

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 3 October 1985

## ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

**Chairman:**

Mr Max Brown

**Members:**

Mr R.J. Gregory  
 Mr G.M. Gunn  
 Mr K.C. Hamilton  
 Mr I.P. Lewis  
 Mr N.T. Peterson  
 The Hon. Michael Wilson

*The Committee met at 11 a.m.*

Marine and Harbors, \$23 794 000

**Witness:**

The Hon. R.K. Abbott, Minister of Lands, Minister of Marine, Minister of Forests and Minister of Repatriation.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr K.R. Freeman, Acting Director of Marine and Harbors.

Mr R.V. Srinivasan, Acting Director, Administration and Finance, Department of Marine and Harbors.

Mr W.T. Bateman, Acting Engineer, Planning and Development, Department of Marine and Harbors.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Before calling on the first line, it has been the practice that I allow the lead questioner of the Opposition to perhaps say a few words on the Opposition's point of view in relation to the particular line or expenditure and the Minister will have the right of reply. The proposed expenditure is open for examination. Are there any questions?

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I do not wish to make an opening statement—I will move straight into questions. My first question concerns the spillage of copper chrome arsenate in the North Arm of the Port River. I notice in the Estimates of Expenditure under the departmental line that there is a pollution control program that has an extremely modest budget for salaries of \$9 577 including superannuation, and a goods and services budget of some \$30 252, which is certainly not an excessive budget for pollution control management. Can the Minister detail to the Committee, first, what consultation his department has had with the Department of Environment and Planning, or in fact what consultation has he had with the Minister for Environment and Planning in relation to the handling of this very serious spillage in the North Arm of the Port River? What advice has been offered by the department to the Minister for Environment and Planning?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** There has been total cooperation between the department and the Department of Environment and Planning in relation to the spillage. The department is treating it very seriously and with great concern. Of course, the Minister for Environment and Planning has submitted reports to Cabinet and Cabinet has made a recommendation, which followed discussions with the working group.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** The working group consisted of whom?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The working group consisted of the Department of Environment and Planning and the Metropolitan Fire Service's chief. I do not know whether anyone from our department was represented, but we were indirectly involved. In a moment I will ask the Acting Director to add to what I am saying. The Cabinet recommendation that we endorsed reads:

That we endorse the urgent investigations of the viability of precipitating the metals from the lagoon and drain; any viable method of precipitation be applied as soon as possible; authorise the expenditure of up to \$50 000 by the Minister for Environment and Planning for these measures to be implemented immediately; costings for this expenditure to be provided through the Department of Environment and Planning; and inform the South Australian public that the present levels of metals within the contaminated waters have decreased significantly since the spill; and that, following the implementation of the precautionary prohibitions, there is no concern for public health.

The member for Torrens may recall the press release issued by the Minister for Environment and Planning. I have since been notified by the Minister that the person who will head that inquiry is Mr Taeuber, a former Director of the Department of Lands. Mr Freeman may be able to add to what I have said and elaborate on the negotiations.

**Mr Freeman:** The department's involvement has been rather secondary in this, in the sense that we became involved because the lock that holds back the water in the ponding basin is a Department of Marine and Harbors lock. The first involvement we had as a department was late on the day of the spill, when we were asked to close the lock. Our involvement since then has been to assist the Department of Fisheries in warning people not to fish in the area and generally to be involved in meetings held so far as releasing water is concerned. Our people are also involved this morning in work associated with releasing some of the water into the North Arm.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I am staggered to learn that there was not a representative of the department on the working party. I would have thought that the Department of Marine and Harbors had a key role to play in containment of this spillage. I find it absolutely extraordinary that there was not a departmental representative on that working party. The question of tides and drift and where the spillage was to be carried is very much a matter of departmental expertise. What are the tidal effects? Where is the spillage to be carried? Will it be carried along the northern beaches and will it affect the prawn nurseries in those areas?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The Minister for Environment and Planning announced (and I am going on some of the press reports as this further develops) that he would be releasing between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. today one-third of the water being held in the channel. Whether or not that has occurred this morning, I am not aware because I have not been directly involved in the clean-up operations.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** In what sort of situation are we when the Minister of Marine plays a secondary role in this serious situation and we find that he learns of the actions of the Government through press reports? I find it absolutely extraordinary. I understand that the Director of Environment and Radiation at the Health Commission has not been consulted. Is that a fact? Was the Health Commission consulted in this matter?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The advice given to Cabinet was that those people included scientists from such varied disciplines as water chemistry, public health and marine biology, as well as experts in the general management of emergency situations. In addition, the working group has access to the most competent personnel and wide ranging laboratory facilities available in South Australia, namely, the State laboratory of the Engineering and Water Supply

Department and the Chemistry Division of the Department of Services and Supply. In arriving at those recommendations, the working group considered very thoroughly all the views expressed. I was not asked by Cabinet to become directly involved following the responsibility that Cabinet gave to the Minister for Environment and Planning to carry this work through.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** The best way to get at this is to ask the Minister whether he can give this Committee an assurance that the deposits of heavy metals, precipitated or not, will not be carried through into the food chain. This is the nub of the whole question. I have made inquiries through universities and experts in the field, and it has been put to me that it is an extraordinarily serious situation.

Leaving aside the matter of the copper and chromium at the moment, is the arsenic likely to be deposited in the food chain or likely to be taken up by marine flora? That is the point we are getting at. We want an absolute assurance from the Minister. I do not criticise the Minister for not being in charge of the whole investigation, but I do criticise the fact that he has to learn what is happening through press reports. I repeat, and will continue to repeat, that the Department of Marine and Harbors has a vital role to play in this situation as it is the department responsible for the area and has the expertise on tidal movements and currents in the area.

The Minister says that a third of the amount retained in the drain was released this morning. Where will that go? Is it just going to be dispersed out to sea or along the northern beaches and along the prawn nurseries? This is important information that the public has a right to know. Will the Minister give an assurance and, if he cannot, will he advise what is going to happen on the question of the moratorium on the catching of fish in the area, what will be the effect on the fishing industry and how long will the moratorium be in effect?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I was referring to the one press report which appeared this morning relating to the release of the spillage and about which the Minister for Environment and Planning was talking. I have been kept aware of the situation through Cabinet discussions, and the Department of Marine and Harbors has been thoroughly involved in all discussions. The latest development to which I was referring was the press release. I have not had an opportunity to discuss it in detail with my colleague, although I can certainly do that. I cannot see that I can give any assurances. However, I can assure the honourable member that I will take up the matter with the Minister for Environment and Planning to ascertain whether he is prepared to give those assurances.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I ask the Minister to table, as soon as possible, details of tide and current movements for the North Arm of the river and the ultimate destination of those currents and tide movements?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes, I agree to table details of those tide movements. We do not have them here, but I will make arrangements for them to be forwarded to the member.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I point out to the Minister that if he does not have that information before him, but can get it, or is prepared to obtain it, then it should be presented in a form that is suitable for insertion in *Hansard*.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can provide high and low tide movements to the member in a form that is suitable for insertion in *Hansard*. I do not think that we are in a position to indicate where those waters will move to.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** My question does not relate to when it is high or low tide—I can find that out myself by reading the *Advertiser* in the morning. I want to

know where the dispersion of these elements will occur. Surely the department has that information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I point out that as Chairman I cannot dictate to the Minister or his advisers whether they supply anything. All I am saying is that, if that information can be supplied, it should be supplied in a form in which it can be inserted in *Hansard*.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I will endeavour to provide as much information as possible to the Committee. Whether we have all the information that the member has requested is a matter that the department will look into. It may not be possible to provide all that information. I was not given an opportunity to give a brief overview before questions started. I think, Mr Chairman, that you gave that opportunity to the lead speaker on the other side, but it was not extended to me. However, I do have a brief overview that I wish to submit.

**The CHAIRMAN:** If the Minister wishes to make a statement he is at liberty to do so in the same circumstances as those in which I was prepared to allow the member for Torrens to do so.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Thank you for this opportunity to make a brief statement, Mr Chairman. I do this in order to give an overview of the activities of the Department of Marine and Harbors. The department is continuing its efforts to attract additional and improved direct shipping services through the port of Adelaide. This has now culminated in the Australian-Japan Shipping Conference agreeing from July this year to make direct container shipping calls to the port of Adelaide.

The conference has agreed that these calls will be on a fortnightly basis, although they will be monthly during an introductory phase. To ensure the success of this service, the Department of Marine and Harbors is actively marketing the service within South Australia and other states, and it has also undertaken some marketing activities in Japan.

The Government has recognised the need for a second container crane at the container terminal at Outer Harbor, and a contract for \$4.7 million has been let to a local manufacturer, Johns Perry, to manufacture and install the crane. It is expected that this crane will come into operation in January 1987.

Because of the importance of container handling to the future of the port of Adelaide, the department is currently discussing with the Australian National Line a proposal to construct an additional container berth at Outer Harbor, with ANL providing the container terminal facilities and a roll on roll off link span pontoon. Negotiations are proceeding in this regard.

The department has continued with its efforts to market the port's industrial estate lands comprising some 800 hectares of reclaimed land at Port Adelaide. During the year, agreement was reached between the Government and Elders IXL Limited for that company to erect a \$6 million wool store of some 30 000 square metres in area on portion of the industrial estate land at Gillman. This expansion by Elders means a greater commitment for that company in the port of Adelaide and a consequential increase in wool shipments through the port.

During the year, the department has embarked on the preparation of a comprehensive development plan covering future capital works and maintenance requirements. A draft plan covering capital works has been completed and has been released to various interests for comment prior to consideration by Government.

The report addresses, among other things, issues such as the provision of a deep draft grain facility east of Spencer Gulf and improved tanker berthing facilities at Port Adelaide. These issues are currently the subject of discussion with the respective industry interests.

As a Jubilee 150 project, the department is preparing a publication of coastal navigation charts, sailing directions and accompanying aerial photographs covering coastal and gulf waters of South Australia for use by the increasing number of people boating in South Australian waters.

During the year a sister port relationship was formalised between the port of Adelaide and the port of Mizushima in Japan, this being the first sister port relationship for both ports. Both ports are anxious to achieve material benefits from this relationship, covering matters such as trade, exchanges of personnel and knowledge, etc.

The department's recurrent budget allocation of \$23.794 million is \$1.579 million or 7.1 per cent higher than that of 1984-85. Effectively, this allocation in real terms approximates the same level of expenditure as last year. The capital budget allocation for 1985-86 of \$16.7 million represents an increase of \$9.603 million over expenditure in 1984-85.

This increase is attributable mainly to funding provided for the second container crane at Outer Harbor and funding for the Government's component of the Lincoln Cove (Porter Bay) project, where the Department of Marine and Harbors has been appointed project manager for the design and construction of the public works component.

Recurrent revenue for the year is estimated at \$39 million, a rise of almost \$2 million over receipts for 1984-85. This increase is attributable to a 5 per cent increase in rates which came into force from 1 July 1985 and increased revenue associated with the new direct shipping service to Japan. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to outline briefly some of the more significant issues involving the Department of Marine and Harbors.

**Mr HAMILTON:** I have listened with great interest to what the Minister has said about the Government's involvement in the arena of trade and promotion, and I refer to pages 95 and 97 of the yellow book. At page 95 it states:

The department is giving effect to Government direction to place greater emphasis on the business nature of the State's commercial ports.

At page 97 these subprograms are listed:

- Port feasibility, planning and design studies, assembly of resources for development,
- Port trade development,
- Provision, maintenance and operation of facilities and services for the handling of shipping
- Provision, maintenance and operation of facilities and services for the handling of cargo.

I commend the Government for all of that. However, I am concerned about a report in the Western Australian *Western Mail* (21-22 September), as follows:

Liberal plan to sell off WA ports: Fremantle Port could become a privately owned business under a State Liberal Government bent on giving full rein to free enterprise. The Fremantle Port Authority would at least be reviewed and overhauled with the aim of giving its users a greater say in its administration.

The Liberal's transport policy paper released yesterday states the aim is to increase productivity, reduce costs and industrial disruption and improve cargo handling. Shadow Transport Minister Norman Moore delivered the Party's policy to a rural seminar at Northam. He said a Liberal Government would examine the possibility of turning all regional ports over to private enterprise.

The report goes on to say what the Liberal Party would do in Western Australia. I am concerned that if this happened in South Australia the possible effect would be the sale of resources that have been built up for the shipping industry in this State, including the possible selling very cheaply of these assets, to Liberal conservatives, the Liberal Party's mates, and resources of our State—

**Mr GUNN:** What absolute nonsense.

**Mr HAMILTON:** Members opposite can have their say later. Courtesy demands that I be heard on this matter. I am concerned, and I want to place on record my strong

opposition to the sale of our commercial ports to free enterprise in this State. Therefore, can the Minister give me further information? I have listened with great interest to what he has said about the amount that will be expended on our ports, especially at Outer Harbor. Can the Minister give more specific details on the upgrading of South Australian ports, particularly commercial ports?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can only relate to the development report prepared by Mr Bateman on the future of our capital works program in the port of Adelaide, including all the outer ports throughout the State and our future maintenance work. There are some concerns about future works: for example, in the past we have reduced the two shift dredging operation to one shift. Assuming that we are able to achieve the new No. 7 berth at Outer Harbor and the new deep draft grain terminal, it will provide sufficient dredging work until July 1988, and in the meantime we hope that other dredging work will become available to continue that program.

One of the main reasons for this report is the technological changes occurring in all ports (not only Port Adelaide and Australian ports) throughout the world. We are also concerned with the change in shipping techniques and the more advanced technology that the ships themselves are using. It is extremely difficult to justify the enormous expenditure that would be required to upgrade the bulk handling operations at Osborne, because most of the vessels today have their own cranes and can do their own loading, etc, without the need to rely on land facilities, so that is an area to which we are giving serious consideration.

As I mentioned in my brief overview, we have our officers out in the field working very hard in our marketing plan in order that we can ask the shippers to provide more calls to the Port of Adelaide. If I give cargo and shipping statistics it might give the Committee some idea. The total cargo handled in 1982-83 was 12 518 536 tonnes. In 1983-84 that rose to 15 368 840 tonnes and in 1984-85 our total cargo handled was 16 052 992 tonnes. Over the past three or four years our total cargo handled through Port Adelaide has grown quite significantly.

To give an indication of the new vessels and different shipping techniques that are being used, there are now fewer vessels calling at Port Adelaide as compared with 1982-83 when there were 2 214 calls; in 1983-84 that dropped to 2 001 and in 1984-85 it dropped again to 1 908. This related not only to the Port of Adelaide at Outer Harbor but all our outer ports in South Australia, including Wallaroo, Port Lincoln, Port Pirie, Whyalla, Thevenard, and so on. That gives an indication of the additional tonnages that the vessels are carrying.

Whilst our total cargo handled has grown significantly, less vessels are calling. We are proceeding with our work in trying to attract more marketing and shipping calls to South Australia. Some of our officers have visited Japan. We have spoken to a lot of exporters and importers there and we are hoping that, as a result of this total program, we can build this up further in the future.

**Mr HAMILTON:** Can the Minister elaborate on the amount of dredging, the locations, and the period at those ports at which the dredging will occur during this financial year?

**The Hon. R. K. Abbott:** The dredging operations of the department were scaled down as from January 1985 from a two shift basis to a standard one shift basis. Given the physical characteristics and location of the State's commercial ports and the dredging operations undertaken by the department over the past years to ensure that operational depths are maintained, the need for maintenance dredging operations of the fleet has progressively decreased. Therefore, the future of the fleet as a functional unit lies in its

capital operations and at this point in time is dependent upon those projects to which I referred earlier. They are the creation of a No. 7 berth at Outer Harbor that would contain the handling as well as the ro-ro facilities, dredging commitments involving the use of the fleet for a 12 month period on a single shift operation, and the establishment of a deep water grain berth at Outer Harbor. The current estimates indicate that, if such a facility was established, the dredging operation on a one shift basis would extend over an 18 month period, so we are assuming that those projects will proceed and that the dredging program will continue until mid-1988. Of course, there is every possibility that more dredging work will be required.

**Mr HAMILTON:** On page 97, in relation to safety in recreational boating, the sub-program is the education of the boating public in safe boating practices and standards. With the increase in the amount of leisure time and fishing activities in this State, it concerns me to note, particularly interstate, via television coverage the number of occasions on which people have gone out fishing, recreational fishing in particular, but have not worn the appropriate safety equipment to assist them if the boat sinks or someone falls overboard. What specific programs are in train to educate the public in that area, and indeed other forms of good boating practices, particularly in the recreational field?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I think that the Acting Director is in a better position than I am to answer this question on the training programs.

**Mr Freeman:** The department does not have any specific training program, apart from our marine safety officers or boating inspectors patrolling areas and ensuring that people carry the necessary safety equipment. As you know, motor boats must be operated by licensed drivers, who must satisfy the requirements of our examination. In addition, to help promote safety in various areas in terms of the Boating Act, sections are zoned for swimming and for other forms of water recreation to try to perhaps make the water safer by keeping, say, water skiers and motor boats out of areas that are normally used for swimming. This zoning is conducted in collaboration with local councils throughout the State.

**Mr LEWIS:** I draw the Committee's attention to the yellow book at page 118, where we read that the need being addressed in the sector of conservation of the natural environment is that arising from the use of the State's waters by trading, fishing or recreational vessels, and that there is a potential for pollution and so on. Under the broad objectives of that program sector we see:

To contribute to the conservation of the natural environment for the benefit of the community through the protection of the State's waters from oil and other pollutants.

Looking at the right hand column we find that the specific targets, objectives, significant initiatives and improvements and results sought are:

To minimise the number of incidents of pollution of the State's waters.

To contain and clean up actual spills with a minimum effect on the natural environment.

The Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1984 to be made effective following Commonwealth Government ratifying the London Dumping Convention.

I have explained to the Committee the gist and background of my concern. Under the subprogram on the next page we see 'Marine pollution management'. I acknowledge that there is only one full-time equivalent person involved, but the clear responsibility of the department in these matters is identified and delineated for us as members of this Committee and this Parliament, on behalf of the people of South Australia. It is there set out in front of us on those two pages. So, bearing that in mind, can the Minister tell the Committee when he was first advised of the spill of the heavy metals in the area of Gillman and Port Adelaide, that

would ultimately result in the risk of pollution to the North Arm?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I pass that over to the Acting Director for his reply.

**Mr LEWIS:** I did ask the Minister when he was advised, with the greatest respect. I want to know when was the Minister first advised of the spill in that area of Port Adelaide that could result in pollution of the North Arm.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I was interstate on Friday of last week. I understand that the spillage occurred on the Thursday. I was advised on the Friday morning of last week.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** When were you advised—on the Friday morning?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** That is when you were interstate.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** By telephone.

**Mr LEWIS:** Can the Minister please tell the Committee what action he took—given what I have just put before the Committee about the department's commitment and obligation in this matter—on being advised in relation to those two statutory responsibilities and stated obligations of the department?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** In discussions with the Acting Director he informed me that we were indirectly involved in this spillage. We were not directly involved. It was more in the area of the Minister for Environment and Planning, because it happened on private property and we were concerned about any seepage into the waterways, but I was informed that the Metropolitan Fire Service and the Department of Environment and Planning were attending to it. They were in consultation with our people and, to my knowledge, there was no further action other than that continuous consultation by the department. I ask the Acting Director to elaborate on what I have said.

**Mr Freeman:** Our people were present on the Friday morning to assist, where possible, in closing off the lock under instructions from the head of the emergency services—the officer from the Metropolitan Fire Service who was responsible as coordinator and controller of the whole operation. As a department, one of our concerns was the amount of water flowing early in the morning into North Arm. I personally went to Adelaide Wallaroo Fertilisers, one of the companies that pumps quite a bit of water into that drain from its plant and requested that, if possible, it shut down its operations to reduce the amount of flow of water. The company agreed to do so and that reduced the flow of water to some extent and therefore helped to stop the flow of effluent passing into North Arm until the breach could be reasonably secured. It is appropriate to compliment Adelaide & Wallaroo Fertilisers on its assistance. It shut down the plant long enough for the breach to be sealed, then recommenced operating.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Before allowing the member for Mallee to pursue his line of questioning, let me say that the Chair has no objection to him or anybody else on the Committee questioning the Minister on what happened with respect to the spillage in the Port Adelaide area. However, it is fair to point out that it is obvious to the Chair that two Ministers are involved in the whole operation and we should remind ourselves that that is so.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** On a point of order, the member for Mallee has proved to the Committee that the effects of this spill are very much a departmental responsibility. The department has a responsibility in the management of pollution control of the sea and our coastal waters. I point out to you, Mr Chairman, with the greatest respect that it is very much a matter for the Department of Marine and Harbors, as of course it is for other Ministers. We are

questioning this Minister on his and his department's involvement in the matter.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The Chair is not stopping the member for Mallee from asking his questions at all. The Chair simply pointed out, and still points out, that the Chair is perfectly able to allow the member for Mallee or any other member of the Committee to question the Minister, but that it was obvious that there were two functions involved. The Chair is not stopping the member for Mallee from pursuing his question, but pointing out that there are two functions that should be taken into consideration.

**Mr LEWIS:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Some of my concern about this matter relates to the general level of ignorance that has been demonstrated, both here and in another Committee in recent times, about the responsibility which a spectrum of Government agencies have in such circumstances. The Minister has just confirmed for me, with assistance from officers of his department (and, indeed you, Mr Chairman, have confirmed for me), that that ignorance is real and dangerous. More than two Ministers are involved.

The Minister of Health was not consulted or, if he was, was so ignorant of his own responsibilities that he never bothered to take this matter to the division of the Health Commission responsible for environmental and radiation health. I want to know why that was not done. Why did not this Minister recognise his responsibilities in the matter? Are officers employed by this Government in the Public Service as experts in fields of this nature to be ignored when they are paid to have expert information and knowledge to ensure that such accidents as this do not have the consequences that they could clearly have had and indeed could still have?

**Mr PETERSON:** Will have.

**Mr LEWIS:** Indeed. I am appalled that public health, at risk directly and indirectly by such a spill, goes completely ignored in the arrangements made for the clean-up—if an attempt to clean up such as has been made can be described as a clean-up. A division of the South Australian Health Commission has that expert knowledge and it is on the record. The Minister of Health has funds appropriated for the purpose of ensuring that that expert knowledge is made available in those circumstances.

The Minister of Marine has a responsibility to recognise that the spectrum of skills available include those available from that division and in the South Australian Health Commission, as does the Minister for Environment and Planning. But, the Minister for Environment and Planning, being overloaded with the responsibilities of other incompetent Ministers, as Deputy Premier, is trying to tidy up the mess that this Government has got this State in. He has ignored the implications of his statutory responsibilities. He simply did not even bother to investigate or consult as to whether there were officers in the South Australian Health Commission who should have been involved in the decision making about the clean-up and, in the process of failing to investigate, the Minister did not take into consideration any of the opinions that could have been provided by those officers.

I want to know from the Minister whether my remarks about this matter are the first time that it has ever occurred to him that he has a responsibility with those other Ministers and the South Australian Health Commission to consult with the Health Commission whenever such an accident occurs? Is it the first time?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** We accept that responsibility when it occurs. I point out that we were fully aware of the circumstances of this spillage and the way in which it was going to be handled. The Minister for Environment and Planning gave a full report to all the Ministers on the following Monday in Cabinet, and it was taken from there

that he would head up, on behalf of the Government, that problem in conjunction. It was recognised in Cabinet that a number of Ministers were involved, and we accept that responsibility.

**Mr LEWIS:** Two Ministers, as you and the Chairman said. That excludes the Health Commission.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The Chair will not allow the member for Mallee suddenly to put words into my mouth.

**Mr LEWIS:** If you, Mr Chairman, check the record, you will find that that is what you said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I pointed out, during the line of questioning at that time by the member for Mallee, that it was obvious that two Ministers were involved. Now, of course, three are involved.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Several Ministers are involved, and that was recognised by Cabinet in the discussion that the Government held on this issue of major concern. I did not ignore that, and I do not think any other Minister ignored it, either. The Deputy Premier, as Minister for Environment and Planning, was given the responsibility to look into the matter and endeavour to take every measure necessary to try to overcome it. I was advised by him through memo, which was no doubt circulated to all other Ministers. I did not ring all other Ministers to see whether or not they had been advised. It was decided by the Deputy Premier to appoint Mr K.C. Taeuber to investigate and report to him on the initial response of Government agencies and departments on the chemical spillage at Gillman, and he stated that he would appreciate if I would ensure that Mr Taeuber had the full cooperation of the agencies and departments under my control involved in the incident. He enclosed a copy of the draft terms of reference which stated:

To investigate and report to the Minister of Emergency Services on the response to and handling of the chemical spillage at Gillman from the initial discovery until the incident was determined as a major spillage at approximately 9 a.m. on Friday 27 September 1985; and without limiting the generality of the above, to specifically report to the Minister on the adequacy of the response of agencies and departments in terms of their responsibilities detailed in the manual entitled 'Emergency Response to Leakage/Spillage of a Dangerous Substance during Transport, Storage or Handling'.

That is the advice I received and, as far as my department of Marine and Harbours is concerned, we will cooperate fully with Mr Taeuber in this inquiry.

**Mr LEWIS:** I do not doubt for a minute that the department, in its professional role, will cooperate fully with Mr Taeuber. I am doubting the Minister's part as a member of the Government to accurately identify the statutory obligations of the Government and the other Ministers involved to ensure that the available expertise from within the resources of the Government in all departments involved is brought to bare so that nothing is overlooked in the course of determining how best to deal with the problem. I want to know why the Health Commission was not consulted and has not been consulted up to the present time. Can the Minister tell me why the Health Commission has not been involved?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I cannot answer that on behalf of the Government.

**Mr LEWIS:** It is reprehensible for a member of Cabinet to say that he cannot answer why Government responsibility established in law is not properly exercised in an incident of this nature; that is astonishing. I do not absolve other Ministers collectively as members of Cabinet, from their responsibility, but we are talking about this Minister as a part of that Cabinet right now. We are questioning not other Ministers but this one.

This Minister, under the line in the Estimates of Payments, is paid good public money to do his job as a member

of that Cabinet. The laws are all there—they are passed by this Parliament. If Cabinet cannot be expected collectively to accept its responsibility for the exercise of those laws, it ought to get out so that a group of people can be appointed to those portfolio responsibilities who can and do understand their responsibilities. Clearly this Minister, as part of this Government, has not, and it is a matter of most serious gravity.

