

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

Thursday 9 October 1980

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A***The Committee met at 11 a.m.*

Engineering and Water Supply, \$67 203 000

**Acting Chairman:**

Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**

Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
 Mr. H. Becker  
 Mr. Max Brown  
 Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
 Mr. I. P. Lewis  
 Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
 The Hon. R. G. Payne  
 Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**

The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Water Resources  
 and Minister of Irrigation.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr. D. J. Alexander, Acting Director-General and  
 Engineer-in-Chief.  
 Mr. K. R. John, Senior Finance Officer.  
 Mr. A. N. Killmier, Director, Administration and  
 Finance.  
 Mr. K. J. Shepherd, Director, Planning.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The minutes of the meeting of Estimates Committee A for Wednesday 8 October have been circulated. If there is no objection I intend to sign them as a true and correct record of the proceedings of the Committee. There being no objection, I will sign them.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Will the Minister reconsider statements he has made in the past, particularly since coming into Government, in respect of the activities of the work force employed by the Engineering and Water Supply Department? In the past, and certainly this year on occasions, the Minister has castigated the previous Government for what he called a condition of over-employment in the Engineering and Water Supply Department, particularly in relation to weekly paid employees. The Minister has said that the previous Government had not taken the necessary steps to provide for a run-down of that work force in accordance with good business practice. In general, he has been critical of the previous Administration.

I ask the Minister to reconsider his statements because page 76 of the Auditor-General's Report shows that the number of weekly paid employees in the E. & W.S. Department in 1976 was 5 474; in 1977, 5 400; in 1978, 5 294 (that took into account 210 weekly paid employees inherited from another department); in 1979, 4 794; and in 1980, 4 387. Those figures apply as at 30 June in each of the years mentioned.

It can be seen that a progressive reduction of the work force was in progress long before the present Government came to power, and moreover, if one wished to take actual specifics, we would find that without taking into account the 221 inherited employees in 1978, the reduction from 1978-79 was 500 persons in the work force in the category to which I am referring, and in the year 1979-80 (and the

present Government was in office most of that year) the reduction was only 407. It would seem from the figures contained in the Auditor-General's Report that the previous Government, contrary to what the Minister has been claiming, already had in progress policies which recognised that changed role and activity of the E. & W. S. Department and was taking steps to reduce the work force consistent with those policies at the time of non-retrenchment, but by making use of every possible opportunity with respect to the normal attrition of the work force that can take place. This policy has also been adopted by the present Government. It would seem therefore, in my view anyway, and I would think in the view of the Committee as a whole, that this would be a good opportunity for the Minister to reconsider the remarks he has made on this subject and perhaps take the opportunity to correct them in the public record.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I stand completely by what I have said before and the figures completely substantiate what I have said. If we look at those figures we see a slight reduction in 1976 and 1977 until we get to the year 1978, which has been referred to by the honourable member. In the House, I have stated quite clearly that the action taken by the previous Government to really come to grips with this problem should have been instigated in 1975 in accordance with the recommendations of the tenth report of the Public Accounts Committee. Action was three years too late, and that is precisely what those figures in the Auditor-General's Report indicate, that the Government really came to grips with the problem only in 1978. I fully agree that the figures do indicate 500 fewer workers as mentioned by the honourable member, in 1978, and also 400-odd in the 1979-80 financial year. So the figures which the honourable member read out to the Committee completely substantiate exactly what I have said in Parliament in the past few months.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I would be pleased to hear from the Minister in respect of this matter where he keeps the crystal ball that he is able to use to look back and say what should have happened in 1975, speaking in 1980. It is one thing being able to say what should have happened and another thing to be able to interpret at the time what one should be doing three years hence. Despite what the Minister has just said, if he looks at the figure for 1975, he will see that the policy was set in motion during that year, because there is the reduction which applies from that time. I do not have the earlier Auditor-General's Report with me, but I took the trouble to have a look at the figure before putting to the Committee the proposition I have asked the Minister to consider.

If we stay on the same page of the Auditor-General's Report, we see a progressive reduction occurring in those persons employed in the departmental workshops, which is another area which has been attacked by the Minister in the past. I would like to hear from the Minister at this point what steps he has taken since he became Minister to provide for the reductions which he is claiming should have been able to be foreseen back in 1975 and which should already have taken place. It is very easy for the Minister to be able to criticise after the event but, as he would know, now that he is in office, it is quite a different proposition altogether to have to interfere in people's lives in the way he has suggested should have been able to be foreseen in 1975.

I look forward to hearing the Minister's solution to this problem. I do not resile an inch from the figures I have put before the Committee. Any fair-minded person studying them will see that the situation could not have just happened by accident. If there is a reduction taking place in 1976, it must have been thought of in the previous year.

So, from the Minister's own remarks that something should have been done in 1975, the figures in the Auditor-General's Report show clearly that something was foreseen to the extent possible, and that is probably where the Minister and I would part company.

In reality, all that could have been done at that time by the then Minister (it was not me) was to perceive general trends. In 1978, anyone can say what should have happened in 1976 or in 1975. I could say to the Minister that, in 1975, the wrong national Government was elected (and I would be perfectly correct in that). I would have been able to say that in 1975, but these are different matters in which all sorts of projections are needed from the skilled people in the area, and all of them have become cautious in the past 10 years on these matters, whether in Australia or anywhere else in the world. The Minister and the Government at that time took the necessary steps, otherwise those figures recorded accurately in the Auditor-General's Report could not appear there. I seek again from the Minister some honesty in this matter, that perhaps he was speaking too strongly and politically and not sticking strictly to the facts, as are available to anyone to inspect on page 76 of the report.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** No-one is refuting the figures in the Auditor-General's Report. They speak clearly for themselves. The Public Accounts Committee report indicated clearly to the then Government back in 1975 that it should be reducing the work force at the maximum rate. I am not saying that the policy was not put into effect, but it certainly was not pressed home to the maximum effect to which it has been pressed since 1978. The figures indicate clearly that, rather than accepting the advice back in 1975, and this is all I have been saying, the Government of the day let things continue in that vein for three years to the detriment of South Australia's economy. We are continuing with the policy which was put into effect in 1978, and have added additional incentives to try to get the work force down to the commitment that the E. & W.S. Department has at this time to meet its charter in South Australia, without having the additional burden of excess staff.

What it has meant, as the previous Minister is well aware, is that much work was done in South Australia ahead of time. That has been to the benefit of those people who received those facilities, which have been provided well ahead of time. The overall water reticulation works in the metropolitan area, particularly sewerage facilities, are far in excess of those in any other Australian capital. That is to the benefit of the people but, from a straight-out economic point of view, much of that work was done ahead of time. Some of that work is still ahead of time, in order fully to utilise the additional personnel we have at present over and above those required.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Mr. Acting Chairman, in accordance with the way in which the Committee has worked, I indicate that this will be my last comment on this line.

I was interested in the response from the Minister, and also to his earlier question. To his credit, I think that he was prepared to restate things he had said in much stronger terms earlier this year, and to moderate the criticism he had applied in the past. However, the Minister clearly stated that it was obvious, and that he was aware that action should have been taken earlier. Since he was so fully aware of the problem when he came into office in September 1979, why have the Minister's best efforts in almost a year of operation resulted in a reduction of the work force of 100 fewer than in the previous year?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Additional incentives have been put into effect, and the natural attrition rate is now

running at about 10 per cent. We have also provided early retirement opportunities, which a number of personnel are taking up and which will substantially reduce the attrition rate in future. I might ask the Acting Director-General whether he has precise figures as to what is taking place in the various areas.

**Mr. Alexander:** The figures are running at 10.4 per cent. We have had 92 acceptances of the early retirement scheme to date, 46 of whom have retired already. We have had a net reduction of 66 in the Job Transfer Office. The more normal people who are leaving are not being replaced. There were 46 in August, 37 in July, and 33 in June—figures of that order. We are achieving an accelerated rate. We assumed an 8 per cent rate for planning purposes, and we are running at 10 per cent at the moment.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** How many weekly-paid staff have taken up the early retirement option, which I cannot describe as generous, and how many staff members have taken up that offer?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The figures were just given by the Acting Director-General. Acceptances to date totalled 92. That does not apply to staff; it applies to weekly-paid employees.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Why have staff members not been offered early retirement benefits?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** This proposal relates purely to weekly-paid employees, in that staff members can elect, under the Public Service Act, to retire as from the age of 55 years.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Can the Minister say how many staff members have taken up that option?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I will see whether we have the figures available; if not, we will provide the honourable member with the figures for which he has asked.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** The Auditor-General's Report, on page 76, states that in the period from 1976 to 1980 there has been an increase in staff numbers of 129, yet during the same period there has been a decrease of weekly-paid employees of 1 087. I do not often admit (because I am rather ashamed of it) that I was a public servant at one time. However, I think that what we are seeing here within the Engineering and Water Supply Department is the typical situation of too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Can the Minister explain to the Committee why there has been an increase in staff members and yet some quite savage cuts in the weekly-paid work force?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** This has very much to do with the reorganisation of the E. & W.S. Department in following recommendations of the consultants that were engaged by the former Government to look into the operations of the department to determine where its future should lie and the areas to which it should address itself in particular. With regard to the new directions that the E. & W.S. Department has taken, in the past the department has been very much a water supply organisation largely involved in capital works programmes. With the scaling down of the overall capital works programme in South Australia because of the nil growth rate in population in this State, and the fact that we are actually ahead of schedule in relation to sewerage and reticulated water supplies in this State, it is very important that the E. & W.S. Department now becomes very much involved in the more technical areas of water quality. For example, as recommended by the consultants, the department now has total responsibility for the full water resources of this State, the River Murray, water quality, catchment planning, cost savings operations and maintenance revenue.

There are numerous areas into which the E. & W.S.

Department will now be moving in the more technical areas than was the case before, including the study of health, the effects of sewerage outfall and so forth on the marine environment, and this type of thing. A great deal more emphasis has been placed on this area of responsibility, and as such, naturally, the balance of staff numbers in the reorganisation of the department to cater for its new role will substantially change between a day labour workforce and a more technical workforce, which undoubtedly is due to the fact that in many areas technology is playing a much greater part today than it has played in the past. Mention has been made of an increase of 10 in staff numbers, whereas in reality, when that is worked through, one finds that in real terms there has actually been an increase of only four. The Acting Director-General did quite a bit of work yesterday in anticipation of this question, and I think he is in a position to give that detail to the Committee, and I think it will be of considerable interest not only to Committee members but also to members of the Public Accounts Committee.

**Mr. Alexander:** I would clarify one point concerning the staff ceilings as calculated by the Public Service Board (and I am referring to Public Service Act staff). In June 1978 the number was 1 763, and in September we had reduced that number of 1 670, which is a reduction of 93 accommodated by a staff attrition rate of 6 per cent a year. As the Minister has said, we are moving into and increasing our input into, planning issues generally and into the question of upgrading management. As members are probably aware, the consultants reported in August 1978, and we have been implementing their recommendations following approval by the Public Service Board for each position. The consultants made a very thorough examination of the department's future, and it was recognised that we had to move into the areas that the Minister has outlined.

This meant redirecting staff, which we continue to do, into new areas as opportunities arise. We upgraded the top management structure as recommended by the consultants. There was a net increase in the senior engineering positions, which was the subject of comment (this related to the Executive Officer and the Class 5 engineer ranges), in an attempt to solve the newer problems we were facing. The net real increase was four, although nine positions were upgraded, the difference being that five of the appointments were of Class 4 engineers reclassified into higher levels. That was done as part of our regionalisation concept.

The net salary increase in that level was about \$100 000 to \$105 000 a year. I should point out that one does not necessarily have to have a professional engineering qualification to be appointed to the executive officer range now that we are moving into different requirements in the department. We are employing economists, for example, to answer this range of issues into which we are moving, which is in effect looking after the State's water resources.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Bearing in mind what the Minister has told us about moving into the field of technology, it is always a disappointment to me and I am sure to many of my colleagues on this side of the House that technology never reduces the need for public servants: it only reduces the need for weekly paid workers in the community. But forgetting that for a moment, I understand that the recommendations of the consultants were given to the Government in 1978. Is that correct?

**Mr. Alexander:** Yes.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** When will the reorganisation as a result of those recommendations be completed? What is the present target date? Could the Minister also tell us what will be the projected number of weekly-paid

employees in the E. & W. S. Department after that reorganisation is completed and what will be the projected number of staff in the department?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** At present, with the attrition that has taken place to this stage, I would be guessing, but I imagine we would still require an attrition of 700 or 800 persons to bring the number down to the operating level of weekly-paid employees we require. The Electricity and Water Supply Department changed over to the new operating basis on 1 July this year.

**Mr. LEWIS:** My question relates to the line "Contingencies—Overseas Visits of Minister, Minister's wife (where approved) and officers", \$23 859 being actual payments in 1979-80 with nothing being voted. What trips were undertaken, by whom, and when?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** There are a number of officers travelling continuously from the E. & W.S. Department, particularly in relation to water quality and to the water filtration programme, and gathering information on the latest developments overseas. Because of the metropolitan Adelaide water filtration programme, which is a massive programme of high expenditure, there are officers going on a regular basis to various parts of the world to seek the latest technology. I will obtain a breakdown of that \$23 000 for the honourable member.

**Mr. LEWIS:** As I understand the Minister's reply, that sum is applied to officers and not to the Minister, and is in addition to the \$30 024 on the next line which also went for the same purpose. Is that so?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** It certainly does not apply to me nor, to my knowledge, to the previous Minister. So, it would be officers of the E. & W. S. Department, and the proposed vote for 1980-81 is in relation to my recent overseas trip with the Director-General and also with the Director-General of Agriculture, to study salinity.

**Mr. LEWIS:** While the Minister was overseas did he have the opportunity of seeing where saline water, whether effluent or otherwise, was used for irrigation purposes in specific instances and, if so, could I have the details and report of any such examination that he or any of his officers might have made?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** A detailed report of that study tour will be made available; it is in the process of being compiled at this stage. A fairly lengthy document, it will contain quite a substantial quantity of technical data.

The honourable member has asked where we saw irrigation waters virtually being recycled or used a second time, and the use of drainage water. Particularly in California in the Central Valley, in the San Joaquin Valley, where they are using water primarily in the first instance for low salt tolerant crops, the drainage water coming away is then being used on crops with a higher salt tolerance and, in fact, they are able to reutilise that water to the point that they then reduce the total amount of drainage that they have to dispose of by actually growing two and three crops with the initial water before it is too saline to produce further.

The other area that the honourable member is talking about, I think, is in relation to making better use of the water that is available, and trying to control the saline problem in the groundwaters and also getting back into the river. The information that we were able to collect while we were away very much substantiates what is being done in South Australia in the programme that has been entered into here, with the rehabilitation of Government irrigation areas. However, additional inputs can be made to that programme as a result of this visit. Probably one of the most significant inputs is that we saw at first hand in the United States a programme of salinity control on the Colorado River, whereby massive amounts of Federal

Government money were being spent in collecting and diverting groundwater flows moving back towards the river, diverting it through to the sea.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Was it Pentagon money?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** A lot of it was federal money. During the three years from when I was there in 1977 to this recent trip, the emphasis has shifted to encouraging farmers to upgrade their irrigation practices, and I wholeheartedly agree with the concept inasmuch as they are now endeavouring to solve the problem at its source rather than trying to rectify it once it has been created. By way of making grants to the irrigators they are encouraging irrigators to improve their irrigation equipment and also their practices, so reducing the groundwater movement back to the river, and they believe that this is a once-off cost, instead of being confronted with a continuing cost of trying to collect the saline water draining back to the river through the ground by way of groundwater movement and then having to pump it by way of canal through to the sea. This, I think, is an extremely important development and one that can be effectively utilised.

As the member for Mitchell would be aware at the time that the previous Government initiated the rehabilitation programme of the Government irrigation areas, it gave an undertaking that no grower would be disadvantaged by the new scheme being implemented and, as such, it meant that the Government would be confronted with major costs of on-farm connection from the new irrigation distribution system to connect into the grower's existing irrigation systems on this property. In my view, this has been perpetuating a poor system and has not encouraged growers to upgrade and put in modern irrigation equipment, because there has been no incentive for the grower to do it. After all, the major reason for the rehabilitation programme is to save water and reduce the saline problem in the Murray River in South Australia.

