

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 22 September 1992

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chairman:

Mr K.C. Hamilton

Members:

The Hon. Jennifer Cashmore
 Mr D.M. Ferguson
 Mr P. Holloway
 Mrs C.F. Hutchison
 Mr W.A. Matthew
 Mr E.J. Meier

The Committee met at 11 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be in a form suitable for insertion in *Hansard*, and two copies must be supplied no later than Friday 9 October to the Clerk of the House of Assembly. A flexible approach will be adopted in giving the call for asking questions, based on about three questions per member from alternating sides. Members may also be allowed to ask a brief supplementary question to conclude the line of questioning before switching to the next member. Subject to the convenience of the Committee, a member who is outside the Committee and desires to ask a question will be permitted to ask that question once a line of questioning on an item has been exhausted by the Committee. Indications in advance to the Chairman are necessary.

I remind members of the suspension of Standing Orders that allows for Estimates Committees to ask for explanations on matters relating to Estimates of Receipts and the administration of any statutory authorities. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure and revenue as revealed in the Estimates of Payments and the Estimates of Receipts. Reference may be made to other documents, for example, Program Estimates, the Auditor-General's Report, and so on. Questions are to be directed to the Minister and not to the advisers, but Ministers may refer questions to advisers for a response. I understand that an agenda has been agreed.

State Transport Authority, \$152 487 000

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Transport.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Brown, General Manager.
 Mr K. Bengel, Executive Director.
 Mr B. Heath, Director of Operations.
 Mr W. Fairlie, Corporate Accountant.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the lead speaker for the Opposition wish to make an opening statement?

Mr MATTHEW: No, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, Mr Chairman. The Government has recognised the need to review the provision of public transport in order to provide services the community will require as we move into the twenty-first century. To that end, the State Transport Authority is undertaking a complete review of its routes and services, and this involves market research, consumer comment and consultation with local councils, schools and other interested groups, with the view to providing services more closely reflecting the community's needs.

The major initiatives included in the plan have been detailed previously but I will briefly summarise them again. The night and weekend services have been reorganised to reduce or eliminate those services that have been poorly patronised and expensive to operate. The service changes were designed to minimise the impact on the community and appear to have met this objective. Following negotiations with the unions, conditions of employment for bus operators were changed, with the employees agreeing to forego some work practices which were no longer appropriate in the current environment. The employees benefited by an increase in wages as part of an enterprise agreement. Negotiations continue with other STA unions.

Most areas within the STA have been subject to review and staffing levels continue to reduce as new technology and improved work practices take effect. These changes are responsible actions necessary to make sure resources are distributed fairly in the community. The cooperation of the employees through the process has contributed to a more efficient organisation, which is more relevant in today's environment. These are some of the initiatives being taken by the STA in an effort to continue to provide a public transport service which is affordable not only to the passengers but also to the community at large.

Despite a significant decrease in passenger revenue, primarily due to the recession, the net cost of recurrent operations in 1991-92 has increased by \$9 million, from \$129 million to \$138 million. This increase occurred as a result of a change in asset accounting, with an \$8.5 million increase in depreciation due principally to an independent revaluation of rolling stock; this procedure was supported by State Treasury. When inflation is taken into account, and the depreciation rise deducted, we find that there has actually been a real decrease in the net cost of providing services. To ensure that the community gets maximum value from the resources provided by the Government, the STA agreed in 1991 on a plan to reduce recurrent expenditure over three years. You will see, Sir, from the budget papers that although the net cash call remains about the same as 1991-92, the 1992-93 recurrent budget has been reduced by around \$10 million in line with this objective. There may be transfers during the year between capital and recurrent but the target net draw is the goal set for the STA.

The CHAIRMAN: I refer the Committee to pages 99 to 101 inclusive in the Estimates of Payments and Receipts and pages 189 to 197 inclusive in the Program Estimates.

Mr MATTHEW: May I ask the Minister for a copy of his statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly; I will give the member my own personal copy.

Mr MATTHEW: My first question relates to the Program Estimates, page 192 and items of capital expenditure in relation to the purchase and delivery of railcars. When the order for the 50 new railcars was placed in 1989, the Minister stated that the first 10 would arrive in 1991. However, the first was delivered in May this year and the Opposition is advised that they have been plagued with problems, leading to breakdowns and delays, much to the frustration of drivers and passengers. What has been the problem with these new railcars, has the STA or Clyde Engineering been responsible for the new parts and repairs, and what is the estimate of the cost of those new parts and repairs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The STA has not been responsible; the railcars are under guarantee. I do not know the technical details of what went wrong; they simply broke. Mr Brown is aware of the technical problems that have occurred.

Mr Brown: Clyde Engineering took longer with the design of the railcars than it previously anticipated. Since it commenced construction of the railcars it has accelerated the program and it will have caught up with the production rate at its expense later this calendar year. That takes into account the problems the company had with some of the mechanical and electrical features.

Mr MATTHEW: As a supplementary question: I appreciate that Clyde Engineering has had problems and that it is trying to make up time, but I am concerned that it may not be able to make up time lost to date. Does the STA still expect to receive all 50 railcars by 1996? When does the guarantee expire? I am concerned that, while the STA has not been responsible for the costs to date, it may have to be in the near future.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We have no reason to disbelieve Clyde Engineering: it is a reputable company, it relies on its reputation to stay in business, and it has assured us that it will make it up by the end of this calendar year. We have no reason to disbelieve that. Apparently, the warranties vary according to the part of the vehicle that is playing up.

Mr MATTHEW: Perhaps the Minister would like to take that question on notice and advise the Opposition when the warranties expire and the pertinent details.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would not like to have to explain each individual warranty on every part that makes up a railcar, but I will supply the information on the principal parts.

Mr MATTHEW: As a further supplementary question, the Minister's initial response to my question about the railcars was: 'They broke.'

Mr FERGUSON: On a point of order, Mr Chairman, I wonder how many supplementary questions can be asked. My understanding of the way in which these Committees is being conducted is that three questions will be allowed by each member. On my calculation, this is already the honourable member's fourth question.

The CHAIRMAN: I take the point of order from the member for Henley Beach, but the Chair indicated last week and this morning that about four questions would

be allowed. I think some members have taken advantage of the good nature of the Chair who has tried to be fair to all members of the Committee. I do not disagree with the member for Henley Beach but, if a member is trying to pursue a line of questioning—as, I understand, the member for Bright is—the Chair will provide him with that opportunity. I hasten to add that the same opportunity will be provided to Government members. The member for Bright.

Mr MATTHEW: The Minister commenced his answer to the first part of my question by saying, 'The trains broke.' They certainly did, and the community is aware of that, but because of that breakage how many times have services been disrupted, specifically through the new railcars that have been delivered to date?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The original question concerned what was wrong with the railcars. As I am not an engine fitter or in any way electrically or mechanically minded, my lay person's reply was that they broke. The General Manager of the STA enlarged upon my answer, saying that the railcars had electrical and mechanical problems. The percentage of service that would be disrupted is very small by virtue of the fact that there are only three of about 100 of these railcars in the system. So, when they break down it means that about 3 per cent of the fleet is having problems.

Mr MATTHEW: It then blocked the railway line and stopped other trains from getting through.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is exactly right.

Mr MATTHEW: My second question relates to page 192 of the Program Estimates and the capital expenditure for the purchase and delivery of railcars. When the Minister first announced the order for these new railcars, the estimated all up cost was \$143 million. That figure was reconfirmed by the General Manager in the Estimate Committee last year. However, I note from the capital works budget for this year that the cost is now estimated to be \$160 million. Has the late delivery of the railcars and subsequent problems increased the cost of the railcars at all and, if not, what is the reason for that cost increase?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The answer is 'No.' They are at a contract price. However, the General Manager can supplement the answer.

Mr Brown: The reasons for the increase in total are up-dates on the changes in foreign exchange rates which occur from year to year and which are anticipated over the duration of the contract. That will vary from the Estimates Committee in 1992 to 1995-96. Of course, inflation has to be taken into account and that has also been built into the total cost of the project. That is updated annually.

Mr MATTHEW: That being the case, as it is updated annually, is there any projection of the final cost with those factors taken into account to 1995?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: One would have to know the inflation rate over the next eight years for the prediction to have any validity. That is why it is done on an annual basis and recorded before the Committee.

Mr MATTHEW: I am concerned about this increase in cost and I realise that you, Mr Chairman, are very interested in rail as well. With your indulgence I would like to supplement that further by asking whether that

increase in costs through interest and exchange rates is being offset through the sale of the red hen fleet?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: All our foreign currency exposures are covered by the appropriate mechanisms. The red hens will be sold as they become available and as buyers want them.

Mr MATTHEW: None has been sold yet?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No, they are still in service.

The CHAIRMAN: The third and final question for the member for Bright.

Mr MATTHEW: My question relates once again to the same budget line. I am aware that, when Clyde Engineering won the order to build the railcars, O'Connor and Sons of Gepps Cross was to be responsible for the fitting out of the railcars. I understand that would have provided employment for 70 South Australians for five years. However, I am also aware that O'Connor and Sons went bankrupt in early 1991. I note that in the Estimates Committee last year the General Manager of STA advised:

The authority is negotiating with Clyde at the moment to determine its intentions in light of the fact that O'Connor and Sons is no longer in business.

What are Clyde's intentions in respect of the fitting out of the railcars? In addition, did the initial contract include an obligation upon Clyde that all or part of the fitting be taken out in South Australia? If it did, what part was involved and how are those obligations to be enforced?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Since O'Connors has gone out of business and apparently no-one else can do this fitting out at the appropriate cost, that work has all been done in Victoria. However Clyde Engineering, again being a reputable business, has negotiated with the Department of Industry, Trade and Technology to offset a fair proportion of that work by doing other work in South Australia. I think a question was asked in the House not too long ago and I went into that in great detail. However, I would be happy to get more detail on precisely what arrangements were entered into with Clyde. Clyde has been a very good corporate citizen. It is a great pity that O'Connors went out of business, but these things happen.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My question relates to page 195 of the Program Estimates. I notice that one of the objectives for the current financial year is continued restructuring of the rail system. I assume that that restructuring includes the new signalling system which has recently been commissioned on the rail system. Is that new system as reliable as the old system; and, if not, what procedures have been implemented to ensure the reliability of the system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The signalling system overall, given its complexity, is performing reasonably well. It does not mean that there have been no problems. Any system of this size clearly will have problems from time to time. However, when compared with the old system that it has replaced, the overall reliability of the new system is far superior. It provides high passenger safety levels, and the fault rate on the new system is continuing to decline as the STA works with the manufacturer to iron out any problems that may arise.

The nature of the system is such that some types of faults cause significant passenger disruptions, and there were a few of those in the last month. The bulk of the

problems has been computer software based. They are being handled with apparent success by the supplier of the system, Westinghouse Brake and Signal Company of Australia. The performance bonds will not be released until the equipment is performing to specification, so we have some financial hold over the company.

The other fault types which can cause service disruption are switch and track failure. Switch equipment moves the rail blades of the main running rail, as the Chairman will be aware. The clearance is checked electrically, and if it is outside a given tolerance it creates a stop signal. This is essential for safety in any signalling system.

Railway track is subject to movement. Unfortunately, any significant movement in the track structure caused by a change in the weather and so on can indicate a failure that requires checking. Passenger safety considerations mean that these disruptions must be accepted. Switches and track circuit joints receive regular maintenance and are checked for tolerance.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My next question concerns patronage of the STA system. I notice on page 195 of the Program Estimates that the STA's objective is to increase patronage in the forthcoming year. What steps has the STA implemented or does it intend to implement to increase patronage on the system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The steps currently being taken by the STA in an endeavour to increase patronage include the following: introduction of fast limited stop transit link services to provide commuters with a viable alternative to the private car for travel from outer areas to major regional centres and the central business district. I know that the member for Bright, in particular, will welcome that initiative.

It will also include the introduction, over the next five years, of 307 new buses with full refrigerated air-conditioning and kneeling capability to replace some of the older buses in the fleet. Approximately one-third of these buses will also be CNG powered, enabling them to be more environmentally friendly, and they will have low floors for easier access by older, infirm persons.

There will be the introduction, over the next few years, as has already been mentioned, of 50 new rail cars to replace our ageing red hen fleet and promotion of our public transport services through television advertising and improving the ease with which users can obtain lower priced tickets with the availability of 884 off-board sales outlets, including licensed ticket vendors and post offices throughout the metropolitan area. From time to time we will come up with a combination of those and other initiatives. At the moment we are facing a recession and a very significant rejigging and reorientating of the public transport system.

Mr HOLLOWAY: As a supplementary question, with respect to the air-conditioning of buses referred to by the Minister, has the problem of Legionnaire's disease been looked at, and what will the STA do about that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: All our new buses will have refrigerated air-conditioning, as I understand it. From my short stay as Minister of Health, I believe that Legionnaire's disease occurs in the evaporative units, so we have opted for all refrigerated air-conditioning in an attempt to avoid the problem.

Mr HOLLOWAY: With respect to page 195 of the Program Estimates and the sale of tickets, I note that one of the objectives for this year is the installation of ticket-vending machines on rail cars. First, what progress has been made in relation to that? Secondly, with respect to licensed ticket vendors, the price of tickets on board buses or trains is greater than the price off board. What impact has that had upon the sale of tickets?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The STA has a couple of prototype ticket-vending machines that it is testing at the moment. Unfortunately, one of the principal concerns in this day and age is vandalism. It is no good installing ticket machines that are not reasonably vandal-proof, or you will not get the result and you will forever be repairing damaged machines. That is very sad but, unfortunately, it is what we have to deal with. As soon as we find some that work satisfactorily and deliver the service without being in the workshop more than they are on the trains in particular, we will install them. Even the very significant ticket-vending machines that we have in King William Street and at the railway station are subject to vandalism from time to time. That certainly makes life difficult, but we will keep working on it. We are working with the manufacturers to come up with something that is suitable.

As to the question of the number of off-board sales in relation to on-board sales, and the shift in ticket types, that is fairly well as predicted. It was not only predicted, but also desirable. The more tickets that we can sell off the system, the quicker people can get on the buses and the bus can take off and get them where they want to go, rather than the bus driver having to deal with each individual passenger who wishes to buy a ticket. So, we do pitch quite significantly the off-board sales being cheaper than the on-board sales, and that is a deliberate policy for that reason. It is having a quite dramatic effect on the proportions of tickets sold on board as against off board.

Of all tickets sold, total on-board sales are now 24 per cent, whereas only two years ago it was 44 per cent. It has pretty well halved. Almost half of our tickets are sold through post offices and licensed ticket vendors. The STA sells about 20 per cent itself and about 10 per cent are sold in bits and pieces elsewhere, principally by the Education Department selling them to school children and so on. Total off-board sales are now about 76 per cent, as opposed to two years ago when they were only 56 per cent of the total. There has been a dramatic shift, and that is desirable. That was the way we wanted it and we priced the tickets accordingly.

As I stated earlier, by making 800 licensed ticket vendors and post offices available as outlets we believe the metropolitan area has been covered so that people can buy off board without too much inconvenience. They are taking advantage of that in a big way and we hope it continues. My prediction is that it will continue because the marginal difference in cost between multirip and single on-board sales will grow as price changes occur. In periods of low inflation the difference will not be quite as marked because fare increases are now of a minor nature. Nevertheless, we will try to maintain that difference and, if necessary, gradually increase it.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: The STA bus control report for 5 September released last week by the shadow Minister reported in part:

Buses running late, buses full, trips missed due to breakdowns and trips missed because an operator was not even rostered. Please be advised that the service cannot be maintained with the present timetable or manpower levels. Even by STA standards this is not good.

In later interviews on 5AN the General Manager stated that action had been taken to rectify the problems—

Mr FERGUSON: Mr Chairman, I have a point of order. I understand that all questions should refer to a budget line.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I refer to page 192, recurrent expenditure, standards of service, and I apologise for overlooking that. The General Manager stated that action would be taken to rectify the problems. I understand that, when an operator advises that he or she will not be reporting for work on a particular day, depot managers are instructed to call upon operators who are rostered off, that is, which operators are not on standby (I understand that those people have been cut). What action has been taken in this area, is that action a temporary or permanent response and what is the anticipated cost of the new arrangements?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Obviously in any changeover where one has 1 000 vehicles doing thousands of trips every day in many different directions and when one has a significant roster and route change there will have to be some finetuning. I believe that that report referred principally to Saturday lunchtime when there were some problems and also on Monday lunchtime. We have gone through this before but I just cannot remember the precise details. I am sure that Mr Brown's memory will be better than mine.

The question of having workers on standby or bringing workers in on rostered days off as opposed to having sufficient spare people to cover every eventuality is a matter purely of cost. It would be an absolute waste of taxpayers' money to have 12 or 15 people hanging around every depot in case someone called in sick simply because on one day in 1952, 12 people did call in sick. One could spend taxpayers' money making sure people stand around just in case the 1952 circumstances reappear.

However, if we did adopt that approach the Opposition, quite properly, would complain about that and I would complain with it. So, we have to balance the use of taxpayers' money—it is not our money—with the reasonable requirements of the system to ensure that disruptions and expense to the taxpayer are kept to a minimum. That is a fairly fine balancing act and it is one that we do every day, but not just in the STA. We obviously do it every day in government in all areas. As to the specifics of that Saturday lunchtime problem, the General Manager will be able to expand upon my answer and detail what changes he has made in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of those circumstances.

Mr Brown: We have to realise that when we introduced the new services on 16 August we were introducing the largest change to public transport in Adelaide that has ever taken place. We put in place new networks—a day-time base network and a night-time network—to cater for 180 000 people using 3 000

employees, and 10 000 trips were operated daily. On the Saturday to which the Minister referred and to which I am sure the question referred, 30 trips were affected during the early part of that Saturday afternoon. As a percentage, those 30 trips represent a .75 per cent error rate. Put another way, the reliability of the services operated on that Saturday amounted to 99.25 per cent.

When it comes to providing public transport services, we have to contend with such things as traffic congestion, weather, special events, road accidents, detours, unavailability of staff due to flu and illness, which cannot be anticipated, mechanical/electrical defects in an ageing fleet, which is why we have entered into a contract for about 300 new buses, vandalism and unforeseen absenteeism. All those things taken into account mean that the authority has to assess the number of standby operators required to cover any one or many of those things which may have a ripple effect, one upon the other.

In the case of the redesigned networks, we assessed the number of standby staff that we would require to cater for any eventuality. Unfortunately, we did not get it right on that Saturday during that two hour period. We have reassessed and re-examined the whole network after our experience of operating the new network for three or four weeks, and we have adjusted the number of staff required. We are constantly monitoring the new timetables to see whether or not loading in some areas may be heavier than we anticipated, and that, too, may be affecting some of the timetables.

It is what we call finetuning, and that will be ongoing with respect to the new network, just as it was with the old network. The authority's reliability factor on that Saturday was 99.25 per cent. Unfortunately, that meant that 400 or 500 people (I will have to check that figure) were affected and had their travel arrangements disturbed on that day. That is regrettable, but the authority cannot always anticipate those factors that were mentioned earlier that affect the provision of public transport.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: This is a supplementary question; it is actually a repetition of the question I asked and, despite the length and interesting nature of the answer, it did not address the question, which is: what is the anticipated cost of the new arrangements?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Apparently, we cannot give the honourable member that information, but I am sure we will get it if we can.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: My next question refers to Program Estimates page 192, capital expenditure. As the Minister told the Estimates Committee last year that the Government was considering sale and lease-back agreements negotiated by SAFA to pay for the new Man buses, have such arrangements been finalised over the past year and, if so, what are the terms and what are the names of the third parties?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am advised that nothing has been agreed on that.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Supplementary to that, does that indicate that the decision has been deferred, or has the decision to undertake sale and lease-back agreements been rejected and dropped entirely? In short, what is happening about those lease-back

agreements and what arrangements have been made to pay for the 15 new railcars?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand discussions are still going on with SAFA as regards any appropriate arrangements.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: As the Auditor-General advises that the State Transport Authority borrowings from SAFA increased by \$21.1 billion last year and that the outstanding principal at 30 June 1992 amounted to \$204.3 million, what plans does the STA have to repay the principal this year and in the future?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Executive Director, Mr Bengier, will give some detail on that.

