$5 000 in this year's budget has been allocated to progress that plan.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: My understanding is that the planning is already underway for the introduction of the new emergency communication despatch system, and I believe a number of questions have already been asked on that issue in the Parliament. What is the name of the company chosen to assist the police and emergency services to develop the system? Will the police provide a list of the organisations which replied to an advertisement in *The West Australian* on 23 July 1996 calling for submissions on the integrated call-taking and despatch system?

Mr COFFEY: That submission was under the control of the Public Sector Management Office. That question would be better answered by those in that office. We were part of the steering committee which considered the proposals and made recommendations. No agency has been selected to assist the Police Service in progressing these issues.

The CHAIRMAN: The member can make his own arrangements to ask those questions of the Public Sector Management Office, either at subsequent estimates hearings or by placing them on notice.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Page 748 mentions that investigations have commenced to determine a suitable site for the location of a new police station at Clarkson. However, it is not included under the highlights for the coming year. It is also not mentioned in the capital works projects for 1997-98, which says that planning and documentation for construction of replacement police facilities has commenced in a number of other areas. These questions relate to both the Clarkson police station and the Bunbury police station. What is the status of both those police stations? How much money to date has been spent on a feasibility study for a new police station in both those areas? How much money has been allocated in this year's budget for a feasibility study for both the Clarkson and Bunbury police stations? When is it expected that work will start on both these police stations?

Mr CLAREY: I can answer one of those questions. The site has not been identified or purchased at this time for the Clarkson police station. I will have to take the remainder of the questions on notice, including what has been done about the site for the Bunbury police station.

Mr FALCONER: I should explain that Mr Clarey was brought off the bench for today's performance. Steve Jones, who normally deals with all these matters - I need to explain this in case members think Mr Clarey cannot answer these questions - is away on leave. He has all of this information at his fingertips.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Does the Police Service have a policy regarding the transfer of specially trained officers? I am referring to a competent water policeman posted to Cranbrook. It concerns me that this is a waste of trained human resources because the lakes dry up there every summer.

Mr FALCONER: The Police Service in Western Australia has a tenure policy. It is for three years, plus one, plus one. Other senior officers who have lived and worked in this jurisdiction all their lives debated that and came to me with a suggestion that made a lot of sense. The point about a specialist water police officer being posted where there is not much water often relates to the professional and personal development of individuals. If we leave people in specialist places for too long they get painted into a corner and wonder why they have difficulty getting promotions and taking up other positions. That happens because they are limited in their capabilities. We do not believe in moving people around willy-nilly, but in developing their potential. I do not know who is the officer. However, we must have multi-skilled people, particularly for future leadership positions.

[5.30 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: It seems to those of us in the country that the system is fairly rigid. Often an officer who has been in a country town for a number of years is transferred at fairly short notice. However, his spouse does not have sufficient opportunity to seek a transfer in her employment. Is it possible to make transfers more flexible so that, where an officer has a spouse who is employed, he or she can make arrangements for an orderly transfer?

Mr FALCONER: I understand that those officers are on a rotational system and they know well in advance when they are due to be transferred, but they might not know exactly where they will go. To the best of my knowledge and

understanding, no ambush system is in place. Sometimes people can settle into a comfort zone and the local community wants to keep them there. However, an officer can often be too relaxed in his performance and activities.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I represent the South West Region. Over the past few years some tragic accidents have occurred on the Great Southern and South West Highways. I am amazed that often they occur on straight, good lengths of road. I have no doubt that speed plays a major factor in those accidents. It is reported if a driver has registered over the 0.05 per cent blood alcohol limit. Are some accidents caused as a result of drugs? Would it be a good idea if that information were published to make people more aware of the serious dangers of drugs?

Mr FALCONER: I do not know the statistics. However, a lot of poly drug use occurs; that is, consumption of other substances with alcohol. The alcohol is always easily detected and that becomes the stated causal factor. At times we are a bit too sensitive about making public comments close to the event in relation to the apparent causal factors because of pending coronial inquests. Our officers are often reluctant to say that a combination of high speed and alcohol was involved. We are trying to overcome that and we have spoken to the Coroner's Office about how far we can go. Often it was evident to the crash investigators that the car was airborne for a certain amount of time and obviously speed was an issue.

I have travelled on a road in the south west and seen the white crosses. However, their cause is not a great mystery to me when I see some of the unsafe overtaking that occurs.

Hon PETER FOSS: During the Legislation Committee's inquiry into the effects of alcohol, evidence was presented indicating that the effect of codeine on driving is probably greater than that of alcohol. Many people do not recognise that some perfectly legitimate non-prescription drugs can seriously affect their driving. Codeine combined with alcohol, even a tiny amount, goes way off the map. One can get effects beyond a 0.08 per cent reading with a couple of codeine and a glass of beer.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: We should be able to publicise that. With the onset of winter, many people take those drugs to treat colds. I have a real problem with accidents that are happening on obviously good roads.

Mr FALCONER: I can check again with Assistant Commissioner Hay, who is the representative on the Road Safety Council. I would be amazed if some of the task groups were not examining that, particularly in relation to advertising campaigns. For pharmacists and those who sell various drugs legitimately that is important. I have noticed prescription drugs without any labels indicating the dangers of mixture with alcohol. Some pharmacists are diligent with the warning stickers, but others do not bother with them.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Prescription drugs are usually clearly labelled.

Mr FALCONER: Only if one reads the little book inside the box. Red stickers can be put on the outside. If we did a survey, we would find that they were not always put on the labels.

Hon PETER FOSS: I came across a chemist today who includes with every prescription a sheet of all the warnings relating to that drug. His system is designed so that, when he fills a prescription, along with the patient's name, it prints out the things that should be examined. It is a very good practice and could lead to people realising that it is dangerous to take what appear to be normal drugs.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Page 747 refers to the Murdoch police station, which I believe is due to be completed in June 1998. Is that intended to be a 24 hour police station? What will then be the status of the Brentwood, Palmyra and Hilton stations?

Mr CLAREY: It will be a 24 hour police station. In respect of the other two stations, I do not know.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: How close is the relationship between the Police Service and the Labour Relations Building and Construction Task Force? Do the task force staff share accommodation of premises with the police? If so, where is it and who pays for that accommodation and the ancillary services? What proportion of police officers' time is spent on task force duties and at what cost? Is there a plan for an evaluation of that program?

Mr FALCONER: I will take those questions on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am concerned about offences against the person. Page 739 refers to offences against the person numbering 18 143, an increase of 8.1 per cent. I note that last year's Program Statements - page 84-5 - indicated a continuing increase in the offences against the person. The number of offences against the person in 1995 was 16 584, a rise of 10.7 per cent compared with the figure for 1994.

Page 749 also refers to crimes against the person. Mention is made of the core functions as prevention and control of crime and crimes against the person. A number of items are set out under the subheading "To minimise the incidence of crimes against the person by", and it lists a number of matters. All but the last two of those matters

involve the activities of people. Is the commissioner satisfied that he has sufficient people, both sworn and unsworn, to minimise the incidence of crimes against the person?

Mr FALCONER: That is like asking how long is a piece of string. Any Commissioner of Police who said he could not use additional resources would not be honest. With the exception of the Northern Territory, Western Australia has the best police per population ratio in Australia. The figures in the Northern Territory are, in my view, an aberration. Mr Griffiths pointed to a number of issues which relate to actions by other people and human activities. Earlier I alluded to what we need to do; that is, to identify where people are deployed and ascertain what they are doing with their time. We have already identified that in some instances where they are rostered to conduct activities is based on historic accepted practice, and it is something we are trying to change.

The member referred to reported crime. The incidence of crime against the person is increasing in this State and in other States, particularly in the cities. Most of the statistics are coming from the cities. When the previous Minister for Police asked me whether the Delta program would in the short term manifest itself in a reduction of reported crime, I said no, it would probably have the opposite effect and there will be an increase in the reporting of crime. If police are held in higher standing, are more accessible and request people to tell them what they know, the evidence is that more people will report crime. There is not more crime; more of it is being reported. The statistics on reported crime are simply victim surveys and invariably they show that a huge part of the iceberg remains below the surface.

I was amazed to read that in New South Wales only 57 per cent of robberies are reported. I am anticipating that again this year there will be more reported crime, not more crime. Perhaps it will be both.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Do you set targets with respect to clean up rates?

Mr FALCONER: We want to reduce clearance rates by a certain percentage so that people have a target to aim for. The reality in this State is that with crimes against the person, the clearance rate is 82 per cent. When priorities are set we concentrate on crimes against the person over and above property crimes.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Have you assessed how many sworn officers will be required to achieve a reduction in the level of crime against the person to the level which existed two years ago?

Mr FALCONER: No. It is not about those numbers. I have said many times in this State, and before I came here, that no Government can provide sufficient police men and women to have an omnipresent force in every street, outside every deli and so on. We are trying to encourage people to take sensible precautions against crime, to warn them against certain practices and seek their assistance by their participation in Crime Stoppers and Neighbourhood Watch. It does not come down to the number of police. I do not know of anyone who would say that if we had 30 000 police in Western Australia we would reduce crime by a certain amount. It is not logistically or economically feasible.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Given the core function is to minimise the incidence of crime against the person, have you caused assessments to be made of the causes of those crimes?

Mr FALCONER: Do you mean the causal factors?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Yes.

Mr FALCONER: No, we have not.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Why not?

Mr FALCONER: Simply because we have relied on research by other people. I refer to the University of Western Australia crime research unit and the Edith Cowan University crime research unit. More research is being done on crime, community safety, security and law enforcement. We are concentrating on revitalising and restructuring the agency to adopt a different model of policing which will be about problem solving at a local level. The crime prevention councils at the local level, in conjunction with local police - there are already good examples of this - are dealing with the problem and the causal factors at a local level. I am adamant that it is not about centralist research and control. That is where things have been going wrong for years. It is about empowerment at the local level and allowing the community and the local police to identify the causal factors in their part of Western Australia and to deal with them at that level.

Hon NORM KELLY: I refer to the fourth dot point on page 739, which indicates that the 1996 road toll for cyclists doubled. Has there been a significant increase in resources targeted at lowering that toll? Has there been an increase in targeting cyclists in the Perth central business district?