So there is a very real need to create that incentive, and I see a situation in which the Government could provide the on-farm connections. The money that has been expended on on-farm connection could be averaged out and made available to growers as a cash incentive. The Government itself would be no worse off, but this would have the effect of encouraging more growers to put in modern equipment, reduce the quantity of water being utilised from the Murray, and at the same time reduce the saline problem.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** That is what Mr. Stratton put forward.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, and we have been on this wavelength for some time, and he is quite correct in what he is doing. As I have said, the Government will not be any worse off, but this scheme would quite dramatically improve the situation in the irrigation areas and reduce the salinity flowback.

Also, while in California at the salinity laboratories at Riverside, the latest development there that I think will be extremely significant in South Australia is that they have now developed equipment that not only records the moisture content of the soil but at the same time as it records the moisture content it gives a recording of the salinity content of that soil at varying depths. In fact, a probe is put down into the ground and it gives an immediate computerised print-out, if you like, of the actual moisture content and the salinity profile of that soil.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Is that the salinity of the soil or is it in solution?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The salinity as taken from the wall of the fine drill hole that has been put down. As the probe enters the ground, it gives a continuous read-out of

the salinity level content of that soil, the object being that, once that test has been done (it takes only a minute or so to do), the grower is given an exact indication of how much water he needs to apply in the next day or two to bring the soil-moisture content back to the appropriate level for his crop and, at the same time, to keep the critical salinity level of that soil a foot or so below the root zone. In doing so, it means that we can substantially reduce the quantity of irrigation water being applied.

Not only will we save water for the State, but we will also reduce the drainage fraction that creates a groundwater movement back to the river, thus reducing pumping costs to the grower. In not putting on excess irrigation water, we will also have the effect of reducing the leaching effect of fertiliser applied to the property. I believe that we can achieve substantial reductions and cost savings to the grower to the extent of between 20 and 30 per cent of the water being applied at present.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** My question relates to the departmental workshops. On the bottom of page 76 of the Auditor-General's Report, it is stated that there is a departmental surplus in the workshops of 180 and says that, because of the surplus labour, the workshop man-hour rate is loaded to take up this excess capacity, thereby overstating the costs. Is the Minister aware of the fact that the workshops at Ottoway brought in 6 000 plastic strainers from a private firm at a cost of 26c each, whereas they could have been produced at Ottoway for 9c each, and that 20 millimetre pistons were brought in from a private company at \$3 each, whereas the estimated cost produced at Ottoway was \$1.90? If this is true, how does that equate with the Government's stated intention of getting value for the taxpayers' dollar?

*Mr. LEWIS interjecting:*

**Mr. O'NEILL:** On a point of order, Sir, if we are going to engage in across the Chamber attacks, I will be right in it.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There is no point of order, but I ask all Committee members to allow members to ask questions in silence. That privilege and courtesy has been afforded by both sides in the early part of the proceedings, and I ask for it to continue.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The details that the honourable member seeks will be provided to him. In the main, the workshop runs very much at a loss. If the honourable member looks at page 100 of the Estimates, at the line "Financing of deficit of Ottoway foundry and workshops", he will see that \$300 000 was voted last year, and that there was \$300 000 in actual payments for deficits, whereas there is no allocation for the 1980-81 financial year. The reason is that the costing at Ottoway will now be done on the basis that it will reach a break-even point. The costing of the foundry castings, etc., will be costed out at actual cost, to projects such as the rehabilitation programme in the Riverland. In the past, they have not been, and so we have this \$300 000 deficit in the actual payments made last financial year. Whatever work is carried out in the foundry will actually be at the cost involved. I think that the costs to which the honourable member is referring are not actual costs, but actual figures have been placed on those units. As such, we must then consider that \$300 000 has to be provided to make up the short-fall. Certain work is put out that could be done at Ottoway, if the workshop is fully committed at that point.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I look forward to receiving the specifics in respect of that question. My next question relates to the Hope Valley water-treatment tank. Was this tank constructed by private contract, and was it necessary for the E. & W.S. Department tank reconstruction gang to dig it out and re-lay the ring, as the tank was leaking badly? If

this was the case, how much was the private contractor charged by the department in respect of the work carried out by departmental employees?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The question raised by the honourable member was the first of a series of questions raised by the General Secretary of the Australian Government Workers Association (Mr. Morley). We have provided a detailed reply to Mr. Morley on all the points that he raised. The Premier has also given Mr. Morley a reply. What I am about to say is virtually in line with the reply given to Mr. Morley.

This tank was constructed under a contract let during the term of the previous Government. The major part of the Hope Valley water filtration plant was constructed by the department's day-labour organisation. Some problem has been experienced with the type of jointing material originally specified. Some of the bituminous component of the material floated to the surface and caused a deterioration in water quality. The material is currently being replaced by alternative jointing material. No structural alterations are being undertaken, nor is the leakage excessive.

Structurally, the job is not in question. The jointing material specified to be used on that job, and used, was not up to standard. It was proved to be unsatisfactory, and it is in the process of being replaced. There is no problem with the actual structural work.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I ask the Minister again how much it cost the department, and whether it intends to recover from the private contractor who did the job and the costs incurred by departmental labour in rectifying the problem?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** It was hardly the contractor's fault, because the material to be used was specified by the department.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I take it that that is the Minister's answer. I indicate to him that, as well as Mr. Morley, I placed all these questions on notice some time ago, and I look forward to getting a reply one day. Is it correct that 600 metres of four-inch waterpipe let to contract at Dernancourt, which would have taken an E. & W.S. Department gang a little over a week to do, took the contractor between eight and nine weeks?

Is it correct that the contractor put in wrong connections and that E. & W.S. Department personnel had to retap the pipe to put in the correct connections? If this is so, how much did the rework cost, and has the private contractor been billed for the work done by E. & W.S. Department personnel in relation to the corrections?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Once again, this was a point raised by Mr. Morley, and a reply has been prepared and given to him. It is precise and factual. Referring to the Dernancourt four-inch water main let to contract, this work was undertaken as a \$1 contract. The laying of a main was a matter between the subdivider and the contractor, provided the work was done to the standard required by the E. & W.S. Department. The actual length was 308 metres, and it is agreed that it could have been done in one week by a departmental gang in normal circumstances. However, the contractor was hampered by weather, and it is not known how many he employed in the gang or what other work he was doing at the time.

On inspection of the work, it was discovered that the contractor had fitted collars with non-departmental main cocks. On obtaining departmental main cocks, the contractor found that he did not have a suitable tapping machine. Consequently, the contractor gave the department an order to carry out the work. This was a subcontract let by the subdivider which had nothing to do with the department. The period of time taken by the

contractor was purely a matter between the subdivider and the contractor, and as such had nothing to do with the E. & W.S. Department or the Government.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I am becoming more and more intrigued by the amazing power of the Secretary of the A.G.W.A. to obtain answers from the Minister at a much more rapid rate than members of the House can. Again, I look forward to getting answers to my questions, which have been on notice for some time now. The Minister can probably predict my next question, because I am reading from a letter from Mr. Morley. This relates to the Fulham Gardens depot and a carport erected by contract to store the survey boat, and the contract price was approximately \$1 350. It was alleged that the whole job was out of alignment and had to be reworked. If this is so, how much was the rework to cost, and will the contractor carry the cost, or will the Government?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, that is the third question on Mr. Morley's list, and the third reply was given relating to the carport erected by contract at Fulham Gardens. Tenders were called for the supply and erection of a carport at Fulham Gardens. Only one tender was received and was accepted. On erection, it was found to be very light in construction, and bracing was required. This was fitted departmentally, as unfortunately the specification was not sufficiently detailed to legally require the contractor to rectify his work. On the other hand, an off-the-shelf carport strengthened departmentally is probably more economical than specifying a specialist product (one that has been detailed in design). We are not aware at this stage that there is any need to correct the foundations. In any case, this is a very minor contract and is the type of work for which tenders have always been called.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I will save the time of the Committee, as I hope to get the answers in the near future to the questions I have put on notice. Is the Minister aware of any circumstances whereby departmental weekly employed labour is being left in the depots with no work to do, sitting around playing cards and generally fiddling about, with the full knowledge of the supervisory staff? Is this done by intent, to create (as it is doing, I am reliably informed) amongst weekly paid employees a feeling of insecurity, and is it an attempt, perhaps, to coerce them into taking early retirement or retiring from the department?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** There is no coercion whatsoever in trying to force people to take early retirement. It is an offer that is there, and they can take it if it suits their circumstances. I am certainly not aware of weekly paid employees sitting around depots with nothing to do. I have stated clearly previously that weekly paid labour is being fully utilised on work which need not necessarily be done at this time but which is being done ahead of time to fully utilise their services. We are hoping to overcome this problem in the next 12 to 18 months. We hope that the figure then will be down and in balance with the workload of the department. I have no knowledge of any weekly paid employees sitting around playing cards.

**Mr. BECKER:** In view of the allegations made by the member for Florey in relation to contracts to a private contractor—

**Mr. O'NEILL:** The allegations were not made by me. I referred—

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. BECKER:** You made the allegations in the Committee. Can the Minister say who supervises these contracts and the work being carried out? Is there continual supervision? How are these things occurring?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** If the honourable member is referring to the erection of the carport, obviously there

would not be a great deal of supervision, because for such a minor job we would not be delegating people to supervise it. It is a minor contract, it was let, and the contractor would be given the job of erecting a carport at a given place. I stress that it is a minor project, and a supervisory force would not be delegated to keep an eye on it. It would be inspected on completion, before payment was made.

**Mr. BECKER:** Other matters have been referred to the Minister. A carport might be considered minor, but surely someone in the depot must have had a look at it from day to day, or someone would have to pass the job? What sort of supervision is there in that instance and in other instances?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** In the regionalisation that is taking place within the department under the reorganisation, it is very much the responsibility of the regional managers throughout the State. What is the honourable member referring to?

**Mr. BECKER:** The matters referred to this morning by the member for Florey, and obviously by the A.G.W.A. How does this happen? I do not think the Minister has given an explanation to the Committee.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Referring to the Hope Valley water filtration tank, the only problem is the jointing material used in the construction. I am not sure what Mr. Morley is referring to, because structurally there is no problem, and obviously he has been misled somewhere along the line. That the jointing material specified by the department has proved unsatisfactory and is being replaced is a fact of life. Structurally, there is no problem with the project.

**Mr. BECKER:** Have significant savings been made by the department since major works have been let out to private contract?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Major and significant savings have been made, not only by the E. & W.S. Department, but particularly in the overall Loan works programmes of other departments within the Government, especially in relation to the construction of schools, and so on.

It is interesting to note, and I think members should recognise, that the estimates which are used and which usually go through the Public Works Standing Committee are not based on what the department believes it will cost to build a given project but are usually an average of what the department believes the contract price will come in at; it is certainly not an estimate of what the department believes it would cost if the department was to do that job. I think that is a very significant point indeed.

The member for Mitchell would be well aware of the excess funding that is required in many of the projects undertaken, but the significant thing is that that figure provided in the Estimates is certainly not an estimate of departmental cost. We are quickly moving away from that situation whereby the department in the very near future will be putting in actual departmental estimates of what it believes a project would cost if the department were constructing that project. I think that will then give a very clear indication of a comparison, and also it will give the department, the construction section and engineers within the department a very real objective and target to work for, as they will virtually have submitted a price on that project and have a target to work towards. In the past, the department's project engineer has not actually had such a target, because it has not related to the department's estimated cost of a project.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** I refer back to the line of questioning that was adopted by the member for Mitchell and the member for Napier, because I found their line of questioning intriguing, to say the least. What the E. &

W.S. Department has become involved in is, unfortunately, an exercise similar to what so many of our industries have become involved in during the past five years, that is, a situation where new techniques in industry have created a loss of jobs. It is as simple as that.

The Minister originally referred to something that happened in 1975 that we ought to have been looking at. Something probably happened 10 years ago that we should have been looking at, namely, whether in fact we should have been prepared to accept all of these new techniques in industry. Maybe we should have been saying that the so-called new techniques in industry that supposedly increase production and cut costs would, in fact, in the long run cause this country a tremendous amount of harm.

I refer to the figures that the Minister gave to either the member for Mitchell or the member for Napier which indicate that there has been a decrease of some 1 000-odd in weekly-paid employees, and I understand that another 700 or 800 may go. I have had a fair amount of experience in the last few years of the real hardship experienced by working people who have no future in a particular industry and who must accept early retirement. However, even in these cases, in the negotiations that took place these people were offered something in respect of their early retirement. That prompts me to ask the Minister the question what in fact the department did in respect of those 1 000 men who have obviously lost their jobs. Were they given an opportunity, perhaps, to have some retraining within the department, were they given an option of taking alternative employment in some other department, or could the early retirement scheme have been made a little more lucrative on the basis of *ex gratia* payments for each year that an employee would not be employed?

Finally, perhaps we should be looking at whether those employees were entitled to full pension benefits and the question whether the full pension benefits would interfere with the means testing in relation to the availability of age pensions. All those things are important, and I do not think it is fair for us to sit in this House and hear the Minister say that 1 000 men have been put off, and that is it, and that 700 or 800 more might be put off. That is the position we are in. The cold facts are that new techniques within the E. & W.S. Department, I have no doubt, have been the main cause of the problem. There is no argument about that, but it is no good going back and crying over what happened or what did not happen, or what might happen in the future. The cold fact is that it has happened. I am interested in finding out from the Minister whether the problems of these people who were made redundant in industry were looked at in the proper way. Has the Minister any information about what transpired and what these people were offered?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The honourable member has made a statement that 1 000 weekly-paid employees have been put off. No-one has been put off.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** Well, there has been a decrease.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** No-one has been put off. Surely the honourable member understands that it is not a matter of retrenchment but a matter of early retirement of the employee's own accord; it is natural attrition, people retiring before reaching retirement age. The Government has said quite clearly time and time again that it will not be involved in any retrenchment, and there has not been any retrenchment whatsoever. This situation concerns persons retiring of their own free will and those persons not being replaced. The honourable member is trying to mislead the Committee totally, by saying that 1 000 persons have been put off and that another 700 are still to be put off. That is not factually correct, and in no way can that interpretation



be placed on it. Retirement through age or through any other decision that a person makes of his own free will is not being put off.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** All right; what the Minister is saying to me is that no-one has been laid off, but in fact what we are doing is obviously not giving any encouragement to the workforce currently working for the Engineering and Water Supply Department to cause them to be anything else but despondent about the whole situation. It is very good for the Minister to say to me that nobody is being put off, but what we are doing is encouraging people to take early retirement. I am saying that that creates a despondent attitude within the workforce first, but, more importantly to me, it tends to give, shall I say encouragement for the want of another word, to the day labour or weekly-paid labour to leave. What I am saying is that it is all very well to say that a person can leave, and nothing more will be done about it. My opinion is that a person leaves because something has happened within the Engineering and Water Supply Department that gives him no incentive to stay there. He then simply leaves on the basis that he either through his own ego gets another job somewhere else, with the Engineering and Water Supply Department having no responsibility at all, or he just accepts an early retirement handshake; I do not know whether he gets a gold watch or not.

When a situation like this occurs, surely the Government, through the department, could provide some kind of *ex gratia* payment, considering that that person is leaving, because there is no incentive, before retirement.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The present Government is adhering to and offering incentives as provided in the policy that was adopted by the previous Government in 1978, which was referred to by the member for Mitchell when he cited attrition figures of 500 in 1978. We believe that, in 1978, the previous Government finally woke up to what was happening and, as I said earlier, my only argument in that regard is that the previous Government took three years to wake up. This Government is continuing and adhering to the policy that was adopted within the last 12 months of the previous Government's term of office.

**Mr. RANDALL:** I listened with interest to the arguments put forward by the member for Whyalla about technology and the impact on manpower resources. I hope that the honourable member does not suggest that we resort to the old techniques of disposing of sewerage—the night soil carts and backyard toilets; I am sure that those methods would employ a large number of people, but with a resultant disadvantage to the community in terms of health. Surely the honourable member was not suggesting this course; I hope that he wants to achieve a balance, as I do. I believe that the Minister's answer intimated that the department is hoping to achieve a balance between technology and manpower resources. Unfortunately, the previous Government woke up too late in this regard and neither saw the trend of the technological revolution nor coupled resources to this trend. Will the Minister say whether his department monitors the disposal of effluent into the coastal foreshore area and into the sea?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I must agree with what the honourable member has said in regard to technological advance: there is no way in which we can go backwards and, undoubtedly, this trend of higher standards will continue. As the member for Whyalla would be aware, there is a problem in regard to the quality of water supplied to the Iron Triangle.