Mr Bengier: There is no allowance for repayment of the principal for 1992-93.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My first question relates to page 197 of the Program Estimates, and this is a topic that will interest you, Mr Chairman, with regard to the transit link services between the city and Aberfoyle Hub, West Lakes and Elizabeth. I think the Minister touched on it briefly in answer to a question from the member for Mitchell. Will the Minister briefly elaborate on what the transit link service is all about; can he indicate to the Committee what the patronage figures are for transit link at this stage, if he has up-to-date figures on that; and are there any indicated trends at the moment with regard to the use of the transit link service?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I touched upon earlier, transit link is something that we have identified as the way that any mass transit organisation has to go in the future. Obviously, there will be winners and losers in that, but overwhelmingly there will be winners, and I again point out that the member for Bright is fortunate that he is in an area where there are many more winners than losers. I am sure that makes him very happy, as an ex-traveller on the STA.

Mr MATTHEW: Current.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As a current traveller, he is twice blessed. The STA's vision of the preferred future for public transport is, as I have mentioned, based on this concept of transit link. The concept is market research based, with emphasis on providing the highest standard and frequency of service in major movement corridors between major centres, and particularly in peak periods, so as to be more competitive with the private car, also locally by increasing the number and type of feeder services available, whether provided by the STA or by others, so as to cater for those without their own transport.

I am pleased to announce that all transit link services have shown a strong growth pattern. Whilst it might have been expected that this growth would come from other bus services, cannibalising other passengers, passenger statistics on corridors serviced by transit link buses indicate a strong overall passenger growth, indicating that new passengers are being attracted to these high speed, high frequency services. Transit link 1 patronage has been stabilised at about 1 200 passengers per day. The new transit link 2 service from West Lakes is continuing to show patronage growth and is showing weekly averages of about 600 passengers per day. The transit link 3 service from Elizabeth is growing still and has reached about 1 500 passengers per day, which is very significant.

So, the progressive introduction of more transit link services will help arrest the declining trend in public transport usage during the past decade. Of more specific interest to the member for Bright, a number of limited or non-stop transit link train services have been scheduled both to the city in the mornings and from the city in the afternoons on the Noarlunga, Gawler and Outer Harbor lines. The new transit link bus and train services operate from interchanges, which are well served by local feeder bus services. From early 1993, bus services in West Lakes and Le Fevre Peninsula generally will also be restructured to complement transit link bus and train services in that area. That will be quite a significant re-jig of those services. Lots of negotiations are still to occur with the commuters in the West Lakes area and on the Le Fevre Peninsula, but we expect that even better services for the people in those regions will result from that.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we continue with the next question from the member for Stuart, I would like to welcome Mr David Chiti from the Zambian Parliament, who is Acting Principal Clerk (Administration and Training).

Mrs HUTCHISON: My second question addresses a matter that has been raised in this House on quite a number of occasions, and that is the problem of graffiti and vandalism initiatives. I refer to Program Estimates page 197. Perhaps the Minister would correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that graffiti does seem to be much less in evidence this year than it was in the previous 12 months. What was the cost of anti-graffiti and anti-vandalism work in 1991-92; what initiatives or projects has the STA introduced or does it plan to introduce; and what were the number of offences in 1991-92?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In my view, graffiti is best described as a social disease, which has been inflicted upon the STA and its customers. Unfortunately, it has meant the unnecessary expenditure of \$1.15 million in 1991-92 in combating the direct effect of this vandalism—funds which would have been much better spent on additional service provision or some other Government priorities. As a consequence of the STA's efforts and the removal of graffiti, the North-East busway, the tramline and railway stations have been maintained in a graffiti free condition for most of the year. This work has been carried out by STA labour supplemented by temporary employees recruited for our anti-graffiti project—a major project, involving the removal of graffiti from all fences and other structures facing the rail corridors, but unfortunately that task is ongoing.

Most graffiti is removed from vehicles within 24 hours of its appearing; this work is also carried out by STA employees in our depots. In addition, the STA has substantially upgraded the security system at all depots to 30 June 1992. The cost of that additional security was approximately \$2.4 million—again, funds which need not have been spent but for the senseless vandalism that we have to prevent. The STA has set up a number of programs to combat graffiti and vandalism. These include the Adopt-a-Station scheme, which is quite successful and which covers 25 stations. As the name suggests, the scheme involves members of the community taking care

of a railway station by removing graffiti, tree planting, landscaping and generally cleaning up. I want to express my appreciation and that of the whole community to those volunteers who have adopted those stations; they really are a credit to them. It is something which is not only long overdue but helps the community as well and keeps a degree of community spirit going. The STA is obviously very grateful that people do it, but I think the community benefits also.

A number of programs have been set up using juvenile offenders to remove graffiti. These programs are run in conjunction with the Department for Family and Community Services and have proved to be very successful in terms of our efforts to keep up with the workload. In 1991-92, 305 vandalism offences and 810 graffiti offences were reported. It is a major problem. We believe that, except in exceptional cases, these days we are on top of the problem. Graffiti vandals do not have the satisfaction of seeing their mess around the metropolitan area on trams, buses and trains for very long; we get it off very quickly.

One interesting aspect of the program that has really been supported by the community is the painting of back fences that face STA property. The cooperation of the community has been excellent. We leaflet the area telling people that, if they see workers with pots of paint painting their back fence, it is the STA cleaning it up, and we have had no complaints from householders when that is done. It has made an enormous difference to the various corridors, but it is still an ongoing problem. People tell me that it is a fashion and that eventually young people will turn to something else. I hope they are right, and the sooner the better because, apart from being offensive to the eye, it involves a shocking waste of money. Personally, I cannot see how anyone thinks the stuff with which we have to contend is art.

Mrs HUTCHISON: What steps has the STA taken to provide security on STA property and for the travelling public?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As all members would be aware, about 18 months to two years ago I think it would have been fair to describe the STA as a system under siege by both vandals and people who thought that STA employees and passengers were there to be knocked around because it was fun. At that stage, we made a conscious decision to significantly upgrade the Transit Squad. This year, the Transit Squad totals 80, including support staff, whereas last year it was 59 and the year before it was about two dozen. So, it has been increased by about three or four times. The Transit Squad now consists of a police inspector, two police sergeants, four police senior constables, 17 special constables and 56 transit officers, a total of 80, with an additional 13 security guards whose principal role is to patrol and monitor depots and stabling areas. A further 11 employees are involved in the administration of security services, that is, inquiry work, prosecutions, lost property, etc.

I think everyone would agree that the Transit Squad has been very effective: we do not get anywhere near the same reports of violence on the system that we used to get. The almost daily occurrence of our reading in the newspaper about a train guard being bashed or the

viewing from time to time of horrific videos of young people, in particular, kicking our employees is becoming less. Passengers compliment the STA on the way in which transit officers handle some of these difficult situations—and they handle them very well indeed.

During the past 12 months, the Transit Squad made 370 arrests and 611 reports and issued 815 transit infringement notices: the total number of apprehensions was 1 796, an increase of 31 per cent over 1991-92. So, it has been very effective and, in my view, it is becoming more so. We are getting more skilled in placing the Transit Squad members for the maximum effect on particular trains and at interchanges that require special attention from time to time—and this varies. The people who want to play up will target a particular interchange for a few weeks, and we put on extra resources to combat that problem at that time, but eventually they move on and play up somewhere else. I hope that, eventually, they will get the message that the transit officers are not playing games. I also hope that those people who think that passengers and staff are fair game find out that that is not the case—and they are finding that out very quickly.

Mrs HUTCHISON: I refer to page 7 of the Budget and its Impact on Women. As at 30 June, how many females did the STA employ, and what steps is it taking to increase this number?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As at 30 June, there were 220 females, or 7 per cent, of a total of 3 195 employees. The structure of the STA is based heavily towards shift work, heavy labour and workshop maintenance activities. Our experience shows that, in the past, women have been reluctant to apply for these positions. The implementation of part-time provisions in operational awards and the active encouragement of women to apply for operational positions has resulted in the employment of a small number of women as bus and tram operators, railcar drivers and transit officers.

The STA has been active in promoting apprenticeship opportunities for young women and, while the number is small, the barriers within the traditional male-dominated areas are gradually being eroded. The STA has applied to the Industrial Relations Commission to insert casual provisions in the bus operators award. The application seeks to introduce up to 30 per cent casual employment over the next three years. The STA is of the view that casual bus operations work will be attractive to many women, and we certainly hope so.

The traditional area for the employment of women has been in administrative and clerical support to the operations base, the majority being in base grade clerical, keyboard and reception areas. The employment of women in some of these areas is a whole of community problem, because it has more to do with community attitudes than actual barriers to which one can point, coupled with difficulties with child-care and so on. It is extraordinarily difficult for women to play the role to which they are entitled in the work force, and that, with some very minor exceptions, is the same as everyone else.

It is the intention of the STA to increase, wherever possible, the number of women employed and to promote the STA as a place where there will be jobs for which women will be happy to apply. As I mentioned, if we get a sufficient degree of casual employment, quite obviously

we will promote that to women. Women are as capable of doing a bus operator's job as men. There is absolutely no difference; one does not need any particular male characteristics to drive a bus.

Membership:

Mr Ingerson substituted for Mr Matthew.

Mr MEIER: Further to the questions asked by the member for Stuart, what was the cost of operating the Transit Squad last year, including overtime payments for both STA employees and police officers? Have the duties of transit officers been extended to include safety practices on trains that were once the responsibility of guards?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As regards cost, I will get that information for the honourable member. I am advised that nothing has changed in the past 12 months; their role is still security—the security of our employees, passengers and the property. That is their role.

Mr MEIER: Supplementary to that, does the Minister propose to reintroduce the Bill that was introduced last April to amend the State Transport Authority Act to widen the powers of Transit Squad officers on STA property? If the answer is 'Yes', does the Government intend in the near future to place the whole squad under the responsibility of the Police Commissioner, as I understand that the current division of responsibility between the Police Department and the STA is deemed an unsatisfactory arrangement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is not deemed unsatisfactory by me, so there are no plans to hand it over to the Police Department. I am not sure that the Police Department wants it. There is no intention to do that. The Bill will be reintroduced, as the honourable member for Goyder has suggested. It will tidy up some of the powers of the Transit Squad. We are gradually phasing out special constables; we do not see any ongoing need for them. We hope that all those who are there will happily stay with us until they retire, but we do not see the necessity now that we have transit officers and we will have the expanding powers when the legislation goes through the Parliament.

However, those expanded powers are not great; it does not make them pseudo police officers at all. However, those powers will be appropriate and all that is required. I cannot see any major changes in the actual location of the Transit Squad; I do not see it going to the police. If someone put up a very good argument why it should, I am not wedded one way or another, but it seems to work extremely well as it is. I have not heard any claims from the police about taking it over.

Mr MEIER: As a brief supplementary question, is it proposed to introduce that Bill this session?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

Mr MEIER: On page 100 of the Estimates of Payments and Receipts, reference is made to traffic receipts. I note that last financial year traffic receipts or fare revenue fell by \$3.459 million from \$46.419 million to \$42.96 million. This year revenue from fares is estimated to increase by some \$4.74 million to \$47.7 million. What factors contributed to the fall in revenue from fares last year, recognising that the Minister said a

little earlier that the recession has had an impact? However, I assume there have been other factors.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, the current recession is the principal factor. I think that, if the honourable member were to ask the service station proprietors, he would be told that their revenue from fuel sales is down by about 7 per cent. I saw some ABS statistics not long ago giving a figure of about 10 per cent in reduction in travel—not just urban passenger travel but also commercial travel in Australia. It is quite interesting that in a recession people and goods move around less. The STA, of course, is in the same position. The taxi industry tells me the same thing: it is experiencing a significant drop in patronage. So, it is pretty widespread. It is a pity.

However, one of the other causes for the reduction in patronage is the famous free travel for schoolchildren. Since that no longer applies, a lot of children find they can perhaps walk or ride their bike to where they want to go rather than pay the 30c on the bus. Perhaps their parents make the decision for them. However, that has also led to a significant reduction in ridership and also in the reimbursements we get for those children. However, I have no doubt that I have left enough, after my brief response, for Warren Fairlie, who is the corporate accountant, to supplement my answer.

Mr Fairlie: In relation to the first part of the question in respect of the decrease between the budget and the actual figure for 1991-92, it was due primarily to a 12 per cent annual reduction in regular patronage associated with the recession and an increase in the proportion of passengers now using the multi-trip tickets. The increase for 1992-93 of approximately \$4.7 million was probably due to the full-year effect of schoolchildren and tertiary students paying for public transport and an average 2.6 per cent fare increase.

Mr MEIER: As a supplementary comment, it is interesting that, if one of the major reasons for the reduction last year was the recession, my reading of the economic forecast at this stage is that we will not be out of the recession for some time, yet we are predicting a 10 per cent increase. Of that, 2 per cent has been identified from fare increases and a small percentage from students. Would the Minister suggest that perhaps the figures are a little optimistic given the fact that we will probably be in the recession for most of this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Minister is an eternal optimist. Again, I think Mr Fairlie could comment on some of the bases for the assumptions.

Mr Fairlie: The model that has been worked out by the corporate services area has taken into account the recessionary figures. As I said, with the schoolchildren coming back and with this 2.6 per cent average across the board, they see that as an appropriate figure at this point.

Mr MEIER: I will not pursue that.

The Hon. Frank Blevins interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Goyder has the floor.

Mr MEIER: From both last year and this year what is the breakdown of actual and anticipated fare revenue from buses, trains and trams?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think we have a rough percentage on patronage, but I can get that information for the honourable member.

Mr MEIER: Will the Minister include the breakdown of full fare payers as well as concession fare payers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Those figures are readily available and we will obtain them for the honourable member.

Mr FERGUSON: My question comes under the broad objectives on page 195 of the Program Estimates. What is the future of the Grange railway line? We have had some statements suggesting that there might be some problems there.

The CHAIRMAN: Before the Minister answers the question, I indicate that the member for Albert Park has a very keen interest in this railway line.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am very happy to tell the members for Henley Beach and Albert Park that the future for the Grange line is very bright. We are looking at the service provided on that line and considering what is worth doing to upgrade the service. It is no use saying that we will run express trains every five minutes if they are going to be running empty, so there is still a lot of work to be done to see what can be justified. I cannot see the service reducing in the future, but I can certainly see it expanding, provided the patronage is there.

As the Committee will know, it is a fairly expensive line to operate. I believe that it has unrealised potential and we are working to see whether the Minister's feelings are justified. It is no good just feeling warm about these things; it has to be based on something. I believe that all our rail corridors can be better utilised. Clearly what we have identified on the Gawler to Noarlunga corridor is paying off. Those fast transit link services with more and more expresses on those corridors are welcomed by our passengers. I think that the potential is there for all our lines, but for the Grange line in particular.

Mr FERGUSON: There have been some suggestions that the actual mode of traffic will be different from the traditional railway carriage and train that we now have. Are there any plans to change the mode of transport in that direction.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not quite sure that I understand the question.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the member for Henley Beach would like to clarify that question.

Mr FERGUSON: It has been put to me that, although the railway line may still be used, it may be used in a different way from the way in which it is being used at present.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The frequency of service will remain heavy rail; it will not change to light rail, in the foreseeable future anyway, and it will not be ripped up and O-Bahn tracks laid. Extensive investment is already there. The line will gradually be upgraded with the new sleeping program, because the whole of the STA rail system is being upgraded as regards sleepers. The Grange line will also have its share of the new rail cars as they come on. We distribute them throughout the system on a quite random basis; we do not keep them for pet lines. With some further promotion and, if justified, some increase in the service, I think we can lift patronage a little on the Grange line. That is certainly our intention. It will not happen overnight; it will be gradual.

Mr FERGUSON: Does the STA survey car parking from time to time? It is now getting very difficult to get a car park at the end of the Grange railway line because of the patronage by people coming up from West Lakes who obviously use the line between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The General Manager can answer the question specifically, but I can say that, in general, car parking is a fairly vexed question in some areas.

Mr Brown: We regularly survey car parks, and the Grange terminal car park is included in that statement. We will be reviewing the needs for the Grange area with the development of the new services that will come into focus in that general area—the north-west sector—in February-March next year. To answer the general question, the authority has a program of upgrading all car parks near its railway stations throughout the metropolitan area. Unfortunately, there are only limited funds available for that project and it is a fairly slow process, but we will be upgrading car parks generally.

Mr FERGUSON: My second question relates to page 197 of the Program Estimates—the new night and weekend services network. Can the Minister explain why the new network was introduced?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I certainly can. The level of services provided by the STA at night and on Sundays and public holidays was reduced from Sunday 16 August, as has been mentioned. The objective of this change was to maintain an adequate level of service to customers at nights and weekends, to allow the STA to transfer resources to heavily patronised weekly mass transit services and to extend market research-based services such as the new transit link bus and train services.

We have come clean with the public. We have said that we want to introduce new services, but we do not want to put in any more money. Those lightly patronised services are very expensive and they will be reduced or eliminated in the interests of expanding in other areas.

The reductions have taken place by operating trains on weeknights on an hourly basis instead of every 45 minutes, replacing bus routes previously operated at night and on Sundays with 52 bus routes, some following different routes to cover a wide area with the minimum number of buses. The different network is operated after 7 p.m. on Monday to Thursday (which is a time when less than 3 per cent of our patronage occurs), after 10 p.m. on Friday and after 7 p.m. on Saturday and all day Sunday. The number of buses and services at these times has been reduced by about one-third.

Day-time services on Saturdays follow the normal network, but they have been substantially reorganised so that a more balanced service is available across the full shopping hours now applicable. The previous routes and timetables did not take into account Saturday afternoon shopping. In our changes of 16 August, we made a specific decision to try to cover, as much as we could, the extension of shopping hours on Saturday afternoons, and I believe that has been appreciated. One timetable is now provided for Sundays and public holidays. This results in a reduced service overall. There have been some improvements on Sunday mornings and evenings for consistency. So, some people have had an improved

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service at those times. I have not heard from them, but I am sure it has happened.

Mr FERGUSON: I refer to page 197 of the Program Estimates regarding transit taxi services in the Hallett Cove area. Will the Minister elaborate on these arrangements, indicating the progress of the service to date, the cost of the subsidy and whether the service could be applied to other areas?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We are particularly proud of this concept and interested in its outcome because it could have enormous implications for transport right throughout the metropolitan area. The taxi/bus concept uses a taxi instead of a bus to feed passengers to and from a transit station at times of low passenger volume. The rationale behind the concept is that the service can be provided cheaper this way than with a bus, and in a more responsive way with door-to-door service. This will increase safety for customers, particularly women, who previously would have to walk home in the dark.

The original proposal to try this concept in Adelaide involved the City of Marion introducing a taxi/bus service in the Sheidow Park-Hallett Cove area with the assistance of the State Transport Authority. Unfortunately, negotiations were not concluded so the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Board made arrangements to contract with a taxi operator (South Australian Taxi Association) to provide a service similar to that originally proposed, with the STA's assistance, for a six-month trial.

The service was introduced on 17 August 1992 concurrent with other STA service changes and operates after 7 p.m. from Hallett Cove Beach railway station.

There is not yet much experience with the service, but, for example, in the second week of operation a total of 68 passengers were taken to their homes. A further two children were carried at no charge. Of the 68 passengers, 66 were alighting passengers from the southbound train, and two people were taken from their homes to the station to meet the northbound train.

There was a need to call one back-up taxi on Friday 28 August which carried one person from the 8.37 p.m. train. The secondary service, which allows passengers to be picked up from their homes to connect with northbound trains, was utilised once on Friday 28 August to catch the 8.5 p.m. train. Both the Taxi-Cab Board and STA are working hard to increase the patronage on the service and make it easier to use.

I believe this initiative is an excellent example of what can be achieved by cooperation between the public and private sectors in providing an efficient and effective means for the public to be afforded a more cost effective total transport package that also provides an extremely high level of personal security to the public. The cost of the subsidy for the first taxi is estimated to be \$16 700 for six months. If passenger demand requires additional taxis, the additional cost is \$19 per hour per taxi.

I have seen some figures somewhere that indicate that it is probably half the cost of using the STA for the same service, so quite clearly we could not afford to put those services into those areas now served by the transit taxi service. If this six-month trial is successful, I can see it being extended to other areas, particularly where no public transport is provided at all and it is unlikely that it would ever be provided, whether that is because of the

geographical nature or the number of people living in those areas. That is not good enough. Being creative, we can get public transport into those areas that now have none, at a cost that the taxpayer can afford. This cooperation between the private sector and the STA is a very important way of achieving that. The implications of this trial could be very far reaching indeed.