Mr FALCONER: The bicycle education safety unit and the independent control group, members of which ride bicycles when on patrol, have been targeting areas around the metropolitan area. Until recently in this State the only police who enforced traffic laws were traffic police and they form a relatively small proportion of the agency. All general duty officers, as well as traffic officers, are now expected to conduct traffic law enforcement activities. Some of the blitzes we have had with, for example, seat belts have been conducted with the aid of general duties police. We are retraining the general duties police in not only how to enforce the traffic laws, but to break the mind set that it is not their job but is the job of the traffic police.

Hon NORM KELLY: Have there been any education programs relating to the city area?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer that question. I said earlier the notion is that there is coordination at the Road Safety Council level and that all entities which have a vested interest in road safety issues are aware of what each other is doing. We can inquire and report back on any strategies that are being developed, specifically in relation to cyclists.

Hon NORM KELLY: Has any consideration been given to increasing penalties for cyclists?

Mr FALCONER: I cannot answer that question either. I know on 1 July the majority of traffic infringement fines will double.

The CHAIRMAN: The question will be taken on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I realise this question may have to be taken on notice. What specific operations have been conducted with respect to the current anti-third wave industrial relations campaign and what has been the cost of these police operations? No doubt everything cannot be covered, but there must be a cost of a reasonable dimension every time the riot squad is sent to Parliament House. Does the commissioner anticipate that an industrial task force will be necessary to deal with the program of civil disobedience by unionists over the next 12 months?

Mr FALCONER: No, I do not anticipate any special group. We have sufficient people with sufficient skills to deploy them to any industrial dispute. It takes resources away from other activities, and that is stating the obvious. In relation to the cost of the operations to date, I will take the question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is taken on notice.

[5.50 pm]

Hon GREG SMITH: There is no doubt speed contributes to fatalities, but fatigue has also been recognised as a major contributor to fatalities on country roads. The roads from Meekatharra to Newman, Carnarvon to Karratha, or Carnarvon to Northampton, are 400 kilometre stretches. Fatigue occurs on such four hour non-stop drives. Many people exceed the speed limit on those roads, not because they intentionally want to break the law, but because the stretch of road is so long. Will the Police Service consider trialling on some of those roads an increase in the speed limit to see whether it has any effect on the reduction of fatigue and whether it reduces accidents?

Mr FALCONER: It was unanimously accepted by the Traffic Board of WA when I was chairman that that would fly in the face of trying to slow people down to save lives and to prevent the crippling of Western Australians. How could we open up the floodgates once people got out of the city, while at the same time trying to enforce speed limits in the metropolitan area? The position of the Traffic Board was "no" at that time and it is the Police Department's decision that it is "no" at this time.

Hon GREG SMITH: I was suggesting a small trial on even a portion of the road, because at the moment it is an unknown quantity. It is only an assumption that an increased speed limit would increase accidents.

Mr FALCONER: With respect, I could cover the table in front of me with research from the Monash University accident research centre and a number of other bodies that have been recognised internationally in road safety that shows speed is a killer. Do not fool yourself; speed kills.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to dot point 3 on page 739. Does the Police Service have any programs in place to address public safety on public transport?

Mr FALCONER: Trains are patrolled by people who are attached to the Department of Transport. Our activities hinge around checking railway station car parks and providing a rapid response to the transit patrol officers if and when they require assistance. A large number of officers are positioned around railway stations and bus stations during major events when people are getting on and off public transport. However, usually the police provide rapid backup to train stations or issues on trains. A former police officer took over the role as manager of the transit patrol officers.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do you have any formal links with the transit police?

Mr FALCONER: Yes, we have operational liaison links and managerial links with them. The managers come in at the managerial level of Ross Drabble as Commissioner of Railways.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do you have any liaison with private security guards?

Mr FALCONER: Yes, the private security guards are employed under Westrail, but under the same mechanism I referred to by which there is consultation and liaison.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do you have formal links with private security officers working for MetroBus?

Mr FALCONER: Yes, we do.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What is the last known clearance rate for damage caused by graffiti, and what was the clearance rate for that category of offence in the previous period?

Mr FALCONER: I am not sure we break down in our statistics the graffiti and the damage caused. Last year's statistics were collated as damage, plus graffiti. We can take that on notice in an attempt to quantify it.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: How many FTEs, sworn and unsworn, are budgeted for in the forthcoming financial year for licensing activities such as under the Security and Related Activities (Control) Act, and how many were budgeted for this current year?

Mr FALCONER: I will have to take that on notice.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: How much is anticipated to be paid to Forensic Behavioural Investigative Services International Pty Ltd in this year's budget? What is budgeted to be paid to that firm for contracts that have currency for the forthcoming financial year? What specific projects are involved in each case? Which of those projects involve the firm having access to police files? What, if any, tendering process for the work was undertaken?

Mr FALCONER: I will take that on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: The Estimates Committee has been working on a number of lines of inquiry. We have 11 questions that we did not have a chance to put today. We will put them on notice and the Minister will receive them tomorrow with the rest of the questions on notice.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**Division 42: Conservation and Land Management, \$41 095 000.**

[Hon M.J. Criddle, Chairman.]

[Hon Max Evans, Minister for Finance.]

[Dr S. Shea, Executive Director.]

[Dr J. Byrne, Director, Corporate Services.]

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What is the current Department of Conservation and Land Management debt?

Dr BYRNE: At present our level of debt is about \$90m, down from \$127.8m four years ago. We have repaid about 30 per cent of our debt.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Last year Dr Shea said that \$19m had been expended for debt repayment and interest. What is the figure for this financial year and the projected figure for next financial year?

Dr BYRNE: That \$19m would be made up of about \$15m of interest and \$4m is scheduled debt repayments. There is a formula of about 3 per cent. In addition, of course, we have been paying more debt than that; \$19m was the minimum amount. However, that \$19m is now down to about \$12m in interest and \$4m in principal as our minimum payment. So it has dropped from \$19m to \$16m

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What about for next financial year?

Dr BYRNE: This financial year it will be about \$16m with debts for repayment and interest. Next year, because we have paid a large amount of debt this year and because interest rates are dropping, the interest bill will be about \$10m and principal payment about \$4m for a total of \$14m. Last year it was \$19m, this year it is \$16m and next year it will be \$14m; it is coming down quickly.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Over a number of Estimate Committee hearings CALM has indicated that it will be free from debt by 2003. Is that still the case?

Dr SHEA: The phrase was "debt free by 2003". In response to a departmental submission, the Government has decided to assist in the implementation of the salinity strategy and to make the debt repayment schedule flexible so that CALM can increase its commitment to salinity tree planting to \$18m by the year 2001. The rate of debt will depend on CALM's ability to generate revenue and on some of its asset realisation proposals, but it will not be aiming to eliminate debt by 2003. We anticipate that our debt will be down to \$30m by 2003 to 2005 and to have been eliminated by 2010 to 2015. That is part of a policy change which was a response to the release of the Government's salinity strategy before Christmas.

[7.10 pm]

Hon J.A. COWDELL: On the same theme, what asset sales are contemplated in the next financial year to contribute to the ongoing debt reduction?

Dr SHEA: It is difficult to be specific for the next financial year because sometimes things occur outside the period, but within the next year or two we shall look at asset reduction of some surplus land requirements, particularly in the Blackwood Valley, of between \$5m and \$7m. Also as a consequence of investment in tree planting in the mid-1980s, which was funded by loans and is part of our debt, a number of those tree planting proposals are reaching maturity. It is estimated that approximately \$40m of wood fibre will be available for sale over the next five years. A tender will be called for that in the next several weeks.

The other significant identifiable land is in areas south of Perth that contain *Pinus Pinasta* plantations which are now being encroached upon by commercial development. We shall seek to realise those parcels of land within the next one to five years. The department has readily realisable assets in the range of \$50m to \$70m within a five year period. Of course, the department overall has much larger assets, and these are assets surplus to needs. We shall use those assets progressively for debt reduction. Also, the Cabinet minute and the government policy decision to which I referred earlier, gave the department the flexibility to mix asset realisation, fundraising and debt repayment in a way that will allow us to maintain our salinity strategy. We shall use part of those funds to support the salinity strategy, as well as for debt reduction.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: What potential is there for Western Australian native animals to be used as a nature based tourist attraction?

Dr SHEA: By coincidence, I returned last Friday from Africa where I attended the Commonwealth forestry conference. I took the opportunity while there to visit a series of national parks in Zimbabwe and South Africa with the specific purpose of seeing how the Zimbabwean and South African authorities equivalent to CALM handled tourism in national parks, particularly the animals which are a major attraction for Africa. Those who have visited South Africa and looked at these areas will know that they publicise the big five. These game reserves advertise the big five - elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, giraffe and lion. It struck me as ironic that our children know more about these animals and others in the American woodlands than they know about Australian animals, even though Australia has some of the most beautiful animals on earth.

I have devised the concept of the small 12 - and we have commenced the process - with a view to making our own community and overseas visitors aware of how unique and wonderful Australian animals are. There are huge opportunities to capitalise on these unique animals, and it fits nicely with the Western Shield conservation program, which is achieving major rehabilitation of animals throughout the South West. One of the difficulties is to match the beauty of a large giraffe or elephant because our animals are generally small. Another difficulty is that many Australian animals are nocturnal. We are considering a range of techniques to enable people to see the animals as they are.

Recently, the people who service the SAS with night vision goggles were at the Perup Wilderness Lodge experimenting with the use of night vision goggles. There are huge opportunities to create a new industry based on these animals. Today I was at the Forest Heritage Centre considering a program for wood carving based on animals. That is another supplementary industry in South Africa. The best thing we can do for conservation of any species, particularly animals, is to make them valuable.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: What progress has been made in developing a method of controlling feral cats?

Dr SHEA: It has become a welcome annual event, and because of the reprimands after I answered a question on this subject last year, I have been instructed to keep my answer relatively brief. I am pleased to advise there has been stunning progress in the control of a major cause, along with foxes, of decline in our native animals. Anyone who does not believe that should see the cats we catch in the Peron peninsula. I squirm as I walk past the cages because they are so vicious. The progress we have made is, firstly, to identify and confirm the existence of a bait window.

We have no problem with foxes and they have been almost eradicated with poison baits using a mix of chemicals that do not affect native animals.