In this day and age, a good quality of life and certain standards are demanded by the community, and this is

what water filtration for the northern towns is all about—technological standards. The Government has allocated \$5 000 in the Budget for work in addition to the basic work that will be required to come to grips with the northern towns water filtration problem. The public is demanding increased standards, and that is why the technical ability of the department is increasing. Unfortunately, this technical know-how and mechanisation requires less manpower, but that is a fact of life that we all recognise, although we do not like it. To remain competitive and to offer our products on the world market, we have no alternative but to utilise the technology that is available, otherwise our products will drop out of the world scene and we would not survive economically.

Sewage outfalls, particularly in the metropolitan area and on other parts of the South Australian coast, are being monitored continuously by the department. The expertise is available, and the laboratories at Bolivar are recognised as the best in South Australia to keep tabs on that. I ask Mr. Shepherd to enlarge on the degree to which the E. & W.S. Department monitors sewage outfalls, particularly in regard to the beaches and coastline.

**Mr. Shepherd:** There is an ongoing monitoring of biological and other effects and disadvantages in regard to sewage treatment works operated by the E. & W.S. Department that discharge to the sea. That responsibility is allocated to the State Water Laboratories on an ongoing basis.

**Mr. RANDALL:** It was put to me some years ago when I was doing research into the Torrens River that raw sewage or treated effluent was pumped into the Torrens River, whereby it reached the sea. I searched the current Hassell Report to find an answer, and I now ask the Minister whether raw sewage or treated effluent is pumped into the Torrens River.

**Mr. Alexander:** Some years ago, the trunk sewers became overloaded, and at times of heavy rain and peak flows in the river discharges into the river occurred from time to time. These discharges were carefully monitored; they were also chlorinated. The trunk sewer systems have since been upgraded and there should be no discharges, unless there is a flood.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I cautiously add to the remarks made by the Director-General; I believe that inflows to the Torrens River occurred somewhat later than "some years ago". I recall evidence that was given to the Public Works Committee only a few months ago in relation to a new northern trunk sewer. A visit to the site of the overflows was arranged, as is customary, and my recollection of the information provided on the spot was that, in the previous winter, small overflows of raw sewage had occurred because of the high volume in the sewers in respect of stormwater and so on. However, I do not wish to debate that point.

I refer the Minister to page 80 of the Auditor-General's Report for the year ended 30 June 1980 in which there is a line "Excessive receipts over payments" which refers to the metropolitan water works. In 1978-79, that excess figure was \$3 873 178 and in 1979-80 it was \$3 445 238. Does the Minister have an estimated figure for the current year of the likely excess of receipts over payments for metropolitan waterworks?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The intention is that we budget to break even. That would be the situation for the 1980-81 financial year. One of the significant figures that comes into this is the pumping costs which are put in at an average figure for an average year and they can vary dramatically; the sum can be a few million dollars one way or the other above or below that amount. That line alone

was underspent by \$1 000 000. Mr. Killmier may be able to add further figures that would be of interest to the Committee.

**Mr. Killmier:** The policy of the current Government and of the previous Government is that the metropolitan Adelaide water supply system should recover its costs. Rates and the price of water are set to recover the whole of the cost for the year. One of the problems in determining the rates and the price is that, under the quarterly billing system, the rates have to be declared in the first week in July, and at that stage the Budget has not been finalised for the year, nor does the department know what the weather conditions are likely to be over the ensuing 12 months. In the case of the provision for electricity in the Budget expenditure statements and in the case of expected receipts, it is necessary to assume that the ensuing 12 months will be an average year. It would be true to say, of course, that if anyone was going to err on the side of excess of receipts or receipts being less than expenditure it would be normal to ensure that perhaps there was a slight surplus. This would be quite reasonable, bearing in mind that there is a significant deficit in country areas. Although there is an excess in the metropolitan area, the Auditor-General's Report also states that there was a deficit, in the case of country payments over receipts, of about \$19 000 000.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** The Minister has just given an interesting answer. If one were to take it literally it would go something like this: that you want to make sure you break even on metropolitan water supply as an operation, so you pluck a figure out of the air and wait until the cash rolls in and hope it is in front of what you estimate your costs will be. I am not going to accept that as an answer. How does one ensure that one finishes up in front if one does not have a figure to commence with? I am quite certain the department must have some sort of figure to work on. The reason I am raising this matter in the Committee is simple. When it was in Opposition, the Liberal Party, in order to gain Government, made the following statement:

*A Liberal Government will have as its aim the supply of the best possible quality of water supply to the consumer at the lowest possible charge. Under the present Government water and sewerage rates have increased dramatically—7.7 cents per kilolitre to 24 cents a kilolitre for water—and they are now higher than those in every other State.*

We have just been subjected to a 3c a kilolitre increase in the State and that might well be justified, but I am trying to find out whether it is justified. The Minister was critical of the previous increase which was from 22c to 24c a kilolitre, and my elementary mathematics suggest to me that that is something less than a 10 per cent increase; whereas a 3c a kilolitre increase on 24c is 12½ per cent, in the first year that the Government is in power. I think everyone will agree that that is a greater increase than occurred in the previous year.

I want to know from the Minister how this figure was arrived at. It seems to me that a reasonable way of finding out from the Minister why that charge has increased to that extent is to start at the point that is being indicated. Figures for two years were available to the department as well as to the Committee, and they show that there was an excess situation. I did not criticise that situation; I simply pointed to the fact that there was an excess situation, and in proportion and percentage terms, relative to the amount collected, it indicates careful and accurate forecasting by the department. I do not believe that the department would have not done the same work for this current year. It was able to do so a couple of years before that and it has been doing so for some time. I ask the

Minister again whether he can give me an estimate—I am not insisting on an exact figure to the last dollar or cent—of the excess of receipts over payments in relation to the metropolitan water operation.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The total costs to be recovered are \$50 300 000, and we are budgeting for a return of \$50 300 000 as well. That is precisely what the department is endeavouring to do to obtain that break-even point. The other point that the honourable member raised was that we would be endeavouring to keep the cost of water down, and that is precisely correct. The average increase across the board in water and sewerage rates in recent years has been about 8 per cent. About 18 months or two years ago, that increase was 15 per cent and 16 per cent, so there is a dramatic difference in the increase that has occurred in the combined rates, compared with those applying two years ago. I do not have the exact figures with me, but I can easily obtain those figures and make them available to the honourable member.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I am not going to accept that statement, either. The Minister referred to taking the past 18 months overall, etc. That is just malarky; the Committee is not interested in that. We know what the increase was in the previous year, we know what the percentage was, and we know what the percentage was in the first year of the present Government and it is a greater percentage increase than that which occurred in the previous year. That was the point I made to the Committee and the Minister carefully sidestepped answering that proposition altogether. I would suggest to the Minister that honesty is not out of place in this Chamber; quite often it comes to the fore. What I sought from the Minister in the original question, I certainly got to a degree.

We found that the figure that was estimated as the cost was \$50 300 000, and that was what we were aiming to obtain by way of receipts. After the luncheon break, I shall seek to develop this point further.

*[Sitting suspended from 12.30 to 2 p.m.]*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** It has been drawn to my attention by the honourable member for Hanson that his motion relating to the difficulty in discussing the lines of the Health budget was not included in minutes circulated this morning. The matter has been rectified, and I propose to confirm the minutes as now circulated. Are there any further questions?

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Before the luncheon break, by answer from the Minister, I had been able to obtain information that the aimed-for collection figure for this year in respect of the metropolitan water works was \$50 300 000. I put to the Minister that the fact that he instituted a 12½ per cent increase in the water rate which would seem to be somewhat severe on the water users of South Australia if one looks at the facts I shall now outline. The actual amount collected in 1980 as shown on the same page of the Auditor-General's report, admittedly from rates and miscellaneous receipts, which I am sure are relatively small, is \$47 339 332. If we add 12½ per cent to that, we find that the figure arrived at is \$53 256 748. The Minister has already stated that the break-even point is \$50 300 000. If we look at the payments which actually occurred in 1980, we find that the figure given by the Auditor-General, on whose figures I am prone to rely, was \$43 894 000 (I will say that is \$44 000 000). If we allow for the much-vaunted inflation level on costs that the present Federal Liberal Government claims, we will see that a fair figure equated with that would be \$48 500 000, in round figures. I therefore ask the Minister why he is aiming to



collect \$53 000 000 to meet estimated payments of \$38 500 000.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The honourable member is obviously confused between water rates and water charges. The water charge has gone up 12½ per cent, but the water rate has only gone up 6·4 per cent, which gives an overall increase of around 8 per cent. That is why the honourable member is confused when he is trying to align his figure with the \$50 300 000 which is referred to in that document. It is quite simple so long as the honourable member does not confuse water rates with water charges.

The charge has increased up to 27c per kilolitre (12½ per cent) but the actual water rate this year has increased only 6·4 per cent. We can give the honourable member detailed figures which quite clearly indicate to him just how it is arrived at. I would ask Mr. Killmier, who has the figures here, to indicate this to the Committee.

**Mr. Killmier:** I think the best way to explain it is from the Auditor-General's report. The receipts in 1978-79 were \$44 300 000, and they rose in 1979-80 to \$47 400 000, in round figures, a rise of \$2 900 000. The figure being aimed for in 1980-81 is \$50 300 000, a rise of \$2 400 000, so in actual fact the charges that have been set for 1980-81 have not been set to achieve as high an increase in charges as actually occurred in 1979-80. The reasons for that are rather simple, and one of them relates to the fact that the capital works programme of the Engineering and Water Supply Department has significantly reduced.

I think, from memory, that the capital expenditure last year was about \$9 000 000 below the original sum provided in the Loan Estimates. If you do not spend the money, you do not have to pay interest on it; hence, the need to raise revenue for 1980-81 has been helped by that fact and also by the reduction in the weekly-paid work force referred to earlier. All of these factors assist in reducing the sum needed to be raised to break even.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I think that probably the worst feature of these Committees is that, occasionally, we appear to get into an adversary situation with the officers, as distinct from a Parliamentary situation, where we are accustomed to some give and take. I have just been informed by the Minister that to move from \$47 400 000 to \$50 300 000 represents an increase of \$2 400 000. With my simple arithmetic, I have just calculated that it represents an increase of \$2 900 000. I was told that there has been an increase in the aimed for collection of \$2 400 000, whereas it should be \$2 900 000.

**Mr. Killmier:** I am sorry; it is my mistake. The figure is \$2 900 000 for last year and this year.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** If there is any defect in this Committee experiment, it is the unfairness of the unfettered right of a Committee member to make any comment he wishes and the obvious restriction that applies to officers. I make clear that I have no quarrel with the work of the officer concerned, but I thought it was my duty to point out that my arithmetic was more accurate than the figure given to the Committee. Notwithstanding that, we were also given by the Minister a diatribe regarding the difference between charges and rates. I am fully aware of that matter, but I doubt whether most householders who actually pay the bills are aware of the subtle difference, although it is referred to in the brochure with which they are supplied at the time of receiving their annual rates. Whatever label is placed on the matter, effectively consumers are being required to pay a 12½ per cent increase. If the Minister wants to venture further into that minefield of how we derive charges and how the actual computations are carried out, I am happy. I point out to him that, as the price of water increases, the allocation available to the individual householder, based on

valuation is reduced, and the Minister knows that. I know it, because I was the Minister for a short period, and I do not believe that there ought to be this resort to subterfuge when answering a question.

Whatever the Minister claims, whether by average or over a long period, or whatever, he and not the officers made the decision to make that increase, which effectively requires householders to pay a considerable sum by way of the cost of water, despite the fact that the Minister presumably was associated with the Liberal Party's policy prior to the election which said, "We will have as our aim the best possible quality of water [something with which we agree] supplied to the consumer at the lowest possible charge."

That at least implied that some change in the procedure and the policy which had been followed for some years was to occur. However, the very same mechanism, the very same machinery continued, and in fact an increase in the rate has occurred for individual consumers. Will the Minister justify the fact that the 12½ per cent increase, which he admits has applied in this matter, has been set as an impost on the water consumers of South Australia, bearing in mind the statement made which, at the very least, implied that if another Administration were installed there would be a change in this matter?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The obvious moves of this Government in endeavouring to reduce the work force of the department as quickly as possible to the appropriate level, so that the work force is fully utilised on work that needs to be done in the areas of water distribution, reticulation, and sewerage, clearly indicate that every endeavour is being made to keep the increase to an absolute minimum. There are no grounds whatever on which the honourable member can claim that that is not being done. The honourable member was critical, only a short while ago (that is, the member for Whyalla) of the Government's endeavouring to reduce the numbers and pass on the benefits to the consumers. We cannot have it both ways.

The attrition rate is now more than 10 per cent, and that was of great concern to the member for Whyalla. We cannot maintain a high level work force if it is not being actively and fully utilised in work that needs to be done in the interests of the persons who pay the rates and charges. We have indicated clearly—and the previous Government acknowledges—that there are weekly paid employees in the E. & W.S. Department over and above the numbers required to maintain a satisfactory service to consumers. As we can reduce those numbers and get down to the right level, the numbers required, the rate of increase will continue to decline. However, I think the honourable member will accept that it is difficult to remain below the natural inflation rate. The present rate is fractionally above the current inflation rate, but it is designed to meet the costs incurred.

As long as we have weekly paid employees over and above the number required by the department to provide the service, we will continue to be in this state. I have indicated that, within 12 to 18 months, we should be getting very close to being on target with the initiatives taken, and that should enable us to have efficient charging and costing to the ratepayers, so that they will be paying purely for the services they are receiving, and not paying additional charges for extra employees over and above the number required.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** As you would be well aware, Mr. Acting Chairman, having been a member of the House for some time now, many members, Ministers and others, when in trouble, resort to diffusion when they cannot answer a matter that has been raised, and we have

just had a most delightful example of diffusion—no reference at all to the matter I raised, other than to attribute quite wrongly to me a statement which had been made by the member for Whyalla, to try to correct it *en route*. I ask the Minister to examine his mathematics. He said that, now that we have arrived at an attrition rate of 10 per cent, all will be well.

The figure which was given in the Auditor-General's Report in relation to weekly paid employees in 1979 is 4 794. In the year the Minister has been in charge it was reduced to 4 387. My calculation is that a reduction rate of 10 per cent would produce a figure of 4 315, but the actual figure is 4 387. So even in that factual area the Minister is incorrect; the attrition rate achieved is something less than 10 per cent. I suggest that the rest of the answer lies in the same category. It is a valiant attempt, but it fails miserably. Since the Minister failed to answer what I asked him before, I shall ask him again and I also ask what other factors were involved in the decision to set the increase in water price from 24c a kilolitre to 27c a kilolitre?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** As stated earlier, there are three areas of reduction. The honourable member has referred to only the natural attrition rate. It suits the honourable member's argument to forget that there is also the job transfer situation within Government departments. Also, there are the early retirement incentives which have been taken up. It is useless for the honourable member to quote figures relating to one area without quoting figures relating to all three areas. Also, publicity has been given to the fact that the work to be commenced in January on the Torrens River in relation to the busway will involve a number of E. & W.S. employees, and a substantial number will be employed on that work. An amount of \$4 000 000 will be devoted to work on the Torrens River that will largely involve employees of the E. & W.S. Department. So, in fact there are four areas, and not one as indicated by the honourable member.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I have not often been in this House over the past 10½ years and heard the Auditor-General's figures challenged, but apparently the Minister is now challenging the Auditor-General. I have been very careful and very specific in using figures which are not politicians figures, and the Minister would understand why I have used that term. Certainly on occasions it is argued that politicians seem to have a different scale, a different standard and a different set of statistics when discussing matters. With reference to that, we have all heard of the rubbery figures that are currently being put around by the present Prime Minister of this country to try to discredit other programmes.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I would ask the honourable member to relate his remarks specifically to the line of questioning.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I certainly will, Mr. Acting Chairman. If it were necessary I could point out that funds for water resources do come from that benign place in Canberra to the State Government, to the very Minister in question, and those funds can be found in the lines which we are discussing. Funds are provided for water resources matters, for water filtration, and so on, and the exact figures are available for all members to peruse.

However, I do not wish to digress. The Minister stated that an attrition rate of 10 per cent had been achieved, and he did not put any qualification on that initially. One would think that, if that rate had been achieved, it certainly would have been in information provided to the Auditor-General as recently as 30 June this year, and the figures that I am quoting relate to this time. It is clear now that the Minister, in effect, is refusing to provide to the Committee the reason for the 12½ per cent increase in the

price of a kilolitre of water. The Committee can only form its own conclusions why the Minister is not prepared to provide that information.