The CHAIRMAN: I have three questions, the first two of which can be taken on notice. What has been the success of the planting of trees along railway corridors, an area in which I understand the Minister has a keen interest? What progress has been made in relation to the coordination of the closure of doors on rail cars? Finally, what is the State Transport Authority doing in relation to assisting the disabled and elderly in the community, specifically in relation to buses, trams and trains? What progress has been made in relation to upgrading platforms so that the floor of the rail car is level with the platform, thus enabling easier access for the disabled, the elderly and mothers with young children in pushers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will take the first two questions on notice and provide replies prior to the appropriate date. As regards the third question, there is a problem with the varying heights of railway platforms. I have no idea why, but my understanding is that the train is level with the platform on some stations and is too high on others, and that obviously creates some problems. However, the way we overcome that problem is to have a ramp at every platform or on the train itself, and that is used quite often to assist people in wheelchairs either boarding or alighting from the train. Some interesting things have occurred just recently, and I will ask the General Manager to enlarge upon them, particularly with respect to the discussions being conducted with groups representing the disabled to see if any more can be done within reason to encourage greater use of public transport by the disabled and to make it easier for them to do so.

Mr Brown: So far as the platforms are concerned, they are being raised so that they are at a consistent height throughout metropolitan Adelaide. That is an ongoing program. We are also decreasing the slope on the ramps at all stations to make it easier for people with disabilities to gain access to the station itself. So far as buses are concerned, we have introduced a new concept into Adelaide, and that is a very low-floor vehicle. People step off the road straight onto the floor of the bus and then progress along the main body of the bus and step up onto a small plinth to gain access to their seats. That is a major advance in bus technology which will assist the disabled. The kneeling facility to which the Minister referred earlier will also assist the disabled. With respect to people who have disabilities, we are setting up an advisory committee to the authority so that we can obtain input directly from the disabled to enable us to design facilities for them within the financial resources available to the authority. On top of that, the Government is putting in funds to Access Cabs to assist it even further.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the Minister say whether or not there is any facility on trams to assist the disabled? Although we have only a few trams, I suspect that access to and from trams would be difficult for disabled people.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Unfortunately, there is none on trams, which were designed decades ago, long before

any of us were born. They are not equipped in that way and it would be difficult to refurbish them to make them easily accessible to the disabled. There is no doubt that when these trams are replaced—and I cannot indicate when that will be—modern trams will have the right number and suitable style of doors and low floors, etc., to make them accessible, but unfortunately the existing trams are not designed in that way.

Mr INGERSON: I refer to page 100 of the Estimates of Payments. How many reports were lodged last year noting that the Crouzet validating machines were out of order, and what were the maintenance and repair costs associated with validating machines last year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get those figures for the Committee.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question: how many tickets were reissued by the STA last year and to what value following complaints from passengers that their tickets were not being accepted by the validating machines? How do STA inspectors assess the extent of fare evasion on STA services?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have the specific numbers, but they are available. It is fair to say that we did have one bad batch of tickets that caused us all kinds of problems. They cause problems in the machines, and they cause problems in their own right. They just did not validate. Some of the magnetic strips gummed up the works in the machines. We worked with the manufacturer to try to overcome those problems. We had to send to France for additional tickets rather than continuing to use the batch that we acquired locally.

Our commitment is to Australian manufacture and we have been working with the local manufacturer to try to upgrade the quality somewhat, because that batch was unacceptable. It gave us many headaches. I do not believe they inconvenienced passengers too much, because they got free rides for a while until the tickets could be changed over. It was costly to us, and it was not much of an advert for the manufacturer. We are working with the manufacturer as we believe they are worth persisting with. We ought to be able to produce that style of magnetic strip ticket here in Australia as well as they can produce it anywhere in the world, and we will persist until that is the case. As to the figures, we will get them.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question: the previous Minister gave a similar answer two or three years ago when he said that there were difficulties with the magnetic strip on the tickets. Is the Minister saying that the STA has not put into force action to ensure that there is a testing system with each batch of tickets? Is he saying that we have the same problem that we had two or three years ago with a different Minister?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It may be a different Minister, but he does not manufacture the tickets. We can go offshore and know that the quality is there. We do not want to do that: we want to work with Australian manufacturers to get tickets of sufficient and consistent quality. We do not believe—and I know the previous Minister did not believe—that is impossible. We are not talking about going to the moon—we are talking about manufacturing bus tickets. Australian manufacturers ought to be able to manufacture bus tickets as well as the French.

The Hon. Jennifer Cashmore interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It does take a while.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Chair has great difficulty in hearing the Minister's response.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Like the previous Minister I am not happy that the STA has to deal with the problem. At this stage, we are determined that we will work through these problems with the Australian manufacturer, but we are gritting our teeth. We are not the least bit happy about this but the alternative is to say that it is all too hard and that we cannot make bus tickets here in Australia and that we will go offshore. I find that unacceptable. It is incredible, but we have to do that. When we get a particularly bad batch we have to go to France for tickets because we cannot persist with that batch. We are very patient.

The CHAIRMAN: Before allowing the next question, I wish to introduce Mr Daniel Mandalo, Senior Committee Clerk of the Zambian Parliament. I welcome Mr Mandalo and hope he learns from us or perhaps can teach us something in respect of today's deliberations.

Mr INGERSON: My next question relates to the tyre retreading plant. Earlier this year the STA decided to update its equipment for retreading or remechanising bus tyres. Prior to calling tenders for the installation of new equipment, did the STA assess the cost of undertaking the retreading on a service basis using private suppliers rather than doing it in-house and, secondly, what was the cost last financial year for retreading operations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know too much about the retreading of tyres, but I am about to learn. Mr Brown, CEO of the STA, apparently knows all about the retreading of tyres and I will sit back and listen while we are informed.

Mr Brown: The STA undertook a full economic assessment of the options available to it, including retaining the existing system, which was a hot process where the tyre is heated to a high temperature during the retreading process. The other option was to go for a cold retreading process, which is the exact opposite, and then a third option was to go out to private enterprise and have the work done there. We obtained quotes and information from external sources and applied that to economic analysis and it came out that the introduction of a cold retreading process, with the type of tyres that we use in our industry, appeared to be the most effective and it showed that the investment was worth while.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question: can the Minister table that information for the Committee so that we can see whether the economic benefits are there?

The CHAIRMAN: There are no provisions under Standing Orders for documents to be tabled. They can be circularised among members.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Obviously, the companies which tender would not want their tender figures to be made public. There is always a confidentiality clause in tenders to protect those tendering, but whatever material we have I will make available to the Deputy Leader or any member of the House, but I ask that they respect the confidentiality of the companies that have tendered in good faith, believing that their business would be kept confidential. The honourable member can have anything we have, and I ask that he use it wisely.

Mr INGERSON: I accept the confidentiality argument, but I would have thought that the general information would be easily available. My next question is in relation to the Tonsley interchange. Under the heading '1991-92 specific targets achieved', it is noted that the STA prepared a report on the detailed design and costing for a possible park-n-ride interchange at Tonsley. However, I note that no reference is made to the interchange under specific targets for this year. Therefore, what is the Government's intention with respect to its election commitment of 1989 to build a park-n-ride interchange at Tonsley; what is the estimated cost of implementing a detailed design proposal; and how much has been spent to date on various studies and consultancies associated with this subject?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get the costings for the Deputy Leader. The Cabinet submission is being prepared even as we speak, so within the next two or three weeks it will go to Cabinet for its decision on whether to go ahead with the interchange. It is fair to say that it is a fairly marginal decision. Being so close to the city, even with express trains, clearly we will not save a lot of time and it depends on people's perceptions of whether five minutes, 10 minutes or 19 minutes is worth it, what saving is worth it and what price we put on it. So, all those balancing factors have to be taken into account but, within the next few weeks, announcements will be made in the usual way. As regards costings on consultants, and so on, I will certainly get those figures for the honourable member.

Mr HOLLOWAY: The member for Henley Beach asked a question earlier about the new night and weekend service network, and I want to follow up on that. We have heard some rather emotive terms used by members in this place at the moment, talking about chaos when that system was introduced. What is the true position in relation to the introduction of the new system, and can the Minister provide the Committee with statistics as to the effect on passenger numbers and the response of customers to the new system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Statistics available to the STA show that the planning put into the new network has been very effective. The net 30 per cent reduction in vehicles in operation has not resulted in a commensurate fall off in passengers. During the first four weeks of the new night and weekend service operation by comparison with the previous two weeks, the patronage figures show that, although the initial effect of the introduction of new night-time services during the first two weeks resulted in a reduction in night-time patronage of about 100 to 200 passengers or so per night (that is, 1 per cent or 2 per cent), during the third and fourth week night-time patronage actually increased, and during the fourth week (that is, the week of the royal show) it was about 1 200 passengers per night higher than during the two weeks preceding the changes.

On Saturdays, although patronage on the first Saturday following the introduction of the new services was about 5 000 to 6 000 passengers less than the previous few Saturdays (that is, an 8 per cent to 10 per cent drop), by the third and fourth week, following the new Saturday services, patronage was actually some 8 000 to 10 000 passengers per day higher than on the three preceding Saturdays. Patronage on the second Saturday following

the introduction of the new services (that is, 29 August) was abnormally low due to extremely wet weather conditions in Adelaide during that weekend. We certainly cannot blame the new system for the weather.

On Sundays, not counting the patronage on Sunday 30 August, which was again an extremely wet day, the average Sunday patronage for the other four Sundays following the introduction of the new services was about 900 passengers per day higher than the average for the preceding two Sundays. With regard to weekday patronage, compared with the average for two weeks immediately prior to the introduction of the new services, there was an initial decline during the first few weeks following the changes of about 2 000 journeys per day for average all-day patronage. However, during the fourth week following the changes (that is, the week commencing 7 September) there was actually an increase of about 7 500 passengers per day. Obviously, much of that could be attributed to the show. Further monitoring during future weeks will be conducted.

To date there has been surprisingly limited comment from customers, as opposed to members of Parliament. From the day of the service changes to date there have been about 200 comments by letter, telephone and in person. These have been concentrated on the policy decision to reduce expenditure at times of low patronage and the use of particular streets for new routes. That is always good for a few letters and petitions. However, to put this number of letters, telephone inquiries and so on into perspective, the STA handled over 120 000 transactions at its customer services facilities over the same period. That is 200 out of approximately 120 000, so it has been rather small. The STA and the Government acknowledge that some people have been disadvantaged by the service changes, and this is reflected in patronage changes, but we also make the point that increased services have been introduced, which have produced the increased patronage in other areas, and I think that is a sensible use of resources and certainly the way the system ought to be moving.

Mr HOLLOWAY: As a supplementary question, one of the factors which has come to the attention of people in my electorate and which is influencing the use of night services, particularly of trains, is the fear of elderly people in particular in using subways at the various railway stations. What is the policy of the STA in relation to the use and security of subways, and is it possible to replace the subways, particularly at Ascot Park, Edwardstown and Woodlands Park stations in my electorate?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The STA's policy is 180 degrees different from what it used to be. During my time in Parliament I can remember local members pleading with various Ministers of Transport to introduce subways into their electorates and at their stations. That was eventually done; we had a program of introducing subways where they were appropriate. We have moved 180 degrees and we now have equally as firm a policy of closing subways. We believe that they are no longer appropriate and, where there is a safer alternative, we will close down the subways. I get pressed as strongly about closing subways as my predecessors did about opening them

Nevertheless, I agree with the member for Mitchell that subways are no longer appropriate. I think that is unfortunate—again, another reflection on our society. Nevertheless, they have to be closed and gradually that is happening. I cannot give details about the subway at Ascot Park in particular. We have no experts here who are familiar with the subway at that station, but I will get a report for the Committee to indicate what is happening to that subway and, if possible, also a timetable or an indicative date so the member for Mitchell can advise his constituents as to when the subway problem will be tidied up.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My second question concerns the former Hackney bus depot, which has recently been vacated. Was the new Mile End depot completed on schedule, what was the cost of the new depot, and how did it compare with the budgeted cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The new Mile End depot reached practical completion on 20 March 1992, nine weeks ahead of the target date of 22 May 1992, and that was very pleasing. The use of the depot on an operational basis commenced on 16 August for bus operations and for engineering and maintenance activities progressively from 1 June 1992. The site has a combined maintenance and bus depot role; that is, it accommodates the operations of engineering facilities, network maintenance and the relocated Hackney bus depot, and has permitted the upgrading and development of the authority's infrastructure to meet needs into the year 2000.

The depot property was vacated by the State Transport Authority at the end of August and handed over to the Botanic Gardens on 31 August 1992. The forecast total project cost as at 15 September 1992 is \$16.265 million compared with the approved budget of \$16.275 million. It was a fixed price contract, and that is why it was so precise.

Mr HOLLOWAY: The Auditor-General's Report refers to annual leave provisions. How did the significant increase in the value of annual leave referred to in the Auditor-General's Report take place over the past four years, and what steps have been taken to reduce the level of accrued annual leave?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is a rather complicated issue. The value of annual leave has increased by 50 per cent over four years, as reported. The introduction of a 38-hour week with a provision for bus and rail operation employees to accumulate rostered days off to take as a block of time off from work effectively provided such employees with seven weeks paid leave, that is, five weeks annual leave and two weeks block book-up. Generally, operators have not taken their full seven week entitlement, particularly the annual leave component, and this has resulted in a steady increase in accumulated annual leave.

Over the period 1 July 1987 to 30 June 1991 the cumulative effect of national wage case decisions has resulted in wage/salary increases of 16.5 per cent. The introduction of new career classification structures resulting from award restructuring, structural efficiency and national wage case principles and the subsequent translation of employees from old to new structures has resulted in small wage increases over this period, the net overall effect being wage/salary increases of

approximately 20 per cent. In addition, there has been a number of special projects, such as resignalling, and this has meant that some employees have deferred their leave. The above, coupled with the steady increase in accumulative annual leave, has increased the dollar value of annual leave accrued.

The August 1992 enterprise bargaining agreement reached with the ATMOEA has resulted in the removal of block book-up provisions and the introduction of the rostering of annual leave. All bus and tram operators' accumulated annual leave is to be taken out by June 1993. The removal of accumulated leave from approximately half the STA's employees will significantly reduce the value of annual leave accrued. The STA is currently negotiating an enterprise bargaining agreement with the other STA unions, and has proposed that similar provisions be applied to the remaining area of STA employees.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: One of the specific targets and objectives for 1992-93 (page 195 of the Program Estimates) involves ticket vending machines. Over the past 18 months, the area that has generated most complaints about the STA is the inability of passengers to buy tickets at stations or on trains. The Program Estimates indicates that the Government proposes to install ticket vending machines on railcars this year. All mainland State rail authorities provide or are in the process of providing ticket vending machines on railway platforms, but I understand that none provides or plans to provide ticket vending machines on railcars. Why has the STA opted for the novel approach of providing vending machines on railcars, and does it propose to install machines on all railcars, including red hens?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is 'Yes.' A number of ticket vending machines are on trial at the STA, but we have not yet found one that is suitable. By 'suitable' I mean not only does it deliver the ticket for the appropriate money but it is relatively vandal proof—and that is the difficulty. The difficulty with putting ticket vending machines on stations—apart from the Adelaide Railway Station, which is staffed all the time—is that they would be vandalised in the first couple of hours, and that is very sad. We believe there is greater security for these machines on railcars and, as we find something that works, and works well, we will gradually introduce it on all railcars.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: The Minister might wish to take this question on notice. What is the cost of each machine, what is the timetable for their installation, and will the machine sell only single trip tickets?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot answer any of those questions, because we have not found a suitable machine, so we do not know how much it will cost and so on. However, we will do our best to answer the question. Suffice to say, when we find the most reasonably cost-effective and vandal proof machine that delivers the service that the STA wishes to deliver, we will introduce it throughout the system.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Page 472 of the Auditor-General's Report refers to rolling stock. I understand there is some concern in the STA that, while articulated buses have enabled the same number of seat kilometres to be offered with fewer drivers, the quality of

service has declined because of the reduced frequency of service that the bigger buses have allowed. Has there been any evaluation of the full economics of articulated buses and, if so, what is the result?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am sure there has been—there has been an evaluation of anything and everything in the STA at some stage. I will refer that question to the STA and supply the honourable member with copies of any evaluations that have been done.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Does the STA plan to increase the number of articulated buses, both in total number and as a proportion of the fleet? I understand that 131 articulated buses are currently in the STA fleet, but their proportion within the fleet increased last year because the number of rigid buses decreased by 19 to 571. Could that information be provided?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Pages 195 and 197 of the Program Estimates refer to public transport services and support services. I refer, in particular, to part-time employment and enterprise agreements. What is the average cost of employing STA bus operators and train drivers and, in each instance, what is the average cost of overtime payments, and what wages and conditions apply to part-time employment opportunities for STA employees?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: These awards are public documents and agreements, but I will attempt to get them together for the Committee. From memory, I think overtime in the STA works out at about 6 per cent, but I will check that figure.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: A target for this year is the development and implementation of enterprise bargaining packages. What initiatives does the STA wish to introduce to the work conditions as part of the proposed enterprise bargaining packages?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will obtain that information.

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

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

Office of Transport Policy and Planning, \$5 321 000

Chairman:

Mr K.C. Hamilton

Members:

The Hon. Jennifer Cashmore

Mr D.M. Ferguson

Mr P. Holloway

Mrs C.F. Hutchison

Mr G.A. Ingerson

Mr E.J. Meier

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Transport.

Departmental Advisers:

Dr Derek Scrafton, Director-General of Transport.

Mr Peter Tregoweth, Manager, Support Services.

Mr Lindsay Oxlad, Manager, Transport Planning.

Mr Mike Philipson, Manager Economic Research.

Mr Paul Duldig, Senior Economist.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed payments open for examination. Does the Minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Since the establishment of the Office of Transport Policy and Planning in 1989, policy staff have been heavily involved in matters relating to South Australia's contribution to national and international transport. This role is carried out increasingly through support for other agencies engaged in broader activities embracing more than transport, for example, inter-governmental relations (Special Premiers Conference land transport reform), economic development (the Hub concept), energy and greenhouse, tourism and primary industries.

In 1991-92 the Office of Transport Policy and Planning consolidated its work on national transport policy and projects, especially relating to the establishment and activities of the National Rail Corporation and the National Road Transport Commission and Statewide passenger and freight transport developments.

The focus of the office remains that of transport planning and research, with a strong accent on metropolitan transport through a major and direct contribution to the Metropolitan Planning Review and specialist advice on transport to the MFP project. Taxi reform and community transport development support the Government's transport policies, together with public transit and road planning work undertaken with the State Transport Authority and the Department of Road Transport.

The contribution of the transport portfolio to the Government Agencies Review Group initiatives has been considerable. Analysis of the proportion of Government outlays expended by the agencies of the transport portfolio shows the net result of the reforms commenced in the late 1980s has been the equivalent of the financial elimination and budgetary saving of a medium-sized department. The work of the office demonstrates what can be achieved by small, flat, professional organisations with broad terms of reference.

Mr INGERSON: My question is in relation to Program Estimates (page 176), planning and coordination of transport in relation to the National Rail Corporation. The Minister's news release issued on 19 August announcing that South Australia had signed the National Rail Corporation Agreement stated that the Government had deferred signing for 18 months while outstanding issues were sorted out. The Minister nominated the following four issues as having been sorted out, and in respect of each issue I would like to know:

1. What improved benefits were secured for South Australian workers made redundant, and how many workers does the Minister believe will potentially lose their jobs in South Australia as a result of the NRC initiative?

2. What future was determined for the Australian National workshops at Port Augusta, recognising that the NRC will not make its judgement on workshop facilities for some two years, and then only on commercial grounds?

3. What longer term future was clarified for AN when the Prime Minister himself announced some two months

ago that he had asked AN to prepare a three-year business plan and that this plan will not be ready until October and not approved, if at all, until early next year?