Those substances are not only highly toxic but are also enduring in their presence in the ecosystem which they penetrate in concentrations of the kind that occurred on this occasion. If it were not such a real threat, direct and indirect, short-term and long-term, to public health I would not go on in the fashion that I am going on. I want to demonstrate to this Committee and this Parliament that we are not here exercising and occupying posts as peoples' representatives in a sinecure fashion. We are here because we have, as do Ministers, statutory obligations to the people whom we are supposed to be representing.

It is not good enough for me, any other member of this Parliament or of this Committee, to ignore those responsibilities when we are voting on and examining the line right here and now involving the expenditure of funds collected from those citizens presumably to be spent in their interests. Goodness me, if this is not a matter of the most serious gravity, I do not know what is. What on earth would be, or could be, more serious? I do not know! I have yet to see anything that could be of more serious gravity than this matter. Had it occurred in any other circumstance I dare say there would have been a greater hue and cry than there has been.

We in the Opposition have given the Government ample time to get its act together, but it was still not together when the Committee sat an hour ago. How can the Minister justify not accepting some personal responsibility for not ensuring that public health officers from the Health Commission were consulted about the implications of their expertise in determining the best course of action to follow in this clean-up? I want to know how the Minister can justify that. I also want the Minister to explain to the Committee where my castigation of him and the Government is mistaken and misplaced.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can only reiterate that the responsibility rests not with the Department of Marine and Harbors but with the Minister for Environment and Planning and the Metropolitan Fire Service to coordinate all of the other departments involved—the Health Commission, Fisheries, Environment and Planning, Marine and Harbors, emergency services, and so on. We did all that we could in this matter and will continue to cooperate in an attempt to solve the problem. That is all I can say.

**Mr LEWIS:** Will the Minister table a copy of the manual to which he referred in his earlier answer, namely, the one relating to the way in which such emergencies are to be dealt with? He referred to State emergency services and the *modus operandi*.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am not too sure whether this line of questioning is appropriate at this time. I pointed out as Chairman of this Committee that the member was, in fact, dealing at that stage with two Ministers' portfolios. Later, of course, he moved into three Ministers' portfolios. I wish to explain this matter to the Committee, because I find myself in an awkward situation. Although the Minister of Marine has within his lines responsibility for oil pollution, I am not sure how far that responsibility goes, as it is common knowledge that the Minister for Environment and Planning would, even in those circumstances, be the responsible Minister.

I am allowing the questioning to continue because I think it is reasonable that the Minister should be questioned—I

am not arguing about that. I am simply pointing out that I find myself in a rather peculiar position, as three Ministers are involved in this matter. I do not know whether the Minister wishes to reply any further on this question.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** No.

**Mr PETERSON:** I have one question in relation to this spill. I will define where I believe there is a responsibility:

Any port includes a harbour, haven, road, step, channel, navigable creek, river or lake.

Therefore, the Minister has a responsibility under that definition. Much of the area into which these dangerous substances will be discharged are mangrove swamps and estuaries. I can see four ministries being responsible here: marine, environment, health and fisheries.

However, there is a responsibility on the Department of Marine and Harbors, and I would like to qualify the dangers that I see and read some quotes from articles relating to this matter. The first article headed 'The Case for the Protection of Mangrove Swamps', by Pat Harbison, appeared in a magazine some years ago. It states:

This is the possibility that the mangrove swamp has a unique potential for accumulating industrial metal wastes, and for redistributing these wastes, with enhanced impact, in the marine environment.

The article continues later:

Heavy metals do not, like cyanides, produce immediately obvious 'fish kills' unless discharged in very large quantities; but because of their accumulation and transformation in the sediments may have an insidious and very long-term effect on the ecology of gulf waters.

There are in that article other remarks which I will not read but which give readings on heavy metals and contaminants in mangrove swamp silts. The article continues later:

However, the sedimentary characteristics of the mangrove swamp suggest that it must inevitably become a sink for metallic wastes. The impact of this sedimentary source, once accumulated, could then be enhanced in the wider marine environment by chemical remobilisation, through food chains, or by mortality among juvenile classes of fish populations. Such redistribution could continue to affect the near-shore marine environment for many years . . .

Another article appeared in *Australian Fisheries* in which it states that the most obviously vulnerable area to pollution is estuaries. I have a report written some years ago on marine reserves in South Australia. Marine reserves obviously come under this Minister's responsibility. This article states:

. . . some of the shellfish taken from St Vincents Gulf contain gut and mantle levels of the heavy metal cadmium about three to 12 times more concentrated than the maximum level permitted in shellfish for human consumption by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council.

The danger of this discharge is not to be seen now: we are handing this problem to our children and our children's children, because it will accumulate.

The metal in that liquid in the drain is being let into the sea, and I do not believe that it should be because it will accumulate. If a problem arises from this pollution in future (and there is pollution there already), where does the Department of Marine and Harbors stand? Will the Minister give an undertaking to accept or deny responsibility for anything that may occur in the future in relation to his portfolio?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** If that was brought to our attention, yes, we would investigate to see what the situation was and call for the necessary support from the Department of Fisheries. I think that we would have to rely on the fisheries people, who have the expertise in fisheries areas. We would do what we could to overcome whatever the problem was.

**Mr PETERSON:** Nothing can be done about it once it is there; it is a cumulative thing. However, it is in the

Minister's area of responsibility. Does he accept that the marine environment is his responsibility?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I think it is fair to say that it is our responsibility and that we would have to seek technical advice and expertise.

**Mr PETERSON:** That is provided for in the Act.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes.

**Mr PETERSON:** I am concerned about the dockyard area. I am sure that departmental officers and the Minister would know that I am in fairly close association with the dock yard. I put on record that there is a fairly dispirited and disillusioned manpower force there at the moment. There are very well qualified people there chipping rust, lifting concrete blocks, and doing that type of thing. Can the Minister or the Director give me an indication of the future of the dockyard and the employment possibilities for the men there?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Future employment levels are largely dependent on decisions made on issues raised in the department's development plan, as well as the review of the maintenance commitments which is currently being undertaken in certain areas where employment levels could be significantly affected in the future. The only foreseeable work of any significance for the bucket dredge and the hopper barges is the dredging of No. 7 container berth and the deep draft grain depot—which I have already explained.

As at 30 June 1986, there will be 267 employees under the Public Service Act, and 508 weekly paid employees, making a total of 775. That number has decreased from a total of 846 as at 30 June 1982. The number has dropped slightly each year since then. The total will be 775 as at 30 June 1986. That is the target that has been set by the Government. If the Osborne bulk handling plant is eventually closed, as foreshadowed in the development plan, about 30 employees will have to be redeployed. We will be talking with interested parties about this matter in the near future to see whether we can come to some satisfactory arrangement with employees who may be surplus.

I point out that it is Government policy that there will be no retrenchments. Every employee is assured of a position, no matter what. With regard to the relocation of the No. 1 berth at Outer Harbor (because of its poor condition and the impact of the Gulf Point development), it is proposed shortly to transfer livestock loading activities to No. 3 berth at Outer Harbor. Some alterations will be required to No. 3 shed to accommodate livestock, and it is envisaged that this work will be undertaken by DMH employees. While the department has received representations from some livestock interests as to building a new berth at Pelican Point for loading livestock, we do not consider that such a facility can be justified at this point.

A separate issue is the relocation of the oil terminals, following the disastrous fire at Birkenhead. The Deputy Premier and I were given the responsibility of reporting to Cabinet as soon as possible. Within the next two weeks I hope to take a submission to Cabinet on certain recommendations to upgrade the facilities at Birkenhead to cater for the immediate safety concern that exists in relation to the Birkenhead fuel depots.

**Mr PETERSON:** In relation to employment factors, page 96 of the yellow book indicates a decrease of 12.1 employees: from where will those employees be taken, and what is the reason for the decrease?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I ask the Acting Director to respond to that.

**Mr Freeman:** The 12 people involved will be spread throughout the department. This depends to an extent on attrition, of course, but we expect a majority of those people to come from the deepening area, following the transfer from a two shift to a one shift dredge operation. Further,

we expect some attrition at the Osborne bulk handling plant, as well as one position from the supply area, where we will be introducing a new computerised supply system. They are the main areas. Under the Government's policy of no retrenchments, vacancies arise when people actually leave the department, and the decision whether or not it is necessary to replace them is dependent on the work load of the area involved.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I move:

That this Committee censures the Minister of Marine for his failure to act on behalf of the South Australian people in the handling of the recent spillage of copper chrome arsenate solution into the Port River and ensure that he was completely informed and consulted at all times.

In his answers to questions on this matter today the Minister has shown that he has remained unaware of the events that have occurred. The members for Semaphore and Mallett and I have shown to this Committee (and the Minister has virtually admitted this) that he has statutory responsibility over this matter of pollution of waters. The Minister's statutory responsibility does not rest just with the pollution of waters by oil—it applies in relation to any other pollutants as well. It is obvious that the Minister has that statutory responsibility.

What has the Minister told us this morning under questioning about his knowledge about these events? First, he has told us that he was advised when he was interstate, in Melbourne, of the spillage on Friday morning. He admitted that he was telephoned by his department and informed of the spillage. What instructions did the Minister give his department as to the involvement that he and his departmental officers would have in the management of this extremely serious situation?

In answer to my questions, the Minister has said that he had a secondary involvement in the matter. No-one objects to Cabinet appointing a coordinating Minister to handle matters of emergency. That is obviously the way to go about it, but in appointing a coordinating Minister the statutory responsibilities of other Ministers are not absolved. The Minister has told the Committee that there was not even a representative of the Department of Marine and Harbors on the working party involved. I find it absolutely extraordinary that the Government department in this State with officers with a knowledge of the movement of tides and currents along our foreshore should not have a representative on that working party. It is all very well for the Minister to say that he is kept informed in Cabinet every Monday.

If the Minister had been carrying out his statutory responsibilities, I would have thought that he would be in touch with the coordinating Minister every day (at least every day if his departmental officers did not keep him informed daily). We know his departmental officers were not on the working party. Certainly, they were consulted, we were told, by the Acting Director. A key department of Government in the management of pollution of coastal waters is not on the working party but is merely acting as consultant.

In answer to my earlier questions the Minister was able to give information only on the basis of press reports that he had read; press reports that we had all read. The Minister must have known that this matter would be raised today, yet he has come to the Committee with nothing more than press reports. He could not even table the tide flow charts for the area. One of the most important problems and consequences of this spillage of copper chrome arsenate is that arsenic is a heavy metal, and I point out its effect on the marine environment: a heavy metal like mercury, arsenic is absorbed into the sediment and marine flora.

If it is absorbed into that medium, the fish feed on it; that is the beginning of the food chain, and then we feed on the fish. Of course, by doing that and because heavy

metals are not metabolised through the body—they remain in the human system—the results show up in future years. I am sure that the senior Minister—the Minister for Environment and Planning—knows that but, as the member for Mallee pointed out, the relevant section of the Health Commission was not even consulted in the matter.

However, that is not the question of this censure, which deals with the lack of knowledge of this Minister on what is a major spillage with serious effects for the people of this State. It is no good the Minister saying that he had a secondary involvement and leaving it at that. He has come to this Committee with no information to satisfy it and, as I repeat, he must have known that it would be the subject of questioning today. It is just not good enough that this should occur and, for that reason, the Opposition has moved this motion of censure to show the people of South Australia where the responsibility lies and to show that Ministers who have statutory responsibilities must carry out those responsibilities.

It has been put to me and obviously to the member for Semaphore that tidal flow in this State from that area goes up along the northern beaches through the mangrove swamps and prawn nurseries. The member for Semaphore has already pointed out to the Committee, by referring to expert evidence, the effect of heavy metal deposits in mangrove swamps and how it is taken up by the marine flora. It is in those mangrove swamps that we have the fish nurseries of this part of the coast.

Surely, if there was going to be any input by the department it would be on the question of tidal flows. The Health Commission is not an expert on tidal flows; the Department of Environment and Planning is not an expert on tidal flows—the Department of Marine and Harbours is. That department has the expertise. No doubt the department has passed on through its offices at least that information to the working party, but no-one has been able to pass information to this Committee—a Committee of Parliament, and a Committee that has a duty to South Australian taxpayers, as my colleague the member for Mallee pointed out earlier, to elucidate these facts. The Opposition believes that the Minister should be censured for not being prepared before he came to the Committee. What is even more important, he should be censured for not taking an active role in the management of what is a potential disaster for South Australia.

**Mr PETERSON:** There seems to be a bit of noise going on about a matter raised by me in 1980 and 1981. I raised this matter then and, in a grievance debate, put to the previous Government put all the points that I have made today. On 3 March 1981, in a question on notice, I asked:

Are regular tests made upon crustaceans, shellfish and pelagic and demersal fish from St Vincent Gulf to ascertain the levels of contaminants contained in their flesh...?

This is the reply I received:

There is no justification for a regular broad-sampling program to test fish samples from St Vincent Gulf for contaminants. Tests are normally done when contamination of the gulf is known to have occurred, in the event of specific natural events such as algal blooms of other potentially toxic situations, or in response to specific complaints.

I had asked a series of questions that are all set out in *Hansard*. The then Liberal Government did nothing.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** There was no spill.

**Mr PETERSON:** It is not a matter of a spill. The matter rests on the basis of the reports by Harbison (Department of Environment and Planning) and the port from Doctor Ottaway, who is a marine biologist. I raised the matter with the previous Minister and his Government, who did nothing. I tried to raise some interest and get something done, because this is not a new problem. However, this is a particular instance, and the way it has been handled is

terrible, especially with the lost time involved. At least four Ministers are involved, and I hope that a report will be released telling us exactly what happened. I hope that that report comes out today. If it does not, we as a Parliament will have to do something. I raised a similar matter four or five years ago, and we have had a series of Ministers from both sides of Parliament who have done nothing.

As far as I am aware not one test has been undertaken. What more can one do? The matter has been raised here today, and perhaps the Minister has not done the right thing or has not done everything he could have—I do not know. He has not come here today with the right information. I do not know what information he has, but he has not given a good answer today. I see his responsibility starting when the material first went into the river. My information on that contaminant is that it is precipitating in the channel: the top level of water is at acceptable levels. As to what that means—

*The Hon. Michael Wilson interjecting:*

**Mr PETERSON:** I got that from another Government department. It came from a department responsible for this, and I was given an assurance that the discharge is safe.

*Members interjecting:*

**Mr PETERSON:** I do not believe it is safe; I do not believe we should put one cup of this stuff in the river or sea: that is my opinion. This is the assurance given to me. It should not go there. As to the motion—

**Mr LEWIS:** I bet that information did not come from health.

**Mr PETERSON:** My information is not secret information: it was given to me clearly by a department, although I do not know that I should name the department or the officer who gave it to me. That information was given to me by a person who should have known and I believe he gave me the right information. Certainly, the motion is out of order, in that there has been nothing done for all these years and suddenly it is a problem. If it is a problem now why was it not a problem in 1980-81? I asked a question of the then Minister of Health (Hon. Jennifer Adamson), and yet not a thing was done.

Today's action is only cosmetic and I will wait for that report to be released. If the report is an honest one, as I am sure it will be, and if it is damning on any public servant or Minister, I think we should then act, but at the moment I can see the confusion that I believe has occurred. I do not know at what stage the responsibility changed from one to the other, but certainly there has been a muckup. Let us find out what has happened before we do anything.

**Mr GUNN:** We have again seen the member for Semaphore perform his balancing act. Every time there is a matter of importance where the Labor Party is going to be censured, the honourable member rides the barbed wire fence. We heard the member for Semaphore tell the Committee that he does not want to see one cupful of this water discharged into the Port River. This is the first occasion that the Parliament has had to discuss this matter in detail. We have before us the Minister of Marine; he is under examination by the Parliamentary Estimates Committee, and this is the appropriate time.

At 6.30 a.m. today I was horrified to hear on the ABC news that they are going to start discharging this material into the river. Once it has gone, the damage is done. There seems to be some indecent haste about discharging this material into the Port River. I hope that no damage is done, but no-one knows. Why should this course of action be taken in such haste? It is only a few days since the occurrence of this unfortunate incident, and this is the first occasion on which the matter has been discussed.

The member for Semaphore devoted a considerable amount of his speech to what a previous Minister or Gov-



ernment had not done. At this stage we are not debating any allegations of inaction, but we have an actual spill on our hands and we are debating the most effective manner of clearing up and avoiding as much damage as possible. We are discussing the potential long-term damage to the environment of this State. I understand that mangroves are among the most sensitive of environmental areas. The Minister for Environment and Planning, along with other people, have gone to great lengths to prevent a few power lines from being erected in the Flinders Ranges, but within a few days of this highly toxic material escaping into the river, it is now intended to discharge it into the Port River.

If the chief spokesperson for the Opposition had not raised this matter, we would have been derelict in our duty and would have been rightly criticised. I am amazed at the lack of information placed before this Committee this morning. We were told that we have four Ministers—what have they all been doing? Who has been coordinating the operation, and what direction has come from Cabinet to ensure that the long-term environmental effects are not serious? It does not please the Opposition to stand here and raise this matter when there are many other things that we want to discuss. It means that the Committee will probably have to sit later this evening. That is all well and good, because we are here as legislators and I am not worried about that. However, it does not give us any pleasure to have to point out what we believe are the shortcomings of the Minister in the actions taken by him.

If there is an oil spill at Port Stanvac, people ask questions in the House. There is a lot of fanfare and television cameras relating to such events, and that is oil, but we are talking about an arsenic based substance. Anybody who has had any experience in using these substances in private employment knows how dangerous they are and how careful one has to be in handling them. Arsenic based poisons and other materials of that nature are some of the most toxic substances that one comes across. We are talking about letting it go into the Port River.

**Mr PETERSON:** That is not what this says—read it!

**Mr GUNN:** The member for Semaphore will have an opportunity to clarify his position. I would say that he rose to his feet a little too early and has attempted to support the Labor Party on this issue: we all know that he has to be very careful with his criticisms of the Labor Party, otherwise he runs the risk of alienating what is basically a traditional Labor seat. He has to be careful to ride that barbed wire fence or the bucking bronco and keep his knees pretty close into the knee pads, otherwise he will slip and fall. We appreciate his predicament: he has to get a good headline in the local paper so that people think that he is really concerned (and no doubt he is a concerned member), but on the other hand he cannot go too far, otherwise he will give the Labor Party at Semaphore and Port Adelaide just the emphasis that it wants to push its candidates to the fore.

Let us come to the Minister, who for some time today has dithered about and has not answered the question. He, as the representative of the Department of Marine and Harbors in Cabinet, obviously has been party to the decision this morning to discharge this material into the Port River. He did not effectively answer the question put by the member for Semaphore as to who will be financially responsible for any long-term damage that may occur. Let us hope that nothing happens—that is the last thing we want. What I cannot understand and what the Minister has to clearly advise this House on is why there has been such haste to, first, discharge this material at 6 o'clock this morning into the Port River and, secondly, why he was not kept completely informed at all times. The motion is brief, but it is very clear and is worthy of support, because it has been

raised with the best will in the world. We are concerned about the long-term effects on the people of this State.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I have been accused of a number of things: first, of not having played an active role in this matter, and, secondly, of just relying on press reports. I thought that I had clarified that point. My comment on that related to the report that appeared in the *Advertiser* this morning. The Committee now is attempting to censure me for my failure to act on behalf of the South Australian people in the handling of the recent spillage of copper chrome arsenate solution into the Port River and for failing to ensure that I was completely informed and consulted at all times.

I think that I should go through this matter step by step. The facts are that I was interstate on the Friday concerned—and I mentioned that fact. I was informed that a spillage had occurred earlier that Friday morning. At that stage I was not informed of the full details or the extent of the spillage, because at that time the full details were not available. However, when I returned on the weekend, there was that full discussion with the Minister of Emergency Services at a full Cabinet meeting. I was informed that the Minister for Environment and Planning and Emergency Services was in control of this matter and would coordinate all other agencies in response to this spill.

The Department of Marine and Harbors placed all its facilities at the disposal of those coordinating the clean-up, and I am quite satisfied that the department took all appropriate action. The control of the marine environment is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Planning, and it has the expertise for that job. The Department of Fisheries also has some responsibility and expertise in this area, and no doubt the Health Commission also has a responsibility and expertise in the matters affecting public health. The Department of Marine and Harbors, in the discharge of its responsibilities, uses the services of all those agencies. We must rely on the expertise within those departments.

In the case of this spill, all agencies were coordinated by Emergency Services. It would have been unproductive for the Department of Marine and Harbors to attempt to be totally separate in the clean-up response. Where the Department of Marine and Harbors has the facilities and expertise in such matters as oil spills, the department would take a much higher profile, but would still come under the control of the agency chosen to coordinate response: that, of course, is usually Emergency Services.

So, this is a rather desperate and emotional attempt to conjure up some blame associated with this poison spill and attach it to my portfolio. It is quite irrational and grossly unfair to those officers of the Department of Marine and Harbors who have been involved. The Government has taken the matter seriously and, given the number of agencies involved, has taken the most appropriate action. A review of the matter, as I mentioned, is to be conducted by Mr Ken Taueber.

The decision to release the substance was taken by the Minister of Emergency Services on technical advice given to the Department of Environment and Planning. Decisions are being taken by the Minister of Emergency Services in accordance with the agreed emergency service procedure manual. I am surprised that the member for Mallee has not got a copy of that, because I understood that it was circulated to all members of Parliament. I oppose the motion.

**Mr GREGORY:** The member for Torrens wants to censure the Minister of Marine for failure to act on behalf of the South Australian people in handling the recent spillage of copper chrome arsenate solution into the Port River and ensure that he was completely informed and consulted at all times. In listening to the line of questioning this morning

by members opposite and responses from the Minister, one wonders whether members of the Opposition had anything to ask about expenditure of the Department of Marine and Harbors, because they have not asked any questions about it yet. They, as well as everyone else in South Australia, know that Cabinet has made some fairly clear and firm decisions in respect to this spillage.

It made a decision that gave one Minister overriding control and authority to ensure that all procedures that needed to be taken were acted upon. On this side we know that, despite all the information we get from other people, it pays to have only one person running something. However, it appears that members opposite who claim to know how businesses operate and that they have business expertise want half a dozen ministries and Ministers all doing separate things.

That is precisely what the resolution tries to imply: criticism of our Government and Cabinet for taking the decision, in accordance with proper procedures, that the appropriate Minister has control of the clean-up. We do not deny that the chemicals that have been spilt are dangerous; we know they are. The appropriate experts have been employed to ensure that the health of South Australian people is not endangered.

I was amazed to hear the member for Semaphore explain the lack of activity, knowledge and desire of the previous Government when he raised matters with it. I would have listened with more patience if he had been responded to in a more affirmative style, saying, 'Yes, we are doing these things.' It illustrates that the Department of Health does not have an overriding role in what happens with fish. The Department of Fisheries does all that work—it initiates. It goes to officers of the Department of Health to get an analysis done or goes to other appropriate places. We have seen some fairly woolly-headed thinking and explanations today, but this hides the fairly important fact that the Opposition has nothing to ask about expenditure of the Department of Marine and Harbors—nothing at all. It has not asked one question yet. All those members wanted to know was about a spill. They know that Cabinet has determined that the Minister of Emergency Services controls it and that it is being monitored daily.

Of course it is highly emotive issue, but it is being carried out under proper control. One reason why the water was let out today—and the member for Eyre talks about haste and I do not know where he has gone: perhaps he is in haste to go somewhere else—is obvious. One member opposite said that they knew when the high tide was because they could read it in the newspaper. I thought that they would realise that the appropriate time to let it out is high tide. When the tide ebbs what has been let out goes with it. I thought that the former Minister of Marine would have understood that clearly.

**Mr LEWIS:** It's not about that, you goose.

**Mr GREGORY:** Thank you very much. At least I do not have to sit here, shout and carry on. I can talk in a normal voice. The member for Eyre does not allow facts to get in the way of a good argument. I suppose one could admire him for that. The point being made is that experts control the situation. They have determined that the levels of concentration are so low at the moment that they form no danger. That is why the water is being let out. I see the motion of members opposite as a complete waste of time and an annoyance to the committee, because they have no questions on expenditure to ask the Minister.

**Mr LEWIS:** Let us get it clear. This proposition, and indeed the thrust of the Opposition's questioning about this matter, does not reflect in any way on whether or not the biology, the chemistry, and the action taken in those matters is correct or incorrect. It relates to whether or not Ministers

who have statutory responsibilities collectively in Cabinet or, in particular, as is the case in this instance, this Minister, have acted according to those Statutes and to their oath sworn to the Constitution of this State.

That is what this motion is about. We know that the incident to which we are referring and which demonstrates that statutory incompetence revolves around the spill of salts of copper, salts of arsenic and salts of chromium. They were all in solution. Sure, those are physical facts. What then becomes the responsibility, if any, for Ministers of the Government in general or a Minister of the Government—this one in particular—is defined in the Statutes. It is undertaken by them as individuals when they swear an oath and become a member of Cabinet.

It is called ministerial accountability, in case members opposite have not ever heard that before. That is why they take an oath; that is why we have Ministers; and that is indeed why we elect members to the Parliament and form governments within that Parliament so that there can be someone somewhere accountable for the various Statutes enacted by Parliament in the delivery of services to the public who elect them. This proposition seeks to censure this Minister because he has demonstrated his ignorance of his statutory responsibility, which he undertook when he swore that oath. It has nothing to do, as the member for Florey was trying to say before, with the effects of the spill. We know that those effects can be serious and that expert opinion will determine the nature of that seriousness.

This is about a statutory matter: the responsibility and accountability of Ministers to this Parliament. Indeed, it has nothing to do, as the member for Semaphore pretended he would like it to, with whether or not there was monitoring of the presence and variation in the levels of presence of heavy metals in the gulf previously. It is not about that, dear boy. It is about ministerial accountability as defined in law for something that has happened.

If we cannot say, with expert knowledge, that this effect or that effect is or is not going to happen, at least we can say that we have laws which govern the responsibility of Ministers who accept responsibilities when they swear on oath under the Constitution. In this case, this Minister (along with others, sure, but they are not here) has demonstrated that he does not understand that principle and has not accepted those responsibilities as established in law. He should have been advised accordingly the moment that this occurred.