I think that the figures I have put before the Committee are not unreasonable. I have not postulated any amazing inflation figures for the ensuing 12 months, but have taken figures from the Auditor-General's Report and applied very moderate increases in respect of estimated costs in relation to the charges that might well apply over the 12-month period. I have applied the same sort of accurate cost increase figure to the receipts, the figures for which are available in the Auditor-General's Report, and I have asked the Minister why he is attempting to collect an amount which seems to be considerably in excess of that which would be needed to provide the break-even figure.

The Minister has made no attempt whatsoever to refer to the fact that on the same basis—nor have I challenged whether the computations carried out in the department are probably on the same basis as before; I believe they are sensible and sound—the increased amounts collected in both cases amounted to about \$3 000 000. If one goes back to 1978-79, when the same formula was applied, it could be argued now that it was known that an excess would be collected at a time of economic stress in the community. The Government was elected on the promise of providing cheaper water to the consumer. There is nothing in the policy statement that says that the Liberal Party would have a look at the water rate or charge or adjust one or the other: it says that if it were elected it would do a certain thing. I ask the Minister why he has not honoured that promise.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The situation that we inherited from the previous Government is quite clear and has been spelt out in the House many times. The total water supply and sewerage in South Australia, but the water supply in particular, runs at a substantial loss. The member for Mitchell tried to promote to the House a few weeks ago that the water rates set in South Australia were revenue-making proposals for the Government, yet the operations of that section run at an annual loss of about \$17 000 000 to \$19 000 000. It was quite farcical of the honourable member to promote that proposal in the House.

The situation is quite clear. I believe that there would be no reason for the water charges to be above 24c a kilolitre even today had the previous Government adhered to the recommendations put to it as far back as 1975 that the department was carrying an excessive workforce. The previous Government did not act on that advice until 1978. The ratepayers in South Australia are having to meet a penalty because of lack of action by the previous Government in 1975.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** One can only wonder at times at the temerity of Ministers—and I refer to both sides of the House, so let there be no quarrel about that. We have just heard the Minister hark back to the fact that in 1975 he was a lot smarter than the then Minister. Had he been Minister in 1975 he would have foreseen the economic changes that have occurred in Australia and South Australia and he would have taken certain action. He says that in hindsight. We all know that advice in hindsight is the cheapest advice possible. It is easy to look back in hindsight and say, after the event, what would have been done.

**Mr. LEWIS:** On a point of order, Mr. Acting Chairman. I rise to ask your ruling on the question of prolixity. I have heard this question twice before, even though I have not been in the Committee all the time. I wonder what the member for Mitchell intends to inquire through using this line or reasoning in the Committee that has not already been requested.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I have been listening closely to what the member for Mitchell has been requesting of the Minister. As to repetition, I point out that the Minister is not required to answer questions in any particular way. A member is not permitted to repeat similar questions continually in an attempt to have a Minister answer to his satisfaction. It is open to any member to express his dissatisfaction with the answers given at a later time in the House or by moving an appropriate motion which may be debated by the Committee. I ask all members to take note of that ruling.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Acting Chairman, for your ruling on that matter. I was quite aware of what it was likely to be, because I am endeavouring to adhere to the requirements of the guidelines which have been set down for the conduct of these Committees. However, I believe that you would be the first to agree that obviously there can be a response which may need to refer back to points made earlier, as a result of any given answer by a Minister. The Minister gave an answer, and he brought in additional factors to which I was about to refer. The Minister seems to have some queer idea of finance, that if a thing is a loss operation, which the provision of water is in South Australia, and if you increase the rates you cannot claim that as a revenue-raising operation. What an incredible statement for a Minister to have made.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! I think it would be appropriate to the Committee's proceedings if we do not regurgitate the responses of the Minister on previous questions but the honourable member asks specific questions of the Minister.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I have been on four other Committees. They have all been held in another place, and I believe that you would be the first to agree that there ought to be at least reasonable consistency and unanimity between Chairmen of exactly similar Committees. Now I find that—

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! This is not the place to comment on the attitude of the Chair in another place or here. The purpose of the Committee is to question the Minister at the table on the lines of the Budget.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I seek your guidance on what form of motion you would receive from me which would question or dissent from the apparent ruling that you have just given?

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The form that a motion should take is for the discretion of the honourable member. I will repeat the comment I made a short time ago. It is open to the honourable member, at a later time in the proceedings in the House, to express his dissatisfaction with answers given by moving an appropriate motion, which may then be debated.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Mr. Chairman, I seek your leniency, at least to this extent. As members of the Opposition Party, we have tried our hardest to co-operate in this operation. I will say no more about it. However, it seems that, whenever a Minister gets into difficulty in answering a matter, it suddenly becomes rather awkward for the Opposition to continue. That is the best construction I can put on the matter. I regret having to say this. Certainly, I was not a member of the Committee, but I was in this Chamber in the back benches yesterday when a not dissimilar occasion arose where apparent restrictions, which were not contained in the Sessional Orders, emerged during discussion on Health lines. I understand that you are an Acting Chairman, and I am not saying it is an easy job to be in the Chair. However, my understanding is that the Estimates Committees are a segment of the normal Parliamentary operation. Appa-

rently I have at least no quarrel from the other side on that.

*Members interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** In respect of the way in which these matters were canvassed before we entered into the experiment in which we are presently involved, a member was entitled to seek information from a Minister on a matter. I asked on a number of occasions for justification. That is all that I am seeking: justification for an increase which has been instituted by the Minister responsible for an increase in the price of water. The answers that have been given have been relative to the matter, I will agree, but they have not gone to the heart of the matter. The Minister makes the decision. I do not want it to seem that I am being patronising, but members may not realise that the Minister and Cabinet made that decision to increase the 12½ per cent charge.

I think that it is perfectly in order for a Committee member to try to elucidate from the Minister what was the reason involved. You will not get a one-sentence answer to that, because it is not as simple as that. It is a complex matter and, over half an hour, including a few minutes before the lunch break, we have elucidated certain facts. Although it was not forthcoming immediately, we obtained, after some questioning, the fact that \$50 300 000 was the figure aimed at in order to work out what the charge ought to be. That was the collection figure aimed at. The Minister might have circumvented some of the questioning, if he had given that figure initially; he could have shortened the questioning time by 10 minutes. If the Minister will immediately follow my questioning and give the other reasons why he set that figure, I am prepared to sit down and let him have one more go at answering to see whether he will be forthcoming with more information.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I point out to the Committee that the Chair's objective is to contain undue repetition during the proceedings. The manner in which the Minister replies to questions is the prerogative of the Minister, in accordance with Sessional Orders.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** It would appear that the problem with the honourable member is that, if the Minister's reply agrees with the lead he has given, that is all right but, if the Minister disagrees with the contention of the honourable member, that is not all right. What this matter revolves around is that we are aiming to raise \$50 300 000, which we calculate as being a break-even point in relation to water supply in South Australia. That sum has been calculated, and that is why the 27c was settled on. The increase in the actual rate is only 6.4 per cent; therefore, it was calculated that it would be required to increase that rate to 27c a kilolitre in order to gain the \$50 300 000. The honourable member disagrees that that is the figure which will be raised. He is at liberty to disagree, but I venture to state that the persons available to provide figures to me have had all the figures available to them at their fingertips in order to make detailed calculations, and this is the estimate with which they have come up.

The honourable member is correct in saying that it is the Government's and Cabinet's decision regarding what rate will be settled on and what the cents a kilolitre charge will be. That decision was taken, giving consideration to what the various increases would result in. Cabinet was aware of the break-even point and the funds that would be required to be raised, so that the metropolitan area did not run at a loss. I cannot see what the honourable member is actually arguing about. If he is talking about the actual increase in the water charge, this increase is clearly 12½ per cent. The rate has increased 6.4 per cent, and the calculations

undertaken by the E. & W.S. Department are that it will return \$50 300 000 this financial year. That is the calculated figure it is estimated we will require to break even on that operation. There is nothing hidden in that. It is clear and open, and it is done on that basis every year.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Would it be fair for a member of the Committee to conclude that, in aiming at the \$50 300 000 figure, which has been worked out and estimated by the department, the collection rate that has been set, which is a 12½ per cent increase in the water charge, is likely to net considerably more than that figure, of the order of the figures for the two preceding years which are available to all members in the Auditor-General's Report?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** No. It has been clearly calculated that the revenue received will be \$50 300 000. There is no hidden objective to raise more than that. The figure has been set in order to try to arrive at \$50 300 000. There is no validity whatsoever in the honourable member's claim that it will result in about \$53 000 000 in revenue.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I now have a different point in case there is any worry about your point about prolixity, Mr. Acting Chairman.

**Mr. RANDALL:** In case the member for Mitchell and other members opposite think they can hog all the questions, I want to demonstrate that other members have questions of the Minister. Can the Minister indicate what computing services his department uses, and in what areas?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The main area, obviously, in which computers are used is in the rating procedure. Undoubtedly, computers are used in the technical areas, but by far the greatest use in the department is for billing.

**Mr. RANDALL:** Does the department have its own computer, or has it access to the Government computer service? If it has access to the Government computer service, does it pay an on-line fee and, if so, what is the fee?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** For this purpose, we use the Automatic Data Processing Centre.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** What line are we discussing?

**Mr. RANDALL:** I refer the honourable member to the line "Management Services—Director, Organisation Services, Computing Services, Personnel and Staff Development and Safety Branch Staff", on page 99 of the Estimates. I am referring to computer services, and related payments thereto. What does the A.D.P. Centre charge for on-line costs to the department?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Mr. Killmier can probably give those exact figures.

**Mr. Killmier:** Referring to the use of the A.D.P. Centre computer, the Minister drew attention to the raising of revenue, the Billing and Revenue Branch. In addition, there are such things as pay-roll, supply, engineering use of the A.D.P. Centre, and a wide range of activities. Probably the best reference to it is in the Auditor-General's Report, in the section dealing with the A.D.P. Centre. On page 151, there is a list of the payments made to the centre by the various departments, and on page 152 the principal clients are shown. The E. & W.S. Department for 1979-80 was listed as paying \$722 000. The charges raised are based on the usage of the computer. I have not got the detailed charges at hand, but it would be on the time run and it is quite a complicated exercise of calculation. Perhaps we could get that information of what the A.D.P. Centre charges are, although really it is more appropriate to its operation than it is to ours. We pay the bills sent to us.

**Mr. RANDALL:** It is the bills the department has to pay

that concern me, so I would like to know how the department is billed and what charges are levied against it. I am quite happy to wait for that information.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** The Minister would be aware that the previous Government introduced a scheme of pensioner concessions, so that remissions on water rates and local council rates were available to pensioners who had to apply, as I understand it, through the E. & W.S. Department. In my electorate, there are a tremendous number of underprivileged people receiving welfare payments. Recently, I wrote to the Chief Revenue Officer of the E. & W.S. Department asking whether some consideration could be given to people who, although unemployed, own their own home. A person who is unemployed is not, in the true sense of the word, a welfare person. I think the Minister will understand what I mean.

I approached the Chief Revenue Officer about whether consideration could be given by the department to extending the current scheme for pensioner remissions to persons who are unemployed but who own their own home, so that they could have a reduction in local council and water rates. Would the Minister be prepared, on behalf of the Government, to look at that proposition? Could he see his way clear to extending that facility to people who are in great need of some reduction? On the Minister's own admission, despite the answers he gave to the member for Mitchell, there has been a 12½ per cent increase in water rates.

When the Liberal Party was in Opposition, I recall very vividly its attack on the then Government, saying that these increases in revenue were taxation increases. Now that the Liberal Party is in Government, its members want to juggle percentages and to say that this is not a taxation measure. They cannot have it both ways. The citizens of this State are now paying 12½ per cent more for water.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Dirty water.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** We will come to that.

**Mr. RANDALL:** But you are asking for concessions as well.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! Interjections are out of order.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** I will not argue with the member for Henley Beach. There is a real problem in this area. Although he owns his own home, a person could be in financial difficulty in meeting the considerably increased costs of every-day commodities, including electricity and water. Will the Minister consider my proposal? Will he examine it in depth and, hopefully, come back with a reasonable solution to the problem?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I fully recognise what the honourable member is getting at, although he answered the question himself when he said we cannot have it both ways. Obviously, if there is a conscious decision to arrive at a break-even point, a given amount of revenue must be raised. The pensioner concession in South Australia is 60 per cent on water and sewerage rates, the highest concession in Australia. The honourable member suggests that that be extended to other areas. However, one must recognise that, if we are to do that, an increased burden will be placed on those who pay full rates. I do not think there is any way to avoid that. The cost must be met either by the taxpayers or by Consolidated Revenue.

One of the problems with the suggestion put forward is that pensioner remissions represent a stable situation. A person becomes a pensioner. However, in the situation raised by the member for Whyalla, a person could be in that situation for a week, a month, or a year—it is an unknown quantity. If consideration is to be given to that variable situation, it would be almost impossible for the department to cope with the process in the way in which it

cope with pensioner remissions. I think perhaps this is an area that could be considered by the Department for Community Welfare or some similar department. From a normal billing point of view, it would not be practicable to do it through the E. & W.S. Department in the way in which pensioner remissions are handled on a permanent basis.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** I thank the Minister. At least he seems to be prepared to be honest about the situation, and I accept the answer on the basis that, if we agree to a proposition to spend money in another area, we must agree about who pays for what. Nevertheless, the issue that I raise is not just that a person is unemployed one day and employed the next. It is a question that somebody, probably in his 60's, because of no fault of his own becomes redundant in industry. He may own his own home and be in receipt of a pension, yet he is excluded from the right to apply to the Minister's department for a concession. For example, an aged pensioner 65 years old may own his own home and may even have some money in the bank, and he is entitled to a concession. I raise the issue with the Minister because it is his department that administers the scheme.

When the former Government brought this scheme into operation if, for example, a person was eligible under the scheme for a reduction in local government rates, he still applied to the revenue officer of the Engineering and Water Supply Department, and once the concession was granted he becomes eligible for a local government rate reduction. That is why I am taking up this issue with the present Minister. I want the Minister to understand that it is not a question of my going to some other Minister or some other department; his department is responsible for the scheme that I am talking about.

I can appreciate the point that the Minister has raised in his reply, namely, that, if the scheme is extended to such an extent, it will cost X thousands of dollars more a year, and obviously that money has to be picked up in some other area. I accept that, but I believe that the Minister, through his officers, could have a serious look at what I am saying. In fact, I do not think the Minister or his officers, or I for that matter, really know what might be financially involved in what I am saying. If the matter were looked at as it affects the type of person about whom I am speaking, the person aged about 65 years, it may be that something could be achieved.

I shall conclude by making three points. First, we cannot get away from the fact that water rates have increased by 12½ per cent, which is not a bad slug in anybody's language. The second point is that the person I am talking about has been forced into an early retirement through no fault of his own and has responsibilities to live with for the rest of his life. Thirdly, I am asking the Minister to have a serious look at the matter. I am not asking him to say "Yes, we will do it"; all I am asking is that he have a serious look at the proposition I am putting to him on the basis that perhaps a specific area might be looked at, say 60 to 65 years or 62 to 65 years.

I can assure the Minister that this is a problem in my electorate and it concerns me very greatly. It is a fact that people through no fault of their own are placed early in their working life in a position where they must face up to all the extra charges that come from owning their own home, with no right to any concession whatsoever. I hope that the Minister will give this whole thing further consideration.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** We are certainly quite happy to consider the point that has been made, but I think a number of similar hardship cases in any age group could be found where what the honourable member is saying could

be justified to the same degree. There are many variables in the proposal that the honourable member has put forward. The 60 per cent remission that is provided by the Engineering and Water Supply Department goes on as a permanent thing into the computers, where it stays and theoretically there should not be any problems for those pensioners receiving that remission. The proposal put forward would have numerous variables. I think that, if it is considered, it should be considered by the Community Welfare Department, that is, separately from the Engineering and Water Supply Department. However, I am quite happy to discuss the matter with the Minister of Community Welfare and see what his reaction is.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** I do not want to labour the point any more; I appreciate what the Minister is saying, and I assure him that I understand perfectly what the problem might be. However, I must go a little bit further, because the Minister raises the issue of the Community Welfare situation. It is not quite as simple as all that. For example, take two similar cases, one person living in a South Australian Housing Trust rental home and one owning his own home. The very fact that a person was living in a trust home would probably automatically entitle him to a concession in that the rent would probably immediately be decreased, whereas the person who owns his own home and who has been struggling all his life to own his own home is not in that position at all. The cost factor of the person in the same position owning his own home is going up year by year, by the fact that we put up water rates, electricity charges, local government rates, and so forth. His rates are going up yearly.