4. What land will be returned at Mile End and elsewhere in the State for redevelopment?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The first of the four questions related to what improved benefits were secured. They were quite considerable and were made public. In essence, there was a better redundancy package, and we were very pleased to be involved in that. Many millions of dollars was supplied by the Federal Government to upgrade the Australian National workshops at Port Augusta and Islington to enable them to compete. Also, I think we ought to recognise that Australian National in its own right—even prior to the NRC coming into being—has made considerable progress in upgrading its workshops and making them more competitive. There is no doubt that the many millions of dollars put in by the Federal Government will improve that no end.

The long-term future of AN is being clarified. AN has been given a brief by the Federal Government to work with the NRC to see what parts of each organisation will complement the other. It bodes very well for the future of Australian National in this State. It will be a different Australian National; there is no doubt about that. However, I believe that Australian National will complement the NRC very well.

The land that has been returned at Mile End at the moment is the subject of testing by the various parties to see the extent of pollution, if any, prior to its being handed over. Again, significant announcements have been made I think by the former Deputy Premier when dealing with the Better Cities program. There was also some involvement of that land. Apart from having a map, I am not sure how I can describe what bits of land are involved. I suppose I could have a go. I think the Director-General of Transport can perhaps draw a mental picture for the Committee in relation to these pieces of land.

Dr Scrafton: The easiest way to describe it is to say that it is west of the main railway line, south of the vehicle bridge, but north of the Burbridge Road bridge and east of Railway Terrace. It is a roughly triangular piece of ground. The actual delineation will take some time, because there will be debate between Australian National and the State Government as to exactly what should happen to existing tenants and how much of that land Australian National might like to retain.

I think the position of the State Government is that, in order to maximise the benefits from the Better Cities program, we would like to get as much of the land as we possibly can. After all, this land belongs to South Australia and has to be returned to us if it is not used for railway purposes. I think we would be looking to get most of that land back. The actual delineation will be made by the Department of Lands working with the Better Cities project officer in the Premier's Department.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question, is the Minister satisfied that the NRC corporate plan takes into account AN's future as a viable organisation and its capacity to provide a workshop and infrastructure services? What is the Minister's assessment of AN's future if NRC is successful in its quest to take over the

concentrate traffic from Broken Hill to Port Pirie, the railroad of business, and the most efficient portion of the locomotive fleet and AN's advanced train control system?

The CHAIRMAN: Before the Minister answers, I would have some difficulty in accepting that as a supplementary question. I will allow it, but it is stretching the generosity of the Chair. The Minister.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not quite sure that it is any part of NRC's brief to see that AN is viable. The NRC's brief is to see that NRC is viable. I think that the first of the many questions is somewhat irrelevant. There is no doubt that the NRC will have a significant impact on AN; there is also no doubt that it will have a significant impact on Vicrail, Westrail, the New South Wales rail authority, or whatever it calls itself, and so on. The whole idea of having a National Rail Corporation is to get the rail system in Australia operating in a more viable way, particularly the longer-haul operations, so obviously there will be an impact. We have to weigh up whether the overall impact is favourable or not. I believe that the overall impact of the NRC will be favourable. Obviously, a State such as South Australia which depends so much on transport will gain benefits from that. I understand that the question of the concentrate traffic from Broken Hill is still under negotiation.

Everyone must realise that the South Australian Government does not own AN: AN belongs to the Federal Government, as does the NRC. We have no equity at all in the NRC, so our bargaining power is somewhat limited as both these rail operations are operated by somebody else. Once we sold our interest in non-suburban rail to the Federal Government, to a great extent any leverage that we had was sold with it. I think that we should always bear that in mind.

As regards the workshops, we have had assurances from the Prime Minister, the Minister for Land Transport and the NRC that they are not looking for hidden subsidies from State Governments to prop up their own workshops. If that were to happen, there would be no micro-economic reform and no point in going through that part of the exercise. I am confident that, with the many millions of dollars that the Federal Government has pumped into the workshops at Port Augusta and Islington, they are in the marketplace and it is up to those organisations to compete against other similar operations interstate. I have no reason to believe that our railway workshops will not be able to do that; there is no reason why they should not be able to compete. I think that they have a very bright but competitive future.

Mr INGERSON: Can the Minister explain his claim in a news release on 19 August, 'The gains for South Australia will be significant,' in view of the concerns that the South Australian segment of NRC's operations will be used to cross-subsidise inefficiencies in the rail operations of Victoria and Queensland and to fund infrastructure improvements in all eastern States?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think that I have covered that; it is self-evident. I do not think that the profitable parts of AN will be subsidising unprofitable parts anywhere else. The NRC is leaving the unprofitable parts of the interstate services with the States to sort out. The National Rail Corporation is taking what its charter grants to it. Again, that is as it should be. If the States wanted to sell all their railways, apart from urban public

transport, to the Federal Government, they should have done that in 1975. I was very pleased to hear the former Premier of New South Wales, Nick Greiner, state that the biggest mistake New South Wales ever made was not to sell its railways to the Federal Government in 1975. I agree that that was an error; but we did not make the error. We had an election on that issue and I am pleased to say that we won that election. I was a candidate in that election and I fought very strongly on selling this railway to the Federal Government. It will be a much changed Australian National; every railway system in Australia will be changed, and they all needed changing.

Mr INGERSON: In citing the NRC agreement, what commitments, if any, did the Minister give to the Federal Government in respect of becoming a shareholder in the NRC and amending the rail transfer agreement of 1975?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I did not sign the NRC agreement; the Premier did. Leaving that to one side, there is a clause in the agreement which permits those States which are not shareholders to become shareholders at some stage in the future. We have given no commitments to do so.

Mr INGERSON: Has there been or is there likely to be any amendment to the rail transfer agreement of 1975?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Any legislative amendment?

Mr INGERSON: Or any amendment by agreement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is still being worked out. We have given no commitments. The various legal representatives of the State and Federal Governments are working out whether any are needed. Not being a legal person, I would not hazard a guess.

Mr HOLLOWAY: The reference for my question is page 176 of the Program Estimates. First, I should like to ask about the Glenelg tram and, in particular, the status of proposals to extend the Glenelg tramline through the city. Will the Minister inform the Committee of the stage we have reached as regards that proposal?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As recommended in the Fielding Report, studies were undertaken in 1989-90 of the traffic impacts and economic benefits associated with extending the Glenelg tramway from Victoria Square to Adelaide Railway Station, the Children's Hospital, Barton Terrace, North Adelaide, or Hill Street, North Adelaide, via Wellington Square.

The study of traffic impacts found that the tramway extension could be incorporated into the existing road and traffic system with relatively minor impacts on traffic activity and delays, provided that an increase in peak period traffic signal cycle times (generally from 76 seconds to 90 seconds) can be implemented along the proposed route. Alternative arrangements would need to be made for some kerbside activities along King William Street and North Terrace (specifically on the King William Street approaches to Grenfell/Currie Streets and North Terrace).

In 1991-92 the STA undertook a detailed assessment of the economic merits of the tramway extension (using the APTRANS computer network model) and came to the conclusion that the extension of the tramline to the Adelaide Railway Station resulted in considerable net benefits to passengers—higher than would be the case for extending the tram to the Festival Centre.

Further work on the extension of the Glenelg tramway has stalled pending the outcome of the Victoria Square

redevelopment study which is currently under way. The layout for Victoria Square eventually chosen will strongly influence whether the Glenelg tramway is extended. It is difficult for us to go any further until the City Council sorts out what it wants to do with Victoria Square, and that is taking some time.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Also on page 176 of the Program Estimates it is noted that the Office of Transport Policy and Planning completed a review of the north-south transportation corridor for the planning review during the past year. Will the Minister inform the Committee of the outcome of that review?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A north-south freeway linking the northern and southern parts of the metropolitan area was first proposed in the Town Planning Committee's report in 1962. It was seen as part of a network of freeways for metropolitan Adelaide but was rejected by the general community at the time, quite properly.

The proponents of a motorway argue that it would stimulate industry development and make the southern suburbs relatively more attractive to industry, thus attracting jobs to the area. However, during the public consultation phase after the release of the review's report '2020 Vision: Ideas for Metropolitan Adelaide', the major comments received by the review were that more should be done to contain the use of the private car within the metropolitan area and public transport should be strengthened.

To assist the planning review to decide whether the north-south motorway proposal should be included in its long range metropolitan strategic plan, Transport Policy and Planning undertook a comprehensive review of the large number of traffic planning studies carried out by the Department of Road Transport and others over the past 30 years, covering parts of Adelaide and dealing with road networks and north-south road capacity. The TPP study, 'Transport Planning and North-South Road Infrastructure' concluded:

... on the basis of material reviewed there appears to be little need for the construction of a major north-south high capacity road across the central sector of metropolitan Adelaide [from Darlington to Gepps Cross] within the foreseeable future. There are adequate options for amelioration of existing problems and adequate capacity to cater for the projected traffic growth at least to the end of the decade.

This conclusion was reinforced by the findings of a further private consultancy for the planning review into the possible effects of a north-south motorway on industry's cost of production, location decisions and access to labour markets, namely:

... the impact of the proposed motorway on business costs do not appear sufficiently large or widespread to warrant the construction and would not make the southern suburbs relatively more able to attract industry than the northern and north-western suburbs.

Further weight was added to the case against the proposal by the planning review's recommended planning strategy which envisages the slowing down of population growth in the southern sector, vigorous urban consolidation in the central sector and faster growth in the northern sector.

Mr HOLLOWAY: That is good news for my constituents. With respect to page 176 of the Program Estimates, reference is made to the continued major involvement of the office with the transport hub project:

what was the involvement of the office with that project, and what is its continuing involvement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It has been announced many times. The Government has given priority to the transport hub project, the merits of which were endorsed in the recently released Arthur D. Little study. The hub concept involves the development of Adelaide as an international express freight 'gateway' and domestic freight distribution centre. Transport Policy and Planning, the Department of Road Transport, Australian National, Marine and Harbors and others are represented on the hub steering committee.

A jointly funded investigation for the hub steering committee into the potential for increasing the hinterland for air freight through Adelaide Airport was completed in 1991-92. The results showed that service quality, especially the frequency of air services, is the most important factor in shippers and producers choosing Melbourne and Sydney Airports over Adelaide, far outweighing the importance of land transport links. For example, large volumes of Riverland exports are shipped overseas via Melbourne Airport, despite Adelaide being significantly closer. The results of the investigation suggest that improving land links or marketing of Adelaide Airport as a freight hub would not be as effective as increasing service frequency at the airport itself.

In 1991-92 an assessment was also carried out of the comparative performance of Adelaide as an international freight gateway. The assessment revealed that Adelaide has a distinct advantage for cost sensitive freight and a relatively narrow base of commodities which can be exported overseas. Work also proceeded on the proposed Outer Harbor rail loop (to be funded by the Federal Government) and the third road/rail crossing of the Port River.

Those things taken together, the transport hub concept is not fantasy but very much a real concept which will have enormous benefits for South Australia. It will take advantage of our geographic location and also the relative proximity of the airport to the port and to the CBD. It really has everything going for it. The concept is a good one.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I refer to page 175 of the Auditor-General's Report concerning the Access Cab taxi scheme. An audit review was conducted last year into the operation of the Access Cab scheme following concern that costs attributed to the scheme had increased by \$474 000 to \$2.8 million. The review determined that the structure and size of the Access Cab operation made it uneconomical for the company to maintain existing services. Audit put forward a number of options to reduce the operating subsidy paid, amounting to \$461 000 last year. The first and preferred option was the devolution of the company's major responsibilities to other parties which, incidentally, was a policy advocated by the Liberal Party in its position paper on the taxi cab industry last year. As the Auditor-General notes that the Minister had requested the office to conduct a review of the Access Cab scheme, what prompted this request, what are the terms of reference for the review, is it to be conducted in-house or by consultants and, if the latter, who are the consultants and what will be the cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We concur completely with the Auditor-General. We have no difficulty with the report. The Access Cab scheme has been enormously successful. The growth has exceeded even our projections. When we have had the costings made of the subsidy scheme, we have been overwhelmed by the increase. Nevertheless, like all these schemes, particularly relatively new ones like this, they do need monitoring and reviewing after they have been in operation for a number of years. We were breaking new ground, but it is now fairly well established and we can see the efficiencies that can be made.

Without pre-empting the review, the consensus around the Office of Transport, Policy and Planning and my office is that some efficiencies can be made, without a doubt, and we look forward to the result of the review. The review is being undertaken by the Government Agencies Review Group (GARG), which is particularly well suited to do it, with significant input from Richard Llewellyn, the former disability adviser to the Government. In essence we welcome the review. We have no problems with it. We initiated it and expect some efficiencies. By the same token, I want to congratulate all involved in Access Cabs, in both the design of the system and its operation since it was established. It has been a credit to all.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Can the Minister respond in respect of the terms of reference for the review?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We will provide that information.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: With respect to the Access Cab funds held by the office, referred to on page 177 of the Auditor-General's Report, the office is responsible for a fund for the replacement of modified taxis leased to Access Cabs. At 30 June the amount deposited in the fund was \$1.011 million and in 1991 it was \$767 000. Does the Minister intend to use the fund this year to replace or add to the 25 modified Access Cabs now on the road? If so, what funds will be used for this purpose, or does the Minister plan to encourage more privately owned and operated cabs suitable for use by people with disabilities, for example, the Metro Cab?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have a philosophic view on this. If the private operators are able to supplement the service with cabs that are suitable for the overall majority of disabled people, I think there is a place for them. I know there is some resistance to that in the industry from those people who at present have the monopoly but, nevertheless, I am always very nervous about monopolies. They can be justified in certain circumstances, but they have to be watched closely.

In this area I am not sure that one can justify a monopoly, and I think the way we have been operating with controlled entry of private individuals who have a suitable vehicle is the way to go. Mr Tregoweth has extensive knowledge of transport for the disabled and this area in particular and I would ask him to supplement my reply.

Mr Tregoweth: It is not intended to replace any of the existing 26 vehicles operated by Access Cabs on lease from the Government this year. There are six owner operated vehicles presently running on the Access Cabs radio frequency and the move to owner operators has

been successful. It is certainly another option with respect to the provision of a service to people with a disability.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: My next question relates to page 176 of the Program Estimates and the heading 'Planning and Coordination'. It is noted that last year the office conducted an evaluation of the north-east busway using a new economic evaluation process. What were the conclusions of this evaluation of the busway and, in respect of patronage and the net cost of providing a service, how does the busway compare with other bus and rail operations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is very successful. It was expensive to construct and buy the vehicles but there is no doubt that it is very popular. As to the details of cost per passenger/kilometre, those figures are available and I will get them for the Committee.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: As a supplementary question: how many additional services now use the busway following the introduction of the transit link service from Elizabeth via Modbury and what is the estimated capacity of the track in terms of the number of services that can be operated?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As to the number of additional vehicles using the busway, I will refer that question to the STA and get a response. The Director-General of Transport has a feeling on how many vehicles can be accommodated by the O-Bahn and I will ask him to supply the answer.

Dr Scrafton: The addition of the TL3 service does not really impose much additional pressure on the capacity of the O-Bahn track. It is only one trip every 10 minutes in the peak period and then every 30 minutes in the off-peak period during the day. That is a comparatively small increase. In fact, given that the O-Bahn track operates by line of sight, one could look at a situation where in theory the heaviest density that we ever see in the peak would be a fleet of perhaps five STA buses following one another for about an hour. In practice that would rarely occur, but it demonstrates that there is enormous capacity on the track and it is limited only by the bounds of reasonable common-sense and the driving skill of the drivers from the St Agnes depot who happen to operate most of the services on the O-Bahn track. There is enormous capacity yet to be fulfilled.

Mrs HUTCHISON: I have to say that the Deputy Leader has pre-empted many of my questions, but I refer to page 176 of the Program Estimates and the line 'Planning and Coordination of Transport'. For the benefit of the Committee, can the Minister give details of the improvements to be made in South Australia under the One Nation package and, as part of that answer, can he provide details of when it is expected that the projects will commence?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Under the One Nation funding of railway infrastructure, \$115 million has been allocated to the standardisation of the Adelaide to Melbourne railway, \$8 million for the construction of the Outer Harbor rail link. \$13 million for improvements between Islington and Kalgoorlie and \$3.5 million for upgrading Port Augusta workshops. Under different programs \$4.4 million is to be spent on the Islington workshops and \$12 million on the *Indian Pacific* refurbishment. A very extensive program indeed. Standardisation of the Adelaide to Melbourne railway

will complete the last standard gauge link between State capital cities. For the section between Keswick and the Victorian border the preferred option is to firstly install gauge convertible concrete sleepers and then, when standardisation work has been completed in the Victorian section, move one rail inwards by 6½ inches. It has been estimated that this will cost about \$45 million.

Within South Australia the standard gauge route will follow the existing railway alignment. The funds that have been allocated by the Commonwealth Government do not permit either major upgrades or the achievement of clearances for double stack containers. Negotiations are continuing between the STA, AN and NRC about the State-owned portion of the track between Adelaide and Belair. There are many possible arrangements for standard, broad and mixed gauge track in this section. The Government intends to retain ownership of this section while maximising the utility to the STA, AN and NRC. Standardisation of the Adelaide to Melbourne line will force a re-evaluation of the branch lines that link into it. AN is presently examining the future of these branches and I have asked the Commonwealth Minister for Land Transport to provide details of the criteria which will be used in the Commonwealth's assessment of those lines.

Mrs HUTCHISON: I refer to the Estimates of Payments, program one, page 93. In this program it indicates that there has been significant expenditure over budget on the Transport Subsidy Scheme. In the past the Minister indicated that he is not concerned about over budget expenditure in this area, but can he inform the Committee whether that is still the Government's position on this matter?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: First, I have just one minor correction to make. I did not say I was not concerned about the over expenditure: I am concerned about all over expenditure, but Government's over expend in a number of areas and this is one that would give me the least problems, being such a superb program.

I have always given my full and unqualified support to the Transport Subsidy Scheme since its inception. Whilst I am on record as saying this is one area of Government expenditure where I am prepared to tolerate budget overruns, I am prepared to do that only when I can be sure that the scheme is being operated in the most cost efficient manner possible and is being targeted at those population groups who are the most transport disadvantaged. The present contract between the Government and Access Cabs expires at the end of the current financial year and approval of the contract which was signed in 1990 was contingent upon a review of that relationship prior to the expiry of the contracts in June 1993.

As I said earlier, officers attached to the Government Agencies Review Group are currently undertaking that review and the results should be known by the end of this year. Without pre-empting any recommendation that may be drawn in the report or down-playing the role Access Cabs and the taxi industry have played over the past six years, the Government's overriding obligation must be to ensure that taxpayers' money is used as effectively as possible.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My next question relates again to program 3 on page 93 of the Estimates of Payments and Receipts for 1992-93. It is shown that the actual grants for country town buses exceeded the 1991-92 estimates by 94 per cent. Can the Minister explain the reasons behind that increase?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The reference to grants for country town buses on page 93 is a typographical error and should have read 'grants for community buses', a different thing altogether. The grants made for community buses relate to funds provided by the Commonwealth Government as special purpose grants under the Australian Land Transport Development Program. The 1991-92 expenditure of \$300 002 shown under program 3 is more than matched by the 1991-92 receipts of \$301 000 from the Commonwealth Government under the ALTD program.

The difference between the 1991-92 estimates and the actual expenditure arose from the fact that in 1991-92 Commonwealth grants for community buses funded under the ALTD program increased from \$155 000 to \$301 000, thereby allowing increased financial assistance to be provided to local councils. I will run very quickly through some of those grants: to the District Council of Willunga for the acquisition of one midi-bus, the grant was \$20 300; to the District Council of Port Elliot and Goolwa, for the acquisition of one midi-bus, \$35 000; to the Noarlunga council, for the acquisition of two midi-buses, \$98 712; to the Happy Valley council, for the acquisition of one midi-bus and one mini-bus, \$99 990; and to the Tea Tree Gully council, for the acquisition of one midi-bus, \$46 000.

Mr MEIER: I refer to industry licensing on page 175 of the Program Estimates. I note that the continued control and regulation of bus route services is recorded as one of the specific targets achieved last year. However, this statement appears to be at odds with what is happening in the Adelaide Hills area with Johnsons buses. Johnsons was not reissued with a licence after the close of tenders earlier this year, yet Johnsons are continuing to operate and are threatening the viability of route services awarded to Mount Barker Passenger Service. What steps have been taken by the Government to ensure that the monopoly provisions of the route service licences issued by the office to Mount Barker Passenger Service are upheld?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, this is a concept with which I have some difficulty, namely, of giving exclusive rights to individual operators on certain routes. However, I have been persuaded that in the main it does work for the community's benefit, inasmuch as there is a significant degree of cross-subsidisation by operators from the more profitable to the less profitable routes. If it was a free for all, these areas would probably finish up with little or no service at all, so that is how I rationalise some of these restrictive practices.