However, cats are much more choosy about what they eat. We must create a soft bait to attract them. The problem with doing that is that some of our native cats are potentially susceptible to picking up that bait and they do not have the same tolerance to 1 080 as some other animals. We have discovered there is a bait window and it is a remarkable event. The cats will not take anything and then suddenly the bait window opens and we can fly in with baits and kill the cats. Secondly, we have developed and are in the process of patenting a unique cat bait - I call it Kentucky Fried Chicken bait - which is a special mixture of elements. Thirdly, in cooperation with the research centre for vermin and animal control in Melbourne, we are using and have tested a specific poison to kill cats. Our initial field trials look extremely promising. We anticipate in the coming year that we shall move to large scale cat control programs in the desert, where our principal problems with cats are.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: I am concerned about the sale of assets in the Blackwood Valley. I know that two auctions have been held already of CALM real estate private freehold titles in the Blackwood Valley. Is a further program planned and will it include broadacre *Pinus Radiata* plantations? If so, is a policy in place to prevent those large parcels of land mainly covered with plantation from being bought holus-bolus by overseas people?

[7.20 pm]

Dr SHEA: We are not in the process of selling broadacre plantations. Most of the land we have sold, or are in the process of selling, was for some unknown reason bought and found to be unsuitable for pine plantations yet was kept on our books.

Another category is partly planted land which is very attractive for tourist development. The Blackwood Valley, as the member knows coming from that area, has fantastic potential for tourism, and we are looking at some of that land. However, no policy has been endorsed by the Government or CALM to sell broadacre radiata plantations - at this stage.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Has CALM been purchasing farms in the great southern and south west for globulus plantations?

Dr SHEA: We have not been purchasing any farms at all. We act as agents, as the member knows, for Japanese and Korean companies, and a proportion of an area is dedicated to a blue gum planting program in the Albany, Collie and Bunbury region. A proportion of that program is met by purchasing farm properties. We have been involved, as agents, but not in using government money.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Can you clarify that?

Dr SHEA: We have a management agreement with interests in the Albany region, as the member knows. We plant up 4 000 acres of globulus plantation. In the process of being an agent, they nominate the properties they are interested in buying, and we facilitate the sale and plant up those properties, but we use no government money.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I note on page 176 of the Budget Statements the estimated expenditure for 1997-98 of \$22.983m for the management of tourism and recreation. What amount, if any, of that almost \$23m will be committed to the conversion of the Gngangara pine plantation into the Gngangara park?

Dr SHEA: Relatively little of that program will be used for the Gngangara plantation. This is a progressive program over 20 years, and a small proportion of the funds will be used to carry out some landscaping. At this stage, we are gearing up for that program.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: This question may already have been answered: How long do you expect the establishment of the Gngangara park to take?

Dr SHEA: As the Government announced prior to Christmas, it will be a 20 year program and we will start the process of converting the area this coming year. We must liquidate the pine plantation but we do not want to dump it on the market all at that same time.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: Are you looking at establishing successive zones of the park?

Dr SHEA: We had a fantastic public response to the proposal when we called for public submissions. We are summarising the approximately 400 submissions we received, and we will follow up that public process with some draft proposal at the initial stage to be feedback into public consultation. An important part of the exercise is to make this a people's park and ensure community input. We want to ensure that we will have a great community commitment from those who live alongside the park, including voluntary managers.



Hon E.R.J. DERMER: How many hectares would you expect to be established as parkland during the next 12 months?

Dr SHEA: It depends on the cutting schedule, which depends on the market. We have 2 000 or 3 000 hectares which are fallow, which is probably part of the park process as we have not planted pine trees back on the land. Some of this program depends upon the public participation process. About 1 000 ha will be treated in some way over the next 12 months, although it may run into the next planting season so it may not fit neatly into the financial year.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I was interested in the statement earlier regarding the amount of funds which CALM is putting into salinity control. I understand from the budget papers that this year the amount involved will be \$3.3m in so-called interest savings rising to \$18m in 2001. Can you give me an indication of the amounts which are targeted to be provided each year for salinity control? I notice that this year the Government is providing \$2.435m from consolidated revenue. Will matching amounts be made as the CALM contribution escalates to 2001?

Dr BYRNE: The contribution is \$2.3m from the consolidated revenue and, in addition, CALM is using \$3.3m from savings to a total of a little over \$5m. The Government's contribution is set out in the salinity action plan. It is contributing \$5m this year to a number of agencies in which CALM's share is \$2.3m. That allocation will rise to about \$10m of new money from the consolidated fund for the salinity action plan. In turn, a reallocation of resources from agencies will occur. It is really quite complicated to explain and the member should look in the back of the salinity action plan document. This outlines aspects to be implemented in this financial year involving various agencies. The consolidated funds estimates are shown with a table of sources. I need to refer to that document to give adequate explanation.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I am interested in CALM's role in the salinity control program. As one of the primary agencies, obviously the Government has required that agency to contribute an escalating amount from its resources. Do you understand that a matching contribution will be made to your program from consolidated revenue each year, or when we get to 2001 will it be \$18m from CALM resources and nothing from the CF?

Hon MAX EVANS: As I understand it - I remember Syd briefing us in this regard - as it has the expertise in tree planting, the initiative for the salinity control program came from CALM. They could not finance it, and the Government came in at that stage.

Dr SHEA: There are three components of funding in the program: Specific funding from consolidated revenue is to be specifically directed to biodiversity or conservation. For example, a significant amount of extra money to the salinity fund from consolidated revenue this year will save Lake Toolibin and some of the other wetlands. The money we are talking about in CALM's budget is the commercial money it has obtained by adjusting the debt reduction and asset realisation programs. That will fund a major expansion of commercial tree planting in the intermediate rainfall zone.

The third big bucket of money is the Federal Government's natural heritage trust money. The Government's salinity action plan put up some proposals for federal funding, which usually States must match. The department is in the fortunate position of having money to match the federal money; it is simply waiting for the federal money. It is going through the usual process of getting money out of the Federal Government. There is no neat formula relationship between consolidated revenue money and CALM money.

[7.30 pm]

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What are CALM's specific expectations of federal grants for its initiatives in respect of salinity control? This program escalates from \$3.3m to \$18m. What is CALM looking for from the "Telstra fund" in the years to 2001?

Dr SHEA: CALM has proposed that it receive matching money from the Federal Government. One proposal is for developing more commercial crops; that is, looking at different types of tree crops. The federal money is earmarked for extensive non-commercial plantings. The broad answer to the question is that CALM set out in its salinity strategy to attract matching money from the Federal Government. Whether that is realised is another question.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: CALM is appropriating up to \$18m to 2001 from its internal resources.

Dr SHEA: It is more; it is up to \$24m including consolidated fund money.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: CALM is looking at matching grants from the Federal Government. Is the department looking for, or does it expect, any contribution from state consolidated revenue for the exercise?

Dr BYRNE: The department expects a contribution from the State; in fact, it received the first \$2.3m this year. However, it does not expect it to match CALM's contribution. The contribution from the State for nature

conservation aspects is very significant in terms of the nature conservation implications of salinity. The State is effectively funding the nature conservation program aspects of the salinity project. The \$18m Dr Shea referred to goes towards forestry; it is a different program. One should not compare the amounts in the two programs. CALM is satisfied with the State's contribution to the nature conservation program.

Dr SHEA: The decision by the Government to allow CALM to have net appropriations, the subsequent decision to allow it to retain its assets instead of handing them over to consolidated revenue and then to give it the flexibility to alter the debt repayment schedule effectively means that the \$18m has come from the Government. In the old days the department would not have seen that money.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: I refer the committee to page 180. I am surprised to find that CALM is responsible for the Observatory. Reference is made to increasing international scientific interest in comets and asteroids which cross the Earth's orbit and which have the potential to collide with Earth. Is there a real potential of this happening in our time?

Dr SHEA: Although Dr Byrne is an accountant, his original studies were in physics. He is very knowledgeable about the issue.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: If this is possible - I have no doubt it is otherwise it would not have been stated - what provision could be made to prevent or cope with such a collision?

Dr BYRNE: It has created genuine interest. Many people remember that not many years ago a comet collided with the planet Jupiter. If that comet had collided with Earth it would have had a very profound impact; it could have wiped out New York. There is also a scientific theory that dinosaurs became extinct 70 million years ago because an asteroid hit Earth. The scars on the moon are craters from asteroid and comet collisions. It is a real enough risk; it is something that can happen.

If we were able to detect such an asteroid heading towards Earth, there is now enough technology in the world - not in Western Australia - to send up a rocket to contact the asteroid and push it away. When Halley's Comet was near, we sent a rocket very close. We can measure how close they are coming to the earth. For example, the Americans are just about to send up a spacecraft to orbit the inner planets and then come back. It will come within 500 km of Earth and then go on to Jupiter. The scientists must be very confident about how accurately they can measure where celestial bodies are and how they can control the spacecraft because the 32 kilograms of plutonium on the spacecraft will come within 500 km. There is no role for Western Australia in that, but we must detect the asteroids and comets long before they reach Earth so that the Americans can send up spacecraft. That is the role for the Observatory. Its scientists are world leaders in detecting asteroids and comets. They measure the positions very precisely and work out the orbits. That is very important.

Those in the northern hemisphere can see only northern stars, therefore, we have a scientific advantage. There are very few observatories in the southern hemisphere and a big gap between South Africa and South America, with only two observatories - one in Western Australia and one near Canberra. Therefore, we play a significant role.

Dr SHEA: We are very lucky that we have a huge expanse of clear skies and a huge number of stars. One of the other areas in which the Observatory has been involved, and increasingly since it has become the responsibility of CALM, is capitalising on the huge interest in stars in the general community. In fact, we are sending our astronomers on landscape tours of the desert. There is nothing like having a glass of red wine at midnight while looking at the stars!

[7.40 pm]

Hon BOB THOMAS: Is all of the Giblett block interim listed?

Dr SHEA: No.

Hon BOB THOMAS: How much is interim listed?

Dr SHEA: I will have to take the specific question on notice and then provide the detail. There are three categories: One-third is interim listed, one-third is deferred and one-third is not listed. I will give the exact hectareage of each one.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Is the other one-third available for logging part of the DFA process?

Dr SHEA: No, the DFA process involves the deferred area. This area is not deferred or interim listed.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Was the part that was not deferred or interim listed part of the initial process and then made available for logging?