The member for Semaphore read the relevant part of the statute which definitely established that measure of responsibility. We have learnt from the Minister, in response to questions we put to him this morning, that he was not advised and, when he was advised, that he took no action. If he did take some action, he is yet to inform us. He was invited to do so. I would like to know who was his informant on Friday morning and why was it as late as Friday that such a serious matter was drawn to his attention when it is already established (in law) that he should have been informed immediately? What instructions did the Minister give when he knew of his responsibility? He has not said what instructions he gave, if any, and I doubt that he gave any instructions at all. He does not even know, or has demonstrated that he is unlikely to know, and I put it to the Committee that he does not know, what are his statutory obligations as Minister. He has not told the Committee of any instructions that he gave. Rather the Minister has skirted around that question every time that it has been put to him.

To whom did he tell what and what needed to be done? If, indeed, the Minister did give instructions on the telephone when he was advised on Friday morning by his

informant, what were those instructions, who was his informant and what did he tell his Acting Director if the informant was not the Acting Director? What did he tell him to do? We do not know that, yet we have asked for that information. Clearly, it is the responsibility of this Parliament to ensure that any Minister, this Minister included, accepts those statutory responsibilities. I hope that point is not wasted on the members for Florey, Ascot Park or Semaphore. I am sure that the member for Semaphore understands the principle that we are getting at.

Not only has the Minister demonstrated his ignorance of those statutory responsibilities, but also, regrettably, he felt that it was his prerogative in this instance to join the debate. Sure, he can answer, but what needs to be understood is that the Minister does not even know what are the Sessional Orders of these Committees. He is not even *au fait* with that! This Minister does not know that he cannot oppose or support the proposition—he is here to be examined by the Committee. It is the members of the Committee, as established in Sessional Orders and not the Minister, who have the responsibility to support or oppose the proposition. The Minister does not even understand the basic proceedings of Parliament—a further demonstration of his incompetence. How many instances do we need to give to validate and thereby ensure that we get support for the proposition that the Minister should be censured?

We demonstrate that in this instance the Minister has not understood what were his responsibilities in relation to this most serious matter. He has not understood what they were in relation to the Acts that establish them as they relate to his department. He has not understood what they are in relation to the Constitution and his part of the Cabinet as a member of it. What is more, he has not taken any action to ensure that information was drawn from all the relevant agencies from which it could have been drawn. Initially Labor Party members of this Committee put the view that two Ministers were involved statutorily. To my certain knowledge there were at least four, and there could have been five, or maybe more. In answer to the member for Ascot Park, the Cabinet has total responsibility.

**Mr HAMILTON:** Albert Park.

**Mr LEWIS:** Albert Park, or whatever it is. I apologise for misidentifying the honourable member. The Minister failed to understand on all those levels what were his reasonable obligations and statutory responsibilities. This Committee is examining whether or not we will pay the Minister his ministerial salary, and he is supposed to be paid that because he knows his job, his obligations and responsibilities and because he discharges them. He neither knows them nor has discharged them. The Minister deserves to be censured.

*[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2 p.m.]*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I think that, on this day of scintillating events, we are up to the member for Albert Park.

**Mr HAMILTON:** This censure motion is a patently and transparently planned attack on the Minister. That is obvious. When we heard the member for Torrens say that he had no great pleasure in moving this censure motion against the Minister, he provided little or no information. Indeed, at no stage did he say that he had contacted the Department of Marine and Harbors to find out what had taken place. They did not. It was apparent that Opposition members had come here with a premeditated plan of attack on the Minister. It was a completely debased attack.

The lead speaker for the Opposition said that moving the motion gave him no pleasure but that Opposition members were concerned about the local community. Then, the mem-

ber for Eyre launched a tirade of abuse against the member for Semaphore. However, I should have thought that members opposite would try to get on side with the member for Semaphore, but they abused him.

Then, the member for Mallee launched a tirade of abuse against the Minister. The honourable member talked about ministerial responsibility and the collective responsibility of the Government. However, I should have thought that, if members opposite had thought about this matter logically, they would have concluded that the Government had acted responsibly and quickly, as I shall prove later. Clearly, Opposition members wanted to have their cake and eat it, too, because, if the Ministers had gone off at different tangents, members opposite would have said that the Government should have placed one person in charge of this spill. However, they did not do so.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** That was in my speech.

**Mr HAMILTON:** I listened to the honourable member's speech and to the other speeches, but they did not say that. Therefore, it matters not that Opposition members have attacked the Government: the Government has acted responsibly. At 11.30 p.m. on Friday, a round table conference was held on site. The Deputy Premier, who is also Minister of Emergency Services, attended the conference in his dual capacity. What more could the Opposition ask for. Perhaps they could ask for the Premier to attend but, given the fact that the Deputy Premier was there, Opposition members should have been satisfied that the Government had taken sufficient notice and was so gravely concerned about the situation that the Minister got there quickly. Officers of the Department of Marine and Harbors, the Police Department, the Fire Brigade, the Port Adelaide council, the Fisheries Department, the Department of Health, and the Department of Environment and Planning were at the site.

**Mr GUNN:** That is not true.

**Mr HAMILTON:** I listened intently to what the member for Eyre had to say and, if he has not got any manners, it is about time that he learnt. If he wants to know what is the Government's position, let him listen and check: at no time did he say that he had tried to contact the Minister's office or the Department of Marine and Harbors. Indeed, he did not do so. He is not fair dinkum. Clearly, the honourable member came in here with a plan for a premeditated attack on the Government. I should have thought that one of the first things to do was contact the Minister's office, but Opposition members did not do that. The departmental personnel concerned have acted quickly and responsibly in this matter.

Let us look at the sequence of events. As I understand it, the spill took place on Wednesday night or early Thursday morning. It was on land initially. The Minister for Environment and Planning was informed that initially it was considered to be a 1 500-litre spill, but subsequently it was found to be greater. The Deputy Premier tried to ascertain the reasons why that misinformation was given to his department. Clearly, he has acted properly.

In terms of toxicity, are Opposition members saying that this Government is irresponsible and that it did not check with the various departments to ascertain whether this water could be released? Are they saying that no checks were conducted with other Government departments? Those checks and subsequent monitoring have taken place, and I understand that further monitoring will take place. Clearly, that is proper. I understand that the water that has been released is below the international standard.

**Mr LEWIS:** What are the levels?

**Mr HAMILTON:** We will come to that later. It is below the international standard, which is based on the best information that could be provided to the Government. What

do Opposition members ask of the Government? The Government got the best information possible, yet Opposition members try to imply that, when this water was released, the Government did not know whether or not it would be dangerous to the community; that the Government had not checked; and that it had not done any homework. The member for Mallee and the member for Torrens did not come up with any international standards or data to prove that the Government had acted irresponsibly. However, they are prepared to come into this place and make a premeditated attempt to attack the Government. Their intention was clear.

I understand that, before the water was released, various Government departments, including the Health Commission, Fisheries Department, Department of Environment and Planning and the Engineering and Water Supply Department consulted one another. The officers of those departments, who had the technical data and the necessary ability, agreed to release that water. I ask members opposite to forget about the Minister and Cabinet for a moment. Are they saying that those officers are incompetent? I hope not, because I am sick and tired of some Opposition members attacking public servants knowing damn well that they cannot respond. It is about time that Opposition members lifted their game. Let them attack the Minister and me, but let them be fair to officers of Government departments, the public servants who do their job irrespective of which Government or Minister is in power.

From my dealings with Government departments over the years, I believe that the overwhelming majority of public servants act in the best interests of the community and, indeed, the Minister concerned. So, let us not hear any more of this waffle from an Opposition trying to make some cheap political point. At the earliest opportunity after this spill last Friday, these officers were consulted on site. What more do Opposition members ask? These officers went down on site and had a round table conference, if you like. The health people have been involved in this area since last Friday morning.

**Mr LEWIS:** That is not true.

**Mr HAMILTON:** Obviously, the member for Mallee does not know what he is talking about. The person from the Health Commission was Mr Gordon Robinson. Let the member check that matter out. Let him check the facts instead of coming into this place and waffling on, talking garbage, lacking research and wanting to attack the Government. Let him do some homework. He should not come in here and talk such drivel, wasting the time of this Committee, which could have been getting on to other issues.

I return to the member for Mallee, who is now walking out: he talks of the Minister's being totally ignorant. That is a pretty profound sort of statement, coming from a person who supposedly represents his electorate yet uses verbiage like that. In anyone's mind, it is absolute garbage to talk in those terms. He talked about ministerial and Cabinet responsibility: the Cabinet has met and the Ministers have met and discussed this matter. The Deputy Premier was present to coordinate those activities. What more does the Opposition want?

Quite clearly, this Government has done the best possible with the expertise and advice available to it. I think that it is a sorry day when people like those opposite are prepared to use abusive tactics (I am not talking about the member for Torrens here, but I am certainly talking about his colleagues) and to reflect upon public servants. They had only to watch television and do a little research and they would have found out the facts of this matter. They could have contacted the Minister's office, departmental officers or other Ministers, but they have not revealed any of that here today.

Last but not least I question strongly the sincerity of the Opposition about this spill. Until 7.30 p.m. last night, to the best of my recollection not one question about this spill had been directed to the Minister of Health in Committee B. If members opposite were concerned about fishermen in the area and the people of South Australia generally, they would have asked question after question about this matter. Why has it been left until today?

I will tell members opposite why: they thought that they would get an easy run in this Committee. But I have news for them—it is not on! The facts stand: the Government has acted responsibly. The Minister acted as soon as he returned from interstate. His officers, who are unable to defend themselves in this place, have been subjected to abuse from the Opposition benches—not a fair go in anyone's language. I believe that this Government and its Minister have done as much as humanly possible to reduce (in terms of international standards) the level of toxicity in the water where this spill occurred. They have reduced levels below international standards.

I will be watching this matter closely, because I have a vested interest in it. Are the members for Torrens, Mallee and Eyre saying that I am not concerned about my electorate? Of course I am! They know damn well that some of that water could get into the West Lakes waterway, so I am watching this matter with a great deal of interest. Let us not hear any more of the nonsense that the Opposition has come up with today. I am prepared to listen to remarks showing genuine concern and to take on board those remarks, and I believe that the Government is prepared also. However, I do not believe that premeditated attacks such as those that we have heard today reflecting on what happened yesterday are genuine, because not one question was asked of the Minister of Health in Committee B up until 7.30 p.m. last night. If that is a measure of the Opposition's sincerity, then God help us!

I think that the Government has acted responsibly, and I rest my case. There is no question but that this censure motion should be thrown out. It is one of the worse censure motions I have heard in the six years that I have been in this place. There has been no homework done by the Opposition in relation to this matter and no mention made of how various Government departments have checked through. This was just an attack upon the Minister.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** In summing up this debate I say at the outset what an extraordinary response there has been from the Government. The lead speaker in defence of the Minister was the Independent member for Semaphore. That is the way in which the Government treats this Committee and the questions asked in it: it puts up the Independent member for Semaphore (who admittedly knows more about the matter than other members opposite—certainly more than the Minister) and I find that extraordinary.

Let us deal with a few of the things that the member for Semaphore said, because I respect his knowledge on this matter. First, he quoted questions on notice that he put to me and other Ministers in 1981 and 1982 saying that the replies were not detailed enough and did not give the information that he requested. I tell the Committee that that is irrelevant to this motion. This motion concerns the censure of a Minister who has not provided this Committee with information while under questioning today and refers to a spill of copper chrome arsenate into the Port River last week: that is what this motion is about, not questions on notice three or four years ago.

This motion is about a potentially disastrous situation for the waterways of this State, and the member for Semaphore knows that. He admitted that the Minister had not provided answers to questions (and if he looks at the *Han-*

sard record tomorrow he will see that he said something like that). He then said that if the report was not favourable (as he did not expect it to be) he would be looking at supporting a motion of this type, or words to that effect. I do not have the copy in front of me, but he said words to that effect.

The member for Semaphore, out of his own mouth, has virtually supported what the Opposition is trying to say in this debate. The member for Albert Park made a speech that was not relevant to the motion. He said that this was a planned, premeditated attack on the Minister. He said that we had, in effect, met before this Committee hearing and planned a censure motion against the Minister of Marine: that is what he was saying, that this was a premeditated attack on the Minister.

I assure the Committee that that is not the case. I am not used to standing up in this place and being mendacious. I tell the member for Albert Park that this was not a premeditated attack. This attack was brought about by the fact that the Minister was not able to answer questions that were legitimately put by members on both sides of this Committee in relation to the question of the copper chrome arsenate spill.

To bear up that assertion, I point out that, a while ago when he spoke, the member for Albert Park gave information to this Committee which the Minister should have given this morning. The member for Albert Park did some homework and made some phone calls during the lunch hour and then gave information to the Committee that the Minister should have given this morning. Further, the member for Semaphore, when he asked his questions, gave the Committee some information this morning that the Minister should have given.

The member for Albert Park said that this was a planned and premeditated attack. However, it was a spontaneous move by the Opposition, as the Minister was not providing this Committee with information. As I have said before, the Minister must have known that he would be questioned on this matter today, but he gave no information to the Committee.

The member for Florey did not make a very good contribution to this debate. Once again, he said that it was a premeditated attack, and that is just about all he did say in response to the motion. In fact, as lead speaker for the Government, he should have made his contribution first, rather than allowing the member for Semaphore to speak first.

I want to wind up this debate now because, despite what the member for Florey says, the Opposition does want to ask the Minister further important questions on marine matters. An arrangement was agreed to this morning between the Minister, myself and my colleagues the members for Alexandra and Chaffey that we would cut short the questions on the marine estimates at lunch time so that we could devote this afternoon to questions relating to the estimates for the Department of Lands and the Department of Woods and Forests. So much for a premeditated attack: it was a spontaneous reaction by the Opposition to the Minister's inability to supply this Committee with relevant information. Questioning on marine matters will continue after this debate—at no small inconvenience to members of the Committee and the departmental officers who have had to stay behind notwithstanding the agreement that had been made.

Finally, I want to deal with what the Minister told the Committee this morning, both in response to questioning and in his reply to the motion. The Minister was asked when he was advised of the spill. His first reply was that the matter was passed over to the Acting Director. He later told us that he was advised by telephone in Melbourne. However, his first statement was that after having been

advised of the matter he passed it over to the Acting Director: that condemnation came from the Minister's own mouth. The Minister was asked what action he took on being advised, to which he replied that he and the department were only indirectly involved. This is despite his statutory responsibilities as a Minister, to which I have already referred in this debate.

The Minister then told the Committee that he received a memo from the Deputy Premier telling him that Mr Tacuber had been appointed to investigate the matter. The Opposition has made the point that there must be a Minister coordinating actions in relation to emergency situations. Of course, we all know that four Ministers cannot all be involved and that divided responsibility is a disaster. However, the Opposition maintains that the Minister has a statutory responsibility to be well informed and close to the centre of action all the time. This was not the case, as demonstrated by the fact that the Minister was unable to give us adequate information today. Had the Minister been able to do so, this motion would not have been put and we would now be debating estimates in relation to the Department of Lands and the Department of Woods and Forests.

The Minister could not say why the Health Commission was not involved. He said that he and the department had had only a secondary involvement and that he had picked up much of his information from press reports. Further, the Minister indicated that there was no departmental involvement on the working party. I think that that summing up lays the case. The Minister is culpable in that he has not kept close enough to the important decisions that were required. The Minister's getting a briefing every Monday in Cabinet is not good enough. The Department of Marine and Harbors has important responsibilities in this area. I believe that the Minister stands condemned.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The question before the Committee is that the motion moved by the member for Torrens be agreed to. Because all the members of the Committee are not present, I intend to ring the bells.

*The bells having been rung:*

The Committee voted on the motion:

Ayes (3)—Messrs Gunn, Lewis, and Wilson.

Noes (3)—Messrs Gregory, Hamilton, and Peterson.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There being an equality of votes, as Chairman I give my casting vote in favour of the Noes.

Motion thus negatived.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I refer to page 105 of the Estimates of Payments and to the line 'Overseas visits of Minister, Minister's wife (where approved) and officers', the actual payment for which in 1984-85 amounted to \$87 706. Will the Minister provide the Committee with details of that expenditure? It is a great deal of money for overseas trips, and certainly exceeds actual expenditure for overseas trips by other Ministers, including the Premier. Will the Minister provide details in relation to what the trips involved were, for how long they were, which officers he took with him, and whether they were all to do with marine matters?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Since the present Government was elected I have travelled overseas on four occasions. I will endeavour to go through the details of those four trips. The first trip of course was within days of the election of the present Government in November 1982, at which time I travelled to Japan with the Director and the Commercial Manager of the Department of Marine and Harbors to undertake negotiations with the ANSCON Shipping Line regarding direct shipping services between Japan, Korea and Port Adelaide.

The member who asked the question certainly would have undertaken that trip if his Party had won office in the 1982

elections. That was my first trip. I found myself absent from this country a week after the election. My second trip involved attending an ATAC meeting in New Zealand in 1983. I then led a delegation to Japan to formally sign the sister port agreement with Mizushima, and I was accompanied then by the Director and three officers from the Department of Marine and Harbors.

In contrast, there had been two preliminary visits to Adelaide by parties of Japanese business people. A delegation of 16 came to the formal signing in Adelaide last year. We were not able to match their numbers. However, we tried to boost our numbers as much as we could in the financial circumstances then prevailing. The Japanese visits were part of our successful strategy to achieve direct shipping calls as a culmination of more than seven years work by successive Governments (the member who asked the question was involved in some of this himself). That has had continuous bipartisan support from all Parties.

Trips of that nature are essential to carry out negotiations in commercial areas, and the benefits to the State from these services and from the opening up of further trade are enormous and justify the expenditure and effort. My fourth overseas trip, undertaken this year, was to the United Kingdom, Europe and the USA to hold a series of talks with members of the European Shipping Conference in an effort to increase the frequency of shipping calls and to study trends within the shipping industry.

Also, I spent time in Germany being briefed on the latest developments on the O-Bahn technology. For the remainder of that visit I had a series of briefings on road maintenance strategies, as Minister of Transport, in order to make the most effective use of the limited funds. The fact that no specific provision was made in the budget resulted from discussions with Treasury officers, who preferred to make the allocation of funds available for travel after our travel had been approved.

In many of the commercial negotiations it is not possible to predict in advance the extent of the travel that may be necessary. I am not now in a position to provide the actual cost of that visit. I did have with me for half of the trip the former Director of the Department of Marine and Harbors, and for the remainder of the time, in the transport area, I was accompanied by the Commissioner of Highways. We are still finalising the expenses of that trip, and for that reason the budget shows the amount overspent. It also follows discussions with Treasury officers, who believed that, rather than provide money in the budget, approaches could be made when more detail was known about the visit. All those visits were approved by Cabinet and payment for the trips was authorised through Treasury.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I would have been quite happy for the Minister to tell us briefly what the trips were, who the officers were, and their purpose. That was a long reply. I was interested only in the trips that the Minister undertook in the year ending 30 June last. As I see it, there were two marine trips, one of which was partly transport. That is all I needed to know.

Some \$600 000 is provided in the Estimates for contribution towards the Porter Bay marina development. Although I have not been able to locate the reference, because the Committee has been tied up with the censure motion, I understand that in his evidence to the Estimates Committee the Premier said that there was a possibility that the Government would not maintain its interests in the Porter Bay marina project (or words to that effect). Will the Minister say what is to be the Government's and the department's contribution to the project? What is the proposed escalation in costs?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can give the pre-tender estimates. The total cost endorsed by PWSC and Cabinet in January

1985 was \$10.13 million. The total cost to September 1985, by applying an agreed 5 per cent inflation factor to the approved amount, was \$10.63 million, and the revised estimate based on the tender cost at September 1985 was \$12.13 million. One main contract to be let shortly to the lowest tenderer is subject to tripartite agreement being signed by the three parties involved in the project: that is, the State Government, Port Lincoln council and the Lincoln Cove Development Company.

The successful tenderer is expected to be a South Australian firm. As I understand it, the contract is expected to be let by mid October 1985. More specific detail includes minor contracts with Port Lincoln council for landscaping; with E&WS, ETSA and Telecom, etc., for services; the Department of Marine and Harbors is scheduled to build structures in the commercial basin for fishing and recreational boating, involving jetties, mooring piles, and berthing structures, to the extent of \$1.25 million; and a timber verandah associated with a community pier of \$200 000.

The responsibilities of the department are to administer the leasing of berths, and the recreational basin, and jetties built for fishermen are to be owned by them and maintained by the department for a period of 10 years as per the proposed tripartite agreement.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** Will the Minister provide the Committee—if not now, certainly later—with the estimated cost of the dredging component? Does the Government intend pulling out of the project because of escalating costs? The Minister has already said the cost has escalated in the last few months from \$10.63 million to \$12.13 million.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** There is no intention of the Government's pulling out of the project. The 'go ahead' has been given, the department is responsible, and work is proceeding. As to the first question asked by the member, I understand that there is no dredging related to this project. There is a type of work involved, but it does not relate to dredging. I will ask the Acting Director to elaborate on that work upon which the member has sought information.

**Mr Freeman:** There is no dredging in the normal sense of DMH dredging using our dredging fleet. The dredging will be land based dredging to form the basin and it will be undertaken as part of the overall contract that will be let for construction of the works.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** I will ask one final question; obviously we will have to speed up proceedings somewhat if we are to meet any of the agreed deadlines. What was the cost of the department's acquiring the motor vessel *Des Corcoran*, and will the Minister detail the uses to which that vessel has been put since it was acquired by the department? Why was the tender for the *Des Corcoran* let to interstate shipyards?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The department commissioned the motor vessel *Des Corcoran* in April 1985 at a capital cost of \$430 000. The vessel is a multipurpose type craft and is capable of use in port inspection duties, pilotage, navigational aids, maintenance work, search and rescue operations, and oil pollution clean-up operations. The vessel replaced the old inspection launch *Sir Wallace Bruce*, which was not capable of leaving the harbour to perform the duties envisaged for the *Des Corcoran*. The capital cost of the *Des Corcoran* as a multipurpose vessel compares favourably with that of the two replacement pilot launches, which are both approximately \$400 000 each and which are under construction. Once they have been commissioned, they will be used mainly for pilot duties at Wallaroo and Thevenard. The vessel is a fibreglass launch, 16.7 metres in length, with a speed of some 20 knots.

To try to attract more shipping to South Australia, we have used the vessel for VIPs visiting Port Adelaide. As the

honourable member would know from his experiences as Minister, if one travels interstate the authorities there have much better facilities for showing people around their harbour operations, and we felt that it was time to replace the *Sir Wallace Bruce* with a much better vessel and we could use it to show international visitors some of the industrial estates that are available in the Port of Adelaide and around the Pelican Point and Outer Harbor areas.

As to the use to which the *Des Corcoran* has been put, on 10 April people from Elders, that is, Messrs Eakin and Smerle, used it. Elders IXL has now agreed to the \$6 million woolshed expansion on the industrial estates. On 16 April to 19 April it was used for visiting Japanese from the Mizushima delegation, conducting an inspection of the Port of Adelaide and travelling to Cape Jervis, Kangaroo Island and inspecting the port of Port Lincoln. On 7 May Australian National Line and other people involved with the container crane used the vessel. On 16 May we had another group of Japanese visitors, Mitsui, from the OSK line. On 17 May we had John Spalvins and Gordon Palmer from Adelaide Steamship. On 17 June we had a delegation from ANSCON, and that comprised its Director, Mr Wright, Mr Downes, Mr Ohmae and Mr Reid. On 19 June the vessel was used by the Premier. Australian National Line representatives were visiting South Australia and wanted to hold discussions with the Premier and that was arranged for that day.

On 20 June there was a grain industry inspection by the transport committee. Grant Andrews from the United Farmers and Stockowners Association and other members of the UF&S were involved. On 12 July we had Mr John Jenkins and Mr Neil Mercer from OCL and Seabridge. On 23 July we had Mr Don Fines, from GMH. I cannot elaborate on that, because I do not know the detail of that visit. On 19 August we had the board of Howard Smith and Company and on 12 September I was on the vessel with Mr Bott, who was good enough to invite the member for Torrens to a cocktail party that was held on that occasion. Mr Bott is Chairman of the Australia to Europe Shipping Conference. He was present together with the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr Crompton, and Mr Anderson, who is the State Manager of OCL. On 19 September we had Mr Damste, from Nedlloyd, in Rotterdam. He is Chairman of the ANZECS, and Mr Scrutton from Elders also attended on that occasion. I was not present on the vessel during the visit by Mr Damste. A cocktail party was also given that evening and the member for Torrens had the opportunity of also meeting Mr Damste.

That is the use to which the *Des Corcoran* has been put. We believe that such a vessel, with all the other activities that it can perform, is certainly an attraction. The Acting Director has just reminded me that Captain Roy Pearson used the vessel on the sesquicentenary chart folio project.

**The Hon. MICHAEL WILSON:** It appears that the vessel has not been used very much for port inspection, navigation aid or pilotage, but perhaps it will be in the next 12 months. Finally, I want to say how disappointed I am that the member for Albert Park was not amongst those invited guests.

**Mr GREGORY:** At page 98 of the yellow book, under the heading 'Marine safety', I notice that expenditure is scheduled for this forthcoming year of \$569 000, which is a reasonable increase above the actual expenditure of \$506 000 for 1984-85. I would like to know what that money is to be used for.

**Mr Freeman:** The increase of \$63 000 over last year is attributed to the carry-over effect of salary increases, plus inflation and the cost of superannuation. Through a change in Treasury procedures, superannuation is now included in

the expenditure estimates, and the proportion applicable to the people allocated to this program is included in that sum.

**Mr GREGORY:** The next line, 'Safety in recreational boating', shows an allocation of \$747 000 for the current financial year. Can the Minister explain how that money is to be spent?

**Mr Freeman:** The safety and recreational boating program revolves around the administration of the Boating Act. The expenditure is incurred primarily by the 10 boating inspectors who are stationed around the State and also in the day to day administration of the Act, involving the issue of licences and the registration of motor boats.

**Mr GREGORY:** At page 100, \$628 000 has been allocated for assistance to the commercial fishing industry. What assistance is being provided?

**Mr Freeman:** That figure relates to the cost of maintaining and operating facilities provided throughout the State for the commercial fishing industry such as slipways, marinas, jetties, mooring facilities, breakwaters, and so on.