So, it is not quite as simple as just going to the Department for Community Welfare and saying, "Let's have a look at it." The Minister may have a point on the basis that the Department for Community Welfare might have a look at some concessions; I do not know how it would do it, but it might look at some concessions similar to those given to a person living in a trust home. However, I point out to the Minister that it is not quite as simple as just telling me that he will have a talk with the Department for Community Welfare, because that is currently taking up quite a lot of issues that have been raised as unemployment continues to grow.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I am quite happy to look at that.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** I refer back to a previous question I asked the Minister about the recommendations that were handed down by consultants in 1978. I asked the Minister when the reorganisation would be completed, but I got no reply to that question.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I answered that.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** The Minister did not give a date when it was going to be completed. He also stated that there would be a reduction of 700 weekly-paid employees. What will be the reduction of staff members? If in 1980 we are considering 4 387 weekly-paid employees and 1 741 staff employees, and there has been an increase in staff numbers and a drastic decrease in the number of weekly-paid employees, and if there is to be a reduction of 700 weekly-paid employees, there will be plenty of chiefs and not enough Indians.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** As at September this year there were 1 670 permanent staff members, and the Government ceiling as at 30 June 1981 is 1 640; by that date we must have reached that figure. Does the honourable member want me to answer the other questions?

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** When is the reorganisation within the department to be completed?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** If the honourable member is referring to the structure of the staff within the department, I indicate that the operation came into effect

on 1 July this year, as I said this morning. The rationalisation of various depots and workshops is continuing. I take it that the honourable member is referring to the reorganisation of the department, which means the new staff structure within the department.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Not only staff. The consultants, in 1978, made a series of recommendations which dealt with not only staff but also with all aspects of the department. When will that reorganisation be completed? The Minister must know, because he told the House that he knew way back in 1975, what should be done within the department, so surely he is able to tell the Committee when the recommendations of the consultants will be completed.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Once again, I reiterate that two areas are involved. The honourable member is referring to reorganisation, and, principally, reorganisation involves staffing and the duties of the various staff members within the department. Rationalisation concerns the physical relationship of depots and workshops in the country and in the metropolitan area. I can give details in relation to rationalisation but, as I said, the reorganisation became effective as from 1 July this year. I ask Mr. Alexander to provide anticipated dates in regard to rationalisation of the various depots.

**Mr. Alexander:** The sort of thing to which the honourable member has referred would involve ongoing rationalisation. The main depot change will occur in December, when we will close down the Kent Town depot and consolidate at Thebarton. Other depots are highlighted in the Public Accounts Committee Report, and we are looking at those. There is no target date at this stage; there is a good deal of analysis work to be done.

The Marden and Elizabeth depots are being upgraded in accordance with the depot report, and that upgrading will be completed this financial year, as indicated in the Estimates. The country depots are being reviewed in terms of the Public Accounts Committee Report. We are considering the changing role of the department, and a number of factors, such as the impact of depots on families, and on communities of country towns, are also being considered. That consideration is ongoing. There are a number of difficult implications that I must put to the Minister in regard to the effects of depot operations.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Was any compensation paid last year to consumers of water who made claims on the department because of clothing that was ruined as a result of dirty water? I am prompted to ask that question by what the Minister said this morning about increased technology and the excellence of the products that are provided to the domestic user in this State. That may be generally true, but I know, as I am sure the member for Florey knows, that people in the northern districts make repeated claims about filthy water. In fact, if one wanted to seek publicity (and I would be the last person in this House to do that), one could demonstrate quite forcibly to the Minister the kind of product that comes out of the taps in the northern districts.

In a letter to me, the Minister said that I could tell my constituents and those people in the northern areas that compensation for clothing that is ruined because of the water that comes out of the taps can be claimed through a certain avenue. I have looked through the lines and I can see no allocation for compensation. The standard of water that comes out of our taps is such that numerous claims could be made for compensation. Will the Minister say what was expended last year in meeting claims for compensation and what is the allocation for this financial year?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The department accepts liability if it can be shown that there was any negligence on the part

of the department. I will have to provide information in regard to the number of claims made last year.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Could the Minister define "negligence" on the part of the department? One would have thought that if the water coming out of the pipes is filthy, the department would be automatically negligent. This might assist me in future when I have to answer letters from constituents who are complaining about the filthy water coming out of the pipes in the northern area.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Negligence is a legal definition, and what it revolves around is negligence in the operation of the water supply scheme. If repairs were being undertaken and, for instance, some jointing compound was used that got into the main flow of the reticulation scheme and finished up in someone's washing machine, that would certainly be negligence on the part of the department. In areas that do not have a filtered water supply at the moment, quite obviously the quality of the water coming through the taps is largely determined by the quality of water available to the E. & W.S. Department in the reservoirs or from the other major source, the Murray River.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Can the Minister say whether when the E. & W.S. Department is carrying out back-flushing, if it puts a notice in the local papers that this operation is being carried out, that takes all liability away from the department for claims for compensation for ruined clothing?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That is a legal question, and as such I would not be able to give an answer to whether that is the case or not. Back-flushing is usually done at the request of ratepayers in given areas. It is done particularly where there is a low flow in a particular section and there is precipitation of the solids carried in the water with insufficient flow to keep that main clear. This is done in some areas on a regular basis because it might be a dead end line, and particularly in those areas there is considerable trouble. Back-flushing is carried out in those areas regularly to try to alleviate that problem.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** This is the last question I wish to ask of the Minister on this subject. Can the Minister say whether there is any truth in claims that the E. & W.S. Department, in carrying out back-flushing operations at present with reduced staff, is causing an excess of dirty water to go through pipes in houses? In my district I have heard that there has been a reduction of weekly paid staff, and the operation of back-flushing is now carried out with the minimum staff available, thus causing a flow of dirty water through pipes. If that is the case, will the Minister reconsider the natural attrition programme he is undertaking with great enthusiasm, and increase the number of weekly paid staff at the Elizabeth depot?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The claim that any reduction in staff numbers is causing a problem in the procedure of back-flushing has not been brought to my attention. I have no knowledge of that. I would certainly need specific examples. If the honourable member can provide me with them, I will look at them. I can see no problem arising from the method that is used in back-flushing; it is basically a means of creating a substantial flow through that particular section of main to remove the deposited silt.

**Mr. LEWIS:** My question specifically relates to responsibilities under allocations for "Management Services", but in general it relates to all the allocations we are making in this vote. What work was undertaken within the department to determine the benefits that accrue from the dollars spent in each and every area of the department's activities? Has any analysis been made to give cost benefit for those dollars to see whether we should



be spending more money in this department and less in others, or vice versa, or no money in this department and more somewhere else because there is not enough left to spend in this one area, since it seems to me that that is the crux of this exercise? As people honoured to represent in this place other citizens, I believe we should be concerned to know why we are taxing them directly or indirectly. That is a lesson members of the Opposition ought to learn. When I hear a bleat about compensation for this and concessions for that and reductions for the other, do they really believe—

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr. LEWIS:** I ask your protection, Mr. Acting Chairman, if I am to suffer interjections.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! The honourable member will address his question to the Minister.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I thought I had to address them to you, Sir.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The honourable Minister.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I had not finished asking my question, Sir.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The honourable member for Mallee will direct his questions through the Chair to the honourable the Minister. The honourable member for Mallee.

**Mr. LEWIS:** It is just not possible for any Government anywhere to provide something for someone else without taking from somewhere else along the line. Governments do not create anything. You should know that if you impose taxes in one area, the prices charged by the people who pay the taxes will have to rise (otherwise they will go broke), and, if the price rises, then costs to the consumer, the very people you think you are helping, will be greater in another area.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Are you talking to me?

**Mr. LEWIS:** Yes, I am talking to you, to help you understand the inadequacy of the line you have been following all day. You ought—

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! Interjections are out of order, and I ask the honourable member for Mallee to direct his questions to the honourable Minister.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I note the member for Whyalla has already gone. Those areas in which management services officers might analyse technologies to determine the relevance of change or not, certainly have done so in the past one way or another. At present, for instance, we do not pay compensation to people who used to be night soil men because we now have deep drainage; nor do we pay compensation to people who would otherwise be manufacturing the septic tanks that we might otherwise use; nor to people who would dig the long drop pits that are now put out of work by deep drainage. We do not pay compensation to the people who would have been doctors treating the endemic hepatitis that would have resulted from an alternative technology. Times change, technologies improve, the skills needed in the work force alter in keeping with that, and it is not realistic for us in any instances to consider that we should fossilise ourselves at a moment in time and weigh ourselves down as a civilised community with those kinds of final commitments through the public purse to the extent that it is not possible for us to finance.

*Mr. Hemmings interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Order! Interjections are out of order. I ask the honourable member if he would like to come to the point of his question.

**Mr. LEWIS:** My point is, as I have attempted to illustrate it, in this budget has the Minister, or any member of the staff that are to be paid salaries under "Management Services", considered the cost benefit of any and all of the dollars that are to be applied in this vote?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes. In their report in 1978, the consultants paid real attention to the matters that have been raised by the honourable member, and a number of those recommendations have already been put into effect. We will start to see the benefits flow from them.

I refer to some of the points which I believe are of concern. One is the formation of a management accounting and budgeting branch within the department, the formation of a corporate planning branch and the corporate plan and management plan for the E. & W.S. Department is virtually complete and will soon be presented to Cabinet. So, exactly what the honourable member is talking about is about to come to fruition as far as the corporate and management plan is concerned with the formation of a capital planning branch, which is very significant, and the formation of a project management office. So the areas the honourable member has raised are largely covered in those four areas and combined in the total corporate and management plans.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I wish to pursue specific aspects relating to that line on which I seek information. The honourable member for Florey asked for details about the cost of making certain items of equipment at the Ottoway foundry. I am not sure whether he meant just the variable costs, the direct labour and materials that would be involved in the production, completely ignoring any administrative overheads or cost of rent on floor space that might be occupied by those undertaking the work and any depreciation that might have to be brought to account on any capital that might have to be invested in any machinery that might have to be purchased. In providing an answer, I would be grateful if the Minister could detail variable and fixed costs of those components and indicate those costs where they are fixed on a per unit basis, so that they can be graphed to find out what the break-even point would be. If we price something at production cost and only make 1 000 items, we know very well the cost of producing them would be much higher than if we were to make 10 000 such items, since the overheads would be spread wider. Is the Minister prepared to provide me with that further breakdown of details, so that I might more validly examine the conclusions that members of this Committee and the House can come to about the common sense of the work having been undertaken or not at Ottoway.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I am more than happy to provide that information. Basically, what the honourable member is talking about is the fact that the corporate plan will set out the overall objectives that the department has, what it is trying to achieve, and the management plan will put into effect the proposals and objectives of that corporate plan. I think that the fine detail that the honourable member is looking for will be contained in the management plan, and in every sector will be finally identified and be answerable for its virtual profit or loss situation. We will be more than happy to provide whatever information we can.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Will the management service division, if that is what it is called, analyse the feasibility of using the water more effectively than is otherwise presently possible where it is used for irrigation purposes, by allowing those irrigators to pump at once into fishponds where they so desire and establish in South Australia, if nowhere else, an aquaculture industry that could be worth several millions of dollars to this State? I think the figures could run as high as \$26 000 000 of fish flesh that we import annually (according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics). This would generate increasing employment opportunities in those areas where irrigation of horticultural and other crops is undertaken under licence from the department,

and thereby increase the gross national product, as well as make more jobs.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The E. & W.S. Department and the Department of Agriculture are working very closely indeed as far as irrigation is concerned. The area of irrigation is one in which we have a very real challenge ahead of us inasmuch as certain countries in the world are faced with the same situation as we have in South Australia where we have a given quantity of water. We know what we have; we have 1 850 000 megalitres under the agreement in the River Murray Waters Act and, as such, we know the only chance of expansion or development is to make far better use of the water available to us. There is no doubt that improved irrigation methods, techniques and equipment which are available to us and which have been proven overseas will substantially increase our productivity per litre of water from the agricultural and horticultural point of view. I am not quite sure what the honourable member was referring to in relation to fish farming, whether it is the utilisation of water on the basis of passing it through fish ponds—

**Mr. LEWIS:** Yes, before it goes on to the crops.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** In other words, the honourable member is looking for a primary use for that irrigation water prior to its going on and into the irrigation system. Thus, the actual use of water in that case would be somewhat analogous to the case of the tourist industry, whereby the water is utilised for boating activities where it does not deplete the resource in any way or does so only to a small extent. I should imagine that if anyone could come up with a proposal tied in with the irrigation undertaking there is no reason why it could not be looked at and, if it is feasible, put into effect, so long as it was in a place where there was no contamination of that water before it was used for irrigation purposes. In other words, the dams in which the fish farming was undertaken would have to be such that there was no salt contamination within those dams prior to their use for irrigation purposes. However, it is an area worth looking at.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I have a number of other questions that relate to the management services provided by the department, and I have waited patiently to put them to the Minister to get this information. I noted with interest a remark he made in answer to the last question I asked this morning about the use of electronic sensors and A.D.P. equipment in soil probes to establish water profiles as well as salt profiles in areas of irrigated crops. I take it that what he saw overseas where such equipment was used made it possible for irrigators to then do without the necessity to use evaporation figures from class A pan evaporimeters in determining the amount of water that would have to be applied to the crop to bring the threshold level back above field capacity, to ensure the crop produced at maximum rates and therefore optimised the total investment that was made in all the resources deployed in the production of whatever was being undertaken in those circumstances.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The class A pan has undoubtedly been a very useful instrument and will probably continue to be a useful instrument in determining water requirements, but what I was referring to is certainly an advance on the class A pan inasmuch as we would not only get a constant read-out of the moisture content of the soil but we would also get a salinity profile which is very critical and which gives the exact application rate that is required to maintain that critical salt level below the root zone.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Does the Minister have any idea of the likely cost so that private irrigators would know whether they could afford to buy such an item of equipment? Does

the Government, perhaps, intend to procure some of them and place them in those areas, in the Riverland for instance, where there are Government irrigation schemes?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The Director of Agriculture took details of the instruments that had been developed at the Riverside Salinity Laboratories. Having been perfected in the laboratories, they were then in the process of being sent out for commercial manufacture, and should be available soon. As soon as they are in commercial production, I believe that it is the intention of the Department of Agriculture to purchase these instruments so that it can carry out tests, particularly in the irrigation areas of the Riverland, to determine the extent to which they can be put into effect in this State. I believe that the instruments will be expensive.

I can envisage a private individual setting up in business by purchasing this equipment and, by agreement with some 20 or 30 farmers, on a day-by-day or every alternate day basis, providing moisture-salinity readings of the soil on those properties. I can see in the future a real opportunity for such persons to take up this possible avenue of employment and provide that service to growers. I think that we will see dramatic results flow from it in a reduction of the actual usage of water, saving in power costs in relation to pumping for the farmer, and, above all else, a considerable reduction in the saline groundwater movement back to the river.

**Mr. LEWIS:** The points the Minister has made interest me, and I appreciate them. I would like to see the specific relevance of the possibility of people employed in that area, or in some other area, investigating the desirability of decreasing what appears to be an increase in salinity in Lake Albert, either by allowing a group of irrigators to form a co-operative trust and dig a trench across the Narrung peninsula isthmus, or doing it departmentally; instead of its being left as a blind appendage on the estuarine lakes that have been created artificially by the construction of the barrages, such that Lake Albert does not flush. As a consequence, it seems that there is increasing difficulty in obtaining water of reasonable quality for irrigation purposes. I wonder whether the excavation of a trench in the general location to which I have referred might be permitted, in order to ensure the viability of the irrigation industry based on Lake Albert on which Meningie in no small way depends for its economic base, and therefore increase the gross national product contribution that can continue to come from that district.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** This matter was discussed with me at a meeting of the Meningie Progress Association. We have undertaken to examine that proposal and determine what would be the costs and cost benefits. As far as the department and the Government are concerned, whether the percentage of water is allowed out into the Coorong from Lake Albert or whether it goes through the barrage is neither here nor there as regards the water entering the sea. There is a distinct advantage in drawing water through Lake Albert from a freshening point of view, and it would not result in any loss situation to South Australia's allowance of water entitlement, or anything else, because it would occur only during the time there was excess flow over and above our statutory allocation. Mr. Shepherd attended that meeting with me, and as the Director and Engineer for Planning might be able to give a report on what progress has been made on this investigation.