Dr SHEA: No.

Hon BOB THOMAS: How many hectares would we be looking at that would be available for logging this year?

Dr SHEA: Again I will give a specific written answer within three days. From memory, it is 400 ha.

Hon BOB THOMAS: Have you all the roading and preplanning completed?

Dr SHEA: Yes.

Hon BOB THOMAS: If you found that a court were to say that you could not log that area, do you have sufficient alternatives already roaded?

Dr SHEA: No. If I might elaborate, the significance of the area is that we have difficulty sustaining log supply during the wet season because of the soil types. We can log this area during wet conditions. The member will be aware that over the last seven years we have had so many constraints placed on us and Federal Governments changing policies so often, in some cases after we have prepared, that it is incredibly difficult and we have virtually no flexibility whatsoever.

Hon BOB THOMAS: The proponents of the Greater Beedelup National Park have suggested that the alternatives to Giblett block would be Twin Brook and Big Brook. What is the suitability of those areas for logging?

Dr SHEA: They will not do the job. It would destroy one of the other major features of the management plan, which is aimed at sustaining the structure of the forest. One of the quite legitimate concerns about our forests is that in addition to having to sustain the processes involved in forestry and having reserves, we want to sustain the structure so that we will always have ongoing forests. Part of those areas the member has mentioned is very significant for maintaining that commitment. We are saying that 40 per cent of the forest will always be in the old growth stage.

Hon BOB THOMAS: A number of people in the timber industry have indicated to me that they feel that the RFA process has been unduly long and bureaucratic. They are concerned about some of the delays and the amount of money that has been spent on the process. We have not even got to some of the scoping studies. Will the Minister explain the RFA process and the bureaucracy they are talking about?

Dr SHEA: With the permission of my Minister, I will answer the question. The Minister will be aware that I have some rather strong views about the commonwealth process.

Hon MAX EVANS: Keep your views on the commonwealth process to yourself.

Dr SHEA: In summary, I have been involved in this exercise of reviewing forests for over 12 years now. We have had about eight reviews in one form or another, such as the sustainable forest review, the RAC process and so on. It has gone on and on. In addition, we have produced two management plans on timber strategy.

Hon BOB THOMAS: With respect, I was asking about the RFA.

Dr SHEA: I am leading up to that, to say that in the context of all those processes, the RFA process is about the same for the level of bureaucracy.

Hon BOB THOMAS: It is a specific process where the Commonwealth has asked for some specific information and has made money available?

Dr SHEA: Huge amounts of money are being spent on obtaining information about forests.

Hon BOB THOMAS: We do not have an agreement in place, but I am aware of two others in place over east.

Dr SHEA: Victoria has one RFA process in place for a very small proportion of the whole State, whereas ours is for the whole State.

Hon BOB THOMAS: That is the reason for the delay?

Dr SHEA: We are not delaying; we are in the middle of the race.

Hon BOB THOMAS: What is the significance of 1 July?

The CHAIRMAN: Rather than conduct a conversation, we will have questions and answers.

Dr SHEA: There is no significance in the date.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: The department quotes a figure of \$11m or \$11.5m for the salinity action plan for research and development money for launching the maritime pine industry. Under exactly what federal program is that to be supplied?

Dr SHEA: The \$11.5m identified there is not for the maritime pine industry. That money has been identified for an area to which I have previously referred, which is to investigate and evaluate a whole range of tree crops. We have conducted four years' research with maritime pine, which is the reason we chose it. It is a tough species which we know how to use, and there are markets for it. We believe, and I am sure the member agrees with me, that we need more strings to our bow than one or two species, so we put up to the Commonwealth for that block of money to look at a whole range of things, including the member's own work on salinity control for species with salt capacity to be produced commercially in salt prone areas.

We are also looking at products. One of the other areas we believe is terribly important is to look at ways by which we can make money out of the species we are planting. Western Australia currently imports tannin from South Africa for the resins we use for many of our manufacturing processes. It comes from *Acacia*, a genus which comes from Australia. We are investigating with colleagues in other departments and federal agencies the potential of restarting what was once a very significant industry in Western Australia, the tannin industry. The Department of Conservation and Land Management has also initiated with farmers a large proposal to plant mallee eucalypts in dry zones with the idea of harvesting eucalyptus oil. We are looking for funds to develop that market for a solvent. We are also looking at ways by which we can possibly use the byproduct of branches and stems which could be harvested. Currently we have studies under way with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation looking at the possibility of using wood fibre in board products and possibly as an energy source. That is what the general amount of money was for, not for the maritime pine.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Is that \$11.5m of federal funding coming under the National Heritage Trust funding package or under the wood and pulp industry funding package?

Dr SHEA: The Commonwealth has collapsed all of its programs under national heritage. We have put our hands up but the money has not yet come. It is coming out of the national heritage fund, not out of the pulp and paper fund.

[7.50 pm]

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: The Budget Statements refer to the establishment of native vegetation over the Gngangara water mound. Has the Department of Conservation and Land Management mastered a system of establishing trees in that water mound area without using herbicides?

Dr SHEA: It would be difficult. We are talking not only about trees but also shrub species. It is almost impossible anywhere in the State, including the Gngangara water mound, not to have some degree of weed control by chemicals. In some situations, where we have not had invasions - unfortunately that is rare - there may be limited ability to establish trees. Basically if we cannot control weeds, we cannot grow plants. At this stage we can only control weeds by some form of chemical application. Some interesting work is coming on about that. However, as I have been reprimanded in the past for elaborating on my answers, I will not continue.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The plans for the Gngangara regional park do not appear in the budget papers. I would have thought it would be listed as a major achievement for the 1996-97 financial year. Is it listed somewhere, and if not why not?

Dr BYRNE: There has been a change in the structure of the budget papers. Last year they were called program statements and they listed achievements; this year they only list achievements for 1996-97. We are now in the transition phase from program statements to budget statements. The member will notice that this year we have no listing for planned achievements. That is not just for CALM, it is across all government areas. We are moving from descriptive information about achievements to key output measures of a numerical kind. It is a change in the presentation of papers. This information can be provided in other forums; after all this is an Estimates Committee, not an audit of achievements.

Hon MAX EVANS: The program statements have been changed. They were introduced about six years ago and were programs run by departments. That did not always fit in with the management of the departments per se. Most departments had to rejig them into a different format. Not much has been done this year at Gngangara; it is the first year of a 20 year program. A small amount has been spent in the first year of a \$180m budget.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What stage has planning reached on the regional park, and how much has been spent to this stage? How much is intended to be spent in the future?

Dr SHEA: We are at the stage of summarising public submissions and setting up mechanisms for public involvement. We are in the process of arranging for new staff, in particular, landscapers to commence the planning process. I will respond in writing on the specific amount we will spend in the budget this year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to the wraparounds in newspapers of the Community Newspapers Group in November last year concerning the proposal for the Gngangara regional park. When was a decision taken to run the advertisements and by whom? Is it true that the wraparounds were originally booked to be one week prior to the week in which they were run? If so, why was the decision made to change the date on which the advertisements were run, and who made the decision?

Dr SHEA: I will respond in writing to the specifics, but the idea was mine.

Hon GREG SMITH: Page 181 of the Budget Statements refers to the acquisition, conservation and protection of representative ecosystems. CALM has purchased some pastoral properties, and I understand it intends to buy more. What area constitutes a representative ecosystem, or does CALM have a base area it will purchase? Considering these properties will not produce income once they are purchased, what measures will be taken, once CALM is responsible for them, to control feral animals, keeping water supplied to the property and the maintenance of boundary fences?

Dr SHEA: We are discussing the issue of a representative reserve system with the Commonwealth. It is like the question of how long is a length of string. Over many years our scientists have carried out biogeographical surveys throughout the State, particularly in the pastoral region, and identified different ecotypes. When we say we want a representative sample, it depends on how rare is the sample. There is not a strict answer. Generally, 50 000 hectares to 100 000 ha is a viable representative system. CALM's acquisition of pastoral stations is not a new thing; it goes back some time. We are responsible for one million hectares of pastoral land in this State. We are conscious of the need to manage these areas. We have a range of systems in place to ensure that management is maintained. For example, we have contracted to set up the Mt Hart station in the Kimberley as a major tourist attraction. We bought Burnerbinmah station from a pastoralist, particularly for sandalwood conservation. We have retained him at \$20 000 a year to live on the station and manage it. CALM is probably the leader in feral animal control. We work closely with the pastoral industry in the goldfields and the Gascoyne. We have participated closely with Ian Laurence's task force. We see a huge opportunity for synergism between conservation and the maintenance of a sustainable pastoral industry.

Hon NORM KELLY: On page 186 reference is made to contractual agreements to supply timber. It does not mention contractual agreements to supply woodchips. Could the Minister outline those agreements?

Dr SHEA: I do not have that before me. Logged timber from native forests includes timber for sawlogs - anything from high grade sawlogs through to woodchips; so that is part of it. Native forests would include jarrah, karri and other minor species and products varying from first grade furniture logs through to woodchips.

Hon NORM KELLY: Do you have a rough idea of the percentage that would be woodchips?

Dr SHEA: I will answer the member in writing.

Hon NORM KELLY: Has the department conducted any research into reducing the amount of wastage from sawn products?

[8.00 pm]

Dr SHEA: That is one of my personal areas of interest. Over a period we have been successful in increasing the proportion of the tree which is utilised for higher value products. For example, when I get depressed - which I occasionally do, after being attacked all week - I visit a factory in Fremantle called BVR Furniture. That furniture factory employs 10 people. It has just employed a new apprentice. It is employing those people to work on 250 cubic metres of wood, principally marri, which CALM dried in the kilns at Harvey. Over the past couple of years the factory has developed a new product which incorporates the gum veins and it is far more attractive than what is produced from a first grade log. Members may have seen some of the furniture at Fremantle. It really is beautiful.

One of the problems with the utilisation debate is that the more successful one is in utilising the tree, the more criticism one is likely to get. When I joined what was the then forest department there were huge amounts of wastage in the forest. They could truthfully say that only 10 per cent of the tree was used for woodchips. A mass of product which was left on the forest floor was burnt. Hon Christine Sharp goes back as far as I do in this great debate and I am sure she will remember that tonnes of wood was wasted. Today there is much less waste.