**Mr GREGORY:** How much of that is covered in fees?

**Mr Freeman:** As you can see from the recurrent receipts under that program, it is approximately \$308 000.

**Mr GREGORY:** Is that mooring fees?

**Mr Freeman:** That covers mooring fees and fees associated with the operation of slipways.

**Mr GUNN:** I want to take the Committee to Thevenard, some distance away from what we are discussing—port facilities. This is a matter well known to the Minister and to the Department. I quote from an article which appeared in the *West Coast Sentinel* on 25 September, headed 'No Improvement for Thevenard—Department Reports'. The article reads:

A report circulating in the Department of Marine and Harbors states that improvement to the channel or bulk loading facilities at Thevenard cannot be justified. The report also suggests that a greater proportion of the Eyre Peninsula harvest will in future be shipped from Port Lincoln rather than Thevenard.

Prepared by the department's acting engineer for planning and development, the report entitled 'Capital Development Works' discusses the need for further major capital development works in the commercial ports under the department's control.

According to the report, works costing about \$5 million would provide improvement in the port limitations, allowing vessels of about 26 000 tonnes to load fully in favourable tides.

Justification for this work does not presently exist... Most of the gypsum export is to Australia and New Zealand ports and is carried—

I do not agree with the report, nor do my constituents, the District Council of Murat Bay or the Cooperative Bulk Handling Company. I now read from a letter received on 18 September from the District Council of Murat Bay, as follows:

I refer to correspondence recently received by council relating to its endeavours to ensure that the South Australian Government upgrades the Port of Thevenard.

It would appear the SA Cooperative Bulk Handling Limited is totally supportive of its continuing need for port facilities at Thevenard. It therefore does appear that the South Australian Government is deliberately 'fobbing off' its obligation and previous commitment to upgrade the Port of Thevenard despite strong industry support for the project.

Council continue to seek your assistance in gaining Government approval to include upgrading works at the Port of Thevenard in the next budget year.

I understand that on 5 September the Bulk Handling Company had this to say in a letter written by the General Manager (Mr Acton) to the Minister of Transport (Mr Abbott):

Dear Sir,

THEVENARD

Some time ago we were led to believe that a decision had been made in principle to upgrade port facilities at Thevenard by effecting improvements to the shipping channel and to the depth of water at the berth to enable larger ships to be loaded at that port.

Recently there have been conflicting statements regarding the Government's intentions in regard to Thevenard. The grain industry in South Australia positively supports any move to upgrade Thevenard, as it will continue to be an important export port for grain grown in the hinterland in which regard this is one of the few areas of the State where new cropping land is still being brought into production.

Despite the fact that the deep water port of Port Lincoln is available, Thevenard will continue to be used extensively, as the cost of land transport of grain from the Thevenard division to Port Lincoln would exclude large quantities of grain from Thevenard being shipped through Port Lincoln.

You can be assured that South Australian Cooperative Bulk Handling Ltd positively supports further upgrading of Thevenard, and would be pleased to have an indication of the Government's intentions in this regard.

I point out to the Minister that as I understand the situation the Cooperative Bulk Handling Company facilities can ship wheat out and put it on the belt at the rate of 1 200 tonnes an hour. But, the belt currently can take only 600 tonnes an hour. The port ships out large quantities of wheat, barley and oats. The best quality of gypsum in the world is at Kevin, and quantities of salt are produced.

The economic reality is that in cost alone it would make a great deal of difference to the economic position of many rural producers on Upper Eyre Peninsula if their grain had to be transported down to Port Lincoln. It would put more pressure on the Port Lincoln terminal. Since during the last two years the department has underspent its allocation by some \$5 million, we have had enough procrastination and the time has come to upgrade the port of Thevenard.

No matter what other decision is made in relation to another future deep sea port, whatever recommendations and considerations are involved, there is a continuing need for Thevenard, and the \$5 million would be well invested on behalf of the people of this State, because Upper Eyre Peninsula produces huge quantities of grain.

There is an unlimited supply of gypsum out there, and it is crazy to say it should all go through Port Lincoln. I am not knocking Port Lincoln—it has excellent port facilities—but Thevenard on some occasions has shipped more material out over the belt than has gone over the Port Lincoln wharf. Therefore, the District Council of Murat Bay and others who are concerned about this matter rightly believe that they should be given proper consideration when upgrading operating port facilities is being considered.

There has been some discussion about other ports on Eyre Peninsula. They are long-term measures, but we are looking at a reasonably small quantity of money to provide an urgently needed improvement to facilities which will be in the interests of all citizens. I find it amazing that, if we want to do anything on Upper Eyre Peninsula, there is no money. I have to make these points. The Government cannot find \$1 million to extend the waterworks, but at the drop of a hat \$4 million can be found with the overrun on the Aquatic Centre at North Adelaide, which is a white elephant, anyway. It spends \$3 million to try to buy votes at the election, that amount being subsidised by the poor people who have been affected by foolish decisions made in Canberra. However, if we want to spend a little bit of money to help the export industry on Upper Eyre Peninsula, it happens to be not available.

I say to the Minister, as I said to his colleague yesterday that the time has come for a bit of justice in the expenditure of taxpayers' funds in this State. We want a fair cut of the cake. I realise that there is never enough money to meet the reasonable demands of the community, but one can be on the end of the line for too long. The people of Upper Eyre Peninsula have been sitting on the end of the line and, indeed, have dropped off many times, and there is no rhyme or reason why those projects should be affected in this manner. I ask the Minister to give the matter his urgent attention, as no logical argument can be advanced why these

people should not be assisted. It would be in the interests of this nation and this State if assistance was forthcoming.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Much history is associated with the port of Thevenard. No doubt the honourable member recalls very clearly that the department had plans to deepen the Thevenard harbor back in 1983. In fact, I approved those works and made a public announcement on it. We put out press releases and, suddenly, there was a change. I must add that it was more embarrassing for me and the department than for anyone else that that change came about. It occurred simply because the gypsum people ordered new vessels that could navigate the channel without any great difficulty with its existing length. I agree with much of what the member has said, and nothing disappointed me more than when I found that that change had occurred. From that point on it became very difficult to justify the spending of millions of dollars on something that might not have been necessary.

A feasibility study was undertaken in late 1983, having in mind that vessels up to 175 metres in length could be accommodated at the berth. It determined that it would be possible to deepen the inner channel to match the 9.1 metre outer channel and to ease the channel curves to enable port limits to be lifted to connect vessels of up to that length and enable them to enter the port. That meant that a vessel of about 26 000 tonnes dead weight could be admitted under favourable tidal conditions, and a load of 23 000 tonnes might have been achieved. The cost of that upgrading would not be less than \$3.5 million. It is obvious that the benefits are marginal if \$3.5 million buys an increase of about only 3 000 tonnes in the load lifted.

Another aspect that would affect the usefulness of such a gain would be increasing difficulties experienced with loader height and outreach vessels exceeding the 20 000 tonne dead weight limit. To increase the port capability beyond that level would involve major dredging of the entire channel, new berths, jetty extension and a new loader. That cost has not been estimated in detail, but it certainly would be in excess of \$20 million.

I can ask the Acting Director to elaborate on the gypsum export trade. The gypsum people came to talk with us, and they have been losing on the gypsum market. They asked whether we could look at providing some concession to enable them to try to recover a lot of the market that they had lost. We agreed to that, for which they were most grateful. We hope that it will help them and that they can regain that lost market.

In relation to the belt operation over there, it was possible to put in a second belt or upgrade the existing one so that we do not have one vessel laying off waiting for another to load. Mr Bateman is an expert on the issue and I will ask him to inform the honourable member of belt operations at Thevenard.

**Mr Bateman:** The facts that the member for Eyre pointed out are quite correct. Under very special circumstances SACBH could load 1 300 tonnes an hour. That would be only when they are capable of loading from two separate sources together—a relatively rare situation. Our plant is capable of loading about 600 tonnes an hour of grain and 900 tonnes an hour of gypsum (roughly double what it was originally designed for). We have already upgraded to the limit. It is interesting to know that the bulk company has, in previous discussions, quite clearly said that it has no interest in increased loading rates, whereas the gypsum companies have from time to time expressed interest in increased loading rates.

To amplify what the Minister said, the gypsum trade is in two parts—the Australian/New Zealand trade, which is handled specifically with a vessel designed for Thevenard as it now stands, and also the export component, which



currently does not exist because of competition from Western Australian gypsum sources, which are much more favourably placed than is Thevenard in terms of ship freight costs and ports capable of taking vessels up to 80 000 tonnes dead weight. So, a marginal increase from 23 000 tonnes dead weight to 26 000 tonnes dead weight would have a negligible effect on any export competition situation. Unless something has happened in the last month or two, there has been no gypsum export, because of heavy competition in Western Australia, since quite early this year.

**Mr GUNN:** As I understand the situation, the vessel that the gypsum people currently have can take up to 26 000 tonnes, but it cannot be fully loaded at Thevenard; it was designed for the trade. Suggestions that the majority of grain from Upper Eyre Peninsula will go through Port Lincoln are not correct. The freight component would be so high that it would have a very serious effect on producers in that area. Those facilities have been there for a very long time. As I understand it, the Thevenard port has been a profitable operation for the Department of Marine and Harbors. I have been here for a long time, and I anticipate being here for quite some time longer, despite the fact that one member is attempting to misinform people.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The honourable member's comments are not on the lines.

**Mr GUNN:** Quite, but they are interesting. The facilities have been there for a reasonable time, and I would think that this State, particularly the department, would like to keep abreast of modern technology. An urgent need exists to start upgrading these facilities as it would appear, with the current market situation for grain, that we want to be able to turn the ships around as quickly and as cheaply as possible for the people buying our grain.

Therefore my request for the expenditure of \$5 million is justifiable. Will the Minister have his officers consider this matter and advise whether the Government can plan to upgrade the facilities at Thevenard? That port will be needed for a long time, and it does not owe the people of this State anything: it has been profitable to the department and it has played and is playing an important role in exporting valuable products from this country.

Will the Minister reassess the situation with a view to putting into effect the original suggestions? After all, the sum of \$5 million is not out of the question to a Government that can find substantial sums for work, for instance, at Port Lincoln, which will have an excellent facility, although I am not sure about the economics of it. The Port Lincoln facility will cost a large sum and I do not know what return the Government will get from it. However, there will be a valuable return from \$5 million invested at Thevenard because wheat, barley, oats, salt and gypsum in varying quantities will go out over that facility, and there will be a regular income from its use, whereas some of these other projects will take up large capital funds and I am not sure what the return to the department will be in the short term.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I do not think that anyone has applied more pressure on the department than I to have Thevenard upgraded, especially when the department was fast running out of dredging work and we were desperately looking for work to keep the two-shift operation usefully employed. It would have suited me right down to the ground had that project gone ahead. The department is continuing to talk with the gypsum people, and it will continue to do so.

I can ask the department to review the situation at Thevenard, so that we can consider upgrading the facilities there. Much depends on the gypsum export trade. If that can be increased (and we hope that it can be) we may be able to do something. Probably, at present, with respect to the grain industry, the proposal for a new deep draft grain berth east

of Spencer Gulf is our first priority, and that will certainly be a costly project. However, I assure the honourable member that we will continue to talk with the gypsum people, and I will ask my officers to see what can be done about upgrading at Thevenard.

**Mr GUNN:** Obviously, the provision of new facilities will require a large sum, which the Government and/or industry will have to find, and such work will not be undertaken over the next two years or so. However, substantial improvements can be made and benefits derived for a small sum spent on the work at Thevenard to which I have referred. Will the Minister talk to the shipping people, the bulk handling authorities and the District Council of Murat Bay, which is keen to see the port developed so that long-term employment can be provided for local people? We are keen to see the facility, which is a good operation, making money for the department, and any investment there will provide a long-term return for the Government. Will the Minister take those points into account? Only last Monday, I was spoken to by a director of Cooperative Bulk Handling Limited, and a letter from CBH clearly states its position on this matter.

**Mr HAMILTON:** Can the Minister say what financial allocations have been made for the replacement of revetment work at the West Lakes waterway? How many blocks have been replaced and how many will be? From time to time, I receive inquiries from constituents about the lowering of the waterway which is required to facilitate the replacement of these blocks. Will the Minister consider advising the local member and/or the local press when the waterway is to be lowered? There is 17 km of waterway at West Lakes with people living adjacent thereto. Perhaps a departmental telephone number could be provided so that my constituents could ring it and ascertain when the waterway is to be lowered. Where work has been carried out on the bridges on West Lakes Boulevard, I have stressed to my constituents that it is important and necessary work: for instance, the replacement of concrete blocks. Such work will cause inconvenience from time to time, but it is necessary and important replacement and repair work.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** To 30 June 1985, 6 000 blocks replaced at a cost of \$257 000, and during this financial year 700 blocks are to be replaced at a cost of \$50 000. So, by 30 June 1986, 6 700 blocks will have been replaced at a total cost of \$307 000. I am told that there are no dangerous blocks that need replacing. This is a continuous scheme to maintain the blocks at a safe standard. At this stage, I cannot say what will be the overall cost of the total project, but the department is experimenting with forms of treatment (for example, epoxy coating and spraying with grout solution, etc.) to reduce the rate of decay. These treatments are being evaluated over a period. There are about 70 000 blocks in the West Lakes revetment area. The honourable member asked that he be told when the water levels were being lowered, and we can certainly tell him when that is occurring. We also have to advise the Woodville council.

**Mr Freeman:** The Woodville council is now responsible for the raising and lowering of the lake, so it would be the council that would advise the honourable member.

**Mr HAMILTON:** As the Minister is well aware, there is considerable controversy about control of the waterway. I appreciate the correspondence and the time that the Minister has spent on this matter. I understand that the Woodville council, as the Minister said, is responsible for lowering the waterway. Does the rest of the waterway still come within the jurisdiction of the Department of Marine and Harbors?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The Acting Director will respond.

**Mr Freeman:** The control of activities on the water rests with the council in connection with such matters as recreational boating.

**Mr HAMILTON:** What areas of jurisdiction has the Department of Marine and Harbors over the waterway and surroundings?

**Mr Freeman:** The department has responsibility for the maintenance of the inlet and outlet locks, as well as responsibility for bank protection and for funding water quality testing. That is where Department of Marine and Harbors responsibility finishes.

**Mr PETERSON:** I was interested to hear the comments about the *Des Corcoran*. I understand that it had to undergo considerable modifications for pilot use and that there are doubts about its suitability because of its bridge structure. I also understand that twice in the past 12 months when rescues were required the *Des Corcoran* was not available, for various reasons. What is the hire rate for the *Des Corcoran*? Is it hired to the department at a commercial rate, or how is that cost assessed?

**Mr Freeman:** We have a hire rate for the vessel which has been set to recover capital and operating costs. That hire rate is charged on any occasion on which the vessel is used against whatever project it is used for. I understand that the current rate is \$160 an hour.

**Mr PETERSON:** What about the modifications to the bridge structure?

**Mr Freeman:** I cannot answer that question, but I will get that information for the honourable member.

**Mr PETERSON:** How do you cost jobs to the department? I notice on page 96 of the yellow book that superannuation charges are involved in your costing. In an example given to me two years ago the hire rate was \$200; it is now \$700 and will rise to \$900 for the next year on this particular aspect of the work. How has that escalation come about and what factors do you apply when charging a job.

**Mr Freeman:** I know the example about which the honourable member is talking—it is the hire rate on our dredge. The department has a working account for each of its major items of plant. That working account is debited with interest and depreciation costs of that item and with all maintenance and operating costs. Whenever that item of plant is used the account is credited with the hire charge, which is set having regard to the amount of use of the plant and the charge necessary to recoup the actual cost of the item.

**Mr PETERSON:** That hourly cost fluctuates?

**Mr Freeman:** Yes. The example about which the member is talking is the dredge which previously operated on a two shift basis. It is now operating on a one shift basis, so we have less usage from which to recoup costs. Some costs would decrease because it is not being used, costs such as operating and some maintenance costs; but capital costs continue whether the vessel is used on a two shift or one shift operation. Superannuation is an additional charge that in the past has not been spread through our books. However, as a consequence of a recent Treasury direction, it is now included and therefore added to costs. The rate is set to recover the costs involved.

**Mr LEWIS:** My question relates to the department's responsibility for navigation in the Murray River and estuarine lakes. Given that the sesquicentenary is approaching and that there are a number of recreation activities that people undertake on the river during their leisure time, whether tourists from within South Australia or elsewhere, what is the department doing about making the river navigable from the New South Wales/Victorian border to the barrage? At Moorundie Creek it is obviously not navigable: one would need to be able to see through more than a crystal ball to find one's way in those waters.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Responsibility for desnagging the Murray River rests with the Engineering and Water Supply Department. This matter was discussed recently in Cabinet,

which has approved an amount of \$20 000 for that program to be undertaken. There has been considerable publicity recently about this matter. I understand that E&WS has the equipment to improve the whole of the river so far as desnagging of navigable areas is concerned. I expect that that work will be undertaken fairly soon.

**Mr LEWIS:** What other responsibilities does the Department of Marine and Harbors have for the river and the estuarine lakes apart from desnagging?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** We have responsibility for recreational use. At the moment we are responsible for jetties, wharves, boat ramps, etc. We are discussing with local government authorities whether they are willing to take over responsibility for wharves, landings, jetties, etc. We have a number of departmental inspectors inspecting the whole of the river. We are not satisfied with the number of inspectors that we have because during weekends in the summertime some irresponsible people like to get on the river water skiing, and the like, causing a lot of vandalism in a number of areas. We are concerned about that. We sought additional inspectors, but owing to financial restraints Treasury was not prepared to make funds available for us to employ more inspectors. There are 10 inspectors along the Murray River. However, there are other areas for which we are responsible.

**Mr LEWIS:** Given that Treasury is not prepared to make money available—

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** For additional staff.

**Mr LEWIS:** How do we stop the irresponsible few who make boating on the Murray so hazardous for the rest of its users, be they swimmers, fishermen, water skiers, or houseboat holiday makers, when these irresponsible few get into high powered boats and not only disturb the peace but also put at risk the life and limb of other users? During the summer months, in particular, I receive a steady stream of complaints from parts of my electorate from Blanchetown downstream to the lakes.

This involves irresponsible behaviour not only on the bank but also on the water. Some of these people take the mufflers off boat exhausts and then start the boats in the early hours of the morning. I have often witnessed some of these people so inebriated as to be unable to stand up in a boat when it takes not even a sharp turn in mid-stream. Further, the noise disturbs the sleep of everyone else. Some of these people have no respect for town limits or anything else. Without an adequate number of inspectors, how can we resolve the situation, unless it comes to violence?

On a number of occasions, after having sympathised with people who have brought their problems to my attention, I have had to castigate them for threatening to blow the bottoms out of the boats involved with a high powered rifle unless something is done. That is the extent to which their antagonism is directed towards these irresponsible few who are not being apprehended and prosecuted, or at least even warned that what they are doing is unlawful. I wonder whether the Minister understands the seriousness of this situation. What hope can he give us that the problem will be addressed?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** As I have said, I am aware of the irresponsible element of people who seem to delight in breaking the boating laws relating to the Murray River. It is agreed that enforcement of laws relating to the river would be easier if more marine safety officers could be made available, and the department has sought approval to increase the number of officers for this purpose. Unfortunately, that proposal was not supported. However, I will continue to strive to ensure that more inspectors are made available.

Arrangements to fill positions could be made when I make further approaches for assistance. Where members of the public witness blatant breaches of the regulations, they

could be of great assistance to the department by reporting such incidents in detail and being prepared to substantiate their statements in court, if necessary. In that event, we can certainly take action. All too often emotive complaints are received lacking sufficient detail to enable appropriate action to be taken. I think that if action were taken in a few of these cases, involving adequate publicity, we might find that the people who seem to delight in breaking the law might behave more responsibly.

With regard to zoning, the report of the special committee that was appointed to consider this matter was completed some time ago. However, the responses that we received from councils and other interested parties, such as shack owner groups, were such that it was expected that the introduction of uniform zoning provisions would have been vigorously opposed in some areas.

The development by the Association of Australian Port and Marine Authorities of uniform signs, which can be used on the river and other waterways in a similar manner to traffic control signs on roads, is nearing completion. When the signs are available, it is proposed to clearly identify existing zoned areas of the Murray River, with particular attention being paid to areas around Murray Bridge. Other zoned areas will then be introduced progressively as the need arises. If we can get this zoning functioning correctly, that may help us overcome some of the problems that the member has raised.

#### Membership:

The Hon. Ted Chapman substituted for the Hon. Michael Wilson.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** I appreciate the Committee's agreeing to allow me to raise this subject on this line. Can the Minister explain to the Committee why he has leapfrogged over the earlier arrangements to allocate the building of the *MV Troubridge II* and can he also explain the present arrangements? I refer to some details provided to me from a meeting between the Kangaroo Island Advisory Committee and his officers, held on 15 August 1985, at which the then Director of Marine and Harbors, John Jenkins, and others were present?

The schedule of arrangements as laid down on that date was that the specifications would be ready on 2 September, that the tenders would be called on 7 October, and that a short list from the tenders received would be determined on 16 October, with discussions relating to those tenders commencing on 21 October and continuing through November. On 9 December a contract or a letter of intent was to be awarded, and on 20 January 1986 the execution of that contract was to occur. However, reports in the newspaper, radio and local island newspaper on 26 September reveal that Eglo Engineering will build the *Troubridge* replacement, an exercise which it is understood will take 50 to 70 weeks.

Undoubtedly, there has been a change of arrangements. I point out to the Minister that, in the meantime, I have discussed this subject with the island committee representatives and at that level they are not aware of the reasons for such haste being adopted. They have not been advised other than as to the details issued to them at their last meeting in Adelaide in the schedule to which I have already referred. Although the design of the vessel has been on display at the local level, there has been no correspondence to confirm the reports which have appeared in the papers and which I have already mentioned. Can the Minister clarify that position, which seems to be an exercise of extreme haste, to say the least, in the light of the cooperation offered by the local community and the efforts that they

have made over the past 12 months since their appointments?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I have not seen any report on this in local papers, nor am I aware of any concern. The Department of Marine and Harbors was given the responsibility for the design and the build of the *Troubridge* replacement. A design committee was formed, and we have endeavoured to cooperate with the Kangaroo Island people as much as we possibly can, because they had representatives on that committee.

There is some background to this matter and, if I go through it, I think it will be better understood. On 22 October 1984 Cabinet approved the replacement of the Kangaroo Island ferry, the *MV Troubridge*, following an investigation into the operations of the vessel by the Abraham Committee. The *Troubridge* has always been controlled by the Department of Highways, and Mr Abraham, the Finance Manager of that department, was given the responsibility for that report, which is therefore referred to as the Abraham report. At that stage the Department of Marine and Harbors was given the role of project coordinator for the design and construction of the new vessel. The department formed a project team and has worked with a representative design committee involving all interests affected by the operations of the *Troubridge*. A broad scale design for the new vessel has been chosen, with the following characteristics: its length will be 79 metres, the beam will be 16.7 metres, the draught 3.6 metres, the lane space 500 metres: it will carry 92 passengers and have an average speed of 11 knots.

In relation to the announcement made by the Premier and me, the construction contract has been given to Eglo. The question of the construction of the vessel was considered extensively by the Government and it was the feeling of the Government that we should ensure, if at all possible, that the vessel was built in South Australia. This was particularly significant, given the negotiations for the submarine contract. I think that we need to bear the submarine contract in mind, because I am sure that all members, of all persuasions, would like to see the submarine contract come to South Australia. Eglo Engineering will be the central focus of submarine work in South Australia and its position would be considerably enhanced if it was able to build the *Troubridge* replacement.

Given the importance of the submarine contract, the Government decided to award this work to Eglo without going to tender. However, certain safeguards were taken. Eglo made an offer to build, at a price that was comparable to the price arrived at by the independent shipping consultants engaged by the Department of Marine and Harbors to develop the shipping design. Eglo's offer was made on the basis of available detail. When final design plans are available at the end of October, Eglo will confirm its quotation and, if there is any escalation on the original price quoted, the contract will be then taken through the normal process of tender.

Negotiations with Eglo on this matter have been quite complex. In addition to the *Troubridge*, they have included negotiations relating to the provision of a 3 000 tonne ship lifter. This device, which lifts vessels out of the water for repair or construction on a dry land site, is a much more efficient system for smaller vessels than a dry dock facility. I think I should point out that every time we need maintenance work carried out on the *Troubridge*, the vessel has had to sail to Melbourne, to be attended to there and then sail back. While it is going through that upgrading or servicing, there is no other facility to service Kangaroo Island, so a number of days are wasted and it can be quite costly. I think that, if we are able to have established in South Australia this new ship lifter, it will give a major boost to

Port Adelaide for that type of work. The existence of a ship lifter in the port would be another major incentive for the submarine contract to be focused in South Australia.

Negotiations are still continuing with Eglo on the costing, construction and other details of such a ship lifter. However, Eglo has already made an offer to apply a discount of approximately \$1 million to the *Troubridge* contract if the ship lifter is provided by the Government. Apart from that fact the two projects are quite separate. On the question of price and financing, the prices quoted by Eglo for the construction of the *Troubridge* are total project prices and will allow Eglo to claim the maximum federal bounty available for such a vessel.

Input supplied by the State Government will be charged to Eglo by a subcontractor. The vessel will be financed on the basis of a lease back arrangement with the National Australia Bank. In relation to the current timetable, we expect the final design to be completed by the end of October; a letter of intent and confirmation of Eglo contract by the end of November; construction to commence by February 1986; and construction to be completed by mid May 1987.

There are a number of benefits to the State. The Government is convinced that the construction by Eglo Engineering will provide the maximum benefit to the State. It would involve approximately 100 extra jobs at Port Adelaide in construction and supply of materials, etc. Immense benefits will obviously accrue should the State gain major work from the submarine contract.

So, on the question of why there has been no tender, given the Government's intention to award the *Troubridge* contract to Eglo, it would have been unfair to go to tender merely as a device for getting comparative prices. The Eglo offer was very competitive in the view of independent shipping consultants. In general, the vessel chosen has been designed to provide maximum efficiency in basic freight movements to Kangaroo Island. A choice has been made that will keep costs to a minimum while ensuring that a high standard of freight carrying services is achieved. As a result, the ship is slightly smaller; it is lighter with more carrying capacity; and has a slightly slower speed with smaller engines burning cheaper fuel than the vessel proposed in the Abraham Report.

The question of berthing facilities for the new vessel is still a matter of debate. Options range between minor modifications at the existing berth to development of an entirely new berth at Outer Harbor berth No. 4. There is also an option of converting No. 25 berth, should the Australian National Line no longer require it. A decision on which of these options is more appropriate will be made in time to allow commencement of operation of the new vessel.