The question of Johnsons is difficult; certain investigations are going on at the moment that I would not wish to prejudice but it may well be that over the next two or three weeks the position will become clearer. However, I want to say to the proprietors of the Mount Barker bus service that we do appreciate the patience that they have shown and that we compliment them on the

service that they give to people living in the Hills and also on some of the attempts that they have made to introduce services. In some areas they have failed; the patronage has just not been there to warrant it. Nevertheless, the proprietors of the Mount Barker bus service do understand the position, what we are attempting to do and the limitations that are on us, but I hope that the inquiries that are taking place will come to a head fairly soon and then our expectation is that we will be able to tidy up what everybody agrees are fairly unsatisfactory arrangements at the moment.

Mr MEIER: My second question relates to page 176 of the Program Estimates in relation to the planning and coordination of transport last year. Doctor Ian Radbone coordinated responses and made recommendations on a futures paper on the taxi and hire vehicle industry, which was released earlier by the deregulation unit. In part, Dr Radbone recommended:

... the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Act should be replaced with a Community Transport Act covering community transport as a whole, including stretch limousines, car pools, community buses, the State Transport Authority and private buses, as well as hire cars and taxis.

Has the Minister endorsed Dr Radbone's proposal for the introduction of a Community Transport Act? If not, why not and, if so, when will the Bill be introduced?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The issue is still under consideration by the Government.

Mr MEIER: Supplementary to that, does the Minister anticipate that the Government will have considered this issue by the end of the year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It could but, if it does not, it does not fess me particularly.

Mr MEIER: My third question also relates to page 176. What is the Minister's assessment of the fate of the Federal Government's push to introduce uniform road user charges following the refusal by the New South Wales and Western Australian Governments to support charges proposed by the National Road Transport Commission?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am always the optimist, and I hope the reforms take place. What the New South Wales Government has done is pretty outrageous. The New South Wales Government was doing all the pushing for this reform, and it was right—no question. We were fairly reluctant to have too much to do with it other than on our terms; nevertheless, after quite extensive discussion, we were satisfied that South Australia would not be unduly disadvantaged and that the nation as a whole would benefit. However, at the last minute, New South Wales decided that it did not want any part of it. I think it is very much up to the industry and, if the industry wants these reforms, it has to talk to the New South Wales Government. The industry is quite capable of doing that and doing it very vigorously.

I believe that the reforms are a step in the right direction, particularly the regulatory reform, which is essential. Uniform regulation across Australia is essential as regards the road charging reforms. I think that what the commission has come up with is probably better than what we have at the moment. I do not think it is good enough. I have always argued that all road charges ought to be reimbursed through the petrol or diesel bowser; that is a much more sensible, simple and reasonably equitable way of doing it. The commission is conducting an

investigation into South Australia's views on that. I am not quite sure when that investigation will be completed, but that was one of our strong suggestions when we agreed to the charging regime that was proposed. It would be quite tragic, in my view, if the will of New South Wales prevailed; I think it is appalling, and it would never have happened under Mr Greiner.

Mr MEIER: Does the Government intend to increase South Australia's registration charges for heavy vehicles (about 4.5 tonnes) to the level proposed by the Road Transport Commission, notwithstanding the failure of the States to agree to a uniform charge?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have not given up on New South Wales—I think the question is a bit premature. New South Wales must come to its senses. The agreement we have reached in this State is with the full concurrence of the industry, and the industry right across Australia is advocating these charges as being fair and reasonable. Some members of the industry will win out of this, some will lose, but overall the industry says, 'Yes, this is a good and sensible way of organising road charges. What the South Australian Minister wants would be better, but that is not on the table at the moment.' So, I think it is pretty outrageous of New South Wales to thumb its nose at the whole of the rest of Australia and the whole of the industry, including the industry in New South Wales. I cannot believe that it will persist with that line. It is very much up to the industry in New South Wales to let the Government know—

Mr Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My influence over Mr Murray, the Deputy Premier of New South Wales, is limited.

Mr Ingerson interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister will respond to the question from the member for Goyder and ignore the interjections.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have not given up on having a national scale, as I think it is extremely important that we have one.

Mr FERGUSON: I have received a deputation from the Greek community in my electorate regarding their fears about the profitability of taxis. I refer to program 3 on page 176 of the Program Estimates. What is the future for hire cars in metropolitan Adelaide; how many hire car licences have been issued and how many are to be issued; and how will the issue of competition with taxis be handled?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The future of the hire care industry in metropolitan Adelaide is very promising indeed. As a result of the Government's community transport announcement in April 1990, and subsequent consultation, the hire vehicle industry has been progressively opened up to competition in the form of new entrants. As at 30 June 1990, there were 58 hire vehicles licensed by the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Board. As at 30 June 1992, there were 146 hire vehicle licences on issue. This shows the remarkable growth in the marketability of hire vehicle services, resulting in large part from the Government's removal of unnecessary limits on the industry's activities. The number of licences to be issued in the future will depend on market demand for new hire vehicle licences. This 'open entry' approach has been accepted by the industry; indeed, in 1991 the

then Hire Car Operators Association recommended that open entry be adopted, as a strategy to allow the industry to grow and prosper. I am very pleased that the association eventually saw it my way.

The issue of competition with taxis is dealt with by the regulations under the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Act 1956, which do not allow hire vehicles to use taxi meters or taxi signs, and which require that hire car passengers must have pre-booked the ride. Any other areas of potential competition between the two industries are and should be fair. Taxis already have considerable advantage over any new entrants providing community transport and should be prepared for competition from other modes. I think the test of the profitability of any industry or business is what one can buy and sell that business for. Taxi plates alone—that is, just the plate and nothing else that goes with it—are fetching between \$100 000 and \$110 000. A couple of years ago, the taxi industry suggested that the actions taken by the Government would make them worthless. They are certainly not worthless: in fact, they are highly sought after. With the agreement of the industry, we have issued 15 new taxi plates, which were sold by tender. I think the average tender price close to a year ago was about \$92 000. This indicates that there is still a very strong market for taxi plates.

I suppose one other reason is that we have deregulated a great deal within the taxi industry, and owners of taxi plates are now free to conduct their business in a way in which they could not before. They have a great deal of freedom in leasing their plates and so on, and that has made an enormous difference. There is no doubt that the recession has hit the taxi industry as it has hit most industries. Taxi drivers are not doing it easy, if they ever did but, given the value that the market puts on plates and given the fact that many more taxis are now operated by people who are leasing plates, there are many more taxis on the roads at times when people want them—and that is a good thing.

We have also allowed discounting. I know that one firm that has recently come into being—Independent Taxis—offers discounts from time to time, and I think that is to be applauded. That another company is involved in the taxi industry to provide more competition is to be applauded; it helps licensees and taxi plate owners, as taxi companies essentially are radio operators. So, I think all in all the taxi industry is progressing quite nicely.

Mr FERGUSON: Will the Minister outline the progress of the review of the State's cycling development program mentioned on page 176 of the Program Estimates?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The national greenhouse and ecologically sustainable development process included in its transport related recommendations a proposal that cycling be facilitated as a growing part of the transport system. It is recommended that greater consideration be given to cycling as a transport mode in future urban and transport decision making and planning. At the same time, the planning review concluded that, in metropolitan Adelaide, greater emphasis should be given to the role of cycling. South Australia is participating in the development of a national bike strategy for consideration by the Australian Advisory Council (ATAC) later this

year. It is likely that South Australia will receive some funding under the Commonwealth's \$3 million offer to fund bike projects, most likely for the three eastern arterial on-road bike lanes.

Funding will also be available for the Adelaide City Council to undertake work on parkland routes. Discussions are under way with the Department of Road Transport and the Energy Forum on a joint survey of bike usage. A recent New South Wales survey found that the number of adult bike trips had fallen by 14 per cent and children's riding by 36 per cent, perhaps due to compulsory helmet legislation. A thorough assessment of cycling development activities in South Australia and elsewhere is presently being undertaken, with the first draft report having been received.

Mr FERGUSON: As a supplementary question, I refer to the cycling track along the linear park. Has there been further development of safety procedures for that cycling track following the spate of accidents about 12 months ago?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I was not particularly aware of a spate of accidents, but I will certainly have the issue investigated and get back to the member for Henley Beach in relation to whether any remedial action was required, if so whether it has been taken and, if not, why not.

The CHAIRMAN: I am very pleased to hear that.

Mr FERGUSON: With reference to the planning and coordination of transport (page 176 of the Program Estimates), what is the status of the Government's plans for a public transport interchange at Tonsley?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly, I did make passing reference to this issue earlier, so I will make only passing reference to it again. In 1991 Cabinet gave approval for the STA to prepare detailed designs and cost estimates for the Tonsley interchange in consultation with the local community, the Marion council and relevant Government agencies. It also gave approval for the STA to prepare a draft supplementary development plan to rezone the Tonsley interchange site. The estimated cost of the interchange and associated works is \$17.1 million in March 1992 dollars. Key features of the design are as follows: all interchange facilities consolidated north of Sturt Road; a new main train platform located at the existing Tonsley Railway Station, supplemented by a secondary platform to be used in emergency situations; bus interchange facilities; one bus set-down platform and four bus pick-up platforms; a taxi drop 'kiss-n-ride' area; car parking for 400 vehicles adjacent to the interchange area; extensive landscaping; acoustic barriers to provide enhanced amenity and minimisation of the environmental impact of the interchange; staff toilets; a concession kiosk, and so on.

As I said this morning, the issue really involves the benefits and disbenefits to people who use the present services in the region and who would be expected, or in some cases forced, to use the interchange. It is not a black and white issue at all; it is not a 100 per cent benefit or disbenefit. Unfortunately, life is not quite so kind to Transport Ministers, or I suspect to anyone else; there always seems to be a down side to everything. However, on balance, the study shows that more people will benefit than are adversely affected. That is something

that Cabinet will take into account when it considers the submission on this issue over the next few weeks.

Mr INGERSON: My question relates to the Program Estimates, page 176, planning and coordination of transport, private sector involvement. I note that an objective for this year is to investigate the scope for private sector involvement in the provision of transport infrastructure and services. Is this investigation to include private bus operators as well as taxi cab operators, who are currently involved in the pilot taxi transit scheme at Hallett Cove that the Minister mentioned earlier? Will the investigation cover options for private sector involvement 24 hours a day, seven days a week or just at inter-peak and off-peak periods and on routes that the STA does not operate?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is already a very extensive private sector involvement in the provision of infrastructure. For example, all our buses and trains, and so on, are manufactured by the private sector and we purchase from there. Apart from labour, that is obviously our principal cost. So, the private sector is extensively involved now.

As regards the private sector replacing STA services, I do not believe that the private sector would be too interested in doing that. Public transport is not a highly profitable area. Where we did make some attempt to withdraw services from certain routes in the Adelaide Hills and one route north of Adelaide, we called tenders from the private sector to see whether it would take over those routes. However, tenders were not satisfactory and the STA maintained its presence in those areas. I was a bit disappointed about that. Since I have been the Minister of Transport I have heard from bus operators how they can do things better, cheaper and so on but, when put to that test, they certainly could not. The STA is a very efficient organisation and it will become more efficient over time.

So, there is limited scope. I think the scope is more in what we are doing at the moment with the transit taxis. As I said this morning, if that scheme is successful, as we expect it to be—we have to give it a six months trial—it is possible that that could be extended into other areas. There is no question that the STA is consolidating the rail routes and the main bus routes. There might be some scope at the edges for private operators to feed into the STA. But, in my view, it would be very minimal, if at all. For example, the taxis are doing it now at Hallett Cove Beach station. Also, the Happy Valley council community buses are feeding into our transit link services at the Aberfoyle Hub. There is some scope but, overall, I do not believe there is great scope for it, because it is not a profitable operation. Of course, the private operators withdrew from most of the Hills services and fringe services in the 1970s because they could not make any money out of them. In effect, the Government had to bail them out. Whether it was wise, in hindsight, to do that is another question. It felt it had to do so.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question, is the investigation to be undertaken in-house or by a consultant? If so, at what cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is an in-house investigation and only staff costs are involved. It is not going out to consultants as far as I am aware. I will have that checked.

Mr INGERSON: Page 176 of the Auditor-General's Report, under 'Other Funds,' states that the balance in the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Industry Research and Development Fund as at 30 June was \$1.377 million. As the fund may be applied by the Minister to carry out research and promote the metropolitan taxi-cab industry, what policy has been prepared by the Minister and/or the board as a guide to the industry on which projects to submit for funding, and what projects are likely to win approval?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get that set of guidelines for the Deputy Leader.

Mr INGERSON: What projects were submitted for funding last year, what was the value of applications, which projects were approved for funding and to what value?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will obtain the details.

Mr INGERSON: My next question relates to page 176 of the Program Estimates with regard to Comcar. Comcar has been authorised to compete with hire cars for private sector business following a loss last year of \$12 million. However, unlike hire cars, Comcar is heavily subsidised by the Commonwealth Government and does not have to pay sales tax on its vehicles, payroll tax, or a fuel excise tax of 26 cents per litre. Has the Minister lodged any protest with the Federal Government about the unfair advantage that Comcar enjoys in terms of competition with hire cars for private sector business in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: From memory, the answer is 'Yes'. If the Government is going to compete—and philosophically I have no argument with that—I believe that it ought to compete fairly. I am not sure whether, from the public sector's point of view, it ought to be competing in the private sector, because I think it works both ways. They have monopolies on certain work within the Government sector. If they want to go into the private sector and compete—and one would assume that is fair—it strikes me that one could argue, 'Why can't the private sector compete for what Government employees do?' If I were an employee of Comcar I would be wary about wanting to venture into the private sector in case the private sector ventured into my patch and knocked me off.

These things are never simple. Nevertheless, in principle, if the public sector is competing in the private sector, and if that decision has been made, I think it ought to be fair competition. I cannot remember the terms of the letter—I will dig it out and send a copy to the honourable member—but I have made some polite noises to the Federal Minister, and I think that some of the other States have been even more vigorous. New South Wales has taken to the Federal Government with a big stick. I am not sure that I am necessarily opposed to it; it works both ways.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My first question concerns pensioner concessions for long distance travel. The Minister will be aware that qualified pensioners were entitled to a free rail trip each year. Of course, their opportunities for such travel have now been reduced owing to the closure of a number of long distance passenger services. Does the Government plan to provide an annual free bus trip to compensate for the loss of the benefit in that regard?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The free annual trip for pensioners on country rail passenger services in parts of South Australia was a concession granted by the South Australian Government many years ago, prior to the amalgamation of South Australian Railways and the Commonwealth Railways. The privilege was incorporated into the agreement that governed the amalgamation, and generally applied only to former SAR lines. South Australia expressed strong opposition to the closure of South Australia's intrastate passenger service. Nevertheless, due to a combination of events, we no longer effectively have an intrastate rail service operating in South Australia.

There would be a significant budget impact associated with providing one free bus trip per year. The bus network is more extensive and most bus routes serve many locations beyond the rail network. It would be difficult for the Government to limit a concession for bus routes to towns only on former South Australian Railways lines, plus Whyalla and Port Augusta. In 1987-88, 80 100 people rode on SA country rail services compared with a route bus service patronage of 1.27 million persons.

Given financial constraints, together with the heavy demand for improved services in other areas, the Government is not in a position to extend concessions such as providing annual free bus trips. I would point out to the member for Mitchell that pensioners currently receive a 50 per cent concession on all bus trips.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My next question relates to local community transport, and I refer to page 176 of the Program Estimates. Can the Minister say what initiatives the Government has undertaken to make improvements in local community transport?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The State Government and local government in the southern Fleurieu Peninsula area and the Barossa Valley have established trial transport brokerage schemes. Transport brokerage seeks to maximise the use of existing transport resources. While the level of unmet transport demand in some sections of the community is significant, a large number of vehicles owned by a wide variety of organisations are sometimes used only one or two days a week. A transport broker seeks to cater for the unmet demand by negotiating with suppliers to provide services. The aim is to enhance people's accessibility by flexible and innovative use of existing transport resources.

The proposal to conduct trials into the brokerage concept in the southern Fleurieu Peninsula area had its genesis in a study undertaken by the Women's Adviser to the Premier which found that the isolation of women in rural areas was a major social problem. To resolve the access problems of this and other transport disadvantaged groups, Transport Policy and Planning commissioned a study in 1991 into the transport needs and possible solutions for the southern Fleurieu community. The study recommended the brokerage model of providing community transport services. As a result, the State Government and the three local councils (Victor Harbor, Port Elliott and Goolwa, and Yankalilla) have funded the new scheme for a 12-month trial period, after which it will be evaluated.

The Barossa Community Services Board, acting on behalf of six Barossa Valley councils, approached the State Government in 1991 concerning a number of unresolved transport issues in the Barossa. Discussions with community representatives revealed a lack of coordination rather than a lack of resources as the main issue affecting the provision of transport. The State Government approved a transport brokerage trial for the Barossa Valley, in which costs are shared between the State Government (which is funding the salary of the transport broker for a maximum period of two years) and the six Barossa Valley councils which are providing all accommodation and support services.

In other local community transport initiatives in 1991-92, the Government obtained financial support, under the Federal Government's Australian Land Transport Development Program, to allow several councils to purchase community buses and operate community bus services. Financial support was also provided to the Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre and the Hallett Cove Community Health Centre to enable them to purchase a vehicle and commence the operation of a community bus service in the Hallett Cove, Sheidow Park and Trott Park area. Also, as I mentioned earlier, a taxi service began to link with trains to serve the Hallett Cove area. So, the amount of community transport is growing.

It is being assisted by the State and Federal Governments, and it is an area that will continue to expand for many years to come. There is no doubt that many of these particular services that people require can be better served by community transport than by the State Government. Yes, they require the assistance of the State Government, but the State Government cannot provide it as well in certain circumstances as can local councils, the private sector or community transport organisations.

Mr HOLLOWAY: With respect to the Community Transport Directory referred to on page 176 of the Program Estimates, I assume that is part of the process of encouraging the use of community transport and the promotion of it. What is contained in the directory, and how is it helpful?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As a result of many inquiries regarding the transport subsidy scheme and community transport generally, it was decided to compile a directory on community transport to help disseminate information to interested people and organisations. The South Australian Community Transport Directory was produced in April 1992 by Transport Policy and Planning in association with local councils, hospitals and transport agencies throughout the State. The directory provides information on style of management, vehicles used, types of services provided and funding sources. The directory has proved extremely popular with human service organisations who find it a useful guide to the transport options available in their area and alternative models of ownership and operation.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I refer again to page 176 of the Program Estimates, under specific targets for the 1992-93 year, which include:

Develop a strategy plan for the development of the transport system in the southern region of metropolitan Adelaide in consultation with community and stakeholder groups.

Will the Minister outline the objectives of that study and indicate the actual area of the southern region covered by that study?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Lindsay Oxlad, a transport planner from the Office of Transport and Planning, is completely *au fait* with that information, and I ask him to respond.

Mr Oxlad: The southern area strategic plan arises from the planning review's work which has set broad guidelines for the metropolitan area. I will take a minute to outline the previous strategic plan for the southern region, just to give members an idea where that is at so that they can appreciate why there is a need to do more work. You may have seen a brochure distributed throughout the southern region, which extends from Marion as far south as Willunga. This brochure dealt with a number of issues in relation to roads and public transport.

With respect to roads, there was a commitment to undertake traffic management improvements to South Road in the Darlington area, particularly the South Road, Marion Road and Flagstaff Road intersection, which has been completed, and the South Road and Seacombe Road intersection which has been completed also. Improvement to the general Darlington area is under way at the moment. There was a requirement to realign and reconstruct what is now called Happy Valley Drive (formerly Reservoir Drive) from Black Road to Chandlers Hill Road, and that has been completed. The construction of a third arterial road is still undergoing investigation, but the pre-construction work of the third arterial road has largely been completed, as I understand it. There was the duplication and widening of Dyson Road in the southern area from O'Sullivan Beach Road to Flaxmill Road which has been completed, and the duplication and widening of Dyson Road from Flaxmill Road to Beach Road which, again, has been completed.