It is interesting that the new Minister for the Environment, Hon Cheryl Edwardes, has a passion about wastage on the forest floor. I tried to point out how much progress has been made. She has just assumed her position and is

saying it looks bad. We have made huge progress. I am proud of and acknowledge the role of the timber industry and my staff in making a quantum leap in utilising the native timber.

Today I was at the Forest Heritage Centre at Dwellingup which incorporates the school of wood. Working in the centre is a person from London who is a specialist in fine furniture. I would like members to go to Dwellingup to look at what he is doing. He is steaming karri and is making beautiful furniture. I am sure Hon Christine Sharp will back me up when I say that a few years ago karri was not a species that could be used for furniture. It can now be dried and it is one of the most beautiful timbers in the world. Huge progress has been made, but we have a long way to go. The value added hardwood industry - particularly the furniture component - can generate thousands of new jobs in this State.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What new national parks and/or nature reserves were created in the current financial year and what area do they cover?

Dr SHEA: I will take the question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: My next question will probably need to be taken on notice also. What national parks and/or nature reserves will be created in the next financial year and what area will these parks cover?

Dr SHEA: One of the reasons that there is a million hectares of pastoral land in my name is that we have been unable to convert it because of questions on native title issues. A large area of land is ready to be created into reserves. We purchased the land. A number of other areas in the Kimberley should proceed to reservation. The Minister and I are keen for that to occur because the area is becoming degraded. However, until the legal questions surrounding native title are resolved it is difficult to proceed. Nobody knows how many reserves will be created. It is the intention of the Minister and the Government to complete the reserve systems which were commenced in the 1970s.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I understand those questions will be taken on notice.

Dr SHEA: Certainly.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Is it proposed in any way to enhance the Beedelup National Park, and if so, how and when?

Dr SHEA: I will take the question on notice in case there are specific proposals I am not aware of. We are certainly involved in a significant process of upgrading all the national parks, particularly in the forest regions. Members will be aware that in 12 months we have made significant developments in the southern forest national parks - the treetop walk, the great forest tree drive and the creation of the wilderness lodge. The Minister announced a few weeks ago that over the next three years CALM will create a major tourist access road which will circle the Beedelup and other national parks. Funding permitting - which means we will have to sell more timber -

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Or get a greater community grant.

Dr SHEA: That is true. I am not complaining about the grant CALM received. It is very favourable. However, CALM will undertake a major upgrade of the parks, including the Beedelup National Park, because of the increased interest in the State's forests.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I should indicate in respect of my question on Beedelup National Park that my definition of "enhance" also covered the concept of expansion of its area.

Dr SHEA: I will take the new definition on notice also.

The CHAIRMAN: The questions will be taken on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: On a slightly different theme, what was CALM's budget for buying land for conservation purposes this year?

Dr BYRNE: The budget this year, as it was last year, is \$200 000.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What will it be next financial year?

Dr BYRNE: It will be \$200 000 next financial year.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: No doubt Dr Shea is aware of the problem of bushfires at the Stirling Range National Park. Bushfires anywhere in the State concern me because of the enormous risk to life and damage to property. At the Stirling Range National Park the main control point was approximately 12 kilometres from the face of the fire. I know there has been a lot of discussion on this subject between the volunteer bush fire brigades and CALM. There was some discussion on whether there should be more communication points in an area which is subject to fire. I

understand there was only one communication point for the fire to which I am referring. Has further consideration been given so that in the event of a fire the control officers can easily access the face of the fire?

Another problem was the communication wave length between the volunteer fire brigade officers and CALM officers. Perhaps the CALM officers are trained in this area and the volunteer farmers are not. Perhaps it would be better if CALM were able to access the local authorities' communication wave lengths.

Another criticism of farmers is that they must notify CALM before they light fires. I think they must give seven days' notice. The CALM officers do not necessarily have to notify the volunteer bush fire brigades who are responsible for the land adjoining the farmer's property. We should not confuse volunteers with amateurs. In country districts the captain of the brigade and the volunteer firefighters are usually farmers and they are extremely responsible people. They take their role very seriously. In many cases they are better equipped than the CALM officers because they have knowledge of the terrain and the adjoining farms. It concerns me that some officers did not move from their trucks until they were told to. At one stage a bushfire was right at the face of a homestead where there were a number of young children. Things like this could be prevented. It is only by talking about it afterwards that some of these areas can be looked at a little more closely. Is more communication occurring between the volunteer bush fire brigades and CALM?

[8.10 pm]

Dr SHEA: I am not familiar with the details of the questions on communication and control points. I undertake to follow up those matters and respond to the member. I join with her in acknowledging the professionalism of the volunteer brigades. We estimate it would cost the State between \$100m and \$150m to replace the current volunteer bush fire brigade with a paid service. Generally CALM has a good relationship with volunteer brigades. However, as the member knows, there has been a lot of controversy in this area over a period. Recently I had the honour of releasing a management plan for the Stirling Ranges, because my Minister was unable to do it. One of the highlights of that plan, and also the highlight of the meeting at which we released it, was the work that went into the plan by the community, particularly on the types of prescribed burning that was required. When I was there I sensed a new era of cooperation between brigades in that park.

One of the difficulties with the sort of vegetation to which the member refers is that the window of opportunity to carry out burns that do not become wildfires is narrow. We have committed a lot of research to that. We have combined that with the long, practical experience of farmers and we are in a position to be much more scientific about burning, particularly now we have the opportunity to use helicopters. Farmers' burns are clearing burns, whereas our burns are prescribed burns. It is not as easy to warn people about a prescribed burn as it is about a clearing burn. As a matter of policy CALM advises all adjacent neighbours, both directly and through the media, when it is burning off. I would be disappointed if we were not keeping in close contact with the brigades.

I have noted from *Hansard* the specific concerns about control points. I thought we had overcome our problems with communication. Prior to the formation of CALM the three separate agencies that now make up CALM had three different radio systems that did not permit them to communicate in the same country town. I will follow that up.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: If there were more fixed control points, it would be better for CALM and officers would not have to be such a distance from a fire. No-one knows exactly where a fire is likely to break out.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: I refer to page 180 of the Budget Statements. Are the fees that are collected from visitors to national parks spent on the maintenance of infrastructure, roads and visitor facilities in the parks, or are they spent on the maintenance of rangers' homes and those areas that are the responsibility of CALM directly?

Dr SHEA: I thank you for that question, because it is dear to my heart. Of all the money we expend on national parks, only 10 to 15 per cent of it comes in fees; that is, more than the fees collected is spent on parks. We have a policy that when each regional district gathers fees and carries out entrepreneurial activities, the money is retained by the region. For example, the treetop walk had grossed \$800 000 at last count. After paying the costs of running the walk, all that money is retained by that region and put back into national parks. This incentive scheme has had a marvellous effect throughout the State. In the past when all the money CALM earned was put into the general Treasury bin and we were handed out the dregs of the consolidated fund, there was no incentive to gather fees. When the net appropriation approach was adopted, it was a big incentive for the department to increase revenue collection; but also when we introduced within the department the policy that the regions and districts would retain their money, there was a miraculous change in attitude. Around the State evidence of significant improvements in in-park infrastructure can be seen because of that policy.

Hon MAX EVANS: The net appropriation is the reason CALM is bringing down its debt. The sale of timber and everything else went to Treasury. I introduced net appropriation in the Government's first year in office, at the request of mainly Agriculture Western Australia and the Department of Marine and Harbours so they could get extra

revenue. Often they had to expend money to get revenue. The spending money had to come out of the budget, whereas the revenue went to Treasury and did not even offset expenditure. The net appropriation made a big change to many departments. It probably made a bigger change to Dr Shea's office than to any other office. He has turned that around even further because the extra money that is raised in parks can be used there and it can have a multiplier effect.

Dr SHEA: A few years ago, before net appropriations, the Nambung National Park used to yield about \$5 000 to \$8 000 in fees. It currently nets over \$200 000, yet we have not changed the fee structure and the number of visitors has decreased slightly. I use this as a dramatic illustration. It is not surprising; public servants respond to incentives in the same way everyone else does.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: Sometimes prescribed burning is in conflict with nature conservation values. I refer specifically to concerns about plans for prescribed burning in the wilderness area of the Fitzgerald River National Park, which is one of the few wilderness areas in national parks in this State. It consists of 70 000 hectares that are to remain virtually untouched by human activity. There is concern that the latest prescribed burning program is in conflict with wilderness values. Is the department considering a second look at that proposal in order to meet community concerns about protecting wilderness values in that area?

Dr SHEA: I have been away and I am not aware of the specifics of that. I undertake to look at the proposals and answer that question. Throughout my career I have been interested in fire as a factor in our environment. I have yet to see an ecosystem anywhere in Western Australia, and in most parts of the world I have visited, where fire is not a natural factor. We realise we cannot keep fire out. In the reserve to which the member refers we lost a volunteer who was fighting wildfire. We must be careful that when we set out specific management proposals such as wilderness we do not make an artificial constraint on the environment, but also that we are conscious that eventually there will be fires there, whether we like it or not. I could be criminally charged under the new laws if I do not exercise proper duty of care by reducing the fuel hazards.

[8.20 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is CALM considering the establishment of a national park in the Wellington Dam area to take up some of the northern jarrah forest? If not, would it be prepared to consider such a proposal?

Dr SHEA: The whole question of reservation within the forest system is the subject of an intensive study referred to earlier - the regional forest management process - of which a very significant part is detailed site assessment to check that the existing reserve system includes all representative types. Any issue of reservation will be an outcome of that process. A significant increase in reservations could be achieved only at significant cost to the timber industry and the mining industry.

Hon GREG SMITH: At page 188 of the Budget Statements, one of the major achievements for 1996-97 relates to funding commitments from the government and non-government sectors for a \$2m visitor centre in Karijini National Park. What is the detail of that centre?

Dr SHEA: I will be happy to reply in writing in detail. I was with my Minister in the Karijini National Park three or four weeks ago. We are currently negotiating with the Karijini Aboriginal group, trying to weave our way through mining companies making counter proposals. I understand this money was committed by the Deputy Premier, and it is certainly still there. It is a question of the location and design of the centre. I can assure the member there will be a centre, but there is a dispute about where it will be situated.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I refer to the CALM budget for buying land for conservation purposes. I note that officers of CALM have been involved in discussions with respect to the Underwood block at Jurien. Will CALM provide the funds necessary to buy the 1 704 hectare Underwood block to prevent its being cleared for cattle farming? Have additional funds been sought from the Government for this purpose?