**Mr. Shepherd:** This proposal is one of a large number of possible options being studied at present in a major study of options for managing the waters of the Murray River in South Australia so that they will be of maximum benefit to users, so that the most benefit can be drawn from the limited available quantities, and so that salinity of the

water can best be managed. This is an extensive study, and it will be about two years before it is complete. At that stage, I would expect information to be made available on a complete basis, comparing that option with other possible options for optimising our management of waters in South Australia.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** With the indulgence of the member for Mallee, I know that he has further questions on a similar line. He has had the opportunity of asking six or seven questions and, in an endeavour to equalise the questioning, I propose to call the member for Whyalla, and give time to the member for Mallee later.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** Mr. Acting Chairman, I appreciate the thought you have given to me. I want to ask the Minister what is an important question in my own area. I do not know that it is really related to a line of the E. & W.S. Department; it is related more to Government policy. He probably knows what is the question. When is it likely that the Government will give further consideration to providing filtered water to the cities of the Spencer Gulf area? The Minister would be well aware that, at the end of the last financial year, the past Labor Government had given this question serious consideration over a long period. At the last election, it had agreed that it would proceed with the filtration of water to this area. This news was most welcome in the northern parts of Spencer Gulf.

I recall speaking to the present Minister privately, and his view at the time of election to Government was that the quality of water coming from the Murray River was a severe problem (I think I am being fair to him in saying that). He felt that one of the major issues that the new Government had to face was the cost of water filtration to the cities of the northern gulf by turning its major concerns to the Murray. That might sound very good, and no doubt had a high priority, but it concerns me that, after, I suppose, no less than five or six years of heavy involvement in providing good quality water to the cities of the northern gulf, and coming to a situation where the light had dawned and we were going to get it, it has been cut off.

It is all very well to say that there is a problem with the Murray River and that we must concentrate on that. I accept that, but it does very little for the people at the end of the pipeline who have to use the water. It is important that we should have some reasonable guarantee that this programme will proceed shortly. The financial responsibilities no doubt were explored by the previous Government, and so we could say that the financial angle has been taken into consideration. Can the Minister give any assurance that the project of filtering of the water will go ahead? If not, can he say when the Government might go ahead with the scheme?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** In this year's Estimates, \$5 000 has been provided for ongoing investigations of the project. The E. & W.S. Department works on a five-year ongoing programme of capital works because of the magnitude of most of those works. The previous Government had provided certain funds for preliminary investigations into the northern towns filtration programme. However, when the present Government came to office, the final amount for that investigation had been expended in the preliminary investigation, and no funding had been provided in the five-year programme to go beyond that point. At the time, I made a statement saying that the matter would be held at that point, that it would be evaluated by the Government, and that I would make an announcement within 12 months about what the Government intended to do.

The Government has indicated its intention by reviving that programme; \$5 000 has been provided in 1980-81, and

it is expected that \$30 000 will be provided in the next financial year, partly for consultants, and so on, to investigate the project further.

I agree with the honourable member that this project must proceed. I have lived close to the Murray River and its water all my life. The problem in the northern towns and other areas is in the transportation of the water over long distances in above-ground pipelines, especially during the summer months, when the heat creates problems and the level of chlorination is excessive, not only making the water unsatisfactory for the consumers but also creating a problem of tremendous maintenance costs within the total distribution system.

The Government intends to proceed with further planning of that project. I cannot give the honourable member precise construction dates at this stage, but \$5 000 is being provided this year, and a further \$30 000 to be put into the five-year programme is proposed for 1981-82. We recognise the importance of the project and, as soon as it can be worked into the construction stages, that will be done.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** The Minister said that \$5 000 has been put aside and that \$30 000 will be put aside next year. Does that mean \$30 000 in one year?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** If I remember correctly, when the project was announced, it involved millions of dollars.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, \$25 000 000 to do the job.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** I am not a mathematician, but if we are putting away \$30 000 and we are to spend \$25 000 000, I would like to be around when the project is finished, but I cannot see that happening. Getting back to the \$25 000 000 project, surely we can be more explicit as to when it is likely to commence. Is the project to be done in one hit? Will the filtration scheme cover the three northern cities in one operation, or will it have to be done in stages? If so, can we fund it more reasonably on the staged method?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Obviously, \$30 000 will not start the construction of a \$25 000 000 project. I said that it was a continuation of the preliminary investigations commenced by the previous Government.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** You have changed your tune now.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** There is no change of tune. When the Liberal Party came into Government, it inherited a situation at Budget time in which no provision has been made by the previous Government for further expenditure on the project. Now, the Government is reviving the project that the previous Government has allowed to slide. That has been demonstrated clearly to the Mayors of the Iron Triangle towns by the E. & W.S. Department documents that are available in relation to the five-year programme. The previous Government had made no ongoing provision beyond the point of preliminary investigations that had been carried out. There was nothing in the Budget papers, which this Government inherited at this time last year, to proceed further. Now, that project is being revived, with \$5 000 this year and an intended \$30 000 for further preliminary investigations before the consultants come in to prepare the overall plan.

Two plants will have to be built, one on the Morgan to Whyalla pipeline, and the other on the Swan Reach to Stockwell pipeline. Undoubtedly, one of the filtration plants will be built first, probably followed by the Swan Reach to Stockwell plant. I cannot indicate which of the two plants would be built first, but it is like the staging of the metropolitan Adelaide water filtration programme. Quite obviously, if we were to slow down the metropolitan

Adelaide water filtration programme, we could proceed with the northern towns programme at an earlier date, but the Government does not intend to deviate from the programme set down for water filtration for Adelaide. It will mean trying to seek additional funds in support of the northern towns water filtration, in the same way as the Federal Government has been supporting water filtration in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** Just to clear the matter up, all I am saying is that obviously some additional finance must be found for a project of \$25 000 000, apart from the \$30 000 that we are putting away. The point I am making is that obviously the former Government intended to seek additional finance for this project, although as the Minister points out it may not have been in the Budget or—

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** In the five-year project.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** I do not accept that.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** This is the programme we inherited from the former Government.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** Programmes are programmes. I would suggest to the Minister that any Government in power can set up a programme; programmes go on and then they change the following week or the following month. I do not accept that we will be messing around with this for five years, that we will be putting in \$30 000 this year and, say, \$5 000 next year. Obviously, the former Government had some area it intended to investigate in an endeavour to fund this scheme. Inside the five years, will the Minister be prepared to say, "Let us have a look at the funding of the \$25 000 000." The Minister will not be able to pick it up in a matter of a few months, or even in 12 months. Perhaps the \$25 000 000 needed to do this project (and perhaps we should bear in mind that by the time we get around to it it will be \$30 000 000)—

**An honourable member:** It probably will be.

**Mr. MAX BROWN:** That strengthens the point that I am making; I think we should be looking at our borrowing capacity or loan funding in relation to this project, if we are fair dinkum about it.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, we are fair dinkum about it, and it will be included in the water resources programme in what we submit to the Federal Government for support. It will be included in that, along with many of the other projects, such as the Murray River salinity control, flood mitigation of the Torrens River, and numerous other projects. It will be up to the Federal Government whether it supports that project. The Federal Government has been involved in the metropolitan Adelaide water filtration programme all along, and we believe that this is just as important, if not more important in the long term, and hopefully we will obtain that support from the Federal Government.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I point out that a number of members have indicated their wish to ask a question, and I draw the attention of the Committee to the time constraints placed on the Committee today, that is, the adjournment time of 5.30 p.m. and I draw the attention of members to the fact that there are still five votes to go.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I cannot find any provision for expenditure on motor vehicles. Is the Minister obtaining motor vehicles and, if so, how much is being expended by the department on new motor vehicles this year, and how many vehicles are involved?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That information is contained in the Loan Estimates and the sum is \$5 250 000. If I might add, in reply to an earlier question by the member for Florey this morning in relation to Questions on Notice, I can tell him they were finalised late last month, but, the House has not been sitting for the past fortnight; they will

be available on the first day of sitting.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** Can the Minister provide me at a later stage with a list of machinery hired, the hiring company, and the amounts expended in relation to such hire, and also can he say whether or not such machinery was available from departmental sources at the time of hiring?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, we will provide that information.

**Mr. LEWIS:** My question relates to some of the matters that have been raised since I was asked to allow other members to ask their questions, and it relates in particular to the problems of water pollution and filtration. Will the Minister please indicate how much he considers the indifferent, irresponsible attitude, particularly of Mr. Wran's Government in New South Wales, is presently costing the South Australian taxpayer and is likely to cost us in the future, and whether he regards that man's attitude as being in any way statesmanlike by incurring that cost to the South Australian taxpayer?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I take it that the honourable member is referring to the additional irrigation diversions taking place in New South Wales and what effect it will have on South Australia?

**Mr. LEWIS:** And I refer to its inefficient use of present diversions.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I do not think there is any doubt that the efficiency of the use of water in South Australia, because of the restraints placed on us, is far ahead of that in New South Wales, where vast areas of flood irrigation are used for wheat and rice. This uses vast quantities of water in a flood irrigation situation. The amount of water available to us, and also the salinity content of that water are the two main reasons why we are being forced into what I broadly referred to as modern irrigation techniques and practices, and the equipment that we are currently installing will give us far greater productivity per given volume of water.

New South Wales is applying for an increase in excess of 50 000 hectares of irrigation diversion on the River Darling and its tributaries, and this is in fact greater than the total area of irrigation in South Australia. The very real concern to South Australia (and what I believe can lead to a totally unacceptable situation) is that, when we are on a statutory allocation of water in this State, virtually no water flows through the barrages and into the sea, and thus not only our own contribution of salt gets back into the river system in South Australia, but also the salt pollution that we inherit from the Eastern States remains locked up in the river system in South Australia, which is not only there for irrigation but is a prime source of potable water for metropolitan Adelaide and for the northern towns and agricultural areas of South Australia.

So, the fact that increased diversions are taking place is a disastrous situation for us in South Australia and will undoubtedly lead to South Australia's spending more of its time on statutory allocation of water. If we go on for long periods of being on our statutory allocation, without any dilution flow in this State, then the salinity level must continue to rise. As long as we are forced into a situation in which the barrages are closed (and in the last nine months, for only about four weeks have any of the barrages been opened), we have locked up in South Australia a considerable quantity of salt that we have inherited from the Eastern States.

Further irrigation diversion must aggravate that situation. It is an area of concern with which we must come to grips. We have made numerous approaches to the Governments of Victoria and New South Wales and representations to the Federal Government on this aspect. The previous Government was very much involved in

endeavouring to have the River Murray Waters Agreement Act amended and, while that is virtually ready to be ratified by the four Parliaments, I have grave doubts whether the interests of New South Wales will allow that ratification to proceed in the Parliament at this stage until such time as that State has satisfied its increased irrigation desires. That is only a conclusion I have reached because the whole object of those amendments is to give the River Murray Commission power to look at water quality and undoubtedly if the River Murray Commission had that power it would be looking for a moratorium on further irrigation diversion until such time as the water quality aspect had been cleared up once and for all.

The Premier of South Australia approached the New South Wales Government seeking a moratorium on further irrigation diversion. However, the New South Wales Government was not prepared to recognise that request from South Australia, and it is proceeding with further irrigation diversion hearings in various parts of New South Wales. The honourable member would probably be aware that South Australia was successful in the opposition to further irrigation diversion applications which were heard at Wentworth in New South Wales. Since the finding on that occasion was in South Australia's favour and our objection was upheld, the New South Wales Government has taken that matter to the Supreme Court in an endeavour to have that decision reversed. We do face a critical situation, and I think it is one that South Australia cannot live with in the future unless we can get a change of attitude in the Eastern States.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Whilst that information in general terms was what I was seeking, more particularly I wanted to get the cost of removing each kilogram of, if you like, Wran's pollutants and, in doing so, work out what the total cost to the State is at present of filtering the water and what it might ultimately become, by knowing the number of kilograms of organic matter that is suspended and other colloidal material in the water that has to be removed by the filtration plants we are installing in South Australia at our own cost, which are a result in no small way of the extravagant, irresponsible irrigation practices of the farmers whose irrigation areas are being allowed to increase in New South Wales.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The filtration plants that are being installed in the metropolitan area in South Australia do not remove salts.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I am talking about colloids and suspended organic materials.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, but the salts still remain and they are the main pollutant factor in the chlorides in relation to the pollution coming from the Eastern States. Most of the other material is natural to the river and the various tributaries of the Murray River system. At this moment we are involved in a \$20 000 000 salinity control programme that was commenced some time ago in an endeavour to get our own house in order in South Australia. It is almost impossible to calculate the cost of removing the salts that we are inheriting from interstate, because the salinity control programme is not based on a desalination programme but is based on diverting the known inflows of salt away from the river before they enter the stream. Once the salt is in the stream and has crossed the border it is virtually impossible to remove it.

The only thing that will control the situation to any degree is additional dilution flow, which I believe is extremely necessary. We have every right to expect Victoria and New South Wales to provide additional dilution flow when South Australia is on its statutory allocation. I mean that this additional dilution flow should come from the State storages of both Victoria and New

South Wales, if we are going to be expected from here on in to transport the salt load from those two States through South Australia and put it into the sea, because there is no way in which we can put that salt into the sea unless we have additional dilution flow from the Eastern States to so transport it.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Can the Minister provide me with the number of employees (staff and daily paid) and their duties working on the Jervois irrigation scheme, the cost of the electricity used in that scheme, and the value of the capital works at establishment cost, and estimated present value?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I shall be happy to endeavour to procure as much of that information as possible.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Will the Minister be prepared to consider any scheme to enable the irrigation services provided in that locality (and other swamplands along the river) to be handed over to a trust of local irrigators, to which they all belong, rather than be administered by the department, if they were personally prepared to undertake and accept the total cost of administering it?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** This matter has already been discussed with me by the irrigators in that area, but the discussions have not proceeded very far. If the irrigators were to maintain the present standard of facility and keep it in the future, at the level of which it is maintained today by the department, I think they would find that the cost of doing this by themselves would be substantially greater than they are being charged at the moment.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I understand that some consideration has been given to using hills reservoirs as recreation parks. At what level is it intended to keep the ponds (full, or at what level), in each case in which any such permission is granted?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** A study has been undertaken into that matter and a final report will be made soon to Cabinet whether or not the reservoirs should be opened up for recreational use. It is one of those areas in which certain interests say that it should occur and other interests are very much opposed to the Adelaide water supply being in any way utilised for recreational purposes.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Acknowledging that any such proposal would of necessity result in there being a pond level of some kind maintained in the hills, I ask the Minister whether he can assure the Committee that his department, in making its recommendation, will take into account the evaporation from the free water surface that will occur in any average summer (the highest and lowest figure), the likely cost of pumping that water from the Murray (where people could just as easily go to ski), and lifting it (from the Murray) to those ponds in the hills?

Could he indicate what that volume of water will be in total and the anticipated cost, at today's figures, of pumping it into the reservoirs so that it is there for people to play with?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I can assure the honourable member that no pumping charges will be incurred for the purpose of providing recreational water. I think we have enough water around without pumping it. If the reservoir is opened up in the future for recreational use, it would be on the basis of whatever the water level in the reservoir happens to be, but we certainly would not be utilising taxpayers' money to pump water to reservoirs purely to go boating on.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Are there any further questions? There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

Minister of Water Resources and Minister of Irrigation,  
Miscellaneous, \$4 311 000.

**Acting Chairman:**  
Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**

Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**

The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Water Resources  
and Minister of Irrigation.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr. D. J. Alexander, Acting Director-General and  
Engineer-in-Chief.  
Mr. K. R. John, Senior Finance Officer.  
Mr. A. N. Killmier, Director, Administration and  
Finance.  
Mr. K. J. Shepherd, Director, Planning.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I declare the proposed  
expenditure open for examination. Are there any  
questions?