Members would be aware of the Flagstaff Road improvements, with the reverse flow lanes that were mooted. Work is continuing there at the moment. Work on the upgrading of Panalatinga Road is also under way at the moment, as well as some longer term proposals to look at grade separating on Morphett Road at the Oaklands Park railway crossing, the upgrading and possible grade separation of Brighton Road at Hove, and the grade separation of the South Road and Anzac Highway intersection. A number of public transport improvements have been dealt with in previous answers to questions. The important part is that, since the original 1980 strategic plan was developed, the philosophy of operation of public transport and transport generally in the southern suburbs has changed.

The Minister has just given a very detailed description of community transport in the south—in Happy Valley, Noarlunga and Willunga—which is quite important, the Hallett Cove-Sheidow Park embryonic scheme, and the strengthening role of the Noarlunga regional centre, which is an issue in the planning review's strategic plan, envisaging the transit link type of operation, with feeders into the major roads. There is a need now to go back into the area and supplement what we have already discussed with people in relation to the Seaford area review that we undertook and the third arterial work that has been undertaken to make sure that the transport facilities in the

south are in fact what the people need and want, and what the Government and the taxpayers can afford.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: My next question is linked with the first two questions just asked by the member for Mitchell. With respect to concessions for the unemployed, referred to on page 176 of the Program Estimates, in July this year the Minister acknowledged, as reported in the Mount Barker *Courier*, that the Government is applying a discriminatory policy in respect of bus fares for unemployed people, based on whether they live in the Adelaide metropolitan area or one of the six regional cities—Port Lincoln, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge or Whyalla—or even beyond the reach of these subsidised services. The Minister said that he would have the matter investigated, but I cannot see any reference to such investigation, in either the initiatives achieved for last year or the objectives sought for this year. What action has the Minister taken to assess the feasibility and cost of extending travel concessions to all unemployed South Australians, not just those who have access to STA and regional city bus services?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There has been some assessment done of the additional cost. It is like all of these things, a question of priorities—whether your priorities are in this area, in health or whatever—and we do the very best we can. Concessions in South Australia are very generous. My ministerial colleagues interstate receive representations based on South Australia's concessions. They are very generous concessions, but there has to be a limit. Again, it is not my money. If I wanted to make a hero out of myself and had a blank cheque to put into the taxpayer's pocket, it would make life very easy and very nice, but that is not the case. Some of the estimates that have been done—if I understood the question correctly, 'What is the estimate of the cost involved in providing the unemployed with concession travel in the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa Valley and other country areas?' I—

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: My question was: what action has the Minister taken to assess the feasibility and cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not only about to tell you what action has been taken but also to tell you the outcome of that action. The costs were assessed, and the result of that assessment is that the extension of the concession at half the adult fare to beneficiaries currently travelling on licensed route services is estimated to be about \$500 000. An additional subsidy of \$50 000 would be required as a result of the increased patronage resulting from the halving of the fares, and so the total cost of extending the subsidy to all licensed private bus routes is estimated to be \$550 000 per annum. It is extensive and at the moment the Government does not see that it can afford that additional expense.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: As a supplementary question, the cost of operating the scheme in the metropolitan area in 1991 was \$2.5 million, but what was the cost of operating it in 1991-92?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is a reimbursement from Family and Community Services and we will find out within the appropriate time and reply. I understand it was \$3 million and I do not think the honourable member will find that it is any different.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I refer to page 93 of the Estimates of Payments and Receipts. I refer to planning and coordination of transport. As to country town buses, last year the actual grant for country town buses was \$300 002, nearly double the estimated grant of \$155 000. This year there is no grant provision for funding such buses. What is the explanation for the increase in the grant last year and the elimination of all grant funds for country town bus services this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thought I had already answered that. That is the result of a typographical error.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I am sorry, I was absent from the Chamber. I refer to page 176 of the Program Estimates. Under specific targets/objectives there is reference to continued major involvement with the transport hub and other organisations. I am interested in the Energy Demand Management Task Force. What has been the cost input and the outcome in terms of costs and energy saved in the public sector? If the figures are available, what are the estimated costs and energy savings in the private sector as a result of modifications to policy or policy initiatives?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We will attempt to get those figures for the honourable member. The Director-General of Transport knows a fair bit about that committee and will be happy to advise the honourable member.

Dr Scrafton: The Energy Demand Management Task Force is a joint effort that is led by the Office of Energy Planning. Our involvement is simply input on the transport side. Obviously, transport is a big user of energy and its more efficient and more effective use will have a major determination on the more efficient use of energy overall. We could obtain the figures requested by the honourable member from the Office of Energy Planning.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: My next question is related to the last one. I refer to page 176 of the Program Estimates and the 2020 Vision transport strategy, which is linked up with the Office of Energy Planning, I presume. A specific target for this year is to develop implementation plans for the transport strategies in the planning review's 2020 Vision. Has the Government endorsed all of the recommendations relating to car driver travel costs, including the implementation of high occupancy vehicle lanes, a charge on long-term commuter parking spaces in major centres, incentives for car pooling and, in respect of public transport, recommendations to allow the private sector to play a greater role in the competition for the provision of services at the local level and, in the longer term, to allow the private sector to compete with the provision of services on a metropolitan basis? I recognise that this question links into some of the previous answers that the Minister has given, including answers about transport brokerage, but my question is specifically about 2020 Vision transport strategies.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The first thing to remember about 2020 Vision is that the title refers to the year 2020, so there is a long way to go. Whether Governments over the years move towards some of the things suggested in the 2020 Vision is something for the future to reveal. Certainly, a number of those things could be possible at some time in the future, but we do not believe that for

1992 there is any immediacy about them. I know the Federal Government has introduced a car parking tax of sorts on certain car parking spaces in the CBD. So, there is something already that is being introduced, although not by the State Government. Nevertheless, the effect would be similar, whether it be by State or Federal Governments.

The question of high occupancy vehicle lanes is an idea that I favour. We put the toe in the water with the bus only lanes, although we get some complaints from businesses along roads where there are bus only lanes and also from motorists who stray into bus only lanes from time to time and who are photographed and fined by the police. These things are not all one way, but I have no doubt that high occupancy vehicle lanes will be introduced at some stage in the future in South Australia. I have no doubt about that whatsoever.

However, it is not an immediate prospect. There is not a need for it immediately, because it will cause a fair bit of disruption to normal motoring patterns. People will wear it if the need is clear, but I do not think the need at this stage is clear and, therefore, it would be seen as unnecessary and would cause strong reaction, with some justification. It should not be introduced simply because it sounds like a good idea—there must be a real need. Perhaps in five years there will be a real need and people will accept it because commonsense will tell them that the need is there.

At present Adelaide roads are so good that there is no immediate need for such a program. Clearways are now part of the landscape but, when they were first introduced, there was a great deal of resistance. Everyone agrees that clearways are a proper traffic management device. Bus only lanes are gradually being more accepted, although they are not totally accepted by motorists, I can assure the Committee. Priority for buses at traffic lights in bus only lanes is becoming more and more accepted and, as it is, we will get more of them because it is a sensible way to use the available road space, rather than spending hundreds of millions of dollars on freeways, which would be full within the first three days and we would be back where we started. So, I think all these traffic management and road use processes will have a place in Adelaide in the future and, as the need is demonstrated and there is public acceptance, I think all Governments will introduce them and they will get the applause of the community.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My question relates to the amendments to the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Act referred to on page 176 of the Program Estimates. What progress has been made in improving taxi cab services since the Government's community transport policy announcements in 1990?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The reforms that were announced in April 1990 to the taxi cab and hire vehicle industry and completed in 1991-92 have begun to achieve positive results for the travelling public and industry members. Adelaide now has a new taxi radio company, Adelaide Independent, which took advantage of regulatory changes to offer a 10 per cent cash discount during its establishment period. We now have amended taxi cab and hire vehicle legislation which, amongst other things, established an independent appeals tribunal and

modernised the administration and responsibilities of the Metropolitan Taxi-Cab Board.

We have completely rewritten taxi and hire vehicle regulations so they are now more concise, up-to-date and streamlined. There is now open entry into the hire car industry, with a reduced entry fee of \$50 and, as I mentioned earlier, that has encouraged over 100 more operators into the hire car industry. There have been 15 new taxi licences, and that was with the agreement of the industry. I think those are the first taxi licences issued since the 1950s. The population has done a fair bit since then but taxi numbers have not. There are now 15 extra licences, with the agreement of the industry.

There is \$1.3 million in a fund for research and development of the taxi industry. The fund has been established and \$1.3 million is in the fund. Projects are under way—codes of practice and so on—for taxi and hire vehicles. I think codes of practice are very important in this area—much more important than attempting to do it by regulation. When we have 800 or 900 vehicles out there, we need an army of inspectors to make sure everybody is doing the right thing as regards dress and the condition and cleanliness of the cabs and so on. Codes of practice are the way to go in that area; it would be a pity if we had regulation and tried to enforce it. I have been very pleased with the progress that the taxi industry has made.

I think that one of the most significant things is the new approach from a significant section of the taxi industry. The industry wants to develop new markets and, more and more, it wants to be out there when people need it. We have enabled it to do that by relaxing and eliminating a great deal of the unnecessary regulation of the industry whilst at the same time protecting its investment, and that has been proven by the price of taxi plates being of the order of \$110 000, which I think is precisely where they were when taxi reform began. We have been able to achieve this without in any way damaging the financial viability of the industry, and I am pleased with the new approach from a significant section of the taxi industry.

Mrs HUTCHISON: As a short supplementary question, does the Minister have any idea when the codes of practice and so on will be completed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is a draft already, so it will be very soon.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My second question relates to the Minister's comment about the transport policy and planning budget. He mentioned the expenditure savings achieved in the transport portfolio. What are the details of those savings?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A timed series of State Government outlays expended by the transport agencies over the past seven years has been prepared and a comparison made with 1982-83. The key finding was that the percentage of total transport outlays had dropped from 11 per cent of total Government outlays in 1982-83 to an estimated 8 per cent in 1991-92. The net result is effectively equivalent to the financial elimination of a medium-sized agency. The handover of activities from the former Department of Transport to the new Department of Road Transport resulted in a net expenditure drop.

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Department of Road Transport expenditure could have been expected to rise up to 11.5 per cent in real terms, but the 1990-91 figure showed a 5.3 per cent real increase. In addition, operating savings have been made in the STA. I think it is important to recognise that the public sector does have the ability to change and become more efficient and is supplying to the taxpayers of South Australia a quality service at a reasonable price. In my view, what has been achieved with the assistance of the Office of Transport Policy and Planning in reducing in real terms the overall cost to the Government of transport and transport related areas in South Australia is commendable.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My third question relates to the resources summary on page 170 of the Program Estimates. It has been claimed that Public Service work force levels have declined since 1989 as a result of the initiatives picked up by the Government Agencies Review Group, or GARG, as it is more commonly known. With reference to that page, what are the changes in staffing in the Office of Transport Policy and Planning?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In the period 1989-90 to 1991-92 the work force levels in Transport Policy and Planning declined by 3.3 FTEs from 34 in 1989-90 to 30.7 in 1991-92. To flesh out those details in the various years, the work force levels in 1989-90 were a total of 34; in 1990-91, 29.3; and in 1991-92, 27.3. Also, some secondment to agencies occurred: in 1990-91, there were 4.5 FTEs and, in 1991-92, three FTEs. So, it gives the figures I quoted earlier: in 1989-90 the total was 34; in 1990-91, 33.9; and in 1991-92, 30.7. For the complete information of the Committee, one staff member was offered a voluntary separation package in 1991-92, and that staff member accepted it.

Mr MEIER: With respect to industry licensing on page 175 of the Program Estimates, a review of licensed country bus route services undertaken last year by Dr Ian Radbone found a poor level of competition in the tendering process. He recommended a further thorough review be conducted. I understand that earlier this year the office contracted Travers Morgan to conduct a bus performance indicator study. What was the outcome of the Travers Morgan study, and will the report be released?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Peter Tregoweth will respond to that question.

Mr Tregoweth: The report was completed recently by Travers Morgan and is still being considered by staff of the Office of Transport Policy and Planning. It provides a large amount of useful information and, hopefully, it will help us to arrange better routes throughout the State.

Mr MEIER: I take it that the Minister has not had the opportunity to consider whether to accept or reject recommendations in the report. What was the cost of the Travers Morgan consultancy?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am advised that it cost \$14 980.

Mr MEIER: What was the cost of the Radbone study?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Director-General will respond to that question.

Dr Scrafton: Dr Radbone's work was undertaken while he was on an academic secondment program to the Office of Transport Policy and Planning, so the cost of the study was incorporated in that. One gets excellent

value from programs of this sort. Dr Radbone is a senior lecturer at the University of South Australia, and he elected during a sabbatical period to come and work with us. The net cost to the Government was about \$11 000, which is about one-quarter of Dr Radbone's base salary. We get enormous returns from these studies. It allows people from the academic community who are interested in transport to work with us to get first-hand experience. We get the benefit of a new and sharp mind in the organisation and, generally, I think we all benefit from the interface. So, the answer to the question is that it was probably about \$3 000 when one looks at Dr Radbone's total output during the six months he was with us.

Mr MEIER: Perhaps the DRT can teach something to some of the other departments that spend in excess of \$100 000 on consultancies. I refer to page 93 of the Estimates of Payments and Receipts. I note that the Office of Transport Policy and Planning spent \$538 336 on research last year and plans to spend \$339 000 this year. What research projects were undertaken or commissioned last year and what was the cost in each instance, and what research projects are proposed for this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be very happy to obtain those details for the honourable member.

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

Road Transport, \$8 100 000

Chairman:

Mr K.C. Hamilton

Members:

The Hon. Jennifer Cashmore

Mr D.M. Ferguson

Mr P. Holloway

Mrs C.M. Hutchison

Mr G.A. Ingerson

Mr E.J. Meier

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Transport

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Payze, Executive Director, Department of Road Transport.

Mr J. Ledo, Director, Planning.

Mr T. Delaney, Manager, Management Accounting.

Mr R. Frisby, Registrar of Motor Vehicles.

Mr D. Gerke, Manager, Programming.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed payments open for examination. Does the Minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have pleasure in bringing to this Estimates Committee for debate the Department of Road Transport's total budget of \$327.6 million. Of this budget, \$116.1 million is provided from Commonwealth grant funds and \$211.5 million is from State sources. Included in the budget are loan repayments totalling

\$25.47 million. This year's budget represents an increase of \$36.4 million or approximately 12 per cent on last year's expenditure. This is a reflection of the additional Commonwealth funding of road transport programs arising from the November 1991 job creation package and the February 1992 One Nation statement.

The Department of Road Transport has a performance based set of expenditure programs and three of these warrant special mention in this introduction. The road assets preservation program has a budget of \$91.1 million of which \$65.4 million is provided from State funds. This reflects our commitment to maintaining both the structural integrity and the safety and reliability standards of the road system. The accessibility enhancement program provides economic and social benefits by funding the upgrading of roads. As well as providing for major works such as the Gawler Bypass, the Swanport Deviation and the Port Wakefield Road, this program also includes works to replace \$31 million worth of existing road assets which have now reached the end of their economic life.

The road safety program assigns \$28.4 million to specific road safety projects and activities. An amount of \$7.7 million has also been provided to the Police Department from the Department of Road Transport budget for road safety purposes. The road safety actions provided by this program contributed to reducing the road accident casualty rate last year to the lowest since 1968. Road accident black spots will again be targeted this year with a provision of \$15.6 million as part of this program.

The Department of Road Transport is continuing initiatives to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. A review of its field operations and the strengthening of its strategic management process will be completed during the year. It will maintain its emphasis on improving asset management, program evaluation and quality management. It will extend the number of business units adopting commercial accounting practices, continue to invite competitive tenders for its works when appropriate and continue its applied research and development programs.

Mr INGERSON: My first question relates to the capital works budget in relation to the Hindmarsh Island bridge. Under the capital works budget, \$4.1 million will be allocated this financial year for construction of a bridge from Goolwa to Hindmarsh Island. It is anticipated that work on the bridge, which is estimated to cost a total of \$6.4 million, will commence in November and be completed by November 1993. As correspondence from former Premier Bannon suggested that subject to satisfactory resolution of project details tenders were likely to be called in August or September, have the tenders been called? If not, when will they be called? For how long will the tender be open and what period of time will the department require to assess the tenders and to let the contract after Cabinet approval?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Executive Director of the department has all those details at his finger tips.

Mr Payze: Tenders have not been called and will not be called until the Government reaches agreement in terms of the cost sharing arrangements. It is expected that the tender will be open for a period of up to six weeks,

following which all tenders will be assessed and a recommendation made to Cabinet.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question, in light of those comments, is it still anticipated that the project will commence in November?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is doubtful that November will be adhered to. We would still like that.

Mr INGERSON: In respect of financing arrangements, I note that the State Government has agreed to meet half the capital cost of the bridge or \$3 million, whichever is the lesser sum. Further, the Auditor-General reports on page 159 that the remaining costs of the bridge will be met by Government loan funds, which are secured with a third rank charge over the project. Which third parties have agreed to secure the cost of the bridge over and above the Government's contribution of \$3 million?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, the Executive Director is right on top of that program.

Mr Payze: The Department of the Premier and Cabinet has been examining options regarding contributions to the cost of the bridge from both Binalong and future developers and in relation to those who stand to gain from the provision of the bridge. A key aspect is the need for an equitable system of contributions that ensures that there is a level playing field for developers on the Island. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is having discussions with the Port Elliott and Goolwa councils on the concept of their making contributions to the cost of the bridge in respect of the developments on the island, including the Binalong development.

If Binalong defaults in its contributions to the bridge, the council contemplates that it would recover such contributions by levying developers or new allotment owners on the island. Whilst the council has endorsed its involvement in principle, a number of legal and technical issues are being examined with a view to formalising these arrangements. Therefore, no work on the construction of the bridge will proceed until the negotiations are concluded. I can only speak from notes that I have had from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Neither my department nor the Minister of Transport is involved in these negotiations at this time.

Mr INGERSON: If the tender should be higher than the \$6.4 million allowed for by the Government, are there any financial arrangements that might take care of that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand that our obligation is up to a maximum of \$3 million. John Ledo will respond to that. We are not really involved in these negotiations; we are only a vehicle. We will do our best, as always.

Mr Ledo: The original arrangement was for the Government to contribute \$3 million or half the cost of the bridge, whichever was the lesser, and the balance was to be met by the developer. When the developer fell upon hard times, the financial arrangements were taken over by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and I have not been party to any of the discussions that took place. My understanding, which I have got second-hand, is that that arrangement still stands: the Government's maximum contribution is half the cost of the bridge or \$3 million. In terms of the cost of the bridge, we are confident that the \$6.4 million which has been quoted—by that I mean it has been estimated on the basis of the original detailed design—is pretty accurate.

Mr INGERSON: The Auditor-General's Report at page 159 notes that last year's payments for work undertaken by private contractors included a payment of \$291 000 for project management work in relation to the Hindmarsh Island bridge. I understand that the department paid \$90 129 to consultants, Connell Wagner, to develop design details and costings for the bridge. What was the balance of \$200 000 spent on last year?

Mr Ledo: Very little work has been undertaken by people in the Department of Road Transport, but some of those times and costs have arisen as a result of people from our bridge design area helping in the formulation of the brief that established the consultancy. Those sorts of costs have been assigned to it, but the bulk of the cost was to pay Connell Wagner. However, Connell Wagner had subconsultants. Work was undertaken with regard to a foundation investigation and the design work has been done by subconsultants. In effect, Connell Wagner are our project managers, and they are hiring, as it were with our approval, subconsultants to carry out this other work. I can only assume that the grand total shown here is predominantly for consultants of that nature.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My first question relates to page 57 of the Capital Works Program: the third arterial project. I note that the commencement date has been brought forward, which I think is the result of the provision of Commonwealth funding. Can the Minister explain the nature of the works to be undertaken in conjunction with the third arterial project and, in particular, say what will be done in the current financial year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The widening of South Road and Marion Road from six to eight lanes in the vicinity of the Sturt triangle and increasing the capacity of the intersection involved forms phase 1 of the new arterial to the rapidly developing southern suburbs. Extra funds were allocated from the Federal Government to commence those works in February 1993 and complete them approximately 18 months later for an estimated cost of \$20 million. That includes land acquisition, service relocations and so on. Phase 2 of the third arterial will be commenced as soon as funds become available. Mr Payze will supplement that answer.