Dr BYRNE: Within this budget no additional funds have been sought for that purpose at this stage.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I note that the Committee has concentrated to some extent on the program for salinity which is an environmental tragedy that should be concentrated on. However, I have noticed over the years Dr Shea's comments to this Committee even last year to the effect that *Phytophthora* was an environmental tragedy on a massive scale, and it was like a biological bulldozer through various areas. He said we had a major crisis on our hands. What funds are appropriated in the 1997-98 budget for dieback research?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice.



Hon J.A. COWDELL: I would like information on the funds directed by CALM to the mapping and interpretation of dieback risk areas in regions or locations of greatest hazard in 1996-97. Also, what funds will be available in 1997-98 for that purpose?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What area has now been treated with foliant phosphonate, following extensive field trials reported to this Committee last year? What is the cost of any such program?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice. We have completed very successful trials in the Stirling Range National Park using helicopters for the first time.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What funds are in the dieback research trust fund and how are they supplemented?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What area of CALM managed land has been subject to large scale aerial colour photography supplemented by intensive ground survey during the last financial year?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: My question relates to a specific tourist facility in the northern part of my electorate. At page 188 one of the major achievements listed for 1996-97 is a significant increase in the level and extent of tourism and recreation investment on CALM lands by way of negotiation and finalisation of a lease agreement for the Yanchep Inn. I have heard that the renovation works have encountered a serious unforeseen problem with the safe management of asbestos in the structure of the building. Can the existence of this problem be confirmed?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice, but I think we have solved it.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: What is the progress on the renovations? When is it anticipated they will be completed and when will the Yanchep Inn reopen for business?

Dr SHEA: It will be soon, but I will respond in detail.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: We have been discussing the treetop walk, which has been extremely popular. I would like to acknowledge it has given great pleasure to many people with disabilities. CALM has been well recognised for its consideration and thoughtfulness in the planning, especially by those with carers who can take their families on that treetop walk with them. It is much appreciated. What is the level of tree planting on agricultural land now and to what extent is CALM planning to increase it, if at all, next year?

[8.30 pm]

Dr SHEA: I thank the member for her praise. We are very proud of the treetop walk which provides access for all people. Members may know that I have a very large family and one of the requirements for all CALM recreational developments is that my 88 year old mother must have access to them. My sister was terrified but my mother was very pleased to be pushed around the treetop walk. If all the proposals go forward for this year's planting season, we will have in excess of 23 000 hectares of trees planted on farmland in the south west region. I recall these figures because I recently gave a paper to a conference in New Zealand about this tree planting program, which is recognised throughout Australia and the world as a major new development in forestry. This involves about 40 million trees and a large proportion of the program is funded by the private sector. Only 10 years ago, at the most, 200 ha of trees were being planted on farmlands and now we have this huge program, which is almost entirely funded by the private sector.

As part of the salinity strategy, CALM plans to increase tree planting substantially particularly in the intermediate zone. As was mentioned, the department is proposing to achieve plantings of 15 000 ha of pinaster maritime pine. It is also looking at adding a range of other species, including sandalwood. If the federal funding comes through, by the year 2000 more than 100 million commercial trees will be planted on farmlands each year. If we sustain that rate, by 2010 we will be looking at 750 000 ha of tree crops on farms.

With existing plantings, in the next three or four years we expect to export \$500m worth of wood from farmlands. The tree crop industry on farms is new and it has huge potential to reverse environmental degradation and the decline in employment opportunities in regional Australia.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Does CALM have markets for this huge new timber industry?

Dr SHEA: The department has carried out a number of analyses and has had access to a number of studies going on around the world. Particularly in the Pacific rim basin countries we are already seeing a deficit in wood fibre requirements. The God given forests, particularly in the tropics, are not sustaining the levels of wood production that

they were. For example, Malaysia has dropped its allowable cut from 50m tonnes to less than 20m tonnes. Some of the northern hemisphere sources of wood, particularly Canada, are looking at reductions. At the same time, we are seeing a per capita increase in wood fibre consumption as the standard of living of our near northern Asian neighbours increases. Currently the consumption of wood in China is about one-hundredth of that in Japan. Very small increases in the standard of living will see an increase in demand for wood fibre.

The other exciting thing happening is that we are seeing a revolution in the development of new wood fibre products. Oriented strand board has the strength of plywood but is made from woodchips. Members will be familiar with medium density fibreboard, which is used particularly in Fremantle homes to redo fireplaces. Laminated veneer lumber is a relatively new product that can be used to construct two or three storey buildings.

We are seeing this dramatic change in wood consumption and demand factors, a decline in supply and the development of these new industries. There will be no wood famine. As the supply has decreased, the prices have increased. Therefore, it becomes profitable to grow trees as a crop. That is why it is so critical for CALM to move quickly into the vacuum now and establish an industry that will be sustainable forever. If Australia misses out, it will continue the appalling situation where it has an import bill of \$2b for wood fibre products. This country imports Tasmanian blue gum fibre from Portugal, blue gum veneer from Chile and acacia tannin from South Africa. We even import eucalyptus oil. We have the chance to reverse that and, at the same time, deal with a major environmental problem on our agricultural lands. I am proud of what has been achieved in Western Australia in a very short period. In 10 years we have moved from planting nothing to planting more than 23 000 ha of trees.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: We can talk about planting these trees and assume that they will all grow into healthy specimens. It would be an unusual cropping program that was fortunate enough to have that happen. Does CALM foresee any possible setbacks in the growing process?

Dr SHEA: That has preoccupied the department for some time. For a number of years it has been suggested that we could lose a significant proportion of the *pinus radiata* plantation in Australia because it is a monoculture, and we have had scares. The species used have been very robust and we have not suffered any significant problem. That is not to say that it will not happen. We are constantly examining literature for evidence of disease breakout. We are using *radiata* pine, *pinus pinaster* and bluegum and, as yet, the department has not seen any significant threat.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: I would like details of the expenditure on the motor vehicle fleet for the previous financial year, this financial year and next financial year. Have there been any significant changes?

Dr BYRNE: We can provide those figures, but there has been great change in the way this is done, and we need to wait a little longer to provide comparable figures. The preliminary analysis shows a saving as a result of outsourcing.

Hon MAX EVANS: Cars are all financed on a lease plan deal and that will be the same for the heavy equipment very soon.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: I would like some details.

Dr SHEA: We will take the question on notice.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I refer again to the Yanchep Inn. Has any CALM or other state money been expended on the renovations? If so, how much? For what specific purposes was the money expended and what aspect of the lease agreement provided for such expenditure?

Dr SHEA: We have spent money and I will provide the details.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have given the Minister a series of questions dealing with proposed expenditure on public relations for the department and the employment of journalists. I understand the State Government is now the largest single employer of journalists in the State. How many journalists are employed by CALM?

[8.40 pm]

Hon MAX EVANS: I refer Hon Tom Stephens to some comments in *Hansard* some years ago when his party was in Government. Many of the *Hansard* reporters were members of the then Australian Journalists Association. I can get the figures for him if he wants me to.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: The National Trust has proposed a system of covenants over land to preserve the natural heritage value of that land. It has been suggested that many people would look to such a body, as not being an arm of government, to set up such a scheme. Is CALM involved in any way in an initiative in this regard, or is it supportive of the National Trust being the appropriate body to introduce this system of preservation of natural heritage in private lands?

Hon MAX EVANS: As Hon John Cowdell knows, the decision about whether the National Trust or CALM should take over this area is a policy matter. A decision has not been made, although both agencies are looking at this issue. I can assure him a decision will be that it will go to one body or the other; however, which way it will go remains a policy decision that must be made.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Given CALM's obligations to manage marine parks, what performance criteria does CALM use to assess maintenance of biodiversity in these areas?

Dr SHEA: One of the generic questions referred to the comments of the Auditor General on performance indicators. In the nature conservation area we have had some difficulty in providing those. We have recently negotiated an arrangement with the Auditor General. We have just taken over the marine parks and we are still working on that information. If I can ascertain more information from my marine parks management specialist, I will provide it.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I understand CALM has an obligation under its legislation to protect endangered species, particularly in marine parks. How does CALM ensure turtles are not killed in trawling activities, particularly in the Shark Bay area?

Dr SHEA: As far as I am aware - I will check this for the member - it is not currently occurring in the areas that are proclaimed as national marine parks.

Hon GIZ WATSON: There is trawling in Shark Bay.

Dr SHEA: There is, but I am not sure it is in the marine park.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I take this opportunity to ask some questions pertaining to my locality. Is CALM still unable to manage the whole area of the Creery Wetlands, if it is acquired for the conservation estate, on the basis of insufficient funds?

Dr SHEA: That is a matter which falls between a policy question and a hypothetical question.

Hon MAX EVANS: I think it does, too.

Dr SHEA: On that basis and under the rules of this Committee, I do not think I could venture an opinion on this matter.

The CHAIRMAN (Hon M.J. Criddle): Perhaps the member would like to rephrase the question.

Hon MAX EVANS: The member is asking what is the policy of the Government on this issue and whether there is enough money to fund a specific outcome. The answer is that there is enough money, but the policy of the Government has not been determined.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: CALM might -

Hon MAX EVANS: It all depends on the priorities CALM places on its funding.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I ask this question because of local statements that CALM would prefer the Creery Wetlands to be of a lesser area than some would suggest because there are insufficient funds to manage the greater area that is proposed.

Dr SHEA: I can assure the member that that sounds like Mandurah tittle-tattle, and it has no basis in fact.

Hon MAX EVANS: It is another press report.

Dr SHEA: Was it in the *Coastal Districts Times*?

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I will leave the matter at that, but the report quotes the CALM spokesman on that matter.

Dr SHEA: I am not aware of it, and I think it is illogical. That is a peanut and a pumpkin issue compared with other areas we manage.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I am happy to proceed with questions concerning the Peel region by asking this question which may have to be taken on notice. What funds have been allocated for management in the Yalgorup National Park?

Dr SHEA: I will take that question on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What steps have been taken to secure the Lake Clifton thrombolites from contamination with nutrients and other pollution that are entering the ground water off the lake?