I conclude by referring to one technical aspect that may interest the Committee. A modification has already been incorporated in the new vessel, namely, the raising of the below deck ceiling from 4.3 metres to 4.6 metres to accommodate larger livestock crates and to give better carrying conditions for cattle. The additional cost for this exercise is in the vicinity of \$500 000.

That is the information with regard to the Government's intention on the *Troubridge* replacement. Much of it is deeply involved with the Government's attempt to win the submarine contract. It will also provide much employment in the port of Adelaide. I am not aware of any concerns expressed by the Islanders. If they have anything that they would like to discuss with us, we would be pleased to talk to them. The Acting Director could perhaps inform me whether any further meeting of the design committee is planned or whether it has concluded its work.

**Mr Freeman:** Most of the work has been completed, but certainly, if the Island people feel that there is a need for

us to get together again, we would be happy to accommodate them.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** I appreciate the extensive report given by the Minister and the added comments by his officer. The concern of the Islanders to which I referred is confined to those who served on the committee and who felt that, in the circumstances, on reading the report in the *Islander*, somewhere along the line they might have been notified of a change in the arrangements. They were concerned about the absolute absence of and disregard for the schedule with which they have been provided.

I referred earlier to the leapfrogging approach to the subject that has been adopted by the Government for the reasons outlined by the Minister. However, in the short time that I have had to absorb the Minister's comments it would appear that building by Eglo Engineering should commence under the revised plan in February 1986. That was precisely the time for building commencement under the previous plan. In the meantime, as the Minister has conceded, if there is any problem over the price after detailed specifications are made available to the contractor, it is the Government's intention to go to tender, anyway.

So, under this revised structure, it could take a damned sight longer to get commencement on the job than it would have taken had the Government stuck to its original plan and either encouraged or received tenders in accordance with the schedule. I cannot see what is going on, except that an assurance is being given to a very reputable local firm at Port Adelaide. Added to that apparently is this undertaking that we will have a 3 000 tonne capacity ship lifter built by that engineering firm as well.

I make clear that in no way do I reflect on that firm other than most favourably, because it is a long established and reputable engineering company. As outlined, I am somewhat concerned about the discourtesy in not keeping the Island community informed of this major change of plans, because at this stage the committee really does not know whether its job is terminated forthwith as a result of this public report; nor would they have known, until we had comment from the Minister a moment ago, that they might be able to make further comment about the subject in its new form.

My next question relates to the principle of tendering. The Minister said that the figure for which Eglo Engineering had undertaken to build the ship was a competitive price. How did he arrive at that if he has not called for tenders or had any input from other competing engineers within South Australia, interstate or elsewhere? From what source was he able to ascertain that the \$11 700 000 contract as now apparently awarded to Eglo was the right and fair price or, in his words, 'competitive price'?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** That advice came from the Australian shipping consultants with whom the department spoke.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Henning Horne?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** That would have been one of them.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** That consultant representative was present at the meeting on 15 August 1985. It was party to the discussions that led to the preparation of this original schedule. As you can understand, Minister, that is why it is so confusing. Given the presence of the Director, the shipping consultant group, the department's own officers and the Island committee, a position was laid down on that date. Then, with no more communication, the Government has gone off on another course. It is a little hard to follow from the remote level of those Islanders.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The honourable member has said that there might have been some discourtesy to the committee. I am quite prepared to ask the Acting Director to

call a further meeting of the committee to discuss those points.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Communication with the Chairman of that committee would be appropriate and appreciated in view of the position. Whilst on the subject of the *Troubridge*, I ask when does the role of the Department of Marine and Harbors cease in this exercise of ship replacement and when does the Highways Department return as the responsible Government arm for this ship and its ultimate service?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** It will cease once the building of the vessel has been completed.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** And all the harbour facilities that are required to go with it?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes, it will then revert to the Commissioner of Highways and be responsible for services to Kangaroo Island via the Minister of Transport.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** So, any questions related to the policy of space rate charging is a matter for the Highways Department and not the Department of Marine and Harbors?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** What about scheduling? Does the Minister understand that the replacement ship will be servicing a port or ports other than Kingscote?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Kingscote and Port Lincoln.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Has the determination been made that it will go to Port Lincoln as well?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes, that was made clear in the Abraham Report. Whether that is still the intention is a matter that would have to be taken up with the Minister of Transport. Certainly, when I was involved at that level it was determined that we would continue to Port Lincoln from Kingscote—in other words, it would be very similar to the service that now exists.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Despite the fact that it is an economic disaster to continue that run for the service that it provides?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** It may not continue to be such an economic disaster once we have the new system in operation.

**Mr PETERSON:** What is the future of the dredging plant and the manpower involved? The Minister said that the dredging requirements have dropped away, he has caught up with the schedule and he has 12 months with the consolidation of No. 7 berth at Outer Harbour. Has the department looked beyond that? Is there any future for the plant? The escalating cost of up to \$900 per hour obviously means that at some stage we will reach a point where it is cheaper to hire outside dredging. What is the long-term planning for the dredging unit as a whole—both plant and manning?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** No decision has been taken on that yet. As I highlighted earlier, the dredging work will continue on a one-shift basis up to mid-1988. Who knows, by that time it is quite possible that more work will become available following the discussion that we had in Committee this afternoon in relation to Thevenard. There could be more work there and that could be ongoing—that is certainly my desire. I would like to keep our own dredging ongoing. We must be realistic and, if the work expires, we have to look to see what we will do about the dredging.

**Mr PETERSON:** But, there is a 12 months guarantee?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes. The Acting Director has more to add.

**Mr Freeman:** The honourable member quoted the hire rate as \$900 per hour; the actual rate is \$660 per hour.

**Mr PETERSON:** I refer to the dockyard and all aspects associated with it. Is there any possibility of work for the dockyard out of the *Troubridge* replacement, the container

crane and the extension of No. 7 berth at Outer Harbour? Is No. 7 berth definitely a goer or is it being planned?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** It is envisaged that the *Troubridge* terminal will be situated at No. 4 berth at Outer Harbour. Quite a lot of work will be involved there for the dockyard, which will be able to do most of that work. If the No. 7 berth and the deep draft grain terminal proceed, there will be quite a good deal of work for our dockyard personnel. That is the way in which we are proceeding at the moment.

**Mr PETERSON:** The Minister referred earlier to computerising the store system. What was the cost to set that up?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I will ask the Acting Director to provide that information.

**Mr Freeman:** The computerisation within the Supply Branch has not commenced yet, but we will be adopting a system which has been installed in the Highways Department and which is likely to become a common system throughout most departments of the Public Service.

**Mr Srinivasan:** As the Acting Director pointed out, it will be a common system for most Public Service departments over a period of time. The operating costs of the system will be around \$40 000. That is the amount that we will pay the Government Computing Centre for providing the facilities.

**Mr PETERSON:** What has it cost the department to come into this system?

**Mr Srinivasan:** We have a return key basis wherein we paid the Government Computing Service \$13 000 to set up the system for us.

**Mr PETERSON:** Was manpower put in by the Department of Marine and Harbors?

**Mr Srinivasan:** We have a chief supply officer on secondment to do the systems analysis work from the department's viewpoint. So, we ensure that we pick all the right aspects of that package that the Government Computing Centre is offering us. That person has been on secondment for this project and in relation to a host of other recommendations that came out of an earlier report by the Auditor-General some 18 months ago. He has been on secondment for about 16 months working on a variety of projects in addition to this specific project of computerisation.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The feasibility study for the introduction of computer systems and VDU terminals in the Supply Branch indicates a potential of saving one storeman's position. However, in line with Government policy, no employee will be retrenched. That may help clarify the position.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** What will be the manning levels of the new *Troubridge*?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** That is not really the responsibility of the Department of Marine and Harbors, but there has been some discussion. Much will depend on who are the newly appointed managers of the new vessel. Federally there is a manning committee that determines manning levels. That matter has not yet been finally determined.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** The Minister will appreciate the importance of minimising the manning of the vessel in order to minimise the costs of its operation, bearing in mind that a significant part of the total cost of the operation of the present M.V. *Troubridge* over its life has been incorporated in wages and salaries rather than in other items such as fuel and maintenance. I appreciate the co-operation of the Minister in this instance and shall be pleased to convey this to the island committee set up by the Minister for the purpose of co-ordinating local views with those of the department over the period involved. Further, I look forward to a little closer liaison and communication between the Government and the community on the island between

now and the date of the berthing of the new vessel, especially if the Government changes course from the plan that has been laid down (as it has in recent weeks) in relation to identifying the ship builder.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I thank the honourable member for that compliment.

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

---

Works and Services—Department of Marine and Harbours, \$16 700 000—Examination declared completed.

---

Minister of Marine, Miscellaneous, \$1 580 000—Examination declared completed.

---

Lands \$30 541 000

**Chairman:**

Mr Max Brown

**Members:**

The Hon. P.B. Arnold

Mr R.J. Gregory

Mr G.M. Gunn

Mr R.C. Hamilton

Mr I.P. Lewis

Mr N.T. Peterson

**Witness:**

The Hon. R.K. Abbott, Minister of Lands, Minister of Marine, Minister of Forests and Minister of Repatriation.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr D.J. Alexander, Director of Lands, Department of Lands.

Mr E.A.R. Mellen, Director, Operations and Services, Department of Lands.

Mr R.F. Elleway, Director, Land Operations, Department of Lands.

Mr J.G. Maher, Registrar-General, Department of Lands.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr Hamilton):** I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** Before asking questions, I should like to indicate to the Committee and to the Minister the areas of concern to me. Naturally, I still have a major concern about the supply of residential and industrial land. This matter has been discussed recently with the Minister and with the Director. In view of the situation that existed at this time last year, I will pursue that matter to try to ascertain what action the Government has taken to solve that problem. I am also concerned about land survey and mapping, which is extremely important to South Australia.

I should then like to ask the Minister questions concerning the land titles system, especially leases, as well as about the Government's attitude to the future of pastoral land and the Minister's intention regarding pastoral leases, marginal lands, and perpetual leases. I should also like to know the Government's attitude to the conversion of Crown leases to freehold, in view of the fact that a certain amount of freeholding is continuing and especially as this matter is highlighted in the Auditor-General's Report concerning the cost of Crown and perpetual leases where the rent is set in perpetuity. I shall also ask questions concerning the problem

that that creates for any Government. That is the broad area on which I shall address questions.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Mr Acting Chairman, may I be permitted to make a statement giving a broad overview of the department's operations before I answer questions on the matters that have been referred to by the honourable member?

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Certainly.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** In keeping with the policy of providing efficient and effective services for the public, stage three of the review of the Department of Lands was undertaken by management consultants in 1984-85. The people involved in that review were Scott in conjunction with APTECH. The department is now implementing the recommendations of that review. A departmental charter has been developed to clearly define the purpose and role of the department and the mechanism by which the Director of Lands discharges his responsibilities to me as Minister of Lands. In fact, it is the department's performance agreement with the Government.

The charter is consistent with the Government's management improvement program to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources to gain the maximum benefit for the taxpayer's dollar. The department has been reorganised to ensure that its responsibilities are discharged correctly and that departmental operations follow policy directions in a logical manner, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

A Policy and Planning Secretariat has been established by integrating various functions of the department with a commonality of purpose to ensure a consistent integration of the purpose and role of the department. The policy of freeholding of Crown leases continued, but at a slower rate, with receipts totalling \$3.9 million in 1984-85. An amendment to the Crown Lands Act was passed by Parliament during the March session, allowing for more simple and rapid processing of property dealings and issue of tenures under the Act. Further reviews are continuing in order that regular rent reviews of leases can be made to ensure that leases of Crown lands can produce a reasonable return. Action is continuing in the implementation of the shack site policy with the major objectives of freeholding all shack sites located in acceptable areas and removing all inappropriately located shacks from the public waterfront, and to provide replacement sites for those shacks that must be removed.

Alternative shack sites were developed in 1984-85 at Younghusband, on the Murray River, and Hardwicke Bay. The real estate boom in South Australia continued through 1984-85 with average monthly lodgments of transactions exceeding those of the previous year by nearly 5 per cent. The upward trend in survey lodgments continued with a 31 per cent increase in the number of plans lodged for deposit. Escalating property values and increased real estate activity experienced during the year were reflected in the high level of revenue collected by the Lands Titles Office which was about \$2.5 million over budget.

Significant use is being made of modern technology, and this is reflected in public demand for up-to-date information in relation to land transactions. Demand for information from the land ownership and tenure system lots continued to increase, and a large increase has been experienced in requests from the private sector to obtain on-line access to the lot system via telephone dial-up microcomputer links. To further improve the service provided to the public, an automated unregistered document system has been introduced with the main aim of providing a tracking system for unregistered documents. The provision of survey services to the community continues to make significant use of modern technology. One such example is the design and

implementation of the digital cadastral data base system which will be the fundamental reference base which allows the linking of land data within and between systems directly through the land parcel identified, or spatially through the geographical location of parcels.

It is estimated that the DCDB will be available to the public from 1 July 1986. Expertise of Department of Lands officers in land information systems is such that during 1984-85 the department, through SAGRIC International, was contracted by the Tunisian Government to undertake a cadastral survey project in that country.

The Department of Lands is also hosting the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Australasian Urban and Regional Informations Systems Association, to be held in Adelaide in late November this year. This conference is attracting speakers and delegates from all over the world. The Valuation Division has completed the last of the series within the five year valuation program. As from 1 July 1985, valuations for all South Australian properties will be provided on an annual basis with the aid of locally developed computer techniques. The Valuation of Land Act was amended during the year to provide for independent reviews of valuations by private valuers. This will provide a review of valuations intermediate between the Valuer-General and the Land and Valuation Division of the Supreme Court.

I now propose to deal briefly with the budget with an overview of the most significant results. The first is the recurrent budget where total expenditure by the Department of Lands was \$27.7 million. This expenditure exceeded the budget estimate by \$260 000, which arose principally due to a salaries and wages increase of \$135 000 and to higher than expected terminal leave payments amounting to \$108 000.

The proposed recurrent budget for 1985-86 totals \$30.5 million. The increase of \$2.8 million is due mainly to a Treasury directive to pay superannuation liability amounting to \$1.9 million; the full year effect of salary and wages increases of \$60 000; and an inflation allowance for contingencies of \$300 000. If one ignores the extra appropriation for superannuation, in comparison to 1984-85 the budget for 1985-86 represents an increase of about 3.3 per cent, or in real terms no increase at all.

Public Service Act average full-time equivalents are to increase by some 12 positions during the year as a result of additional funds for the digital cadastral data base project and the State mapping program. However, the overall departmental target of actual full-time equivalents will reduce by some 15 from 952 as at 30 June 1985 to 937 as at 30 June 1986. With regard to estimates of a capital nature you will see that the total payments for 1984-85 exceeded the voted estimate by some \$8.7 million. This resulted from the Government's decision to buy a suitable property at Gawler for \$700 000 to stage the sixth world three day equestrian championships in 1986, and two properties totalling \$8 million under the resumption of parklands occupied by Crown agencies policy. That mainly relates to the STA purchase of land at Mile End and the Hackney bus depot reverting to parklands.

A provision of \$2.4 million has been made in 1985-86 for the purchase of land from SAMCOR for the relocation of the East End Market. A provision of \$1.2 million has been made for the replacement of an existing Burroughs computer for the operation of various land based information systems. In relation to the estimates of receipts, collections on the recurrent account exceeded estimates by some \$2.5 million, due mainly to higher than expected receipts by the Lands Titles Office as a result of increased activity of the real estate boom and increased charges which came into operation in November 1984.

Capital receipts exceeded budget by about \$600 000 due to additional receipts from the sale of Crown lands. The Department of Lands is most conscious of its level of expenditure, and every effort is being made to eliminate inefficient practices and procedures to ensure a maximum return for the taxpayer's dollar. Considerable use of modern technology is being made, and will continue to be expanded where possible to help achieve greater efficiency in departmental operations.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** Page 16 of the program estimates relates to the provision of residential land and page 27 to the provision of industrial land and buildings. I will deal with these two subjects together to save time. We are all conscious of the fact that the Government accepts responsibility for being the developer of last resort. At this time last year the then Minister indicated in round figures that in respect of 50 towns throughout South Australia the Lands Department was responsible for providing residential and industrial land and that of the 50 towns some 40 did not have any residential blocks or industrial land available for sale. What is the present situation? Has that matter been addressed effectively in the past 12 months and how long will it be before there is a ready supply of housing and industrial blocks across South Australia, particularly in country areas?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The following details are provided for the Committee's benefit:

The department is involved in all country areas of the State and is currently active in 43 council areas.

	<b>Residential</b>
Land On Sale . . . . .	Lock (8) Coober Pedy (26) Glendambo (10) Marla (70) Morgan (16) Whyalla H/S (15) Kadina (6)
Under Construction . . . . .	Waikerie (11) Wool Bay (18) Clinton (3) Kingston S.E. (9)
Under Investigation	
Far North . . . . .	Andamooka Roxby Downs
Eyre . . . . .	Thevenard St 2 Venus Bay Port Lincoln Elliston Louth Bay North Shields Ceduna R/L Cleve R/L Seale Bay
Northern . . . . .	Port Augusta H/S Miranda Orroroo Wirrabara
Yorke . . . . .	Tickera Port Rickaby Minlaton Port Vincent Port Julia Mallala Balaklava
Central . . . . .	Ardrossan Victor Harbor Emu Bay Kingscote

---

**Residential**


---

Murraylands	Berri St 3 Loxton West Barmera St 4 Meningie Cobdogla Glossop Rail Yard
South East	Kingston S.E. Beachport Tintinara

---

Does the honourable member want me to refer to the industrial areas?

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** I am interested in the overall picture. At the moment it appears that the situation is not significantly different to what it was last year. Apparently, in 30 or 40 South Australian towns there is still no land available. The responsibility in relation to the supply of such land must be accepted by the Government of the day, and the people across South Australia want to know when land will be readily made available to enable young married people, for example, to buy a block of land in Barmera or Renmark or in any other town across South Australia.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I appreciate what the member is saying. We have had discussions on this issue previously, and the honourable member has raised this matter in the House on several occasions. He has written to the department and has discussed the matter with the Director of the department and me. The department is currently reviewing aspects of land that is owned by Australian National. Perhaps I can follow up that matter later if further information is required. But at last we seem to be making a breakthrough in this area, which I think will relieve the situation. I am referring to land that was not made available by Australian National under the railway transfer agreement. We are making headway, and we can talk about that. The matter is being reviewed, and it is the desire and the intention of the department to release much more land. I ask Mr Elleway, who heads this department, to comment.

**Mr Elleway:** The number of projects that we have under investigation for development has increased from last year. One of the limiting factors is the size of the fund that we have to do the job. I think Treasury lent us some \$300 000 when the fund began in 1976. We have paid back \$100 000 of that amount and, from memory, the fund has grown to about \$1.3 million or \$1.4 million.

In order to serve the South Australian community properly, we must ensure that the capacity of that fund to do its job of providing allotments, as a developer of last resort, is not reduced. Therefore, there are some projects which we will not enter into because the loss on them would be too great and in relation to which subsidising them from the profits made in other parts of the operation could not be justified.

However, the fund is gradually expanding in its capacity to do the job that the member for Chaffey believes it ought to be doing. Following our review of the situation, which should be completed in a month or so, I think we will be able to make the fund move a little more quickly and thus satisfy some of the honourable member's desires.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** I appreciate what Mr Elleway is saying, but, from a policy point of view, is the Government serious about decentralisation? South Australia is a comparatively large State with a comparatively small population. If it is considered that everyone should live in the metropolitan area of Adelaide (where blocks of land are readily available), the Government ought to come out and say so.

However, the idea is to encourage people to live in the country. At the moment only about 200 000 people live in the country, but they produce more than half the State's wealth. However, young people, whom we are trying to encourage to stay in the country, cannot purchase blocks of land. If they want to purchase a building block they must go to a large centre or the metropolitan area.

I can appreciate the departmental point of view: but certainly in relation to an overall policy point of view I think that the Government and the Treasury must look at this matter again—otherwise we might as well be honest and say that we are not particularly interested in encouraging people to live in country areas.

From what I can ascertain, on information currently available, the situation has not changed dramatically from what it was this time last year: I would hazard a guess that in probably 35 or 40 towns across South Australia one cannot purchase a housing block. With the enormous area of South Australia, and with the tremendous amount of land surrounding every town, to be unable to buy a quarter acre housing block is absolutely crazy.

I appreciate the financial problem that any Government has in dealing with this matter. However, the problem will not go away, and we must find a solution to it. I put to the Minister that, from a policy point of view, this issue ought to be taken up very strongly with Cabinet to determine just where the Government intends to go in future. Otherwise, this time next year people will still be unable to get a housing block in most country towns in South Australia.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** In aiming to provide allotments the department is working towards involving local government wherever possible. For example, the next development will be undertaken in Berri: that will be done by the local government authority in that area. I support what the honourable member has said. On the question of policy, the Government certainly wants to open up much more of the country areas. This is preferable to continued building in the metropolitan area, resulting in a metropolitan sprawl. It is in the Government's interest I think, to move in that direction.

I can assure the member that I will pursue this matter for him. Through Cabinet I will endeavour to get the support of Government, if necessary. That is how we are proceeding at the moment, and I think the situation will be vastly improved with time. The departmental officer in charge of these matters is in regular contact with local government in order to meet the demands in this area.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** Turning now to the matter of receipts from Crown land rental, I refer to page 146 of the Auditor-General's Report and to the table giving details of recurrent receipts and payments for the year ended 30 June 1985. Receipts for 'Crown lands—rent, licences, etc.' amounted to \$1.829 million in 1985. I take it that that refers to the total receipts for Crown land rentals across South Australia.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I ask Mr Mellen to answer that question.

**Mr Mellen:** Yes, that is right.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** In relation to the administration of Crown lands, the Auditor-General's Report states (on page 147):

Crown lands, administered by the department, include 22 000 perpetual leases covering 8.4 million hectares. . . . With respect to fixed rentals applying to 21 000 leases the effect of changing money values in relation to increasing costs of administration is reflected in the net cost of operations of the department.

Later, it states:

The following summary of fixed rentals applying at 30 June 1985 shows that for 11 000 (51 per cent) of the total leases the average rental was less than \$7 per annum.



From what I can remember the current servicing cost of a lease by the department is probably about \$25 (it may be higher: I do not know). What is the net situation concerning the \$1.829 million collected in rents against the total servicing cost by the department? What is the net annual benefit to the department? If the net return to the Government is so small, perhaps further incentives should be looked at to encourage further freeholding at a greater rate than is now occurring. I see that \$3.8 million or \$3.9 million was paid to the Government by people purchasing Crown leases. Would it not be a proposition to look at further incentives to encourage people to purchase the lease they occupy if the value to the Government or the department is an ever diminishing return on rents fixed in perpetuity?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** We are reviewing that policy now. I will ask Mr Mellen if it is possible for him to provide these details. I am not sure that we have them but, if not, we will certainly get them.

**Mr Mellen:** Expenditure for 1984-85 was \$1.487 million, and the return was \$1.867 million.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** That is getting close to a break-even point.

**Mr Mellen:** Yes. In regard to perpetual leases, we have had considerable discussion with the UF&S, and the discussions will be continuing.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** Are those discussions looking to break the 'rent in perpetuity' system? Is that what the department is looking at?

**Mr Mellen:** The discussion has been general thus far, not necessarily looking at breaking the rent in perpetuity but trying to reach a means whereby the breaking point can be achieved.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** By applying a surcharge?

**Mr Mellen:** There are a number of ways. We have looked at alternatives means, including not necessarily a surcharge but a service charge.

**Mr GREGORY:** It is understood that the major delays involved between a proprietor of land making application for approval to divide land and receipt of the certificates of title for the new land parcels occur in the planning and plan preparation processes. However, some time is also involved in the plan examination and deposit functions. What action, if any, has been taken by the Registrar-General's Office to reduce the time taken in examining plans of survey to minimise delays for subdivisions of land?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** A number of steps have been taken to cope with the exceptionally high rate of lodgment of survey plans experienced in the last three years: an increase of approximately 150 per cent over what had been the historic average for the lodgment of 80 surveys a month.

The number of personnel engaged in the planned examination function has been increased substantially and the taking of special leave or long service leave other than in exceptional circumstances was deferred for a period. The most recent action has involved on a pilot study basis a variation of the traditional survey examination process with the aim of reducing the average time needed for examination of a plan without reducing the legal intensity of the survey examination process.

This has been achieved by such methods as pre-examination duties being carried out by junior officers, leaving survey examiners to engage in the level of work required to ensure in-depth survey examination.

**Mr GREGORY:** Can the Minister inform me of any progress being made by the Dog Fence Board in the use of solar powered electric dog fences? Can the Minister say how many sections of dog fence have been electrified? What is the cost of the dog fence compared to conventional netting fences? Has the Dog Fence Board undertaken any experimental work in developing an electric fence type suitable

to South Australian conditions? I have read recently of comments by people in Queensland who seem to believe that a dog fence similar to the type that we have will not work.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The Dog Fence Board is responsible for the management of the 2 220 kilometres of the State's dingo-proof fence. In South Australia the fence is owned by the 28 pastoral lessees that abut it on the inside, and there are three sections on the West Coast owned by local dog fence boards. The board is concerned at the ever increasing cost of maintaining the fence in dogproof condition and has undertaken extensive trials in the use of solar powered plain wire electric fences to contain costs.

Three sections of the fence have been electrified. First, the Fowlers Bay local dog fence board has erected 90 kilometres of four wire electric fence to control wombat damage to the netting dog fence. The results have been spectacular in reducing wombat penetration from 430 in 1983 to one so far this year in 1985. The local board chairman, Brian Johns, reports that the dingo problem in his area has been solved by the easily maintained electric fence.

The lessee of Parakylia Station, north of Woomera, has erected 34 km of six wire electric fence to protect a very old and frail netting fence. The Parakylia manager is delighted with the results, as not one dingo has entered the run through the electric fence in the 18 months it has been in operation. Mr Michael Sheehan, of Moolawatana Station, in the North Flinders Ranges, was the first owner in South Australia to use solar powered electric fences for dingo control. He inherited an ageing netting dog fence running through harsh and rough terrain, where the netting fence was subject to heavy damage by kangaroo and euro bombardment. The first section of the electric fence is 24 kms in length and of six-wire construction. This proved sufficiently successful for the owner to extend it a further 19 kms using a seven-wire fence.