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Under the line "Protection and  
improvement of River Torrens", the sum proposed for  
1980-81 is \$422 000. Does the Minister intend to spend any  
proportion of that money on the improvement of the  
Torrens or its banks in the areas from Port Road where it  
takes in Hindmarsh, Thebarton, Torrensville, and  
Flinders Park?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The immediate expenditure of  
this money will be on the eastern side of Adelaide, not on  
the western side. It is a matter of taking into account the  
most effective flood mitigation. It is not so much  
beautification at this stage or, as the honourable member  
for Mitchell has said, for the toffs: it is a matter of flood  
mitigation rather than beautification. We will be  
concerned more with beautification at a later date, but the  
E. & W.S. Department is very much concerned with  
reducing the potential of any likely flooding in the area. It  
will be taken on a priority basis as to the areas that will be  
first affected by a given flow of water in the Torrens.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** I take the Minister's word that this  
sum will be used for the relief of flooding and not for  
beautification, and I take his point that perhaps it will not  
be used for the toffs in the eastern suburbs. Could the  
Minister give the Committee some assurance, that when  
beautification of the River Torrens does take place,  
money will be spent in the areas that I have mentioned so  
that the proletariat can get some benefit of any  
beautification programme?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The linear park concept is a  
concept that will be worked out, and the development of  
that concept will be in co-operation with all the councils  
that have part of the Torrens within their council  
boundaries, so it will largely be on the basis of  
involvement and co-operation with local government as to  
how that proceeds.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Would the Minister try to influence  
the councils covering the areas that I have mentioned that  
they do embark on a beautification programme of the

Torrens River, possibly with the support of the  
Government, as is envisaged in the eastern areas, where I  
am sure that the Minister is not talking about "just for the  
toffs"?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I think the honourable member  
can rest assured that the members whose electorates  
encompass sections of the Torrens River will have a very  
real interest in this, and my experience to date is that they  
have a close involvement with local government and have  
certainly had a close involvement and negotiations with  
me as to the proceedings of this total project. I think it can  
well be left in the hands of the local members concerned to  
look after in the interests of the particular councils and  
their constituents.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I refer to the line "Liquid waste  
reception facility". Does the department have the facility  
for handling radio-active liquids and, if not, is there any  
provision in the current year to acquire that expertise  
and/or equipment?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That involves the toxic waste  
disposal with the facility at Bolivar, and I think that Mr.  
Shepherd could probably give the Committee some more  
detail on how that toxic waste disposal unit operates.

**Mr. Shepherd:** The toxic waste disposal facilities  
available at Bolivar are for certain classes of waste—toxic,  
alkaline, and acid wastes. My understanding is that that  
does not include provision for the disposal of radio-active  
waste. I am not aware of there being wastes of that nature  
coming forward in South Australia for disposal in that sort  
of volume.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** I take it that there is no provision for any  
investigation into that area by the department. The other  
question relates to "Operation and maintenance of  
neutralisation plant at Brukunga Mine", for which \$45 000  
is provided. Is the department able to obtain any  
restitution from the company that was responsible for the  
situation that eventuated at Brukunga, or is the State  
carrying the whole cost of the rejuvenation of the  
waterways in the area?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I believe there was some  
contribution from the company initially, but I am not  
certain just what that is. Once again, Mr. Shepherd may  
have more details.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I understand that the company has been  
wound up, and there is therefore no ability to recover  
moneys from it for this purpose.

**Mr. PAYNE:** I refer to the line "Investigations into  
disposal of waste waters from Riverland indus-  
tries"—\$10 000 last year and \$15 000 this year. Has there  
been any change in the policy now that the Minister's  
Government is in power from that which was previously  
announced by the Labor Government immediately prior  
to the last election?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I take it that the honourable  
member is referring to the fact that liquid waste from  
industries will be disposed of separately from the Noora  
Scheme. There has been no change. The investigation  
going ahead at the moment is to ascertain what industrial  
wastes are in the Riverland from the various wineries, fruit  
packing houses, and so forth. The E. & W.S. Department  
has had a team working with industries in the Riverland to  
determine the best method of disposal. Once that has been  
determined and a report has been produced by the  
department team, which is at present in the Riverland, it  
will be available for comment by local government and  
those persons affected by the proposal for a land disposal  
scheme whereby industrial waste will be pumped to a land  
disposal area, where it will be disposed of by means of a  
sprinkler system so that it is put on at a rate which is far  
less than the absorption rate of that land, and there will be



no ponding of that waste effluent, so it should not generate any odours in the community.

Once the disposal objectives have been determined and accepted by the industry and the community, it will be in the hands of the industry to take the proposal to consultants for development of a disposal plan and specifications for putting it into effect.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I think it was over a year ago, when I was Minister, that I was fortunate to see the work being done by Mr Tom Angove in the river area, whose scheme is not dissimilar from the one the Minister has outlined. It seemed to me that Mr. Angove had put in much work and was getting promising results at that stage, although I believe that he had a sufficient area of land. Can the Minister say whether Mr. Angove has had more success in the ensuing year?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes. He is proceeding with that method of disposal, which is almost identical to the method being used in the San Joaquin Valley in the large wineries in that part of the world. He has available to him an area of land which is level and on which he can, by flood irrigation, dispose of most of his industrial waste. In the case of most other companies in that area, a similar circumstance does not exist, and it will be necessary to distribute evenly the effluent from other industries by way of a sprinkler system because dead-level land is not available.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Regarding "Payment to Australian National Railways for water cartage", no allocation is made, whereas actual payments of \$106 026 were made last financial year. I think that that relates to charges incurred in providing water to what are loosely called former northern railway towns. I take it that some other suitable provision is now being made for the continuous water supply. Has the Minister any information on this matter?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That was a special contribution made to the Yunta and Olary area, up on the northern line, mainly for rail freight for water to those towns. It was a reimburseent for carting costs.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I had discussions with the Director-General and Engineer-in-Chief (Mr. Lewis) at the time. There was a problem in relation to a continued water supply for those towns. The Minister did not really answer my question, so I will rephrase it. What will be the methods in future to ensure a reasonable water supply to the inhabitants of those two towns?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** When that \$106 026 was allocated as a special allowance, the E. & W.S. Department was not responsible for the water supply in that area. It is not known whether any rail freight or carting of water will be necessary this year. The department has taken over and is responsible for the water supply in that area and, as such, it will be absorbed in the total E. & W.S. Department's undertakings. Previously, it was not a responsibility of the department.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I thank the Minister for that answer. That is what I wanted to know.

**Mr. LEWIS:** My inquiry relates to "War Service Land Settlement—Eight Mile Creek", for which the allocation is \$40 000. Does that in any way relate to the trout-farming venture that has been established at Eight Mile Creek? I notice that it is war service land settlement, yet it appears under the heading "Miscellaneous". If it does relate to that venture, does the Minister have any information about the success or otherwise of that operation?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The \$40 000 refers purely to maintenance in the Eight Mile Creek area and has no bearing on the trout-fishing experiments and undertaking being conducted by Mr. Vehshure in that area. I do not

know what will be the long-term prospects for the trout-farming operation. As that is a private undertaking, it has nothing to do with the department.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I refer to "Installation and maintenance of meters—River Murray", to which about \$250 000 has been allocated each year. Can the Minister refresh my memory regarding the purpose of that funding?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That is the capital and operational costs of the installation of the diversion meters that have to be installed on all private and Government diversions.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

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Engineering and Water Supply Department,  
\$64 150 000

**Acting Chairman:**

Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**

Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**

The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Water Resources.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr. D. J. Alexander, Acting Director-General and Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. K. R. John, Senior Finance Officer.

Mr. A. N. Killmier, Director, Administration and Finance.

Mr. K. J. Shepherd, Director, Planning.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

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Renmark Irrigation Trust, \$100 000

**Acting Chairman:**

Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**

Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**

The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Water Resources.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr. D. J. Alexander, Acting Director-General and Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. K. R. John, Senior Finance Officer.  
Mr. A. N. Killmier, Director, Administration and Finance.  
Mr. K. J. Shepherd, Director, Planning.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

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Pyap Irrigation Trust, \$10 000

**Acting Chairman:**  
Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**  
Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**  
The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Water Resources.

**Departmental Advisers:**  
Mr. D. J. Alexander, Acting Director-General and Engineer-in-Chief.  
Mr. K. R. John, Senior Finance Officer.  
Mr. A. N. Killmier, Director, Administration and Finance.  
Mr. K. J. Shepherd, Director, Planning.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed

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South-Eastern Drainage Board, \$185 000

**Acting Chairman:**  
Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**  
Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**  
The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Water Resources.

**Departmental Advisers:**  
Mr. D. J. Alexander, Acting Director-General and Engineer-in-Chief.  
Mr. K. R. John, Senior Finance Officer.  
Mr. A. N. Killmier, Director, Administration and Finance.  
Mr. K. J. Shepherd, Director, Planning.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed

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Lands, \$15 693 000

**Acting Chairman:**  
Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**  
Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**  
The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Lands.

**Departmental Advisers:**  
Mr. B. H. Bridges, Surveyor-General, Lands Department.  
Mr. E. A. R. Mellen, Director, Administration and Finance.  
Mr. K. C. Taeuber, Director-General of Lands.  
Mr. F. J. Vickery, Director, Land Resource Management.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I draw the attention of the Committee to the scheduled time of closure. It will be necessary for the Committee to formally adopt one or two procedural motions before the Committee adjourns, and I expect that will take about five minutes. The member for Flinders has indicated his wish to participate in this section, and I propose, on completion of questions by members of the Committee, to call upon him.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** A sum of \$19 952 was actually paid in relation to the costs of the court action in the case of *Johnson v. the State*, and \$1 000 is allocated for the current year. Can the Minister give any details of the expenditure that has already occurred and of the further \$1 000 being provided?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The sum of \$19 952 was spent last year, and only \$1 000 is proposed in the current financial year. The amount of \$19 952 was made up largely of witness costs, bringing witnesses to the hearing. Basically, that is where the major cost was incurred, and also in bringing Professor Davies from the United Kingdom, which involved a substantial cost.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** In relation to the Registrar-General's Office, the sum of \$2 447 500 was voted last year, while \$2 728 448 was actually spent. I think this represents more than any wage increase that would have occurred in the time. Does the larger amount indicate increased activity, with additional staff employed?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The Land Ownership and Tenure System became operative during that period, and that was largely the reason for the increase. The system is working extremely well, and a senior officer from New South Wales came to Adelaide to watch its operation. It is the most advanced system operating in Australia, and the New South Wales authorities are considering putting in a similar system.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I suspect the Minister is saying that something done by the previous Government was not too bad.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, it has worked very well.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** It is refreshing to hear that after slogging on all day and trying to extract some candour in this matter. I would like it to be noted that I did observe it.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** On two or three occasions I have recognised the previous Government's involvement in other areas as well, particularly in endeavouring to obtain amendments to the River Murray Waters Act.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** The amount provided for contingencies and operating expenses is to be reduced this year from the amount actually spent last year, which was less than the sum provided, but was \$423 288, and this year the proposed allocation is \$408 000. I would assume that operation expenses make up the largest component. Does the Minister think that the amount of \$408 000 might be a bit tight?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The provision made there is for A.D.P. charges, copying machine expenses, and the normal run, but certain charges have been transferred out of that line, which might account for the reduction to which the honourable member has referred.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I think it is rather naughty to transfer expenses out of a line without stating that in the publication. I cannot see any asterisk or any other symbol to call our attention to the fact that there is a reason for this other than the figures in front of us. In view of the time, I accept that there might have been something which has not been incorporated in the document. In relation to administration expenses, minor equipment and sundries, conversely there is an increase, and I take it that the Minister is saying that some of that is in that line, because there is quite a healthy increase.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That is where the item has been transferred to.

**Mr. BECKER:** Referring to the computer purchased by the department called LOTS (Land Ownership and Tenure System), I draw attention to page 111 of the Auditor-General's Report of 30 June 1980, wherein the Auditor-General states:

The computerised Land Ownership and Tenure System inquiry service became operational in November 1979. Equipment and development costs associated with the project to 30 June totalled approximately \$2 400 000.

On 30 June 1978 the Auditor-General said (page 158), under the heading "Land Ownership and Tenure System":

In 1975 work commenced on the development of a computerised system of land ownership and tenure information at an estimated cost of \$455 000 (revised in 1976 to \$641 000) to be expended over two years. Costs to date are estimated to exceed \$1 000 000 and significant deficiencies in the design and development of the system led to a complete review of objectives. The need for more effective management and improved financial control has been recognised by the department. Approval has been given to proceed with the development of an enhanced system, estimated to cost \$2 200 000, for implementation in 1980.

Why did it take so long to establish this computer system? What was the basis of the original estimated cost of \$455 000, compared to \$2 400 000, and what type of computer has been acquired, and the system involved?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The point I made earlier is one that must be taken into account, and that is, that it is the first system of its type in Australia, and other States are currently looking at it to see whether they can adapt it to their own use. There were virtually no real guidelines as to what the final cost would be. Some of the finer details and points that the honourable member has raised can probably more effectively be answered by the Director-General.

**Mr. Taeuber:** The original estimate was about \$455 000, but as the development of the system proceeded the interest in it grew and requests were made for substantial modifications to the system to include the requirements of other potential users. By early 1978, it became evident that the system that would be developed as a result of acceding to those requests would be a substantially different system from the one originally approved.

The review of the development of the system was thus undertaken by the Public Service Board in conjunction with the department's officers and with the Department of Services and Supply for the purpose of making a decision whether the development should proceed in view of the nature of the system that was emerging from that development process. As a result of that review, it was recommended to the Government of the day that the system should proceed. A revised estimate of the cost of about \$2 200 000 was made, a development time table was approved, and direct project management for the project was assigned to an officer of the department.

The system became operational in July of this year and is now supplying the service to the public. The equipment that was purchased is a Burroughs 6800 computer, which is operated in the computer room of the Totalizator Agency Board in conjunction with its computer operation. The figure of \$2 400 000 mentioned in the Auditor-General's Report for the year ended 30 June 1980 includes the total cost of a purchase of that computer, and that accounts for the difference between the \$2 200 000 and the \$2 400 000 recorded in the Auditor-General's Report. The computer will operate not only the LOTS system, but is also operating another system already for the department called the debtors ledgers system, our revenue collection system, and it is anticipated that other systems will be added to it. Although the Auditor-General has shown the total cost of that computer against the LOTS system, indeed part of the cost of the computer is attributable to other uses of the department.

**Mr. BECKER:** I understand that it is housed in the T.A.B. computer room. I shudder to think of the success the T.A.B. has had with its computers that has cost us millions. Does the department collect any fees from the users of LOTS and, if so, what are the estimated receipts this financial year? What will be the cost of operating the computer this financial year? How many staff does this system replace, and what has happened to that staff?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The best that we can do is provide that information for the honourable member, as the Registrar-General does not have that detail here.

**Mr. BECKER:** I would like to register a protest because this is what the Estimates Committees are all about. This is the type of information we want. I would have thought that these sorts of things would have been broken up into a greater area so that we could really have, not a balance sheet but a working sheet of these sorts of functions, and I hope that in future this information will be more readily available to the Committee, because we can then examine the lines within that system to ensure that we are getting value for our money. I am also concerned about the number of people this computer has replaced; I hope that the introduction of it has not led to any retrenchments or lessening of employment opportunities within the department.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Are there any unfilled positions within the Minister's departments?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Not to my knowledge. There is an odd position coming up when a person retires and so forth, if that is what the honourable member is referring to. The position of Deputy Director-General, with the reorganisation, has not been filled and will not be filled.

That is part of the reorganisation of the department.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Is the Minister saying that there are no unfilled positions, even down to clerical and general staff, within the department?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Is the honourable member referring to staff ceilings; to what positions is the honourable member referring?

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** Are there any positions which have not been filled within the Registrar-General's office, the Valuer-General's office, or within the general office of the Minister, and I refer to all staff levels, even down to the lowly typist?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Like every other department, there are vacancies which are in the course of being filled, and this is a fact of life in every department, and the position would be the same in the Department of Lands and the E. & W.S. Department. However, there is no deliberate situation whereby positions will not be filled in the future. I just made the point that there is one definite decision that has been made by the Government, namely, that the position of Deputy Director-General will not be filled after the retirement of Mr. Rowe.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** That is the information I wanted; it was not a trick question. Can the Minister explain why the line under Registrar-General's office dealing with all staffing provided \$2 728 448 last year, and the proposed amount this year is \$2 700 000?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The member for Mitchell referred to this line, and it was pointed out that the line had been transferred, and, as such, his query is accounted for. The line comes under "Administration expenses, minor equipment and sundries".