Hon MARK NEVILL: I have never heard of them.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I said thrombolites.

Dr SHEA: I think the member means stromatolites; the oldest fossils in the world.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I have heard of stromatolites, but not thrombolites.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I keep being corrected on that one.

Dr SHEA: They are stromatolites, I think. Does the member mean the fossils at Shark Bay?

Hon J.A. COWDELL: They are a particular variety of stromatolites which CALM officers have corrected me on and have insisted that they are called thrombolites. On that basis, I use that terminology.

Dr SHEA: I stand corrected. If CALM officers said that, it must be true!

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I will not quite concede that point. This question may also have to be taken on notice. Will the State, under the auspices of CALM, acquire private holdings to enhance the area of the Yalgorup National Park and secure Lake Clifton? I am particularly concerned about the boundaries of that national park and the fact that there are private land holdings specifically surrounding the lake, which appears to be one of the most valuable features of that national park.

Hon MAX EVANS: That is obviously a policy question. If the member wishes to place it on notice, it may or may not be answered.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: A question came up earlier about admission fees to national parks. What are the current entry fees for national parks? Are there any plans to increase these fees?

Dr SHEA: I shall take both questions on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: In respect of these parks, have any been placed on the entry fee list in the past 12 months?

Dr SHEA: Not that I am aware of, but I will check the information.

Hon MAX EVANS: The trouble is that Dr Shea does not pay when he goes in, so he does not know what the fees are!

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Earlier Dr Shea mentioned a reduction in visitation to some of those parks with respect to head counts and amounts received. I seek any relevant information about the variance of visitation to those parks where a fee is now attached.

Dr SHEA: There is a slight misunderstanding. I was illustrating that in the Pinnacles park a fee existed, but because there was no net appropriation, there was no incentive to gather it. The revenue received increased from between \$5 000 and \$8 000 to over \$200 000, without a change in the fee schedule. There was some slight decrease in numbers. It was not a matter of a greater number of people visiting that park. In respect to the general thrust of this question, I will have the national park people provide the member with the latest visitation figures so he can examine them at his leisure.

Hon MAX EVANS: That is a better answer than the one we received before; I understand that.

[8.50 pm]

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What programs have been run in the last 12 months on the basis of commonwealth recoups and what programs will be run on this basis in the next 12 months?

Dr SHEA: I ask for clarification of the question. A recoup to us is a specific term. For example, we are doing an analysis of vegetation in the forest regions as part of the regional forest process. The money we are spending will be recouped. That is different from a stack of other money that the Commonwealth provides directly. Is the member talking about a specific job for the Commonwealth and we get a recoup or the overall funding from the Commonwealth?

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I am interested in both aspects. There appears to be a reduction in the annual report, which compared the amounts received from the Commonwealth for various projects from 1991.

Dr SHEA: Can I supply all the information on commonwealth funding over a period of years?

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Yes. In previous years we have had the discussion and I know a lot of valuable work has been done from commonwealth programs in the conservation areas, even on the boardwalk to the thrombolites at Lake

Clifton. I had seen from the decline in allocations from those programs that far less work was possible, although we live in hope of the bonanza fund.

Dr SHEA: I will take that on notice and provide that information.

Hon MARK NEVILL: My question relates to the hairy-nosed wombat. The information I am getting is that wild dogs have wiped out the colonies on the South Australian side of the border in the Nullarbor National Park and there is only one small colony north of Eucla. Is that claim true?

Dr SHEA: I heard it only recently. For both of our benefits, I will follow that up.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I asked a question about it in Parliament. It was raised at an Eyre Highway operators' meeting.

Dr SHEA: I must have seen the press report. I have been away. I will respond in writing.

Hon MARK NEVILL: It is of great concern because Nullarbor Station used to kill 600 dogs a year. Now it is part of the national park, and while the South Australians will claim there is a lot of management of that national park, I suspect it is nowhere near enough and the dog population has exploded.

Are senior salaries in your department determined by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal?

Dr SHEA: Mine is. I think the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal does CEOs and part of the SES.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do not want to allow Hon John Cowdell to be the only one to add blocks of land to the purchase wish list. Is there any chance of CALM making funds available to purchase the last remaining section of coastal banksia in the northern suburbs - that is, the block of land immediately to the north of Burns Beach - and add it to the Neerabup National Park?

Dr SHEA: We never have enough money to purchase land. One of the other outcomes of the national heritage trust process will determine to some extent whether we can continue our purchase program because there has been a constant flow of money from the Commonwealth for that. With respect to the specific area, I will take it on notice. We have to develop priorities and, frankly, the priorities have been more in the pastoral region where there has not been a sufficient reserve system.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Has CALM done any investigations into the likely impact the extension of the freeway and railway reserves will have on the integrity of the Neerabup National Park?

Dr SHEA: Some work has been done. However, I do not have that at my fingertips. I will respond to the member.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Has there been any monitoring of the effects the concrete batching plant has had on the integrity of the Neerabup National Park?

Dr SHEA: I will respond to the member. There is no monitoring. However, we do not expect it will have any impact.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I am interested in the new responsibilities of CALM. Does CALM have any forward estimates for the annual adjustment of the community grant? I have noticed during the time I have been a member that it has been adjusted from \$34m to \$38m to \$41m. Do the forward estimates indicate what the expectation is for the community grant to allow CALM to discharge its community responsibilities?

Dr BYRNE: The member is right; it has increased from about \$34m to \$41m. It will go to \$43.7m by 2000. If government policy changes, more money may be added. Those figures are based on current policy. The increase included things like the salinity program, regional parks, and a general increase for new conservation and community obligations. One of the effects of net appropriations has been that money from the forest resource management program is used to improve nature conservation. The Premier referred to that in his budget speech. He said -

Any revenue derived from this purpose will be used to manage native forest reserves and to undertake major tourism, recreation and conservation projects.

This year forests will provide \$5m. Before net appropriation was none. There will be a steady increase in the funds available from the consolidated fund and the internal funds account for nature conservation and other community service obligations.

Hon MAX EVANS: The Committee will now understand why I had a big fight with the Treasury Department to put in net appropriations. Not long after that was introduced, Hon Ian Taylor said that it was one of the best things I had done; that is, give independence to the agencies away from Treasury.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I notice in the annual report that the hours worked by CALM volunteers have increased by about 50 per cent from 38 000 hours to 58 000 hours. Do they get anything from CALM for the work they do? Do they get free passes to CALM facilities?

Dr SHEA: No, they do not. The level of work done by these people is fantastic. However, there is huge potential to increase it, particularly with early retirement. People ring virtually every second week - they are quite highly qualified people in many cases - and want something to do because they are going mad at home. I think it is a great idea. Last year was a particularly good year for CALM. Our people made a number of achievements. It is always very difficult to reward public servants; there is no system of bonuses. Therefore, we decided to provide a free pass for our people. Subject to my Minister's agreement, this year I intend to expand that to our volunteers. However, we must be careful because some of the service is provided short term. Therefore, it will be over a certain number of hours. Also, I want to increase training opportunities. Some of our new initiatives are fantastic. We have introduced camp ground hosts. For example, people go to Ningaloo and spend three months looking after the place for nothing. It makes a huge difference. I am glad the member raised that matter, because we will be doing that.

[9.00 pm]

Hon MAX EVANS: Recently I visited Lotteries House in Stirling Street where people undertake voluntary work. They receive dozens of calls from people who want to volunteer. Their qualifications are taken down and are passed on to organisations such as CALM and the voluntary fire brigades. People offer to knit or to read to old people. I did not realise that so many people in the community were looking for somewhere to volunteer their help. This charitable organisation points these people in many different directions.

Hon MARK NEVILL: The Government has almost emasculated Wittenoom, but not quite. What plans do you have to place tourist facilities in Karijini National Park? This has been talked about for 10 years but little has happened.

Dr SHEA: I answered a question earlier about the visitors' centre. The allocation of \$2m is still intact, and that centre will proceed subject to working out where it will be and what it will contain. The member may be aware that we called for expressions of interest in providing accommodation. That tender was won by the Hancock Group. Millions of dollars will be invested at three levels, from the camping level upwards. The group has recently appointed a specialist manager, who is a very good guy. The member is not the only person to raise this matter. Every time I see the Premier he asks me when the accommodation will be provided, so a lot of pressure is being applied.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I notice that last year in the estimates Dr Byrne indicated that some \$600 000 had been spent on solicitors' fees for litigation against voluntary service groups. What is the figure for litigation this financial year, and can I have a breakdown of that expenditure?

Dr BYRNE: I will take that on notice. I cannot provide that figure off the top of my head. I had the figure in my head last year, because the finance had to be provided at short notice.

Dr SHEA: We are not undertaking litigation; we are responding to litigation against us. It is sad that we are spending huge amounts of money on often frivolous, fruitless claims when we could spend that money on conservation.

Hon MAX EVANS: It is paying the other side's costs.

Dr SHEA: Sometimes it is the Commonwealth Government.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What is the expected return from leaseholders under the nature-based tourism program? I notice that in recent years Dr Shea and other representatives have indicated that they have expected an increase in return as more leases were given out. I would like an indication of progress over the years with returns from leaseholders.

Dr SHEA: We will take that question on notice and provide the detailed information. I mentioned earlier that only 10 per cent of our recreation dollar is returned in revenue. We have a long way to go. I have cited on previous occasions the success of some of our leaseholds; for example, the Matilda Bay restaurant is owned by CALM on behalf of the Government. Before CALM was created, it was earning \$1 500. Currently we receive \$250 000 from that exercise. My ambition is to have about 50 of those enterprises throughout the State. We now have significant developments in the parks; for example, not only in the Karijini but also in the Purnululu National Park. We are experiencing dramatic increases in nature-based tourist visitation. We are putting out a new series of tenders for people to take up those facilities.

Hon NORM KELLY: Does CALM have a strategy to manage the conflict caused by the increased use of the road through the Giblett block, given the development of the tourist drive through the area and increased logging?