**Mr LEWIS:** When did he erect the first section?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Last year. Mr Sheehan is convinced that the electric fence trials have overcome an otherwise insurmountable problem. The Chairman of the Dog Fence Board, Mr Rod Everett, advised me that the current cost of erecting 1 km of conventional netting dog fence to board specifications runs at from \$4 800 to \$5 100, depending upon location and terrain. So the all-up cost of building 1 km of seven-wire solar powered electric dog fence varies from \$1 200 to \$1 400, again depending upon the terrain and the cost of fence line clearing. The cost comparison is very attractive and the results to date have been excellent.

The Dog Fence Board has visited both Victoria and Western Australia to evaluate experimental fencing in those States and it has, in cooperation with the suppliers of electric fence components and manufacturers of solar panels, tested almost the complete range of available equipment, and is now in a position to supply fence owners with plans and specifications of electric fences capable of dingo control to a high degree of efficiency and reliability.

**Mr GREGORY:** It seems that some States ought to take a leaf out of South Australia's book and use that electric fence, because, from what I have read, most of the pastoralists on the inside of the fence are not very keen on it. They say that it does not work and that it does not keep out the dogs.

I refer to page 98 of the Estimates of Payments, program 5, land surveying and mapping. I see that under 'Salaries and Wages' that there is a line called 'Digital cadastral data base' that last year had a voted figure of \$150 600, an actual figure of \$358 874 and a proposed figure for 1985-86 of \$565 869. The digital cadastral data base appears again under 'Goods and services' with operating expenses, but with a

trend different from the salaries, with an underspending in 1984-85 of about \$75 000.

I also refer to page 20 of the yellow book where, under 'Major resource: variations' there is an explanation that \$370 000 is for acquisition of major equipment for the digital cadastral data base. I see it is also mentioned in the specific targets section for last year and this year. From the money involved, this appears to be a significant project. Will you explain exactly what is the digital cadastral base, how long has it been in operation, what will it cost and what is it supposed to achieve?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The digital cadastral data base is a new computer that is to be purchased as a data base machine for the DCDB at an initial cost of \$500 000, 50 per cent of the initial cost being met from the 1985-86 allocation and the remaining 50 per cent in 1986-87. With a phased implementation over three years, an additional cost of \$100 000 will be also incurred in each of the two subsequent years. The installation of the computer represents a significant step in the project, because it will provide user access to an increasing volume of data on demand. As part of the development of the total land information system for South Australia, on 23 January 1984 approval was given for the introduction of a digital cadastral data base.

The digital data depicting the total State cadastral framework was to be completed by July 1988 at a cost of \$5.6 million in 1983 dollar values. The total cost of \$5.6 million represented an additional cost to Treasury of \$3.8 million to cover staffing and contingencies over a six year period. As to the financial variations for 1984-85, the overspending against budget for salaries for the DCDB system was reflected by a compensating underspending in a general land surveying and mapping function. This resulted from an internal transfer of resources within the department in line with the original feasibility report and project timetables.

The underspending on goods and services of about \$75 000 for the DCDB project resulted from the fact that consultants were not engaged to confine the data base as expected, the reason for that being that no consultants were available who possessed the necessary knowledge and expertise. I point out that this digital cadastral data base in particular is a very new area for me. I do not really fully understand it just yet. Perhaps if Mr Alexander, the Director, could add to what I have said.

**Mr Alexander:** It is quite a fundamental information system for which we are developing the data base. As part of the Lands Department's function is to do the basic geographic computer data base, this is digitalising the coordinates for locating land. Plans can be derived from this for water supply, sewerage, socioeconomic and legal fiscal information on land data bases.

As part of the overall State wide operation, I am Chairman of the Land Information Steering Committee that is pooling all this together through the Government, so that hopefully, putting it simply, every agency that is concerned with land information can talk to each other. It is a major project. Our part of it is well ahead of schedule, as the Minister mentioned, and I understand that the other major user, the E&WS Department, is about to purchase its equipment as part of the State data base.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** Returning to a topic to which I was referring earlier that we are collecting only \$1.86 million and it is costing \$1.48 million to collect it, rather than looking to increase the charges on leasehold land, I put it to the Minister that it would be in the best overall interests and would give an opportunity to reduce the overheads of the department if consideration was given to providing further incentives to freehold much of this remaining land. I note that the present Government has continued with the policy that was instituted by the previous Liberal

Government and, as such, I believe it has continued down that track.

But, if the Government further encouraged freeholding, it could significantly reduce the permanent overhead costs of the department. Unless a surcharge of some type or a departure from rental in perpetuity is undertaken by the Government, we will soon have a situation where the actual return will be less than the cost involved in its collection. I strongly suggest to the Government that it look seriously at further incentives to freehold.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The matter raised by the honourable member is being considered at the present time. The department is looking at an incentive system to freehold rather than trying to increase charges. Nobody likes increasing charges at any time, no matter what Government is in office. However, those issues must be faced. We believe that it is better if we consider this whole matter and try to encourage people to freehold and offer some form of incentive system. We are developing that at the moment.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** The type of work involved in sending out accounts and collecting in a diminishing return situation, besides being non-productive, involves many people who could probably be much better utilised in some other way in the interests of the State. What is the Government's present thinking in relation to tenure of pastoral leases? The Minister would recall that some years ago we endeavoured to bring in a continuous pastoral lease which would have given a greater security of tenure for those who had invested their life's savings in the pastoral lands, but at the same time still retaining ultimate control with the Government to create a situation whereby, if the lessee abided by the covenants, there would be some guarantee to him that that title would continue on in that family as long as they continued to abide by those covenants and looked after that country.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The Government and the Department of Lands have considered amendments to the Pastoral Act for some time now. That has proceeded through various forms to the stage where discussions were held with Parliamentary Counsel. A promise was made that all parties would be fully consulted and that it was desirable, before any legislation was introduced, to endeavour to achieve as much agreement with all parties as we possibly could.

There have been one or two fairly sensitive issues, which we are currently discussing. Parliamentary Counsel is awaiting further instructions following consultation with the Land Resources Standing Committee, which I approved recalling on 19 September. That committee membership consists of the permanent heads of the major land related departments. It is crucial to obtain their views before we proceed any further.

Parliamentary Counsel raised some drafting issues that will require Cabinet clarification, so I will need to get that cleared through Cabinet. The areas of concern mainly involve sections relating to occupiers' liability and public access. At the moment, they are in the hands of the Attorney-General, who requested that we do not proceed at this stage. Of course, the UF&S is particularly concerned with those aspects. It will only consider amendments to the Pastoral Act in the full context of all those issues.

That is the case with the conservation people also. They would much prefer to proceed as a whole rather than our coming in and doing bits and pieces where there has been total agreement. It is desirable that we continue to try to bring the parties together to get some form of compromise where those concerns have been expressed. So, we are proceeding carefully in the context of the wider issues of Government land resource management in South Australia.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** My final question relates to leasehold land. Has the Government reached the point at

which it is prepared to come to grips with the marginal perpetual leases? Something like 80 per cent of marginal lands in South Australia are currently held under Crown perpetual leases. A very small percentage is still held under marginal perpetual leases, which is somewhat absurd, because one finds many properties held by farmers comprise one section that is Crown perpetual lease and another section that is marginal perpetual lease.

They come to freehold their farm and find that they can freehold half of it but cannot freehold the marginal lease that makes up the other half of the property. There is no difference between one paddock and the next, yet we have this absurd situation where something between 80 and 90 per cent of marginal lands in South Australia are currently held under Crown perpetual leases. It has been argued that there is insufficient control over erosion, and so forth, but I believe that in this day and age that is not the case. The sooner that the Government comes to grips with it and has the courage to offer marginal perpetual leases to farmers as Crown leases—in other words convert them and repeal the Marginal Lands Act, which has long since served its purpose—the better it will be. This would benefit all concerned: it would give farmers who have a property made up of a mix of Crown perpetual lease and marginal perpetual lease the opportunity to freehold their total property.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I ask Mr Elleway to explain the current situation in regard to this matter.

**Mr Elleway:** The basic difficulty with marginal lands goes back to a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Marginal Lands Act, which was originally devised in 1940 as a farm reconstruction Act, which enabled the State to buy uneconomic farms from their owners, to consolidate those farms with other land in the area, and to sell the properties to farmers with sufficiently sized properties to enable them to make an economic go of it. Controls were placed on the land in relation to stocking and growing of grain and, in particular, the tying of marginal parcels to other marginal parcels, other ordinary perpetual leases or other freehold titles.

The latter condition is the only one that has been policed and, of more recent times, Ministers of Lands have administratively decided that the tying conditions will not be policed. However, recently we had a review of freeholding in South Australia, and it was decided that all properties south of a particular line could be freeholded. Marginal properties which were north of that line could not be freeholded. So, we have the situation to which the member for Chaffey refers, where one can have a perpetual lease adjacent to a marginal perpetual lease being freeholded, yet the marginal perpetual lease is not permitted to be freeholded.

In order to solve the situation and to achieve a satisfactory negotiation with all the interested parties, it was finally agreed that the Soil Conservation Act held the key to the problem. Amendments to that Act are currently being prepared by the Department of Agriculture for the Minister of Agriculture. When they come into force, that will enable, I believe, freeholding of the marginal perpetual leases.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** How far off is the introduction of that legislation? I cannot imagine that drafting to amend the Soil Conservation Act would be a very onerous job if there is any need for that to be done.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** That is the legislation being prepared by the Department of Agriculture. The Director informs me that it is mid-1986.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** It is an issue that we have been playing around with for so long and it is farcical, in my view. No-one can identify in any of those farming properties that one paddock has been looked after in a different way from another paddock. It comes back to the old argument in relation to the pastoral leases. Some 30 per

cent of pastoral leases in South Australia are Crown perpetual leases and the other 70 per cent are pastoral leases. If anyone can identify by looking at them which is a Crown perpetual lease and which is a pastoral lease, I will eat my hat. However, that is the way it goes. I can only hope that common sense prevails and that what has been outlined by Mr Elleway does come to pass before too much longer, because no great purpose has been achieved in recent times.

**Mr LEWIS:** Electrified dog fences have been used in trials in the South-East at the Rodda family's place, Bunn's Bore, adjacent to Ngarkat National Park. That arose out of my having drawn attention to the Box Flat Dingo Control Committee and its role in controlling dingoes on what used to be unallotted Crown land inside and outside the hundreds in County Chandos and on land dedicated in the last flurry of activity in the Corcoran Government two or three days before the election was called in 1979. That dog problem had never been properly addressed with the resources necessary or, for that matter, given the technological or innovative consideration it should have been given.

My raising it resulted in considerable mirth in this Chamber in the debate on the 1979 budget. However, late that year, after I was first elected, it excited the attention of a number of people, one of whom was a Mr Piesse and Roger Rodda, the manager of the family-owned property, to which I referred, in that locality adjacent to the Pinnaroo/Bordertown Road at Bunn's Bore. As a result of discussion and correspondence between myself, those two gentlemen and officers of the Department of Environment and Planning, it was decided to install a trial stretch of electrified fence using solar energy assimilators for the electrification. That is where the innovation came from.

I am mightily pleased, of course, that whatever mirth there may have been on the occasion I first raised the matter and drew attention to the problem, my attitude is certainly vindicated now, in that we can keep the inside country free of dingoes at much less cost than the otherwise enormous expense that would have been involved in the replacement of the dog fence. That is an example, I guess, of where what might have appeared to most people at the time to be something deserving ridicule turned out in very short order to be something worth millions.

I do not mind putting that information before the Committee now in all immodesty, because the chance for the Committee to scrutinise the programs of departments in this way is indeed extremely valuable. Just that one instance illustrates the value involved, some 2 000 kilometres of dog fence being now made dog proof—as well as whatever else proof one wants it to be—at a saving of something like \$2 500 per kilometre. That amounts to saving more than \$4 million of State money. These Estimates Committees would not cost the State that much in 10 years. So much for that point!

I now turn my attention to another area of innovation to which the Minister has already referred, namely, the computerisation of the data base being used in the department for logging and cataloguing the cadastral records, to which reference is made on page 22 of the yellow book, under the heading 'Natural Resources—Policy Area'. We do not see anything under the fixed assets information as an explanation of the acquisition of the computer systems referred to under the State cadastral survey component of the lands survey subprogram of the department. Yet, on page 24, still under 'Natural Resources', under another subprogram obviously related to that (the establishment, operation and maintenance of a land related record and registration system), we see fixed asset information related to the Nu-Arc camera, which is obviously used for getting the records straight from above.

Also mentioned is the NBI system 8 word processor. Is that the mainframe system into which the data is being

entered referred to as a computer system under that component of the subprogram to which I referred earlier as the State cadastral survey, or is there another mainframe? Can the Minister also tell the Committee what is the mainframe capacity in memory terms (how many megabytes) and say what is the RAM of that computer system? For the uninitiated, RAM is the random access memory capacity of the central processing unit, or the brain.

**Mr Mellen:** I am not quite sure what the honourable member is trying to ask.

**Mr LEWIS:** I want to know whether the NBI system 8 word processor is the hardware the department is using for the establishment of the digital cadastral data base or whether it has a separate chunk of hardware. If it has a separate chunk of hardware, what is the mainframe memory capacity?

**Mr Mellen:** The NBI system 8 word processor is not the digital cadastral data base machine. The other question I will take on notice, because I do not know the technical details of the machine that is running the digital cadastral data base.

**Mr LEWIS:** What is the cost of the word processor system installed, and what other computer is the department buying for the records arising from the State lands survey data base and at what cost? I heard the Minister explain, in the remarks he was making in response to the member for Florey, that there was no-one anywhere who could provide the consultant expertise necessary to give the department the advice it needed about which outfit to buy and what tool kit to get. I guess that that is putting it as simply as possible.

**Mr Mellen:** The information is available but, as I do not have it here with me, I will have to get it.

**Mr LEWIS:** The State has wasted much money on computers over the past five years. Too often those people making the decision have not known for what they are looking, and those providing the information have had a vested interest in providing only what will enhance their prospects of getting business, with the result that we are getting square pegs in round holes across a range of departments. I am just as interested in that sort of information as most members would be about whether to buy a Rolls Royce or a Sigma for the use of departmental staff. I use that as an analogy so that I can alert the Committee to the sorts of implication that there are and have been in the decisions made to purchase computing equipment.

Clear instances exist where it would have been appropriate to buy neither a Rolls Royce nor a Sigma, but rather to buy a four-wheel drive Toyota landcruiser or some other landcruiser that was available. Sometimes I have seen software programs going on to hardware that is useless: for instance, there should have been a concurrent disk operating system installed so that the rate at which information could be entered and retrieved could be speeded up and so that there would not be up to a fortnight's wait before asking the computer a question because it has been receiving information from someone else all the time. That worries me.

I do not wish to castigate the Minister or his officers in this instance: I merely draw to their attention what I have identified as a real problem arising from the ignorance of people as to what is the appropriate equipment for the task for which it is to be used. I trust that the information for which I have asked and which I hope I will receive will enable me to make a judgment, not only as to what the department is trying to do but also what it has bought and how it is trying to make the equipment work.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** As with other departments, the Lands Department is required to go before the Data Processing Board. Indeed, the Director has told me that there is

a meeting of the board on this issue this afternoon that he would normally have attended but for the Estimates Committee meeting. I am sure that the department can get the information for the honourable member.

**Mr Alexander:** We are not yet at the stage of purchasing the equipment, and certain investigations must be made. We could get progressive information, but we have not yet determined the matter finally. We are running the data base on the existing equipment and getting ready to go to the Data Processing Board with a proposition as to the type of computing power that we need.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I should appreciate the Minister's providing the information in such a form that it can be inserted in *Hansard*.

**Mr LEWIS:** Regarding a more parochial matter, I refer to problems that have arisen for a Mr Blascoe, one of my constituents at Ki Ki in the hundred of Livingston. Mr Blascoe, an immigrant to this country, is a beekeeper whose plight, by and large, has been drawn to my attention by other constituents. From what I have been told, I believe that Mr Blascoe has had a fairly rough time. I hope that the last paragraph of a letter which I received only yesterday from the Minister will in fact resolve the matter for him. That paragraph states:

In the interests of the more effective processing of this matter, I have instructed departmental officers from the Murray Bridge office to liaise directly with Mr Blascoe with the aim of a mutually acceptable resolution.

The problem arose as a consequence of Mr Blascoe needing a headquarters for his apiary. Originally, he sought and obtained a lease of the former Ki Ki schoolgrounds. The lease, costing \$20, is on section 74 in the hundred of Livingston. In June 1982, after protracted negotiations, a 12-month lease was granted, to expire on 28 February 1983. As Mr Blascoe had been in occupancy, the lease was backdated. He understood that he was entitled to be there, and the officers compassionately gave him that assurance.

Under the terms of the agreement that was finally sent to him, entitled 'Conditions of licence', certain conditions, signed by someone for Mr Jack Vickery, appeared on the back of the letter. I draw to the attention of the Committee the following two conditions:

(8) The licences shall expire on 28 February each year.

(13) The licence may be cancelled within 30 days by notice in writing from either party.

Many other conditions appear, but they are irrelevant to the point that I am making, except for the following point that is made in the fifth condition:

Licences shall be issued for occupation of these sites for a maximum period of 12 months, subject to condition 8.

Obviously, those conditions of licence are standard: they are sent to everyone who takes a licence on a piece of land from the department. Mr Blascoe did not receive a notice from the department giving him 30 days to get out, nor did he tell the department that he wanted to get out.

Although he has no written evidence to this effect, he was disturbed when told that someone was trying to buy the land that he was renting. He had paid the department \$20 a year from the time when he first obtained the licence. When he learnt that someone was trying to buy the land and rather emotionally drew that news to the attention of another constituent of mine, correspondence between the former Minister and me resulted in my almost being castigated by the former Minister for having had the audacity to suggest that Mr Blascoe had any right to be on the land or to have any lease or licence of any kind on the land. That letter from the former Minister was a bit rough, because it said:

Naturally, Mr Blascoe would not be permitted to put a shed on the land he neither owns nor leases.

Mr Blasko had been paying his money. I wish to ask the Minister two questions. First, given that Mr Blasko has been an inoffensive cooperative soul who has stayed out of everyone's hair in every way, why was he put through the hoops, by the Minister's predecessor, of having even to feel anxious about the legitimacy of his presence on the land in the first instance?

What reassurance can the Minister now give me, given that neither he nor any officer of his department has told Mr Blasko in writing (as they are required to do) that he has to get out; that, as this land is surplus to departmental and Crown needs, Mr Blasko will be allowed to buy it (which is his wish)? I am curious to know why Mr Blasko or anybody else could not buy the land, anyway, and why the Minister for some policy reason does not want to sell it. That does not make sense to me. Can the Minister answer those two questions? The first is whether there is anybody else in this predicament who has suddenly found that they have been asked to leave and who has not been given any notice, even though they have been paying the \$20 every year.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I am not aware of anybody else.

**Mr LEWIS:** I hope not. The second question was whether the Minister would sell the land to Mr Blasko.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** As I understand it, the arrangement was that one of our officers would talk this matter over with Mr Blasko. I understand that it is quite complex, and that there is a little misunderstanding here. It would be better to discuss the matter personally. The member mentions that he is a cooperative and inoffensive person, and I think he would agree that I am, too. I am only too happy to cooperate, to try to help someone.

**Mr LEWIS:** More so than the previous Minister, who was abrupt and rude about it.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** That is the member's judgment: I think it is the right one. I am prepared to look at this matter again and to follow it up for the honourable member. Perhaps if we can talk to this gentleman we can ascertain what the problem is and try to help him. I do not know of anybody else in this situation.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** My question relates to the area of the Registrar-General. Can the Minister say whether there is an alternative method which can be adopted and which would possibly alleviate this situation? My question relates to an application for subdivision at Moonta, made by a Mrs Ferguson. This matter was referred to me by the Leader of the Opposition, as she is a constituent of his.

On 30 October 1984 Mrs Ferguson instructed a surveying and planning consultant to proceed with a subdivision. The problem highlighted in this instance is that since 11 March 1985 applications have been lodged with the State Planning Commission and processed by it. However, it does not issue its statement of requirement until after the council has issued a planning authorisation. This causes a delay of at least a month in obtaining certificates of approval from the State Planning Commission.

Once certificates of approval have been received from both council and commission the application can then be lodged with the Registrar-General. This person says that it is not until that point, after it has been lodged with the Registrar-General, that it is known whether or not a survey is needed.

Having gone so many months down the track this person was suddenly confronted with a survey that cost \$1 350. Is there some means by which it can be determined early in the piece, before other applications are made? The \$1 350 could in some instances be the determining factor as to whether or not a person proceeds. It could come as a real shock to some people, not having allowed for an amount such as \$1 350, to be suddenly confronted with it.

I believe that in other States a survey is required on all subdivisions, and that is probably an even more horrendous problem. I suppose that in that case people know where they stand. Is there a means by which it could be determined early in the piece whether or not a survey is required? A person could then decide whether or not to proceed with a subdivision.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I will ask the Registrar-General to provide this information. This happened before I became Minister.

**Mr Maher:** The matter raised is one that comes to mind as having facts similar to a matter with which we dealt several months ago in the Lands Titles Office. My recollection of the correspondence was that it was with the lady (or the husband and wife) at Moonta and the surveyor. We pointed out to at least some of the parties involved that there is an arrangement between the Lands Titles Office and surveyors whereby, if any such situation arises (and there are some where it is not a straight decision as to whether a survey is or is not required), the Lands Titles Office provides a facility for surveyors to come in and discuss, in instances of doubt, just what the circumstances are. This situation was in that category, in the assessment of the survey drafting officers in the Lands Titles Office, and, had we been approached, we would have provided that service. That is well known throughout the surveying profession. In this case it was just not availed of.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** So an assessment could be made in advance if requested by the agent, which would give a fair guide?

**Mr Maher:** If the surveyor in his professional capacity has doubts as to whether or not a survey is required to divide a parcel of land, the Lands Titles Office provides a facility for the surveyor to come to the office to discuss the matter, and a determination will be made at that early stage.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** I will read correspondence I have received from the District Council of Paringa. Dated 26 September, the letter states:

Please find attached, correspondence items relating to the annual licence 17302 that the District Council of Paringa holds for the lock 5 marina issued by the Department of Lands. Through various discussions with officers of the department and council, it was proposed by the Department of Lands that the annual fee for the lease of the land was to be \$300 per year plus CPI increases and council agreed to this. The agreement was prepared with the fee set at \$300; however, no clause is in the agreement indicating price increases. The Department of Lands has now advised council that they have increased the annual fee to \$50 per boat and in future will lease the licence on a percentage of the gross takings.

When the marina is fully established with approximately 40 houseboats, the fee will be \$2 000 plus the percentage. Council is totally opposed to the proposal because of:

1. a breach of the original agreement;
  2. no discussion has taken place with council on the proposed increase of fee; and
  3. the extra fees for the licence would be better spent on establishing and maintaining the marina,
- we respectfully request your support to establish a more equitable licence fee for the lock 5 marina.

Can the Minister indicate whether this sort of approach in relation to licence fees is a new trend within the department? It seems a little like service station rental arrangements. If an entrepreneur gets hold of, or leases, a piece of land from the department and then makes a success of his operation, the Government wants a cut of the take. That is the only way that one can interpret this matter. Will this be a new style of approach, where the Government will move in for a percentage of whatever an entrepreneur is able to make out of a new investment or facility? Here we are really talking about a facility that is providing an essential component of the tourism industry—namely, the expansion of the houseboat industry by the Paringa council.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** This is a complex matter, and I ask Mr Ron Elleway to respond.

**Mr Elleway:** The member for Chaffey is quite correct in suggesting that the Department of Lands is moving towards a more commercial approach, and perhaps wishing to share in investment opportunities in the same way that the private sector would share in investment opportunities. The structure of the rent proposed for the marina to be operated by the Paringa council is a commercial structure. That council will obtain a commercial benefit from the operation of the facility placed on Crown land. If the operation is commercially viable, I do not believe that the sharing in the revenue from that would be a disincentive. If the operation is not commercially viable there will be an opportunity to go back and relook at the situation.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** If that is the Government's approach, I am appalled. The Government is virtually sitting back waiting for someone to use a bit of initiative: if someone does any good the Government comes in for its take, having put in nothing itself. Why does not the Government offer the council in the first place the opportunity of buying the freehold of that land, rather than waiting for the creation of something that works and then squeezing the operation? Where does that squeezing end? There is no guarantee where it will end. If the Government goes down this line we could end up with the appalling situation of the Government squeezing the last drop out of anyone who is showing any initiative. That is an appalling way of encouraging development. Is that the Government's policy or not?

**Mr Elleway:** For quite some time now—in fact, ever since Colonel Light was instructed by the South Australian Commissioners with the Letters Patent—it has been the policy of the Department of Lands (under various Governments) to maintain a strip of Crown land along every inland river, navigable waterway and sea coast. Given that historical background, certainly not in the recent past has it been the Government's policy to freehold land on the waterfront. Therefore, it is not possible for the Paringa council to have a freehold title on the waterfront.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** But the Government could give them a lease at a fixed rent. That was what was arranged in the first place, and it was \$300. However, as soon as it looked like being a viable operation the ground rules were changed. The department and the Government do not seem to know whether that is their policy or not, and they are in for their take. What was the use of reaching agreement with the department? It was stipulated that 'a fee for the lease of the land was to be \$300 a year, plus CPI'. However, the ground rules have now changed dramatically.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I am prepared to look at this matter for the honourable member, and report back to him.

**The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD:** I will be pleased if the Minister could do that. I think this represents a tremendous disincentive for any individual or council: they would be looking down the barrel, not knowing to what extent the squeeze would be put on them after having developed something worthwhile. I think this would kill any future expansion or initiative in this margin, to which Mr Elleway referred.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I would like to have the opportunity to go into the matter more thoroughly. I will do that and report back to the member.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I point out to the Minister that it is not just a question of reporting to the member for Chaffey but of reporting to the Committee. Any material provided ought to be in a form suitable for insertion into the *Hansard* record.

[Sitting suspended from 5.55 to 7.30 p.m.]

**Mr GUNN:** I have not deliberately gone on today to ensure that we are all here tonight, because that is the last thing I want. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be enough time in the parliamentary timetable to raise all the things that we want to and this occasion gives us the opportunity to raise them. From the information that I have been able to glean, under the preferred land rights option of Mr Holding, it would appear that there is a fair chance that, of all unallocated Crown land in South Australia, a large section is in my electorate. One portion runs from the railway line south to the farming areas and west to Cook and to the back of Ceduna that could, and most likely would, be subject to claim under Mr Holding's proposals.