Mr Payze: I understand the honourable member's question also included what specific works will be undertaken in this financial year. The construction works on site are unlikely to commence much before February/March 1993. Prior to that a lot of work will start on the relocation of services and acquisition and accommodation works associated with land acquisition. You will not see too much construction equipment working down there until early next calendar year.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Within the scheme of the project where does the Sturt Road-South Road intersection come in terms of priority? Will all intersections be done together or what will be the order of the intersections involved in this project?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We can get back to the honourable member on that.

Mr Payze: I think I could provide the honourable member with a detailed construction schedule later. At this time I do not think it is available. However, the stage 1 project includes work associated with the intersections of Marion Road with Sturt Road and then the

intersections of South Road with Marion Road, Sturt Road and Shepherds Hill Road. The intersections and the widening of those major intersections are the fundamental part of stage 1, but I am not too sure which intersection will commence first. If the honourable member can accept that all those works are included in stage 1, I think that would suffice to answer the question.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My next question relates to another new capital works project touching my electorate, and that is the Cross Road project which, according to page 56 of the Capital Works Program, is due to commence in April 1993. Can the Minister give some details about what is envisaged in relation to the Cross Road widening?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly. In addition to the funds allocated for expenditure on Cross Road in 1992-93, there are further allocations planned for subsequent years. The work proposed in 1992-93 involves the start of the upgrading of Cross Road with the first stage incorporating improvements at the following intersections: Winston Avenue and Cross Road, Duthy Street and Cross Road, Goodwood Road and Cross Road, and Unley Road and Cross Road. These improvements have been identified as having priority based on information concerning road accidents and delays to motorists, and hence will encourage the use of the arterial road in preference to local streets and provide the greatest return on expenditure.

Full widening is proposed at Winston Avenue and Duthy Street. The other two intersections, which are already at ultimate width, require relatively minor upgrades to overcome congestion problems. While these urgent intersection upgrades are proceeding, land acquisitions will continue until the 19 remaining properties required along Cross Road are purchased. Services relocation along the whole length of the road (such as the undergrounding of power) will follow, and then new advanced growth trees can be planted. A number of issues raised during earlier community consultation processes are to be discussed shortly with local government prior to a final public display on the project, at which time the department's preferred staging of the total development of Cross Road will be declared.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I assume that the depot used for the South Road widening project near the Emerson intersection will be used as a depot for these works: is that correct?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will provide that information for the honourable member.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Turning to a much wider program—the question of ecologically sustainable development, which is an important aspect these days—will the Minister explain the role of the Department of Road Transport in ecologically sustainable development, and say how it sees its role of contributing towards that objective?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The goal of sustainable development is development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends. The Department of Road Transport aims to be an organisation that understands and consistently applies principles of sustainable development to the provision of

services and facilities which meet the community's requirements for a road transport system which, among other things, is equitable and safe, meets the requirements of personal mobility and access, supports the productive sectors of the economy, is in harmony with the natural social and cultural environment, and is provided at an acceptable cost. The department considers the raising of awareness throughout the organisation as the most important challenge that it faces as it seeks to practise ecologically sustainable development at all levels of the decision-making process, including policy, strategy and project levels.

Other measures to address this issue include continuing to review projects for their environmental impact and investigating ways to reduce greenhouse emissions. The latter includes investigations into travel demand management measures such as the provision of high occupancy vehicle lanes in Adelaide; continuing the provision of bicycle lanes on arterial roads and support of the State Bicycle Committee; the provision of information on choosing a fuel-efficient vehicle and training the public in fuel-efficient driving techniques; closer integration of transport and land use planning; and continuing roadside planting to absorb carbon dioxide.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I refer to page 152 of the Auditor-General's Report and the issue of the Motor Registration DRIVERS System. It is apparent from an audit review last year that the DRIVERS on-line computer system continues to be plagued with problems. Management of the system has now been transferred to the Justice Information System (JIS). Audit reports that the department paid \$1.1 million to JIS for the provision of the service last financial year, including the provision of staff and the management of hardware, systems, database and applications development. Also, a further \$1.6 million in capital equipment plus a \$479 000 loan were transferred to JIS.

In the meantime, audit found that moneys for new Government vehicle registration and Government vehicle renewal transactions were being disbursed twice due to a program fault which had existed since November 1990, and this fault had resulted in an estimated \$1.3 million overpayment of third party insurance premiums to SGIC. It also found that the risk of inaccurate disbursement of moneys had been increased by the inability of the system to reconcile moneys received and disbursed to the balance of the motor vehicles clearing account. Audit concluded that:

High priority should be given to this area as significant delays in the implementation of proper financial controls increase the risk of major errors in the disbursement of moneys.

When will the department be providing a detailed response to audit outlining action it proposes to take to redress the problems identified with the DRIVERS system, and if that detailed response has been provided already to audit, what is the nature of the response?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Registrar of Motor Vehicles is with us, and he is ideally placed to answer that question in detail. A similar question was asked in the House several weeks ago, and rather than go through it all again, I refer members to that particular question and answer. There is no doubt that the DRIVERS system has settled down to an enormous extent and is a

wonderful system for the front of house customer. It works extraordinarily well and certainly saves an awful lot of time. It is very convenient, very quick and very accurate.

The Hon. Jennifer Cashmore interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It has saved an awful lot of money. The member for Coles interjects and says that it has not saved any money. That is just simply incorrect. I can see that I will have to answer another question in the House at the appropriate time.

Mr Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have the details of the exact number of people who have been replaced due to DRIVERS being introduced, but I will get those details for the honourable member at the appropriate time. I also dealt extensively with the question of the overpayment to SGIC. As I stated then, I have absolutely no fears or any reason to doubt that an amicable arrangement will not be arrived at with SGIC to ensure that any overpayment to it is refunded. Whatever modifications are required to the software, if that is the problem, will be made. For the average motorist in South Australia who wishes to register a vehicle, this system is an outstanding success but I am sure that the Registrar will be able to enlarge upon that very brief response.

Mr Frisby: A response was provided to the Auditor-General in late August which detailed the nature of the problem with the \$1.3 million over-disbursement. Included in that report was also detail about the proposed action that would need to be taken to correct the error that was identified and to create a working party on which the Auditor-General's staff would participate to oversee the necessary corrections that were required to DRIVERS. We have indicated that we will have the issue of the balance of the motor vehicles clearing account completed by 30 June. The actual amendment to the computer DRIVERS system, which resulted in the error, was corrected within a couple of days of its being identified, and the Executive Director has written to the SGIC with respect to the first steps to recover the \$1.3 million.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I would not like to disappoint the Minister concerning the identification of savings. What is the anticipated cost of measures necessary to rectify the problems associated with drivers and, with these additional costs, what has been the cost to date of installing and operating the system? What are the identified savings?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Those costs are readily identifiable and we will get them for the honourable member.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: As a supplementary question which may need to go on notice with those costs, is the management arrangement negotiated with JIS an ongoing exercise and, if so, what payment is the department required to transfer to JIS this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Registrar has those figures with him.

Mr Frisby: The facilities management arrangement with JIS is a two year agreement and we have almost completed the first year. This year the budget for the facilities management arrangement is \$2.8 million.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: What are the identified savings?

Mr Frisby: Cabinet approval for the facilities management arrangement was on the basis that there would be an annual saving of \$390 000. In the first year there was an identified implementation cost of \$720 000. That amount has not been borrowed because JIS people are working towards a cheaper solution to amalgamating the motor registration activities and their current activities in a more efficient way than was initially proposed. It is possible that that will be achieved with significantly less than \$720 000 in implementation costs, which could see actual benefits significantly above the \$390 000 identified originally.

The payback was to be in four years but we may find that it will be sooner than that because there is clearly a cost benefit ratio with the facilities management arrangement in dollar terms, but with the added security of the justice information people being able to manage the system more effectively for us.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: As a supplementary question, I want to make sure I understand correctly what Mr Frisby is saying. At this stage the annual saving over two years should have been \$780 000 at \$390 000 a year, but at this stage there has been no identified saving. Is it anticipated that there will be such a saving?

Mr Frisby: We are only through the first year of the two year agreement. There could be an identified saving of only \$390 000 but, in addition to that, there is the \$720 000 that was to be borrowed to implement the merged arrangement. That has not yet been borrowed and so we are making a saving there as well.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Notwithstanding the Auditor-General's opinion that high priority should be given to problems associated with the reconciling of the Motor Vehicles Clearing Account, it is apparent that the necessary work will not be finished until June 1993 because the department considers other changes and initiatives should be given higher priority. What are the 'other changes and initiatives' that demand immediate attention ahead of the reconciliation of the Motor Vehicles Clearing Account?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, Mr Frisby can respond to that.

Mr Frisby: On the top of our priority list is the introduction of computing changes necessary to accommodate fines enforcement arrangements in respect of people who are fine defaulters in matters relating to the use of motor vehicles. If they do not pay their fines, the proposal is that their drivers licences be cancelled, and significant savings are identified for the State if the payment of fines can be improved. That is the first one.

We are currently developing a practical learner driver test booking system for the Driver Development Section that will facilitate new arrangements for the testing of learner drivers. Also, the reconciliation of the disbursement problems has been identified as a six-month project. Work is actually being undertaken now on that issue but, because of the extensive nature and the desirability to improve the accounting aspects of drivers to the level that has been identified, it will take until about next June to complete that work.

Mrs HUTCHISON: I am sure that the Minister will not be surprised by my question, which relates to the highway leading from Adelaide to Port Augusta. The

question is in two parts. First, how far will the duplication of the Port Wakefield Road just north of Two Wells extend? What is the timetable and what will be the overall cost? The second part of the question relates to the sections both north and south of Red Hill where work is being done. Can the Minister advise when it is anticipated that those sections will be completed and what will be the final costs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Like the members for Stuart and Goyder, that stretch of road is also dear to my heart. Those of us who have the privilege of representing country electorates, particularly to the north, frequently use that road and we watch with great interest and attention the speed at which this road is being duplicated. The duplication will extend from Two Wells to Port Wakefield. Construction of the section between Dublin and Two Wells has commenced and will be completed in June 1993.

The duplication to the Wild Horse Plains section is scheduled to commence at the end of October 1992 and will be completed by December 1993. The section between Port Wakefield and White Horse Plains is scheduled to commence in September 1993 and will take about 15 months to complete. The total estimated cost of this project is \$38 million. As it is a federally funded project, all the cost is met from the Commonwealth. Like the members for Goyder and Stuart, I look forward to the day when there is a ribbon cutting ceremony and our lives are made a lot easier during our travels from our electorates to Adelaide. As to the Red Hill question, I will ask the Executive Director to outline the progress made to date and the cost.

Mr Payze: The works associated with the reconstruction of the road between Port Wakefield and Port Augusta at Red Hill are being undertaken by contract. As you experienced, Mr Chairman, recently the works were delayed due to rain. They were scheduled to be completed this month, but I suspect that we have another month or two before all works can be said to be completed at Red Hill. The total cost of that project is about \$6 million.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My second question relates to page 184 of the Program Estimates and is listed under broad objectives. To what extent does expenditure on the State rural unsealed arterial roads meet engineering strategies and social justice demands?

Mr Ferguson interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There certainly is, and a lot of electoral justice, too. We have a very large program of work on our unsealed roads and, again, it would not particularly bother the Deputy Leader, who is the member for Bragg, but I can assure the member that a third of the population of this State have the privilege of living outside the metropolitan area. Many of the roads in country areas are unsealed and we understand why. We could not seal them all, although I do seem to remember the Deputy Leader at one stage suggesting that all our provincial cities ought to be joined by four lane highways, which I thought was a somewhat extravagant suggestion.

Mr Ingerson interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That was before the State Bank, was it? You've modified your position. I thought it

was a somewhat extreme approach to road building in this State, but the road builders would have been happy. Unsealed rural arterial roads are a very significant issue outside the metropolitan area and we have a strategy to deal with it, which is to upgrade the physical condition of unsealed rural arterial roads to overcome flooding and drainage problems, correct road alignment problems that constitute a traffic hazard and undertake sealing on a priority basis where funds permit. These improvements are a positive way of providing social justice to rural communities.

The unsealed rural arterial roads strategy seeks to provide an equitable level of accessibility for people in rural areas, who are often disadvantaged by location. Unsealed rural arterial roads for which funds have been provided this financial year are:

	\$
Kimba-Cleve	150 000
Elliston-Lock	150 000
Andamooka-Roxby Downs	270 000
Hawker-Orroroo	310 000
Port Wakefield-Auburn	100 000
Spalding-Burra	150 000

So, we do have quite an extensive program, as we ought to.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My next question relates to a slightly different matter, and that is the training and licensing of drivers. I refer to the broad objectives detailed on page 185 of the Program Estimates. There has been constant debate about whether young drivers in particular are appropriately trained before taking to the roads. What action has been taken to improve the training and licensing of drivers in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Stuart for her question. Again, those of us who live outside the metropolitan area can be inconvenienced from time to time by the availability (or lack of it) of licence testers in the country. It is not as easy for us just to go down to the Motor Registration Division and book a time and away we go. Often it can involve travelling quite long distances on a number of occasions. The driver development section of the Department of Road Transport is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of standards applying to the driver training industry in South Australia. All licensed driving instructors have been accredited by this section and licences are not issued unless a satisfactory level of competency is achieved. Approximately 80 per cent of all novice drivers receive training in various degrees from licensed driving instructors. This training is applied in accordance with the national driver training curriculum, which emphasises systematic car control.

Regular reassessment of instructors is scheduled to ensure consistent application of the standard. A new system of driver licence testing will be introduced in October 1992, and it will directly reflect all components of the training curriculum. In addition, as an incentive to undertake a full course of instruction, novice drivers will soon be issued with their probationary licence without the need for a driving test. Medium to long-term road safety benefits should be derived from this initiative as drivers are persuaded to choose training in lieu of testing as a means of obtaining a driving licence. I want to stress that the traditional testing will still be available. This is an

alternative and not a replacement. I think it is something worth trying. I know it has had some criticism, based on misunderstanding; I think most people assume that this is to replace the driving test and only the rich will be able to afford driving licences. That is nonsense.

The present position will remain exactly the same, but this is an option for those people who do not like tests and who are prepared to take a course of instruction from an accredited instructor. They can take it at their own pace, they can develop their own skills at their own pace and they will go straight to a P plate when the accredited instructor says they are ready to do so. Given that our information is, as I have stated, that about 80 per cent of novice drivers already go to driving schools or have some professional instruction of one form or another for varying lengths of time, it seems that there are many people out there who would appreciate going through the driving school and then, when the instructor (not the same instructor who actually instructs them—a different one) says they are ready for P plates, they will be issued. I think it is a very sensible alternative to the present system, but it is an alternative, and I want to stress that.

Mrs HUTCHISON: Supplementary to that, I refer to tourist bus drivers licences for someone who lives, for example, in Hawker and whose nearest testing place would be Port Augusta. What is the position with regard to them? Do they have to make the trip to Port Augusta for that testing, or is there some provision that they could do that within the area? I am aware that there may be some limitations on that.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The problem with all vehicles but particularly those specialist vehicles is that there are just not accredited instructors or testers in the various areas and it would be unreasonable to expect there to be. I believe that we can extend the concept much further by having accredited testers in some of these remote areas. If, for example (to pluck something out of the air), the local school teacher gets trained to the extent that they can be accredited by the Department of Road Transport as a licence tester, I see no reason at all why they should not be able to do it in that location. I do not believe it necessarily has to be a Department of Road Transport employee, and it just may well be that in Hawker or some other location somebody could get accredited for testing for larger vehicles.

I cannot imagine anybody going to that trouble, because only one driving test would be taken every five years, so it really would not be worth it, whereas I think it would be worth it with the other motor vehicles, such as the small, family saloon-type motor vehicle, because there would be quite a few, but for the heavy vehicles I do not see any practical alternative. I am always willing to listen and learn and, if the department or anyone else can come up with a viable alternative, they should let me know, because I am very flexible on these things.

Mr Payze: I think this initiative is very important. Not only are we attempting to transfer the responsibility for testing and training of novice drivers to the private sector, with the Government actually training the trainer, so to speak, but we are also adopting very close to a national standard for the driving test, which will be consistent irrespective of where the test is done. One of the problems at the moment is that, no matter who the instructor is, he may offer a different type of test. So, we

are trying to find some sort of consistency so that the novice driver is tested on the road under the conditions that are important to having a licence. So this initiative has to allow for uniformity of testing as well as the transferring of responsibilities.

The CHAIRMAN: As the member for Albert Park, I am concerned about road safety. What progress, if any, has been made in relation to the installation of seat belts on buses? The Minister will recall that I have asked a number of questions on this matter. What progress has been made through ATAC or any other body in relation to the compulsory wearing of seat belts on interstate buses? The Minister would be aware of the number of road deaths which have occurred in the past and which were subject to a considerable amount of television coverage last year.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Considerable progress has been made, but not to the point where seat belts are mandatory, although I think that is inevitable. One of the problems is that most buses that are on the road now were not built to take seat belts, and a considerable amount of redesigning needs to be done before they can be installed and have any meaning. One of the biggest problems concerns seat anchorage, which I think is even more important than seat belts. We could install seat belts, but all the seats would finish up in the front of the bus. Clearly, we will have to go back a little before we start worrying about seat belts and have seats anchored in one place.

All the design rules are under exhaustive discussion with the industry, but I do not think there will be any major problem with their modification. When sufficient lead time is given to the industry so that from a certain date buses cannot be registered unless they comply with the design rules, gradually we will see much safer buses. However, I point out that the safest vehicle on the road is a bus. People who travel in motor cars and trucks, etc., are far more at risk than those who travel in a bus. I know that a bus crash is quite spectacular and makes the headlines, but overwhelmingly it is a well run, self-regulated industry. Bus companies have a vested interest in keeping their passengers alive and not frightening people away from their mode of travel. Nevertheless, I think the design rules will be tightened up over the coming years—and I am not talking about a 10-year period but in the relatively immediate future—the industry will comply and buses will be even safer than they are today, although I stress again that they are the safest form of road transport.

Mr MEIER: I believe that yesterday a memorandum was circulated to Motor Registration Division offices in South Australia advising that the introduction of the department's proposed new system for driver testing and licence issue would be deferred for four months until 6 April 1993. Why has the commencement date been deferred? What measures will be incorporated in the new option, whereby an instructor can also issue a licence, to guarantee that corruption does not arise and that drivers are not made to participate in more lessons simply to generate income for an instructor before an instructor is prepared to issue a licence? What is the cost to the department of introducing the new log book option, and what will be the cost to drivers who nominate this option to gain their licence?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot give the reasons for the delay off the top of my head, but I will obtain those details for the honourable member. As far as corruption is concerned, I would not have thought there was any more potential for corruption than there is now, and I do not believe there is any corruption now. I cannot see why people would believe that the private sector is inherently more corrupt than the public sector—I do not buy that at all. We are talking about people's livelihood. If people are found to have done the wrong thing, they will not be authorised to engage in that practice—it is as simple as that—and their livelihood will go.

South Australia is a very small town and, if a driving school or driving instructor does anything untoward, it will not take five minutes before everyone knows; that is the nature of South Australia. So, I do not see any more potential for corruption than exists already, and I have not heard of any such practices. In New South Wales, the situation was quite scandalous, although I am not sure of the present position; people who could not even drive bought a licence. However, as far as I know there has never been an example of that occurring in South Australia. There are still many people on the roads who did not have to pass a practical driving test; some members of this Committee might even have licences that were issued on the basis of a written test. I came to Australia in 1965 and I had to do a practical test, but I think practical driving tests were introduced only in the early 1960s. I will have the question examined and provide any available details to the honourable member.

Mr MEIER: I assume that the Minister will also examine the cost of the introduction of the new log book option, which I mentioned. Will the new driving trainer and testing standards place more emphasis on defensive driving skills and fuel efficient driving than is the case at present?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am advised that the answer is 'Yes.'