Dr SHEA: The proposed tourist drive takes into account that factor. Most of the roads that tourists use in the forests, if not all the roads, were originally logging roads. I can understand the frustration of some people in the logging industry when some elements of the tourism industry complain about having to use those roads, when the roads would not exist had it not been for the logging industry. Our surveys indicate that the vast majority of people enjoying our forests do not move very far from key centres. Most of the activity is at places such as the treetop walk. Where we thought we had an opportunity to expand people's experience, we have done that. For example, the Great Forest Trees Drive in the Shannon National Park is specifically designed to allow people who do not wish to hike, to drive around and see some of the magnificent old growth forest and karri and jarrah stands. It is significant that the conservation movement in the region vigorously opposed the development of that facility.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: The figures indicate that in 1996-97 the retained revenue was in the order of \$127m, and in 1997-98 it will be down to \$121.4m. What is the cause of the reduction, or is it a case, as in previous years, of conservative accounting on the part of CALM? I think I saw on another occasion that the estimated revenue return was \$119m but it came in at \$134m.

Dr SHEA: I wish it were a case of purely conservative accounting. As I have indicated on a previous occasion, I cannot help the conservative nature that is inherent in me. We are suffering major stagnation, as are all people in the general area of the building industry, to which we relate. There is a major recession in the area, and we are suffering badly. Our revenue is significantly down.

Hon MAX EVANS: It is only a 5 per cent variance, which is not a lot.

Dr BYRNE: As Dr Shea said, the downturn in the building industry is a factor. Another factor in the current financial year has been higher asset sales with the sale of vehicles. That means that revenue this year is higher. The problem is one that the budget process will improve because asset sales should really be treated better in the budget process instead of being included in recurrent revenue. If you dispose of an asset to retire a debt that should come into an accrual type of arrangement. The introduction of accrual budgeting next year should allow some improvement in the presentation.

[9.10 pm]

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What is the return from the sale of the fleet this year?

Dr BYRNE: About \$11m for about 600 items of fleet. It will be a little more than that because another 78 items are yet to be sold. We do not have the final figures at this stage.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: How does CALM view the impact of native title claims on its operations?

Hon MAX EVANS: That is ministerial policy and not for the CEO to answer.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I note that the ACIL report for Bunnings on hardwood woodchip exports refers to some situations that arose during the year. How could the competitive pricing of Australian woodchips be improved to maintain export volumes to Japan?

Dr SHEA: The whole issue of wood pricing for this industry is complex. The current pricing is determined on annual negotiations based on the Tasmanian woodchip price. The issue in question is not so much the price, although it has some bearing on the returns; the principal issue the buyers - that is, the Japanese pulp and paper industry - are concerned about is security. In a relatively short time, five or six years, Australia has lost out significantly in this market, principally because of the political debate over the question of forests in Australia. Pricing is not a major factor that would determine the future supply of woodchips. The quality of our woodchips is not high, relative to blue gum, so the continued sale of our waste material as woodchips is potentially vulnerable if the buyers are concerned about security.

Hon NORM KELLY: You mentioned that 460 ha are to be logged this year. Is the rate of logging of the block expected to continue at the same level for a number of years or do you expect that to increase next year?

Dr SHEA: I have to take that question on notice and provide whatever answer I can. A very complex cutting plan is reviewed each year.

Hon NORM KELLY: Does CALM have estimates of the long term viability of the Pemberton mill without the long term logging of Giblett?

Dr SHEA: We have carried out an analysis of the impact of that at the request of the Minister, because this issue immediately confronted her when she was first appointed. The removal of that resource would have a significant impact on the Pemberton mill; it would involve its closure because the supply would not be sustained.

As I said earlier, we have had to deal with the controversies under successive Governments and Ministers. So many constraints have been placed on us that we now have nowhere to go. We have accommodated the Shannon, changed the road reserve system and deferred forest and national heritage areas. All those things have been absorbed without detriment to either side, but we now have nowhere to go unless we want to do serious damage to the forest - which we would not do.

Hon NORM KELLY: Is it possible to give me an answer on the long term future of Pemberton mill if logging continues?

Dr SHEA: I will send the member a copy of the management plan. There is no difficulty in sustaining the level of log supplied to the Pemberton mill indefinitely.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Would the calling of public tenders for the purchase of native forest pulp wood jeopardise the Japanese share of the market?

Dr SHEA: That is a hypothetical question. I can answer truthfully and say it has the potential to do that. This business is a funny business; perceptions rather than reality have the biggest impacts.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Does CALM consider that further domestic processing of pulp wood is viable in the future and are any studies underway?

Dr SHEA: The opportunity to obtain a world scale competitive pulp mill will not come for about five to 10 years. However, there are alternative ways of using the generated residue. I mentioned some of these earlier when responding to a question from Hon Muriel Patterson. We have a greater opportunity to get more value adding from some of the new technology wood, such as strand wood, MDF and laminated veneer lumber. In putting up some of our wood fibre lots for tender we will put a preference and priority on companies that would take that and process it here. However, I cannot see a large replacement of the existing use of woodchips in the short term.

Hon MARK NEVILL: My question relates to the wildlife licences for avian fauna. Some years ago a licence was issued which allowed for the Naretha blue bonnet parrot to be bred. What has been the outcome of that program? Is it a commercial licence or a licence to deal or to breed the birds in captivity?

Dr SHEA: I thank the member for the question because when the process began it was subject to a lot of debate in this House. The program has been an outstanding success. We issued licences to six aviculturists to determine whether the Naretha blue bonnet could be bred in captivity. Part of the arrangement was that they paid the costs. CALM got half the progeny and retained all the birds that were captured. That program has now terminated. Although I have to check the numbers, I think 40 birds were taken from captivity. I will forward the member an article on the program. We have 140 birds. We made about \$30 000, which has been put back into the program. We have put the Naretha blue bonnet in zoos throughout Australia, including Perth's, and it is now a captive bred species. It is not at risk, which has taken the pressure off smuggling. Over the next several months we propose to redo that program with a range of other species, including the ground parrot.

[9.20 pm]

Hon MARK NEVILL: The other species listed is the bat. Is there concern about handling bats in CALM as a result of viruses bats carry in Queensland?

Dr SHEA: I am not aware of it. I will check up to see whether a problem exists.

Dr BYRNE: We have taken precautions in alerting all staff who handle bats in the course of their employment about the risk. We make sure that they are aware of the situation and are immunised as a safety precaution.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Where is the dam site which CALM sold to the Water and Rivers Commission in this financial year?

Dr SHEA: I will take that on notice. Before we sell any land surplus to our needs, we check with other agencies which may have an interest. The Water and Rivers Commission had a strategy to build a dam, and then Minister Peter Foss told them, "If you want to retain the dam, you've got to pay for it."

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Will you comment on the allocation of funds for research within CALM and whether you are satisfied that adequate research is underway and a suitable output was produced by way of scientific papers?

Dr SHEA: Regarding publications released as criteria, as a former researcher I have always been sceptical of that as a measure of performance.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: So am I.



Dr SHEA: CALM has a specific niche in which it works in research. We do some fundamental research. To draw the analogy, our speciality is to be behind the pack ready to pick up the good idea and apply it on a large scale. We did that with the blue gum, nature-based tourism and conservation programs. We do not see ourselves as duplicating fundamental research, as we look to CSIRO and the universities to carry that out. We will never have enough money for research, but we can manage this area much better. We are looking at much closer relations with universities in using the postgraduate system increasingly to meet many of our requirements.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Last year Dr Shea indicated that \$1m went to dieback research from income from commercial exploitation of conocurvone. What is the situation with respect to income from that source? CALM had obviously looked for some flow of income from the commercial potential from drugs from native plants. Obviously, in the past that had benefited the research capacity.

Dr SHEA: It was useful money. We will not receive money from conocurvone until it is a proven drug, but we will get a considerable piece of the action if it becomes viable. We are in the process of, in the near future, calling for expressions of interest internationally in some plant-derived compounds. We have 400 highly prospective compounds with which to test the market. It is a very exciting and complex area. I will be interested in members' views on our approach.

It would be very easy for us to make some short term cash in this business, as some States have sold their whole bio-prospecting resource for a few million dollars. It is an opportunity to earn some money but more importantly to see if we can drag some of the scientific industry associated with these drugs to Western Australia. We have some superb graduates in this area who are going overseas to work for the big companies as they cannot get jobs here. Our strategy is not to maximise short term gains, but to combine a return from the flora with developing an industry, to some extent at least, in Western Australia. That is why we have been slower than some of the other States in moving in this area. Some of the other States have sold themselves very short.

Hon NORM KELLY: Do you have an idea of the level of Aboriginal employment in paid staff and volunteers in the department, particular the tourism and recreation sections?

Dr SHEA: We can provide that on notice. We have a big commitment to the Aboriginal community in assisting people to gain employment. One of the most important things we can do is provide Aboriginal communities with the dignity of earning wealth for themselves. We have one of the key industries which can supply that wealth; that is, the nature-based tourism industry. We have established an Aboriginal tourism and cultural unit which comprises our Aboriginal rangers. I am in the process of increasing staffing in that unit and using it to contract Aboriginal communities, eventually throughout the State, to provide the infrastructure to help provide a service to the industry.

Wherever one goes in Africa, one sees African culture as a major attraction. One cannot go anywhere in Australia, except the Northern Territory, to readily access Aboriginal culture. Here we have the world's oldest landscape, which put together with the world's oldest culture would produce an unbeatable tourist product. Currently, we are on one leg. I was negotiating today to develop this industry in relation to small wood carvings. When I came in on the Qantas flight and saw passengers with big wooden zebras and giraffes, I thought I would like to see them leave dragging a big wooden numbat carved by the member of an Aboriginal community!

Dr BYRNE: Employment statistics are published by the public sector following counts across the Public Service. This includes Aboriginal employment, and it indicates that CALM is one of the agencies with the highest proportion of staff who are Aborigines. I believe only the Pundulmurra Aboriginal College and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs have a significantly higher proportion of Aboriginal people on staff.

Hon NORM KELLY: When providing those figures, could you provide some breakdown regarding Aboriginal people in management positions as well?

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Quite often in reports, and especially one report I referred to earlier, comment of the following nature is made: "The WA wood and wood product industry is estimated by CALM to generate direct and indirect employment of 20 000 and to have an annual turnover of \$850m." Is that a correct representation of any estimate made by CALM and, if so, has any update been made since that estimate was made?

Dr SHEA: I will take that on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: We have a few others question from the committee for you to take on notice as well.

*Committee adjourned at 9.30 pm*

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