On 29 August there appeared in the *Australian* a map which showed the amount of land that is currently under legislation. It would be a very large extension into South Australia, so I ask the Minister whether he or his officers have examined this legislation to see how it would affect South Australia and, if he has not, whether he would give this matter his close attention, because I believe that the people of South Australia should be advised of how much land would come under claim. Can action be taken to ensure that we do not close another area of South Australia and make it unavailable to all citizens and for mining and other activity? I am not doing this on the basis of any racist tendencies, but, rather, so that we may clearly understand the situation.

Approximately 17 or 18 per cent of the State has already been allocated, and some of that legislation is in need of urgent amendment. As the Lands Department would be nominally responsible for the land at this stage, it would know how much is involved.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I am not aware of the proposed federal legislation to which the honourable member has referred, but under the State legislation no claim can be made for unallocated Crown lands to be Aboriginal owned. As I understand the honourable member, it may be possible for Aborigines to make those claims under federal legislation, which of course overrides State legislation, and that is a matter that I think ought to be raised with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I am not sure whether the legislation has been presented, but I am prepared to bring it to the Minister's attention, if that is acceptable to the honourable member, or he can take it up with that Minister.

**Mr GUNN:** I thank the Minister. I am happy to give him a copy of the article in the *Australian* which stated that, under the terms of the plan, only existing Aboriginal reserves, national parks, and vacant Crown land would be open to claim. The vacant Crown land is the land that would be nominally under the control of the Minister. It is very important that the people of South Australia are aware of how much land could be subject to claim, because, as I understand Mr Holding's proposals that have been bitterly criticised by the Premier of Western Australia, they would have a serious effect on South Australia. I should be grateful if the Minister would pass this on to his colleague and, if a study could perhaps be undertaken into how much vacant Crown land we have in South Australia, it could be tabled in the House.

In relation to the tourist mining complexes that are currently under discussion, as the Minister and other people would be aware, one tourist mine has been established at one of the opal fields. There has been a considerable amount of discussion in relation to this, and I think it is true to say that there was divided opinion in relation to its merits. As I understand it, the Minister's department is involved in a committee. Could the Minister take all action possible to ensure that this committee is set up so that it can hear from

all the people involved on both sides of this question? First, it is important to resolve the issue one way or the other and, secondly, there will be other people who may wish to be involved in similar activities, because the area is growing. It is anticipated that a lot more people will move through the opal fields, particularly with the sealing of the Stuart Highway. I therefore think that the matter ought to be resolved once and for all to ensure that everyone knows what the ground rules are and, if these enterprises are going to be given some form of title, what the title will be and what their long-term future is because I think that everyone at Coober Pedy wants to know where they stand.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The honourable member and I have had discussions on this matter for some months now. I took the opportunity several weeks ago, when I was in Coober Pedy, to visit the Opal Quest mine, and I spoke with the people there in relation to the moves with which the Government was proceeding. The problem is that, to preserve from the operation of the Mining Act the area of land covered by Opal Quest claims, it can be done only after an effective licence issued by me if the Minister of Mines and Energy is prepared to exclude that area from the provisions of the Mining Act. We can issue a surface licence, and we have made that quite clear, but the issue of that licence does not give the operators any protection whatsoever.

During my visit I was taken right over the mine. It is some distance under the ground and it is quite a large complex covering several sites. It is really a matter that involves the Minister of Mines and Energy and us. I have established this working committee to enable it to get together and try to see how we can proceed to satisfy these people. There is a lot of local feeling in the town of Coober Pedy about it, and there are arguments for both sides. I have pointed out that, if we grant this application to these operators, it could open up quite a large area. We need to be very careful as to how we proceed with this.

I know that certain assurances have been given, but we are aware that a number of other people in similar situations are waiting for a decision to be made in relation to granting these people a mining licence to operate their tourist attraction. I have involved in the working party the Departments of Tourism, Mines and Energy, Lands, and, I think, Treasury on this issue.

I do not know whether the Director can advise the Committee of the progress that has been made on that exercise, but it is a fairly sensitive issue within the local community. I received a copy of a petition signed by a number of the township business operators who are violently opposed to this application, because they are concerned, naturally, for their own enterprises. Of course, everyone is trying to make a living, and this is outside the town area, and these people are very concerned that this could really open up a wide field. The matter needs to be looked at carefully, and I would like to ask the Director whether he is aware of the progress that has been made with that committee which was established to investigate this whole area.

**Mr Alexander:** The committee has met, but there is no report as yet. I will certainly ascertain tomorrow what is going on.

**Mr GUNN:** I thank the Minister for the information, but the question really related to the committee. I was not arguing the merits of the case. I am aware, as the Minister is, that a number of petitions have been circulating, some supporting and some opposing, and there have been other activities in relation to the matter to which I will come later. It involves a question of resolving the matter once and for all, and that is why I am keen to see the committee set up and meet, and particularly to hear from those people who have an interest in this matter, those who support it and those who have concerns about it, so that they have an

opportunity fairly and squarely to state their case; the committee can then make a recommendation taking into account everything that is put before it. That is my concern at this stage. I am not trying to solicit support for or against. However, I think it is pretty important that the committee get on with its job.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The matter was discussed at Cabinet level, and Cabinet determined that we establish that committee to investigate all the issues involved and that we should look at the committee's recommendation. I hope that that can be resolved in the near future, because these people are anxious for a decision to be made one way or the other.

**Mr GUNN:** The other matter in relation to Coober Pedy is that there has been some discussion regarding the allotment of commercial blocks for transport roadhouses. Is the Minister in a position to say what stage that exercise has reached? Has the department decided at this stage not to proceed with that matter of leasing land for commercial purposes? I understand that considerable concern has been expressed in relation to that proposition.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** During my recent visit to Coober Pedy we had discussions with the Chairman of the Progress and Miners Association, and a recommendation was made to the operator in the town to establish his business on, I think, Harrison Road. The Progress and Miners Association was not keen that that operation should face the Stuart Highway. I am confident that some arrangement can be worked out, provided that the business faces Harrison Road—I think it was—with some loopline connection to the Stuart Highway.

I think that that matter was left with the Progress and Miners Association to discuss at their next meeting, and I have had no result of any decision that might have been reached, or, in fact, an indication of whether they have even met. However, I undertake to follow that up to see what has been decided.

**Mr GUNN:** The next matter relates to land. I understand that certain blocks of land are currently held under pastoral lease. In this respect, I refer to areas close to Andamooka and an area known as White Dam. There have been suggestions that some of these areas will be cut up for residential allotments, for want of a better term. Can the Minister or his officers say whether there are proposals to subdivide any more land in those particular areas? White Dam is an area just out from Andamooka, where people reside.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I ask Mr Mellen to respond to that question.

**Mr Mellen:** The only information I have here is that land for residential purposes at Andamooka is under investigation. I do not know whether that refers to the particular area or not. If you want any more information, I think we would have to get it for you.

**Mr GUNN:** We will have to take it on notice. Perhaps the Minister could provide to the Committee in the next couple of weeks an answer to that query.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** We will do that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I just point out that the Minister should provide it to the Committee, not just for the member for Eyre, and it should be available to *Hansard* by 18 October.

**Mr GUNN:** In relation to the mapping and aerial photographing carried out by the department, has the department had new aerial photographs taken of the agricultural areas of South Australia, and is any particular attention being paid to native vegetation? Has any mapping of these areas been done at the request of the Department of Environment and Planning?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can give the Committee a report on the State mapping program. Over recent years, economic

constraints have resulted in reduced levels of staffing and a consequent decline in the ability of the division to meet the requirements of the State mapping program. The projected completion dates of first coverage base mapping were extended beyond the year 2000, and the map revision programs were limited to the extent that they were virtually ineffective.

When the Government was made aware of the serious implications of this situation, additional funds were made available in the 1984-85 period, and this permitted the employment of 14 additional staff on urgent large-scale base mapping. Private sector mapping consultants were also engaged to assist in the completion of the first coverage. The restored mapping capacity resulted in increased production rates.

First coverage mapping completed in 1984-85 covered 10 000 square kilometres more than that achieved in the previous year, and map revision programs were also improved. Topographic and cadastral mapping with scales of 1:1 000, 1:2 500 and 1:10 000 completed during the year included areas of outer metropolitan Adelaide, the Gawler River flood plain, the Murray Bridge township and the Murray River region.

Mapping at 1:50 000 completed by contract covered areas in central, northern and western Eyre Peninsula. Revision of preliminary 1:50 000 scale maps of the South-East of the State was also accelerated. To assist organisations involved in mineral exploration and development, work continued on the 1:100 000 series mapping of the West Coast and northern areas of South Australia. A total of 202 maps, including revised editions, was produced during the 1984-85 year. I am not sure whether that answers the honourable member's question to his satisfaction. If he needs further clarification, I will ask the Director to elaborate.

**Mr GUNN:** In view of the controversy that has erupted over the past couple of years about this subject, have special photographs been taken of remaining areas of native vegetation?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I am not aware of any. Perhaps the Director might like to elaborate.

**Mr Alexander:** The honourable member is probably referring to what is done by remote sensing satellite imagery. We are not specifically requested, nor have we the capacity, to get off our normal mapping program.

**Mr GUNN:** The member for Chaffey has referred to the Pastoral Act. Does the Minister intend to introduce new amendments to the Pastoral Act in the remaining weeks of this session? If so, can he give an unqualified assurance that the interests of pastoralists—such as security of tenure and reasonable opportunity to manage their properties—will be maintained?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** That assurance can be given, provided that there is proper consultation.

**Mr GUNN:** My last question relates to something slightly different. During this Government's term in office I have attempted to be reasonable in my dealings with it. I try to play the game fairly and squarely. Certain Ministers carry out normal courtesies and advise members of visits to their districts. However, the Minister has said twice that he was at Coober Pedy. In this case the courtesies were not observed. Has there been a breakdown in the normal process?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** It certainly is normal practice, and I apologise for the fact that on this occasion there was an oversight and the honourable member was not notified. I will make sure that the honourable member is informed of any future visits.

**The Hon. P.B. Arnold:** I refer now to page 150 of the Auditor-General's Report. At the bottom of the page the Auditor-General refers to Monarto and identifies for disposal as at 30 June 1985 an area of 14 478 hectares which

was sold for \$9 300 000. That figure included \$913 000 for principal outstanding on sales under agreement, the residue of 903 hectares to be released for sale pending planning and marketing arrangements. What is the position in relation to the remaining Monarto land in relation to the proposal for an open range zoo? That issue has for many years keenly concerned the District Council of Murray Bridge. What is the status of that project, since we are now down to only 903 hectares remaining in the Monarto area?

Has any land been put aside for that project and what is the Government's attitude to the project—does it support it or not? I have a letter from the District Council of Murray Bridge stating:

I am writing to you with reference to the Monarto open range zoo. Whilst awaiting further action from the State Government towards implementation of this project council has been communicating with the Tourism Commission of New South Wales and the Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo.

Obviously, the Murray Bridge council is still very keen on this project, and I am seeking the Minister's attitude as to whether or not the Government is supporting it.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The Monarto zoo does not come under my jurisdiction. I have no idea of any decision or progress on that issue. I would be pleased to take the question on notice and obtain some information for the honourable member.

**The Hon. P.B. Arnold:** It may not be under the Minister's jurisdiction, but he has the responsibility of disposing of the land. If the land is disposed of before anything positive is done, obviously the proposal for an open range zoo at Monarto is a dead duck.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I accept that. Whilst the zoo is not within my jurisdiction, certainly the land is. Frankly, I have no idea of the Government's intention in this area, but I will undertake to find out for the honourable member.

**Mr GUNN:** Can the Minister advise the position relating to unallocated Crown land on Eyre Peninsula, particularly some of the land classified as being south of Wudinna? Has the department had any approaches from the Department of Environment and Planning to have the land converted into some form of conservation or national park? Any unallocated Crown land on Eyre Peninsula should, in my judgment, remain under the control of the Minister of Lands. Perhaps the Minister or his officers could enlighten us as to whether there has been any further action on that land.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I will ask Mr Elleway to respond.

**Mr Elleway:** We are doing two things with the land on Eyre Peninsula, and I believe the honourable member has had some of these things explained to him by the regional manager. Some of the land is being made into conservation park and some made reserve under the care and control of the Minister of Lands. I am unaware of whether the piece of land specifically referred to is to be made a national park, conservation park or otherwise, but I will obtain that information for the Committee.

**Mr GUNN:** Would the Minister advise what stage the plans have reached to realign sections of the dog fence? A big loop comes down above Eyre Peninsula. Has that reached any finality at this stage?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Work commenced on the dog fence on 26 August this year to construct 88 kilometres of seven-wire solar power replacement of dog fence north of Nunjirkompta. The estimated cost is \$115 000 and it will be the longest continuous electric fence for pest and animal control in Australia, and is being financed by three local dog fence boards. It is estimated that construction will be completed towards the end of November. I do not know whether the Director can add to what I have said.



**Mr Alexander:** It will straighten out the loop to which the honourable member referred.

**Mr PETERSON:** In his dual capacity as Minister of Marine and Minister of Lands, is the Minister aware of any development plans on the industrial areas of LeFevre Peninsula? A rumour is circulating of a proposal to turn some of the land into a residential development. Is there any substance in that rumour?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I do not respond to rumours, agreeable as the member for Semaphore may be. I am not aware of any development and certainly not in regard to the industrial estates under the control and responsibility of the Department of Marine and Harbors. Our endeavour with regard to the industrial estates is to attract port-related industries. I say quite clearly that there is no suggestion of any residential development in that area. Whether there is any other area on the LeFevre Peninsula, I am not aware.

**Mr PETERSON:** What about the former Steel Mains site when vacated? Is there any proposal for that land?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** To my knowledge, there is not, and I am informed that there is nothing under the department.

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

---

Works and Services—Department of Lands, \$8 443 000—  
Examination declared completed.

---

Works and Services—Woods and Forests Department,  
\$8 000 000

**Chairman:**  
Mr Max Brown

**Members:**  
The Hon. Ted Chapman  
Mr R.J. Gregory  
Mr G.M. Gunn  
Mr K.C. Hamilton  
Mr I.P. Lewis  
Mr N.T. Peterson

**Witness:**

The Hon. R.K. Abbott, Minister of Lands, Minister of Marine, Minister of Forests and Minister of Repatriation.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Mr A.H. Cole, Acting Director, Woods and Forests Department.

Mr D.R. Mutton, Assistant Director, Support Services, Woods and Forests Department.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Where is the Director of Woods and Forests at present? Why is he there? What is his trip costing, and for what purpose is he out of the country?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** At present, the Director is in Chile investigating forestry operations. Earlier, he attended a conference in Canada and he will be home next week. I am sorry that I cannot say how much his overseas visit will cost.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Will the Minister in due course obtain details of the cost and provide them for the

record? I do not raise this matter flippantly. Since the Australian Labor Party came into office in 1982, I have had drawn to my attention the fact that a number of senior officers of the Woods and Forests Department have been out of the country for a fair amount of their employed time and on many occasions. As the matter has been raised with me with an element of concern, it is appropriate that we have a record of the costs associated with these various overseas trips that are apparently taken for various purposes because, as the Chairman would acknowledge, the Estimates of Payments in respect of the Woods and Forests Department do not appear in anything like the detail provided by other Government departments.

Indeed, except for the line involving capital expenditure, there is no record at all in the Estimates of Payments to cover the Woods and Forests Department. Other than the details that have been provided in the yellow book, we have nothing to go on except for the details that are provided in the Auditor-General's Report. Details of the financial payments by the Woods and Forests Department are unique because they do not appear in the Estimates of Payments for access by this Committee. Information regarding the several visits by executive officers of the department over the period and the cost and purpose of each visit will be most welcome at the Minister's earliest convenience.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I do not know whether the Minister is prepared to provide what the member for Alexandra wishes to have. I assume that the honourable member wants the Minister to supply details of costs of the Director's present trip, although he will not arrive back until tomorrow. Could such details be produced within the time limit of 18 October? That is my only query.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I am not sure on which day the Director will return to Adelaide, although I understood that he would be back next week. My officers may be able to indicate his exact date of return. The Director has attended the Commonwealth Forestry Conference in Canada and on his way home he is visiting Chile to bring back a report on forestry operations in that country, especially as regards the endeavour of Chile to market some of its timber in other countries. I will ask Mr Mutton to give details in reply to the questions that have been asked.

**Mr Mutton:** The Director of the department (Mr South) will be back in Adelaide on Tuesday next. As has been stated, he is currently in Chile investigating forestry operations in that country, which has developed over the past 10 to 15 years a large forestry base in respect of which it is well beyond its capacity to use that material in its own country. Therefore, it will become a significant exporter of *pinus radiata* with a likely influence on the Australian market. It may be difficult to ascertain by 18 October details of the cost of the Director's trip, but will try to provide that information if it is available by then.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Along with the other information that I requested.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I again draw attention to the time element for supplying the information.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Page 3 of the Australian Labor Party's election promises which were announced in 1982 and which, of course, are current throughout Labor's term of office, under the heading 'Forests' states:

In government, we will follow up the many inquiries from countries in the Middle East and North Africa seeking South Australian forestry expertise.

In reply to a question on notice (No. 294) in 1983 it was further advised that many inquiries had been received from Algeria and other nearby Middle East countries. This had come about as a result of a visit that I made to the region in 1981. I was pleased indeed to read the commitments made by the ALP in 1982 in the lead-up to the election

that a Labor Government would vigorously pursue those opportunities. Indeed, as inquiries were forthcoming (as referred to by the Minister's predecessor in reply to my question), I am wondering whether the Minister can tell us how many contracts the Department of Woods and Forests in South Australia has entered into with countries in the Middle East region or elsewhere as a result of the long term promotion in the marketplace of our expertise.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** As I have no information on this, I ask Mr Cole to respond.

**Mr Cole:** We have not entered into any contracts in the Middle East at this time. There are still some outstanding initiatives that are awaiting a response from governments in the Middle East which the inquirer and a subsequent Minister have both followed up—particularly in Algeria and some possibilities that exist in relation to the Arabian peninsula.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** I note Mr Cole's comments. I think they reinforce the need to identify publicly in some detail the extent of overseas trips made by officers. These were referred to in an earlier question. As far as I can recall, in the past 10 years the Department of Woods and Forests has not funded an overseas ministerial trip. It may have funded trips to New Zealand or nearby countries for Forestry Council meetings, but in that time it has not funded a long distance overseas trip. As I intimated earlier, in the interim, many overseas trips have been made by a host of senior overseas officers.

The Minister, through his officer tonight, conceded that, despite those efforts in 1982 (at the time I made that trip I was wearing two portfolio hats—the trip was funded by the Department of Agriculture) and the further multiple visits made by officers, to date we have not secured one single contract for either our expertise or, I think, for the sale of our hardwoods, such as timber or timber products, to a country overseas. I am very interested in any further information in relation to this.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I would be delighted to visit those overseas countries and to take up these issues with the departments there that are responsible for woods and forests matters, given the opportunity. However, at this time nothing is planned. I have had responsibility for this portfolio for only a very short period, and at the moment I am concentrating on visiting departmental operations in South Australia. However, last week I had the opportunity to visit Sydney and I was shown a small area of the New South Wales forestry operations. I found that experience very valuable indeed. Through the department, I am planning to visit as many of our own State operations as I can. I hope to visit the South-East within the next month or so to see as much as possible. If I were given the opportunity to visit some of the areas to which the honourable member has referred, I would certainly do that. In relation to the honourable member's specific question, I ask the Acting Director of Woods and Forests to respond more fully.

**Mr Cole:** I think the answer to the question is that the last ministerial visit at the expense of the Woods and Forest Department was undertaken by the Hon. Brian Chatterton, who visited India with regard to a chip sale project. Since then, to my knowledge no overseas trip funded from the Department of Woods and Forests budget lines has been made by a Minister. All subsequent visits, including the trip undertaken by the Hon. Mr Chapman, were funded by the Department of Agriculture.

I point out that his successor as Minister did a similar trip, mainly on an agricultural basis. Matters concerning forestry were dealt with as an adjunct to those trips. At the moment there appears to be no specific reason for funding such a trip from the forestry lines, particularly as we have little resource available at the moment for export. The only

thing we really do have is technology, and it takes quite a bit of time for a recipient country to accept the arrangement.

**Mr HAMILTON:** I want to follow up the matter raised by the member for Alexandra. Having come from the South-East, I have a considerable interest in radiata pine: I have known the area pretty well ever since I was a 'tin lid', if you like. Recently it was reported that a shipment of sawn radiata pine from Chile had landed in Australia. This is a matter for concern. Does the Government consider that this is a threat to the local industry? As the Minister would be well aware, the South-East in particular employs a considerable number of people, be it in relation to felling, carting or the sawmill operations. A considerable number of people are engaged in this industry. Is the Minister aware of this development and, if so, to what extent does the Minister believe that this is a threat to the local timber industry of this State?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** As I indicated earlier, the Director is currently in Chile, investigating and assessing their forest and sawmill production potential. I am sure that his report to me on his return will be read with great interest. There is no doubt that, if the Chilean Government can penetrate our market, that could possibly threaten our own industry. As the honourable member has pointed out, a shipment of about 2 500 cubic metres of radiata pine recently arrived in Brisbane. A similar shipment has also landed in New Zealand.

Chile has now planted over 1 million hectares of radiata pine forest. That is about the same amount that has been planted in New Zealand and, like New Zealand, Chile intends to export the majority of that production. Obviously, Chilean exporters are looking to the Australian market as one that is already developed for acceptance of radiata pine and, whilst its first shipment was very poorly received by buyers mainly because of the poor quality in the presentation, it has the potential to disrupt the Australian market. Chilean exports have already displaced some New Zealand exports into Japan, and that is indicative of the potential Chile has to disturb world trade in softwood timber. So, we will look with great interest to the report from the Director when he returns next week and the assessment that he makes on the penetration, if you like, and the intention of the Chilean Government to penetrate markets such as Australia, New Zealand, and other markets around the world.

**Mr HAMILTON:** I understand that in his recent trip to New South Wales the Minister visited forests, around the Hornsby area. Whilst it may not directly relate to the forest industry itself, I understand that trails have been built for blind people and also to cater for wheelchairs. If that is so, to what extent have these trails been built for people in wheelchairs, and how could they be applied to the tourist areas of the South-East and to the North of the State?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I thank the honourable member for his question. It is true that whilst I was in Sydney I took the opportunity to visit Frenchs Forest, which is a suburb north of Sydney before one reaches Hornsby. I looked at the forestry developments and the nursery that operates in that region. The New South Wales Government purchased that forest in the late 1920s or early 1930s. That involved quite a significant amount of money, and I think that the departmental people are quite pleased that that very valuable purchase was made at the time, because if they attempted to purchase it today, it would be worth many, many millions of dollars. It was of tremendous interest to see how it was being developed as a great tourist attraction; this was for many reasons, particularly the forestry library which has developed and which is perhaps unique in the world. This library is visited by the Education Department and many school students, who are able to sit down and read any material that they like and visit various

parts of the forest in order to broaden their knowledge on those subjects.

A museum that is being developed involves all types of timbers, carvings, paintings, etc, and it is really something of which they can be proud. I was impressed perhaps more than anything (and I think the honourable member referred to this) with the provision of walking trails for blind and handicapped people. We walked the trail where there were guiderails for the blind people, who can follow ropes with various signs. Braille is available to them so that they may read about the type of tree, and that sign is situated close to the tree so that they may feel the bark and get some idea of the size of the tree, its bark and so forth. That was of tremendous interest, but the officers indicated that it is possibly used more by handicapped people in wheelchairs than by blind people. However, members of the public are free to use it. This is a beautiful area which could be further developed in South Australia.

My department advises me that we have the opportunity for a facility such as this in the Kuitpo Forest in South Australia. One was developed, but some five years ago it was destroyed by vandals and subsequently burnt down. I am keen to take up this matter and see whether it can again be developed so that it may be an attraction for students who go to school and undertake projects in this field. I am also keen to provide a facility for the blind and handicapped people of South Australia. There may be other areas closer to the city than the Kuitpo Forest, although that involves only a short run, and tourists possibly visit that area. This issue is well worth following up so that we can develop it for the benefit of those less able people within our community.

**Mr LEWIS:** I refer to the commercial involvement of the department in the marketplace. The department was restructured to establish the Commercial Division in, I think, the early 1970s. Could the Minister provide the Committee, not necessarily now but in due course, figures for inclusion in *Hansard* that would illustrate in a table form what the annual output has been from departmental mills from 1970 to the present time? I do not know whether the Minister uses old money or new money, but I refer to superfeet or metres. How many persons have been engaged in milling each year to the present time? That figure would enable us to calculate an annual per capita output in the milling operation.

I would be grateful also if the Minister could provide us with the gross value, using the CPI as the deflator, of the timber that has been sold by the department from 1970 to the present time and the numbers of staff that have been engaged in selling timber, so that again we can obtain some assessment of the value of sales accomplished by the staff that has been engaged in selling over the years.

We would know, too, because we would be able to refer to the table which had the number of super feet of timber on it, and how much those sales had been per person engaged in the sale of it over the years. I am curious to know that, because I wonder what the personnel structure of the department is in terms of the trends that will emerge from examining such a table. One could, therefore, perhaps determine whether any changes that have taken place since that time were or were not warranted. Would the Minister be kind enough to provide the Committee with that information in due course?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I think we can possibly give the member some detail tonight on the volume of output over the past five years.

**Mr LEWIS:** Since 1970. We do not need it tonight.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I do not know whether we can go back to 1970. The department can, and will be happy to provide that to the honourable member but, if he wants

some indication, we can give him that information for the last five years.

**Mr LEWIS:** That is not needed; just put it in the record.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can give a bit of information on the timber supply in South Australia. Although South Australia is virtually self-sufficient in timber, not all the timber produced in South Australia is actually used here. Timber millers in the South-East, including the department, sell only part of their production in South Australia, with the balance being distributed around other States of Australia.

A deliberate policy is adopted to protect against demand variations in local markets and to facilitate the best return for some industrial grades for which there are better market opportunities in the Eastern States. South Australia's need for building timbers, whilst met mainly by radiata pine, is supplemented by imports from South-East Asia and North America, and this is likely to continue at least in the foreseeable future. I think the member in his question referred to staff levels. Does he want those over that period of time?