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** I notice from the Auditor-General's Report that receipts for general fees and registration of real and personal property, etc., amount to \$3 708 000 in 1979-80. There were increases in fees and \$3 708 000 was collected. Is the Minister contemplating, or are there in the pipeline, any increases in fees relating to this line for registration of titles and real and personal property fees in general?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The fees were increased last year, but nothing is in the pipeline and the Government has no intention in regard to an increase of fees this year.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** To what does the sum of \$10 300 for bridge repairs on the Pichi Richi railway refer?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** This sum represents a contribution made to the Pichi Richi railway, because an accident involving a semi-trailer brought down part of the over-pass rail bridge. The railway could not meet the cost of repairing the bridge and, because that attraction would have been put out of operation, because it was considered by the Government to be of importance to this State, and because the railway is on Crown land, money was made available to repair the bridge.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** In view of the Minister's answer and the fact that the railway is of such importance to the tourist industry, should not the money come from the Department of Tourism and not from the Department of Lands?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The money came from the Department of Lands because the railway is on Crown land and, to all intents and purposes, it is the property of the Crown.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I ask the Minister the same question that I asked about the E. & W.S. Department: does the department do a cost benefit analysis of its programme of expenditure which, as elected representatives of the people who pay taxes to provide these funds, we would be able to examine to see whether we agree with the cost benefit judgment? The Director-General of Lands must

surely be responsible for any member of his staff who makes such analyses.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I believe that the honourable member referred to the programme system that is being developed, which involves the financial and manpower resources of the department and the way in which they are utilised.

**Mr. LEWIS:** I do not know how the department goes about it, but I would be heartened to hear that it is going about it, and I am interested to know the yardsticks used by the department in determining where to apply the dollars that are appropriated for the programmes that it has under way.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** In the programme that we are considering, there is a comparison of revenue and loan, and the manpower associated with each part. Whether it is administration, transport and supply, or craft services, we know exactly what revenue is available and the amount of Loan and manpower commitment to that area. This information will be available in future years and will enable the department and the Parliament to draw a comparison between the previous years' performance and the trend in the various sections.

**Mr. LEWIS:** In that case, would the Minister be prepared to supply the figures that relate to revenue obtained from lease payments made to the Government as against the total cost involved in administering that section of the department responsible for the collection of lease payments, whether they be perpetual leases, pastoral leases such as miscellaneous leases, or whatever, on a lease-by-lease basis in terms of revenue? I do not mind if the figures are totalled collectively.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That information would have to be processed. As the honourable member said, we are talking about annual licences, miscellaneous leases, the various forms of perpetual lease, whether marginal land perpetual lease, Crown perpetual leases, and leases under the Pastoral Act. There is no total figure in regard to these leases, but I make the point that many of the Crown perpetual leases, where the rent is set in perpetuity, in many instances are extremely low, and the servicing cost to the Government is probably about \$15 to \$20 a year. In many instances, the actual rent per annum on a substantial property can be as low as \$2 or \$3.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Will the Minister supply those figures at a future time, because, whereas rents have not gone up (and I do not advocate that they should have gone up), the cost of administering has certainly gone up. What does it cost to collect those rents? I would be pleased if that information could be provided either to the Committee or to me.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** That information can be provided.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions from members of the Committee, I ask the member for Flinders to ask questions.

**Mr. Blacker:** I refer to the Registrar-General's office; I brought to the attention of the Minister a problem in this regard on about 28 August this year. I raise the issue because it may have some application State-wide. The problem relates to Mr. Lyell James Robertson, of Port Lincoln, who was given an opportunity to sell part of his land near Port Lincoln. He holds freehold title to the 30 sections listed on the title. In 1973, an application was made to subdivide two part-sections from that land. The surveyor's map indicated that those sections should be F and G. Then the problem arose when it was mentioned that the balance of the land would be known as H. On the new certificate of title for the balance of the land, on the volume and folio number dated 1977 (bearing in mind that

this original subdivision took place in 1973), in the new certificate dated 28 June 1977 full listing of all of the sections was made.

Mr. Robertson believed that he had the same block of land with all those sections and in accordance with the map attached to the actual copy. He has now been advised that that is not the case, because, according to that original subdivision in 1973, all of those sections had been cancelled out and the area is now just block H. However, further to that, there have been two other subdivisions and the name of the remaining part of that block has changed from H to M, and I think J comes in somewhere. It has had three changes of title. A search taken yesterday reveals a further notation on that title indicating that these two other subdivisions in 1974 had been further added to this list.

The problem that I believe exists is that Mr. Robertson believed that he had fair and just title and access to those particular sections. He was of the opinion that he held the freehold title on 30 sections of land and that he had every right to sell one or more of those sections, subject to other planning requirements of the day. No indication of anything different was given to him by anyone until recently, when an application was made to annexe one of those sections off. The small stamp that is on the search title just says, "The consent of the Director of Planning required before further truncation", and it gives the docket number. I understand that "truncation" in this sense means the subdivision within a section, yet other people have said that it may refer to the subdivision of sections from within the original volume and folio title. As I see it, Mr. Robertson is now in an awkward situation. I believe he has just right to sell those sections, or certainly divide them off. More importantly, how many more people throughout this State are of the opinion that they are holding titles of various sections believing that they have a right to be able to subdivide those on the title? In my own case, I own a farming property which has three particular sections. I have always been of the opinion that that can be subdivided. However, once I present that to the department for resubdivision of one of those sections, the whole lot will be lumped into one block.

I am assuming that that would apply on the basis of what has happened in Mr. Robertson's case. On that assumption, many hundreds of people throughout the State are to the best of their knowledge and belief of the opinion that they hold freehold titles to a number of sections and believe they could either scale down their farming operations or purchase other titles in order to build up their operations.

I see a very serious problem in this case. It could be said that the original surveyor did not explain to Mr. Robertson the full implications of his notation of the original map, but I understand that that was standard procedure at that time and it has only been in recent years and, I believe, only in the past couple of years, that a different type of interpretation has been applied to the phrase "balance of lands" in a certificate of title, in this case CT 3722/2.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I can well remember the discussion I had with the honourable member on this matter. Whether or not any other situations like this exist I would have no idea. At this stage, no other situations like it have been brought to my notice. An attempt is still being made to resolve the matter. It is with the Minister of Planning at the moment. As yet I have not received a reply from him, but I will follow it up with him and find out what the attitude of the department and the State Planning Authority is to try to see whether the problem can be resolved. The normal requirement is that for any title to

stand by itself it must have legal access to it. I think this is probably one of the problems in this situation, that there are a number of blocks. Perhaps the honourable member might indicate whether they all have legal access.

**Mr. Blacker:** In this case, I believe some roads were closed years back. However, more than half of the blocks, and certainly the blocks in question, do have legal access and there are roads there at this present stage. So, more than half of those blocks could still be subdivided, although I am not sure whether "subdivided" is the correct term in this particular sense. Certainly they could be made available on a freehold title with existing access being made available. I apologise to the Minister for not speaking to him privately about this matter but it has only just come to my attention, and I have the search copy, dated yesterday, here today and that concerned me more than ever. When I first spoke to the Minister, we were dealing with a situation that occurred in 1973 or 1974. The new certificate of title was dated 1977, but since that time and since having spoken to the Minister of Lands and the Minister of Planning there has been a further notation on the title indicating and bringing into effect transactions that took place in 1974.

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** I will certainly continue to follow that matter through with the Minister of Planning in an endeavour to reach some satisfactory conclusion for the honourable member.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Are there any further questions? There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

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Department of Lands, \$1 600 000

**Acting Chairman:**  
Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**  
Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
Mr. H. Becker  
Mr. Max Brown  
Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
Mr. I. P. Lewis  
Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
The Hon. R. G. Payne  
Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**  
The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Lands.

**Departmental Advisers:**  
Mr. B. H. Bridges, Surveyor-General, Lands Department.  
Mr. E. A. R. Mellen, Director, Administration and Finance, Lands Department.  
Mr. K. C. Taeuber, Director-General of Lands.  
Mr. F. J. Vickery, Director, Land Resource Management.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Are there any questions? There being no questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

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Minister of Lands and Minister of Repatriation,  
Miscellaneous, \$514 000

**Acting Chairman:**

Mr. J. W. Olsen

**Members:**

Mr. E. S. Ashenden  
 Mr. H. Becker  
 Mr. Max Brown  
 Mr. T. H. Hemmings  
 Mr. I. P. Lewis  
 Mr. H. H. O'Neill  
 The Hon. R. G. Payne  
 Mr. R. J. Randall

**Witness:**

The Hon. P. B. Arnold, Minister of Lands and Minister of Repatriation.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr. B. H. Bridges, Surveyor-General, Lands Department.

Mr. E. A. R. Mellen, Director, Administration and Finance, Lands Department.

Mr. K. C. Taeuber, Director-General of Lands.

Mr. F. J. Vickery, Director, Land Resource Management.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** As a grant to the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia, \$381 000 is proposed for this year. Has the Government taken any decision about a new site for the zoo and, if so, has a site in Salisbury East been considered?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** At this stage, no decision has been taken in relation to the Salisbury proposal.

**The Hon. R. G. PAYNE:** Can I take it, from the answer the Minister gave, that a Salisbury site is at least under consideration?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, as far as I am aware, it is still under consideration. Nothing to the contrary has come through to me that there has been any variation from that.

**Mr. HEMMINGS:** It has been my concern last year and again this year that we spend a rather exorbitant sum on subsidies to the Dog Fence Board, whereas I believe that that expenditure should be the responsibility of those people who have the problem of dogs. Will the Minister advise the Committee whether he believes that the subsidy is wisely spent and does he foresee that, each year, the subsidy will forever escalate as a general tax on the people of the State?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Pastoralists within a given distance of the dog fence pay a rate, and the Government pays a \$1 for \$1 subsidy on that rate. The Government pays that subsidy because it is considered that the pastoralists near the dog fence should not have to bear the total cost of protecting pastoralists and farmers practically throughout the State. The penetration of wild dogs or dingoes would go throughout South Australia, if it were not for the dog fence. Whilst the adjoining pastoralists are the ones immediately affected, the fence has a large bearing on other pastoralists and farmers throughout the State. As such, they pay a rate, and there is a matching subsidy by the Government.

**Mr. O'NEILL:** Can the Minister give us a brief explanation of the way in which the \$75 000 allocation in relation to South Australia's 150th anniversary celebration is being spent?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** As the Committee would be aware, the 150th anniversary celebration board was established by the Government to organise activities for

the 150th year celebration. The board is made up of many representatives in South Australia who represent most interests. A whole series of subcommittees has been set up, with Chairmen who will be answerable to the board. I take it that the honourable member is wondering how the \$75 000 will be spent. A certain amount will be spent on administrative costs. There will be substantial costs for providing accommodation for the board and for the various subcommittees. It is anticipated that they will be located in the Torrens building and will take up a substantial area on the second floor, plus the two lower offices either side of the main entrance, which will be the reception area for the public.

As the programme gains momentum during the next six years, the utilisation of those officers will build up considerably, and it is expected that there will be an office staff of 15 or 20 by the time the celebration is reached. The board is involved at the moment in a number of things, one of the first being to determine an appropriate logo for the celebration. In the Western Australian celebrations, the concept of a swan was developed, and it became widely known in Western Australia as a duck. It became the symbol of the celebrations. These items are costly to develop. There is a contest, for instance, to develop the most appropriate logo for South Australia.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Can the Minister say why the actual expenditure last year in connection with training and research into arid zone ecology was considerably more than the amount voted? What part of the programme required such an increase in expenditure? Does the Minister expect that the programme in the ensuing year will result in a similar miscalculation of need? Will the Minister explain the purpose of the research and the beneficiaries of the training?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Principally, the Middleback training centre is for the purpose of arid zone ecology. It is a grant to the University of Adelaide to cover operating costs and expenses.

**Mr. LEWIS:** It goes to the university?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes.

**Mr. LEWIS:** What happened last year that required an additional \$8 000?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** The additional expenditure was mainly in the provision of power supply to the centre.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Can the Minister say whether the university or other bodies make a contribution towards the expenditure incurred in maintaining this installation? Presumably, from its name, it is somewhere in the Middleback Range?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Mr. Vickery is probably more aware of what is occurring in the project than anyone else would be, and I would like him to comment.

**Mr. Vickery:** The amount arises from a grant by the Government to the University of Adelaide for the establishment of the Middleback centre for arid zone research. It is operated by the Botany Department of the University of Adelaide, under the leadership of Dr. Lange, and is used extensively for post-graduate student studies. Masters and Ph.D. students undertake a considerable amount of study and pursue their research and honours projects there.

As a result of this, it gains some patronage from other research grants that come from other sources, and the centre is also used for teaching in the general area of the Botany Department, in arid zone botany and taxonomy, and particularly in the conduct of Dr. Lange's three-week summer school each year in arid zone ecology, which is a unit 3 botany course at the University of Adelaide.

The amount of \$6 000 budgeted for this year represents an annual Government approved figure for the ongoing



contingencies as an annual figure. It was originally \$5 000 per annum, and it has been upgraded in the current year to keep up with general inflation of the economy and to meet the needs of the annual ongoing costs.

**Mr. LEWIS:** What reason can the Minister or his assistants give for the necessity for the increase last year over and above what was voted?

**Mr. Vickery:** The increase last year from \$5 000 to \$13 000 occurred as a result of the need to upgrade the electricity supply and provide a new transformer able to meet the load needs of the research establishment, together with the station homestead.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Would the research work being undertaken there in any way assist in the discovery of native species, like some of the euphorbia, which might be useful for alternative energy, or hydrocarbon substitute crops in the future, to provide energy needs to society, in view of the trends, apparently, that the supply of crude oil will be reduced dramatically in the future? Are they trying to discover useful species in that locality and, if so, is it a particular objective of any research programme known to you?

**The Hon. P. B. Arnold:** Yes, work is being undertaken with various crops which can be a fuel substitute. Just what varieties and species are being tried, I am not too sure. Mr. Vickery might know the actual species that are being tested in that area.

**Mr. Vickery:** Generally, the research is aimed at range land use, the use of arid range lands of the State by sheep and cattle grazing, and this type of research. Some information may come from that research which relates to energy production from biological resources, but I am not aware of any particular research going on at the moment in that direction.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I draw to the attention of the Committee the comments that I made in relation to the procedural motions etc., some time ago.

**Mr. LEWIS:** What time does the Committee sit to?

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** The honourable member would be well aware from the Sessional Orders that the Committee will be suspended at 5.30 p.m. sharp, and that it is not at the discretion of the Committee to vary the times of sitting in any way whatsoever.

**Mr. LEWIS:** Could I ask the Minister whether the Department of Energy has in any way attempted to use the facilities that are there and the information that is being collected and co-ordinated (that is, the programme of collecting a species library, if I can call it that, to be established at the Roseworthy Agricultural College)? Is there cross-departmental liaison?

**Mr. Taeuber:** I would think that the work being done by Dr. Lange is being done in very close association with his botanical colleagues both at the State herbarium and other areas. If any research is proceeding in South Australia on

the matter, Dr. Lange would be well informed of it and using the resources of the arid zone research station to forward it.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I seek the concurrence of the Committee in relation to answers that have yet to be supplied; if there is no objection, I propose to insert such replies in *Hansard* and I will ensure that the member who asked the question receives a copy of the reply.

The report of Estimates Committee A indicates those items in the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) and the Public Purposes Loan Bill that have been considered by the Committee and the resolution agreed to by the Committee yesterday. I ask for a motion in regard to the adoption of the Committee report and resolution thereto.

**Mr. BECKER:** I move:

That the draft report of the Acting Chairman be adopted.

In doing so, I refer to the motion carried yesterday. There have been some difficulties and I hope that, when the Estimates Committees are established next year, the teething problems and difficulties will be ironed out so that everyone will have an opportunity to make a contribution or suggestion to the Premier so that we can get on with the job of questioning the Ministers and the public servants. I believe that, on occasions, we should have had a better opportunity to question the public servants, because, after all, a document was tabled in the House in relation to guidelines for public servants appearing before Committees. However, sometimes we did not have the opportunity to ask questions of the public servants, and I would have thought that that is what it is all about. I believe that the system worked reasonably well, considering that this is the first year, and I hope that it will be continued in the future.

Motion carried.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I seek the concurrence of the Committee for a motion to authorise the Acting Chairman to sign the minutes of today's meeting.

**Mr. BECKER:** I move:

That the Acting Chairman be authorised to confirm the minutes of today's meeting.

Motion carried.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I have received answers to questions asked of the Minister of Public Works on Tuesday 30 September 1980 and I propose that they be inserted in *Hansard* and distributed to the members who asked the questions.

At 5.29 p.m. the Committee concluded.