**Mr LEWIS:** Yes.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** We will have to get that information for him.

**Mr LEWIS:** I would like to know what the investment in new milling equipment has been over that time, and what the maximum throughput of that has been year by year. It would be interesting to compare that with the throughput which the mills have had. If the Minister could provide explanatory notes for any variation that might have occurred, such as the effects of fire on Ash Wednesday. That would be useful also to me as a member of this Parliament in making judgments about the direction in which the department is heading. I understand that it would not be too difficult to ascertain that information. Would the Minister be willing to provide that for us?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Yes.

**Mr LEWIS:** Is it the department's intention to replant the area that, prior to Ash Wednesday, had been planted with pines in the Adelaide Hills and, if so, why? Has there been any planting already? If so, in what forest reserves and how much? Again, if the Minister would be kind enough to furnish the Committee with a table, I would be grateful. He may wish to make some comment about the intention of the department to replant, or not, in the Adelaide Hills.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Detailed plans covering the Kuitpo Forest reserve have been completed. The aim is to reinstate this forest to pre-fire levels of timber production, but on a reduced area of land, using more effective establishment techniques and more efficient forest management methodology. As a consequence, some additional areas can be devoted to recreation and conservation programs, recognising the continued increase in public demand for such facilities. A concept plan has been drafted for the Cudlee Creek area of forest. This awaits consideration by several Government agencies, including the Engineering and Water Supply Department and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It will also be discussed with local government and adjacent landowners before finalisation.

Essentially, the plan outlines proposals for redevelopment of approximately 1 800 hectares of land, of which some 650 hectares will remain native forest and 115 hectares will be replanted to production forest. It is anticipated that the area of pine forest at Cudlee Creek will be reduced from 960 hectares to 170 hectares. That is quite a considerable reduction. The remaining 980 hectares, apart from the 250 hectares recommended for sale, will be managed as grazed open woodland and act as a fire retarding zone. It is very steep terrain in that area. The finance is probably on a long term basis, and it is not very productive, either.

**Mr LEWIS:** That is fair enough. By way of explanation of my earlier question, I simply put on record that the table that I was seeking about production output and sales needs to differentiate between sawn timber and processed timber that has been processed in some way beyond simply being sawn. I am referring now to particle board and the like. I do not want those two items to be compounded into the one column. They will need to be kept separate, because the additional processing requires additional investment in machinery as well as additional manpower, and it would mask the real benefit that the Committee could derive from an analysis of the figures if they were to be so aggregated.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Mr Cole has a response to that matter.

**Mr Cole:** In attempting to answer those questions, it should be remembered that the department does not run any particle board plants or pulp mills at this time. All its plants are primary processing plants, and I presume that the required information will be strictly related to departmental activities. Much of that information is available in the annual report.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Can the Minister identify the locations of the South Australian department run forests that he has visited since becoming Minister?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Will the honourable member repeat the specific question?

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Subsequent to the Minister's long, extensive and somewhat touching and sensitive answer, I ask whether he has visited any South Australian forests.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I indicated when replying to the member for Albert Park that I intend to visit South Australian forests within a month or so.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** You have not visited any yet?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** No, I have not.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** However, you had this long and interesting visit to a New South Wales forest?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Most definitely. I was trying to relate the honourable member's question to a budget line.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** There is a budget line that pays the Minister's salary. We want to know what he is doing and where he is going. We have heard about New South Wales, and we want to know what he is doing in South Australia.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I had other business.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** At page 3 of the forestry policy papers of 1982 the ALP said that in government it would explore overseas markets for sawn timber and pre-cut components in order to reduce Woods and Forests Department's dependence on the ups and downs of the Australian market. I understand that during 1983-84 markets for Woods and Forests Department sawn timber products were sought and to some extent secured in Malaysia and Singapore. In due course, in accordance with arrangements for insertion of material in *Hansard*, the Minister can identify the quantity of timber exported to those or any other countries during the present Government's term of office.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I ask Mr Mutton to answer that question.

**Mr Mutton:** Through the auspices of the South Australian Timber Corporation, a volume of timber was imported into Singapore during the past 12 months utilising a South Australian agency. It was not a particularly large consignment of timber, but was a volume used to test that very competitive market in South East Asia, particularly with New Zealand having somewhat of a stranglehold in that area, along with the West Coast of the United States. At this stage that market has not been followed up as an economic

user of timber produced in South Australia. As a result of the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983, the volume of timber available to the market place from the Woods and Forests Department is obviously limited. At this stage, we are able to place all our sawn timber production on to the Australian market.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Referring now to the export policy commitment in those same papers of 1982, the Party committed itself to assisting other producers of timber and timber products to seek alternative markets for products such as particle board outside the country. Can the Minister or his officers enlighten me on the Woods and Forests Department's success in that area?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I can get that information for the honourable member and bring it back to the Committee.

**Mr GREGORY:** The Liberal Party has had six, seven or eight questions without our having a question.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I apologise. I did not realise that the member for Florey was advising me that he wished to ask a question. I thought he was indicating that I should call the member for Albert Park.

**Mr GREGORY:** Can the Minister say what profit was made by the Woods and Forests Department in 1984-85? How much of that was retained by the department for its own benefit and how much was returned to Treasury in that year?

**Mr Mutton:** The pre-tax profit of the Woods and Forests Department in the 1984-85 financial year was \$5 500 000. It was negotiated with the Treasurer just prior to the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires that the department would pay an initial contribution to the State Treasury, which was equivalent to company taxation; then, depending on the circumstances of a particular year, a further dividend over and above that in relation to the Government's investment in forestry in this State. For 1984-85 the pre-tax profit of the Woods and Forests Department was \$5 500 000. A tax component of that at the company tax rate was a contribution to Treasury of \$2 532 000 for 1984-85.

**Mr GREGORY:** Was that profit of \$5 500 000 affected by the Ash Wednesday fires and, if so, what would have been the profit had the Ash Wednesday fires not taken place?

**Mr Mutton:** The pre-tax profit level of the department in the year before (1983-84) was \$10 300 000. That was the year that we cut the majority and milled a considerably larger amount than normal through our sawmills as a result of the Ash Wednesday fires. It was an abnormal year—probably close to a record profit for the department in 1983-84. However, the 1984-85 level is probably a more realistic level of profitability for the department, because we were getting back to more like normal levels of production. In years to come, with slightly reduced volumes available from the department, our profitability will be slightly less for a few years, because we do not have the volume available—again due to the fires—to cut the forests at the same sorts of levels and, therefore, we do not have the volume to put through our mills.

**Mr GREGORY:** Will the Minister advise the Committee on the success of the salvage operation of timber burnt during the Ash Wednesday fires?

**Mr Cole:** The salvaging operations are running roughly according to the original budget, which allowed for a return from salvaged material of something like \$14 to \$15 a cubic metre ex-store. That still applies. About one-third of the stored material has been recovered to date.

**Mr GREGORY:** I understand that the salvage operation is unprecedented in forestry operations. Is it going to be written up as a model for use in other areas?

**Mr Cole:** A number of actions are being taken to write up the progress of this operation as it proceeds. The limi-

tation is that our priority of work is to make certain that the storage facilities continue to operate effectively and that we remain as profitable as possible. That does not leave a lot of time for devoting our staff attention to writing documents on the issue. However, some reports have been done by members of staff for the purpose of presentation to various conferences, and so on. We also have quite a bit of television documentary, which will be edited in due course as soon as we have staff time available.

**Mr GREGORY:** I have noticed in the press that the Timber Corporation is involved in the use of scrimber, which I understand is the peeling, crushing, drying and reshaping of round wood into usable pieces of timber. Can the Minister advise the Committee on the progress of that scheme and say how much round wood is being cut and left on the forest floor because of lack of sales of such wood.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Scrimber is a reconstituted wood fibre product pressed into a long length making a very high strength timber beam used for structural purposes in competition largely with high priced hardwood and imported oregon large section beams. The South Australian Timber Corporation is still negotiating with CSIRO's Sirotech and Repco Research Pty Ltd for the rights to product scrimber. The agreement is not yet signed. If it is signed, a factory will be built in the South-East and production will commence within 18 months to two years from the signing of the agreement.

**Mr GREGORY:** I also asked the question on round wood.

**Mr Cole:** I believe the honourable member asked how much was left as residue on the forest floor. Currently there would be something like 100 000 cubic metres a year being wasted because it is either surplus to the requirements of existing industries or too expensive to recover. One of the solutions, in part, is the establishment of something like scrimber. There are other solutions as well.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I refer to questions raised by the member for Florey on the amount of storage of burnt timber, and that is spelt out on page 236 of the Auditor-General's Report. For the information of the Committee, the total amount of burnt timber the department has in storage is 1 010 000 cubic metres. The amount extracted to 30 June 1984 was 67 200 cubic metres, and for 1984-85 it was 233 900 cubic metres. We have a total amount of 649 700 cubic metres left at the moment—approximately 60 per cent.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** At page 229 of the Auditor-General's Report, I note a reference to taxation, as follows:

The department is not required to pay Commonwealth income tax. However, as the department engages in trading activities in competition with private sector business entities, agreement has been reached with the Treasury for the department to make provision for payment to the South Australian Government Consolidated Account of an amount equivalent to the *prima facie* tax on the determined book profit of the department at the rate currently applicable to public companies under Commonwealth income tax law.

On the opposite page, where the balance sheet to 30 June 1985 and the proposed balances to apply for 1985-86 are recorded, there does not appear to be any reference to an equivalent sum being paid in the form of a notional tax as required by that apparent agreement for the period to 30 June 1984. I am not sure to what the figure of \$2 688 000 refers, not under but adjacent to the column provided for the current year 1985-86. Could the Minister or his officers clarify the position in relation to payments to State Treasury of a notional tax representing the rate that ordinarily would be payable by companies in the form of company tax to the Commonwealth Taxation Department.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** This question was answered by Mr Mutton whilst the member for Alexandra was out of the Chamber.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** If it is on the record, there is no need to repeat it. I heard the answer to the first question asked by the member for Florey. That answer did not cover the principle of notional tax—the question I have raised. If he thinks that the answer already recorded embraces that matter, that is fine. If not, I will follow it up later.

I refer again to the policy paper which does not appear to have been upheld by the ALP in regard to forestry policy during its current term of office. An undertaking was given to change the investment priorities of the Woods and Forests Department away from the provision of subsidies for private farm forestry and return it—that is, the department—to the continual updating of its sawmills. This undertaking was, I believe, a reaction by the ALP, prior to the November 1982 election, to a position that the Liberal Party took whilst in Government between 1979 and 1982—indeed, developed over the period and identified in the later months of that term in office.

In that respect, under Liberal Party policy we undertook to direct funds to the private sector in order to encourage private farm afforestation projects, especially on those sandy lands which, if not considered unsuitable, were deemed to be undesirable for the cultivation of annual agricultural plantings and associated cereal growing purposes. In other words, to ensure that those lighter sandier soils in the South-East in particular did not blow away, afforestation on private lands was to be encouraged by financial assistance and also by the use of the expertise of departmental officers.

I concede that during the latter months while we were in Government, departmental officers were not keen on the idea and tended to shy away from Liberal Party policy in that regard. They did not put much effort into it, and the Government steered away from it altogether. Am I to take it from the policy undertaking given by the Australian Labor Party in 1982 that the department has shelved that policy and not pursued it at all? Alternatively, if the department has pursued that policy, how successful has it been?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** I should have thought that the 1982 policy had been changed since then. I have not had the chance to catch up with that at this time, but we had a policy convention in 1983 when a number of our policies were changed and this one may have been changed. I will check that out and let the honourable member know whether or not that policy has been changed. I do not know whether Mr Cole could add to what I have said regarding the policy or whether he has been advised of any change of direction in that regard.

**Mr Cole:** If I understand the question correctly, it relates to whether or not action has been taken since 1982 on what was called the Private Forestry Incentive Scheme. If that was the question, the answer is 'No; no action has been taken since then.' I hasten to add, however, that the interference of a fire in 1983 would have changed most of our priorities in any case.

**Mr LEWIS:** At page 60 of the yellow book, under the subprogram 'Management of native forest and woodland reserves', the following components are shown: management and planning; tending; native flora and fauna research; maintenance of facilities; protection; and use of areas for productive purposes. Will the Minister say how that program is being put into effect and, in so doing, will he refer to the activities involved, especially the study of population dynamics in native forests and woodlands? What is meant by 'prescribed burning'? How much of that is being done under the program? Further, can he say what surveillance there has been to protect vegetation and native fauna from man and introduced animals? The Minister may wish to tell the Committee what is going on with respect to the Sirex wood wasp.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** A major CEP program is involved in the study of population dynamics in native forests and woodlands. I will ask Mr Cole to give details in reply to the honourable member's questions and to refer to any other point the honourable member may have made.

**Mr Cole:** Over the past 12 months, there has been the most intensive survey of native forest areas ever conducted in our history and probably in the history of most Australian native forest areas. It was done under the auspices of the CEP and we received about \$250 000 in financial assistance. The information from that survey is being analysed at present with the intention of putting together a management program for all the native forest areas which will be maintained as native forests subject to Government approval. It has nothing to do with the Sirex wasp, which has nothing to do with native forest areas.

**Mr LEWIS:** The fifth activity referred to on page 60 of the yellow book is the study of population dynamics in native forests and woodlands. The other activities to which I referred earlier are prescribed burning and surveillance to protect vegetation and native fauna from man and introduced animals. The latter is the tenth activity, after which four other activities are referred to, so there are 14 activities under the subprogram 'Management of native forests and woodland reserves'.

Will the Minister supply me with information on the three activities to which I have referred concerning the study of population dynamics in native forests and woodlands? I am happy that the department has undertaken that study with the aid of a CEP grant. Has there been any overlap with the work of the Department of Environment and Planning, which has been looking at native vegetation stands around the State? What is meant by 'prescribed burning'? How much of it has been done?

The third point that I raised under the subprogram concerned surveillance to protect vegetation and native fauna from man and introduced animals. I presume that in regard to that point I could be told what is the present state of the surveillance activity relevant to the Sirex wood wasp.

**Mr Cole:** If I may answer that question, the prescribed burning situation is carried out in accordance with two particular matters, one of them being that we attempt to restrict prescribed burning to the minimum area possible to protect the rest. The other factor is beyond our control and is totally seasonal. We are simply able to prescribe burn, which is a fairly delicate and sensitive operation which can only be done effectively, from the information we have, anyway, as a spring burn operation and is limited to very few days of the year. We do it as a mechanism of protecting the rest of the native forest and protecting our productive forests from the incursion of fire from outside.

The areas that are prescribe burnt each year I cannot quote, but we can find the information for several years. It is very much seasonally determined and, as a rough guide, I would think that in the last year we would not have prescribe burnt more than 500 hectares, but I cannot be sure of that. Surveillance is an equally difficult problem. It is a costly business. The areas are not fenced and the public has reasonable access to them. We certainly do as much as we are able to do within economic reason to protect both the vegetation and the fauna from predators, of nature or humans. (If human is not natural, if I may say so.)

Introduced animals are comparatively easy to deal with. We have a program of dealing with things such as rabbits, other vertebrate pests and certainly, so far as the present situation is concerned, we are concentrating to a large extent on the control of feral goats in the Adelaide hills area. That work is done in close association with the environment and planning people, because in many cases our territories are adjacent. We are also dealing with the environment and

planning people on some mechanism whereby we might be able to rationalise the control of surveillance and control of both man and animal. Does that answer the question?

**Mr LEWIS:** I do not know whether in that program the department is looking at insects, or what other subprogram gives attention to problems like siren. As the Minister does not seem to know about that, I make the comment that I understand that foresters are trained in burning and know when and how to do it. Indeed, so far as I am aware, there is no other profession which is trained in the effective use of the management tool of burning.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The honourable member is not supposed to be commenting, he is supposed to be seeking information.

**Mr LEWIS:** There are two people referred to at the bottom of the page relating to employment levels and average full-time equivalents. They have a lot of work to do and I wonder how thinly they are spreading themselves.

**Mr Cole:** Very.

**Mr LEWIS:** I have been building up to say that the Government is being irresponsible. At page 62 of the yellow book it refers to advice to the community re tree planting and growing. That presumably refers to trees and other plants of economic importance and significance that can be grown in large scale areas. What is the present level of inquiry for assistance related to the use of common effluent from major country towns and provincial centres for the production of, say, firewood using salt tolerant species like red gum? If the department has not had any inquiries of that nature, does the Minister believe that it would be a good idea that, instead of tipping that water out to evaporate, we use it in the same way as they do at Alice Springs to produce firewood on a commercial basis?

**Mr Cole:** I can answer the question fairly simply. We are receiving questions from people responsible for disposing of effluent, particularly in the river areas, as are a number of private suppliers of nursery stock. We offer the best advice we can give, as do they. We, in fact, are operating in conjunction with at least one private nursery operator with regard to such things as the member mentioned, things such as salt tolerant *camaldulensis*. The difficulty in the whole program is that that particular enterprise appears to have no valid economic reason for existence as a business unless it can be used as an adjunct to some other activity or as a means of reducing tax. We give technical advice as far as we are able and leave it to the holder of the effluent to decide how he is going to use that advice. We also offer, I add, a contracting service to carry out the work if such an inquiry requires it.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** Each year for a number of years the department has allocated funds for new product research and development. It is readily acknowledged that provision for this purpose has occurred consistently each year, particularly in recent years. The allocation for 1982-83 was almost, if not totally, absorbed in the research work that was required following the February 1983 bushfires. The records to which I have access indicate that in 1983-84 about \$1 million of research funds were involved in the total \$30 million project concerning water storage of timber.

Therefore, understandably, in those early years of the present Government, research fund allocations were used for that important emergency purpose. In the limited budget allocations that are provided this year, I note that there is no substantial increase in funds for new product research and development. Has the department allocated priorities in other areas? Will the Minister explain the policy of the Government and the department in relation to this budget line providing funds for new product research and development?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** We have a person engaged full-time on research matters.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** I am referring to new product research and development. It has been the practice of the department over the years (and it is in accordance with the present Government's 1982 policy, and the former Government followed this policy) to allocate funds for new product research. I take it, from the material before us, that that continues to be the policy of the present Government. However, the allocation for this purpose in the current budget appears to be pretty miserable. Has the department advised the Government that it knows everything that needs to be known about new product development and that therefore it does not need much money for that purpose or an increased allocation?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The total budgeted amount for 1984-85 for marketing throughout the whole department was \$3.811 million. For the past 12 months the department has had one staff member working full-time on new research.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** That is, new product research and development?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** One man has been working full-time on new product research. I do not know whether there are any plans to expand the program. Perhaps Mr Mutton can comment further on this matter.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** To assist the officers, Mr Chairman, what have been the results from that research in the form of identified new products or new product development in, say, the 1984-85 period?

**Mr Cole:** New product development covers a number of fields. Two fields that have been developed under the new product development budget line have been in the area of compost technology, and an alternative to fuel commonly used by the State, such as hardwood material.

**Mr LEWIS:** Mallee?

**Mr Cole:** Yes, that is correct, mallee is the common and traditional fuel. We have been looking to an alternative, because mallee is getting scarce. Let us assume that all the mallee is getting scarce and we are trying to find an alternative, which in our point of view is quite rational. The project concerning fuel development is moving very slowly at the moment for two reasons: first, because it has been hit by lower oil prices and, secondly, because the area of competitiveness is on the upper end of the market and that makes it very difficult for us to justify expenditure on something that has a long-term return.

The compost situation has reached the stage where we have, as far as we are able to judge, come to the end of the development stage. We are ready to try to market it, and we are currently negotiating with a private organisation to market that product. All the tests so far indicate that it is effective and that there is a growing market for that material.

All the developmental activities have been aimed at utilising that part of the resource of the department that has hitherto not been used because of either economic reasons or other difficulties, including a lack of suitable market. I have no doubt that we will propose to the Minister that we enlarge the expenditure and energy expended on new product development once we can see some opportunity for it to develop and earn some money. At the moment most of the advice has been to devote the large proportion of the funds and energy to re-establishing the forest that was burnt in 1983, and that is a fairly expensive item.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** In 1981-82 the then Minister for Primary Industry in the Coalition Government, Peter Nixon, hopped into bed with some New Zealanders and entered into what he called and what we now know as the CER policy, or the closer economic relations policy between Australia and New Zealand. At the time that that

policy was adopted, the then South Australian Liberal Government expressed some concern about the impact on certain industries that that closer economic relations policy might cultivate.

We expressed concern particularly about the future of our South Australian based timber industry, bearing in mind our reliance on a market for large quantities of our product on the eastern seaboard, and the impact that that policy might have in causing New Zealand to apply dumping measures, relating to their timber surpluses, on our Australian shores. Can the Minister or his officers tell the Committee whether that fear was misplaced and that the closer economic relations policy between Australia and New Zealand has not so far led to any problems for our South Australian based industry?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** For a number of reasons CER has not been, nor does it appear likely to be, troublesome.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** The Minister has indicated to the Committee that he has not yet had the chance to visit any of our South Australian owned and operated forest properties, and I suppose it is a bit unreasonable to expect him to comment on what the future might be for forests like those at Second Valley, at Kuitpo, in the Adelaide Hills, in the Williamstown direction, at Bundaleer, Wirrabara or Wanilla, on the West Coast. I mention those because collectively they represent almost all the smaller forest plantations and holdings outside the consolidated South-East region of South Australia. Can the Minister say whether he or his Government has considered disposing of any of those small uneconomic afforested areas that I have cited and, if so, which ones?

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** The member for Alexandra mentioned a number of what he regards as small forests. I mentioned earlier that I have not had an opportunity to get to any of these forests since I have been responsible for this area, but I noted that the member has chosen not to mention the Blackwood Forest, which is regarded by the department and the Government as being uneconomic, and the Opposition has made moves to disallow our endeavours to sell off that forest.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** We are not really talking about those little units, as such, adjacent to or within the metropolitan region. We are talking about the afforested broad acres which constitute the uneconomic afforestation areas of the State. I listed the ones that relate to the question, and they did not include that little socially sensitive situation at Blackwood.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** My advice is that some of the forests that have been mentioned by the member are economically viable; in particular, the Second Valley Forest, Mount Crawford and Kuitpo. In relation to those, let me refer to the Blackwood Forest Reserve. That property was previously the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. More recently it was dedicated as a forest reserve: it is not regarded by the Woods and Forests Department as suitable for commercial forestry.

Earlier efforts to interest local government (and thereby residents) in its development as an urban forest site for fuel wood production failed to get support, and resulted in a decision that the property be disposed of in the interest of containing Government costs. The process of resuming the land as forest reserve is well advanced, and there is no logical reason for the decision to dispose of the land as reserve.

Officers of the Department of Lands are discussing its future with local residents, with the object of finding a mutually acceptable plan for the overall development of the land without the need for future Government financial or management involvement, and the member for Fisher—

and the member for Davenport, for that matter—have been directly involved in this issue.

The Woods and Forests Department is anxious to get rid of this forest as soon as it possibly can. I do not think the department is directly involved in the outcome, provided that it can be relieved of this liability and that it can be resumed and returned to the community in the best way that the community sees fit. That meeting has been set up, bearing in mind local community involvement. We hope that a decision will be taken on that in the near future so that we can get on with more important areas.

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN:** This evening before the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Kavel (Hon. Roger Goldsworthy) left Parliament House he asked me to refer to the area within the boundaries of Kavel at Mount Pleasant and even closer to Adelaide in which the department owns considerable amounts of land on which it has planted trees over the years.

Every few years portions of the area are devastated by fires, and the department sets out to replant. A few years later, as was the case in the region that I identified, when the trees reached 12 feet or 14 feet in height they were again burnt out. I refer not to total holdings but to substantial slabs in very steep country. Reports from departmental officers working in the region indicate to us that it is typical terrain on which to grow trees, even though soil types suit and the growth rate is vigorous.

Maintenance of those areas from a fire point of view is not impossible, but is extremely expensive. They pose a great threat to the built-up communities in and around those areas, not the least of which are in township and village form. Generally speaking, this poses a hell of a headache for anyone who is involved in that sort of activity.

It is against the background of that type of example that I ask whether the Minister or his Government has considered getting rid of some of those broad acre paddocks—and I am not talking about sensitive areas like Blackwood. I go so far as to suggest that, if they have not thought about it, they might think about the future of pursuing afforestation under the auspices of the department in those regions.

I include in that Wanilla, which I note the Minister did not raise when he sought to establish units at Second Valley, Kuitpo and in other places. No matter what the Minister says, I will not accept that the exercise at Wanilla has been for many years or is ever likely to be an economic unit on the profitable side of the balance sheet, whether the department or anyone else runs it.

If those examples that I have cited have not been considered by the Government as to their future ownership and persistent operation by the department, it might be about time that they were. I would appreciate the Minister's commenting on that subject for my own general interest but, more especially, for the benefit of my colleague the Deputy

Leader of the Opposition so that he may have access to that information for his constituents.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** In a sense I would be covering some of the ground that we have already covered. I refer to my response in relation to the Cudlee Creek reduction, although I do not want to go over it again. I point out that the depth test of land that is suitable for forest in the non South-East area is that it can earn 3 per cent per annum in real terms. If that is not met, the department considers either selling or transferring anything that earns much less than 3 per cent per annum. Wanilla is certainly socially sensitive, although admittedly it is not financially viable—we must admit that. It is the aim of the department to retain economically viable forests and to be rid of those that cannot earn a fair return. I refer to the 3 per cent per annum.

**Mr LEWIS:** I refer to pages 73 and 74 of the yellow book. What is a Waco moulder, how much did it cost, and when is it going to be commissioned? I see that there is no comment about it in the fixed asset information on that page.

**The Hon. R.K. Abbott:** Mr Mutton will answer the question.

**Mr Mutton:** Is the member asking about the Waco moulder at Mount Gambier and when it is to be commissioned? That piece of equipment has been commissioned and is working in excess of a single shift—more like two shifts a day at this stage.

**Mr LEWIS:** What does it do?

**Mr Mutton:** It is a player moulder which produces finished product, that is, scantling, flooring and large section planes of material out of air-dried stock.

**Mr LEWIS:** What does it cost?

**Mr Mutton:** The capital cost associated with that piece of equipment I do not have with me, but that information could certainly be provided to the Committee. It was budgeted for and approved during the Estimates 12 months ago, but I will provide that information.

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

---

Minister of Lands, Minister of Forests and Minister for Repatriation, Miscellaneous, \$318 000—Examination declared completed.

---

**The CHAIRMAN:** I thank the officers present, and those who have appeared today from the departments, for their cooperation.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 9.58 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Friday 4 October at 9.30 a.m.