Mr MEIER: With reference to waiting time for driving tests, as of yesterday, the first available date for people to sit for a driving test at Oaklands Park was Monday 16 November, some eight weeks away. I have been told the delay in sitting for a driving test is due to the lack of examiners and the fact that examiners are undertaking instruction in the new driver training testing options to which the Minister alluded earlier. What is the current waiting time at each driver testing centre; how many examiners are employed by the department; over what period of time are the new training courses for instructors to be conducted; and has the department considered seeking the cooperation of the police who, until recently, examined drivers, to see whether some police resources could be used to help reduce the waiting list for driving tests?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get the details from the various centres for the member for Goyder. However, given the answer to the previous questions, I think he will see that what we are attempting to do is to reduce those lists dramatically by using private sector accredited driving instructors and examiners. So, the problem will diminish greatly. Regarding my asking the police, I would not ask the police. I do not think it is really the job of the police, nor are they trained, to be driving

examiners. I know that in some country areas that has applied in the past. The police have asked to be relieved of that duty and, from a road safety point of view, I think it is important that they are relieved of it.

I have asked the police in certain locations to continue to do it, at least for a while. However, I think the sooner we get the police out of conducting driving tests, the better. In my view, the police have better things to do than testing drivers, apart from the fact that they are not really qualified to do so. If there is a young police officer of 23 or 24 years old in some remote location, there is absolutely no guarantee that that police officer is qualified to do anything other than drive the police vehicle, certainly not to test the competency of others. I do not think the police ought to be involved; they do not want to be involved and they have asked to be relieved of the duty.

I think the onus is on the Government to make alternative arrangements so that people are not overly inconvenienced by this. It is not for us to say to the police, 'No, you keep on doing it.' The police can tell us where to go if at the end of the day we try to stand on our dignity and insist that they do it. That is obviously not the way to go. The way to go is to comply with their request and make alternative arrangements. I think it can be done a lot better than it is done now and a lot more conveniently, including for country people.

Mr MEIER: The Minister has alluded to country people, and that brings me to the question of testing of drivers in country areas. Since the responsibility for practical driving licence testing was transferred from the Police Department to the Department of Road Transport on 1 July, there has been some concern and consternation in many country towns, certainly in my electorate, and I am sure that the Minister has heard from other areas. I appreciate that the Minister is sympathetic to representations made on this matter. I believe he has asked the department whether alternative arrangements can be made in some locations. In fact, in the House of Assembly on 12 August the Minister advised that he was not averse to private individuals in such communities being trained to conduct driver testing, for example local school teachers. What flexibilities has the department agreed to implement in respect of driving licence examiners to meet the concerns of many country communities? Further, what advice is given to instructors—particularly in country areas, but it may apply to metropolitan areas too—that they be polite and make applicants feel relaxed before undertaking a driving test?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: All people who are dealing with the public, whether in the public or private sector, have an obligation to be polite and to do their job. Obviously, their job can be done better when the person taking the test is relaxed and not unduly apprehensive. I am told—and it is a long time since I took a driving test—that it is a pretty traumatic experience for some people; they can be quite good drivers but will never pass the test, because they fall to pieces. I am not quite sure what the poor driving instructor would do in those cases. Who would be a tester? It would be an extraordinarily stressful job, I would have thought.

As regards flexibility, I agree with the police that they should not be involved other than in special circumstances. I am not having country people unduly inconvenienced by this. So, I have asked the department to work out a regime where there is a reasonable service in most areas of the State. There is a number of prongs to the attack on that problem. One aspect is that the Department of Road Transport will go into areas rather than everyone having to drive to the nearest centre, which on occasions can be a long way away, particularly in the more remote areas. Regarding the electorate of Flinders, my own area and that of the member for Stuart, we are talking about remote areas. I believe that the Department of Road Transport has to organise officers to go into those areas on certain days and conduct the tests where the people are. As much as possible, that is being done.

I have also agreed—and I am pleased that the Police Force has agreed—that, in some of the more remote areas, the police officer will still conduct driving tests. However, in turn, the police officer will do the necessary training so that he or she is qualified to examine the probationary or novice driver. In addition, I believe that in some of these areas it does not have to be an employee of the Department of Road Transport. There is the example I gave a moment ago where, if the local schoolteacher has the necessary level of training and is accredited by the department, there is no reason why he or she could not conduct driving examinations. So, I think if we look at it a bit creatively, we can replace the local policeman with a system that is at least as good, and probably better, because it will involve trained people.

Mr FERGUSON: I refer to Seaview Road, Henley Beach, which was due to be resurfaced by the department either last year or this year, but that was cancelled because of the council's reconstruction of that part of road. The council has just been granted \$400 000 from the Federal Government for reconstruction of the road. Will that be enough money to reconstruct the road totally or will there have to be a top up from the department?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure about that. Mr Payze appears to know about this stretch of road.

Mr Payze: I will attempt to answer the question, but I will need some clarification. Are we talking about the section of Seaview Road between Grange Road and Henley Beach Road?

Mr FERGUSON: Yes.

Mr Payze: Some years ago the department, in conjunction with the Henley and Grange council, undertook a design of the stretch between Marlborough Street and Grange Road; there were significant concerns about drainage, the flooding of adjacent properties and pedestrian safety. I understand that that is probably the section to which the honourable member refers.

Mr FERGUSON: Yes, that is right.

Mr Payze: Those works have commenced and we have agreed that the department's responsibility is to resurface the road after those works are completed. I do not know whether the grants that the council has received from the Federal Government as part of this capital works are sufficient to finish the works. I understood they were sufficient to finish the works between Grange Road and Marlborough Street and that they were going to use those funds to go further from Marlborough Street to Henley

Beach Road with protuberances and landscaping. The only reason I know this is that I was discussing it last Tuesday with their city engineer. The Department of Road Transport's commitment is to resurface after all the kerbing and landscaping works have been completed.

Mr FERGUSON: I do not see the matter mentioned in the Capital Works Program.

Mr Payze: That is because the works would be covered by a general provision for resurfacing; there is no specific allocation.

Mr FERGUSON: I refer to the black spot program. I notice on page 98 of the Estimates of Payments an increase of over \$10 million in capital expenditure for a road users program. I understand that this will be directed towards eradicating the State's black spots. What effect will the increased black spot funding have on employment in this State?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Federal road safety black spot program for 1992-93 totals \$14.6 million. Although no formal approval has been received at this stage, the indications are that funding will provide additional direct employment opportunities in the State and flow-on effects throughout manufacturing industry. It is expected that the department will engage 35 people to work on these areas, that contractors will also supply 35 people and there will be a further 30 from the local councils, so approximately 100 people will be engaged on the black spot program alone. Of course, it will be in various parts of the State. Black spots occur right across the State, not just in the metropolitan area. I think it is particularly good for the contractors. Small contractors are always trying to keep body and soul together financially. These programs fill in gaps between other jobs, keep them viable and keep people employed who otherwise may have had to be let go. I think these small programs are extremely valuable.

Mr FERGUSON: Referring to tree planting, what steps does the department take to protect the environment in respect of vegetation?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There are many. Through its environmental assessment process the department minimises as much as possible the impact of its road works on roadside verges, recognising that these perform an essential ecological function as habitat corridors and remnant indigenous vegetation. The department has an extensive landscaping program to instigate impacts, improve the amenities of its roads and maintain and improve the ecological value of the roadside verges. In the 1992-93 financial year it is intended to use both tube stock seedlings and the seeding technique to plant approximately 1.9 million plants. This will be achieved on rural road reserves and in association with major construction projects such as The Grove Way and Seaford developments. We hope in this year alone to plant close to two million plants on road reserves. It is quite an extensive program.

I would recommend any member of the Committee to go to the Department of Road Transport in Walkerville and look at the section that is dealing with this matter. It is quite an eye-opener. I think it is a credit to the department that it has engaged officers of the standard that we have in this area. It is not just somebody who has nothing else to do but pick up a few trees from Woods and Forests and stick them down the side of the road; it

is a well thought through operation with officers of the highest standard. It would be appreciated if people would go to Walkerville and see what they do; it is a credit to them and to the department. The Executive Director also has a few comments to make in response to a question.

Mr Payze: The direct seeding operations which are used now in conjunction with this operation represent a technique that the department has developed with great success. It is a matter of collecting seeds which are indigenous to the area. Whilst that is a fairly expensive operation, it is unlike a farmer sowing wheat, because the rate of regeneration is remarkable. The trees tend to grow in an ecological system much better than if we simply planted tube stock. We are rather pleased with the successes that we have had on the Dukes Highway and on the Lincoln Highway north of Port Lincoln. That enables us to meet the numbers of trees that we are talking about here. It would be an impossible task to plant two million trees from tube stock, but by using direct seeding we can get that sort of success.

The other example concerns the works on Port Wakefield Road. Our assessment of the vegetation, before we selected the route of the road, indicated some very important and rare species along that road. In fact, not only have we varied the width of the median in terms of selecting the alternative carriageway to save those trees, but we have fenced them off and protected them in the best way possible. I am rather proud of the work that we are doing by way of revegetation, recognising the rare species and doing something about saving them. They are just two examples.

Mr MEIER: For what reason did you fence off the trees on the Port Wakefield Road?

Mr Payze: Because there is a significant number of rare species that warrant saving not only from the point of view of selecting the alignment for the road but to preserve them from predators.

Mr MEIER: Rabbits?

Mr Payze: Yes.

Mr FERGUSON: Could this technique be exported; is there any potential for export?

Mr Payze: It is not unique to the Department of Road Transport. In fact, we have negotiated to transfer that technology to Woods and Forests and other people. I think it could be exportable as a technique.

Mr INGERSON: The Auditor-General, on page 153 of his report, says that the department owns 612 light motor vehicles. This year's audit was critical of a number of features of the department's utilisation and management of this fleet. It found that a significant number of vehicles located at sub-pools, particularly at Northfield and Walkerville, had a utilisation rate of less than 50 per cent. Does the Minister agree with the audit that potential exists for a reduction in current fleet numbers through a merger of a number of the sub-pools attached to operational units at the same location, particularly the two that I have mentioned; and, if so, what action is to be taken and when to reduce the current fleet numbers; and by how much?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I agree with the Auditor-General in a general sense, not just in relation to the Department of Road Transport. I think the whole of the Government's small vehicle fleet and its usage ought to

be the subject of review. Indeed, the Government Agency Review Group (GARG) is having a look at that. An argument is thrown up that, if you lease them from the private sector, it would be cheaper. I am not convinced that that is the case but, nevertheless, it is worth while having a look at it. The Department of Road Transport will respond to the Auditor-General outlining what action has been taken. In fact, we are ahead of the game and Mr Payze will outline the response that has already been made to the Auditor-General.

Mr Payze: In a letter dated 18 August I responded to the questions from the Auditor-General in respect of the review of light vehicle management, in particular with regard to the allocation of departmental vehicles and the amalgamation of sub-pools. The letter states:

All directors have been requested to provide the information required in the Commissioner's circular No. 30, and this information will be maintained on a spread sheet to facilitate six monthly reviews as suggested.

So, already we have actioned the necessary review.

Mr INGERSON: With respect to capital works on page 54 of the Program Estimates, it states that a further \$2.3 million is allocated this year for expenditure on the duplication of Flagstaff Road between Bonneyview and Black Roads. However, work has stopped on the road. Residents were told that the suspension would be for only a few weeks, but work has now been suspended for eight weeks, and for eight weeks departmental equipment has been left idle on the side of the road. When will the work resume on Flagstaff Road, and why has departmental equipment—graders, rollers, etc.—been left at the site and not utilised at other sites?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am sure that the Executive Director knows what progress has been made and precisely why.

Mr Payze: Work was ceased simply because to proceed in the prevailing weather conditions and ground conditions on Flagstaff Road would have been a waste of money. Whilst it may seem that the plant was idle, the workmen actually relocated to Panalatinga Road, where the ground conditions were much better, and have been working actively down there. I am advised that it is anticipated work on Flagstaff Road will recommence at the end of September and, given normal weather conditions, completion is expected by mid-1993.

Mr INGERSON: On a similar line, will the Minister advise when work is likely to begin on Portrush Road between Greenhill Road and Magill Road?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Absolutely not! A line has to be drawn here.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the Deputy Leader is testing the patience of the Chair.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Unfortunately, whilst we scored a bullseye with The Esplanade, we do not know the present state of every single stretch of road in Adelaide. I will obtain that information for the Deputy Leader.

Mr INGERSON: With respect to the road user regulation referred to on page 188 of the Program Estimates, the Minister would be aware of difficulties in relation to A double road trains passing through the City of Port Augusta on the main highway. He would be aware of the significant cost in relation to the road transport industry with that restriction. It has been put to

the Opposition that a general freight company in Adelaide that operates 10 vehicles per week throughout the year has an added cost of approximately \$300 per vehicle movement, which adds approximately \$150 000 per annum to its costs. There are many other examples of that movement cost. Is there any discussion between the Government and Port Augusta council with respect to movements of A doubles through the City of Port Augusta?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am aware of the issue. It is a pity that the Corporation of the City of Port Augusta has adopted this approach. B doubles travel through my own City of Whyalla without any problem. They travel through the City of Adelaide and the metropolitan area without any problem on designated routes at certain times. We keep them off during peak periods, for example, but I have never had a complaint about a B double for all the reasons that we all know. They are far more stable, so on and so forth. The licensing requirement for the drivers is a higher standard than that for normal large vehicles.

The braking systems are far in advance of those required for other vehicles. The biggest benefit is that there are fewer of them. For every two B doubles that you put through, you take one truck off the road, and to me that is the benefit. There would be fewer trucks going through any city if we could get greater use of the B doubles. As I say, it is a pity that the corporation takes that particular attitude, especially with the duplication of the highway from Port Wakefield to Adelaide. The economic case for our rural producers and people who have to move goats in and out of country areas will be absolutely overwhelming. I understand what the City of Port Augusta is saying, but I am not totally convinced by its argument, to say the least. The Executive Director will cover anything I have missed.

Mr Payze: In addition to what the Minister has said, there is also a very strong move to establish national routes for B doubles. Therefore, in my opinion, we will soon see consistent use of that type of vehicle across Australia without restriction, other than with respect to routes. On the other hand, road trains do not have the same stability as the B doubles and the routes need to be selected very carefully. With respect to a route northwards from Adelaide, from an engineering perspective, the time to review that is when we have finished the duplication to Port Wakefield and when we conceive of another interchange area closer to Adelaide where those sorts of vehicles could be broken down. In terms of the engineering of road trains, that is, A trains or whatever we like to call them, coming farther south than Port Augusta, the time is when the duplication is concluded to Port Wakefield, because the stretch between Port Wakefield and Port Augusta, from an alignment perspective, should not then prevent road trains coming farther south.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I notice that work has commenced on the reconstruction of that section of Panalatinga Road between Graves Avenue and Reynell Road. In his answer to the Deputy Leader's question a moment ago, Mr Payze explained why there has been activity there. When will the remaining sections of Panalatinga Road be completed, and what is the total estimated cost of that very important project for the southern suburbs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Panalatinga Road, from South Road to Wheatsheaf Road, will be constructed over the next five years with an estimated completion date of early 1997. As a matter of construction priority, the department is dealing with the high accident rate into sections: first, Pimpala, Graves and Reynell Roads, and the remaining sections will follow. The estimated total cost is \$22 million, funded entirely by the State.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My next question concerns bicycle tracks. The Minister commented about this earlier in relation to the Office of Transport Planning. Can the Minister describe the Department of Road Transport's role in this? I note on page 187 of the Program Estimates that one of the department's specific targets this year is to construct three arterial bikeways to Mitcham, Henley Beach and The Levels and further develop arterial bikeway networks to serve the east and north-west of the city. As the Minister has spoken about the general activities of the department in respect of bikeways, can he provide information about the arterial bikeway to the Mitcham area, which is near my electorate?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Of course, the department supports fully the recommendations of the ecologically sustainable development working groups, which include cycling. In South Australia cycling is promoted as part of the transport system. For example, 'Ride a bike to work day' was very successful. Unfortunately, it was one of those days where it rained heavily and it was not conducive to riding a bike, except for the most fervent cyclist, but nevertheless it did prove a success in promoting bicycle riding so it was worthwhile.

A strategy for cycling is currently being implemented for South Australia and it is in line with the national cycling strategy. Training and advice provided to planners and engineers includes planning for bicycle facilities. The department is placing emphasis on its arterial bikeway construction program. The west side bikeway was opened in 1991 and has seen traffic along it treble since that time. Stage 2 will extend it to Glenelg and it will be completed this year. Three more bikeways are in preparation: the city to The Levels; the city to Henley Beach—and the member for Henley Beach will be interested to know that as he will be able to cycle into Parliament House in safety when that bikeway is completed—and the city to Mitcham.

It is unfortunate that there does appear to be a trend since the introduction of helmets for a lower level of bike riding, but I think this is temporary. In particular, some children feel that it is not fashionable to wear a bike helmet, but the consequent reduction in head injuries has made the wearing of helmets very worthwhile and I expect that, as fashions change, more children and more people in general will come back to riding bicycles where it is suitable to do so. There is an obligation on the Department of Road Transport, and I have made it clear to the department, not just to provide roads for motor cars because roads are for a number of things, including cyclists. The department now takes that responsibility seriously. Mr Ledo has further information.

Mr Ledo: I can comment about timing. One of the difficulties with putting bike tracks on arterial roads is the problem with regard to parking *vis-a-vis* cycle lanes. There is always some sort of conflict there.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As in Nelson Street, Stepney.

Mr Ledo: Yes. There is some difficulty in rationalising some of these problems, and these are the things that hold us up. It is not that the council is at logger-heads with us but it is a matter of both of us working through these problems. With all three councils, we are hoping to do some of the work before Christmas, and in fact some of it may even be finished by then. There are still problems with regard to parking where councils at this stage do not want to mark a cycle lane which calls upon banning parking during peak hours. We hope there will be action before Christmas.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I refer to page 128 of the Financial Statement in respect of inter-governmental financial relations. What is this State's share of Federal road grants as they were recently given in the Federal budget? Can the Minister say whether he believes that is a fair share of funding?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: South Australia received \$146.2 million in Federal road grants out of a total of \$2 117.1 million distributed to the States. This total indicates a percentage share of 6.9 per cent and reflects only a small increase on the share of 6.8 per cent in road grants received in 1991-92. South Australia's percentage share does not compare favourably with those funds that would have been received if distributed on a per capita basis of 8.4 per cent, or 8.6 per cent if distributed on the basis of the number of motor vehicles registered, or 11.3 per cent to be comparable with South Australia's share of financial assistance grants from the Commonwealth Government.

I would point out further that that figure is not really very meaningful. Where we have large projects, from time to time we get extensive distortions. When the Stuart and Eyre Highways were being built South Australia seemed to receive an enormous share of the available funds—far higher than was warranted on a per capita basis or on a normal motor vehicle registration basis. We get this lumpiness as projects occur in the various States. Since I have been Minister of Transport I have not really heard any argument about the split-up of the cake.

There has never been any substantial argument about the split-up of the Federal Government cake. Certainly, there is a great deal of argument about the size of the cake, because we would always like the cake to be larger, but there is no disagreement about the split-up. These things are worked out fairly and all States seem to accept there will be lumpiness, that their State will appear to have a lower or higher percentage of the available funds—this is just the nature of large road projects. They cause blips in the allocations from time to time.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I refer to page 153 of the Auditor-General's Report. In March 1989 Cabinet directed that the Highways Act 1926-1975 be replaced by new legislation. A draft Principal Roads Bill was circulated for comment about 18 months ago, and the Auditor-General now advises that the draft is to be the subject of yet a further review by a number of external parties who have an interest in the legislation. What are the reasons for the delay in introducing the Bill and what

is the current timetable for submitting the Bill to Cabinet and introducing the legislation into Parliament?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Executive Director of the department will respond to that.

Mr Payze: As the honourable member has said, the draft Bill was released for public comment quite some time ago and the responses were many and constructive. The one that has been the most difficult to resolve relates to who has control of access to a road, as distinct from who has responsibility for the road itself. This is something that is quite dear to the heart of local government; it is trade-off between a roads transport function and a roads accessibility function. Because the planning review was to look at all land use planning in this State and because accessibility is an integral part of decisions relating to land use development, I took the decision, with the Minister's agreement, to defer any action on the Principal Roads Bill until such time as the planning review had come down with its draft legislation. We have now reached agreement with local government on the approach to be taken and the rights and powers of decision making pertaining to accessibility. The Bill is being reviewed and put in a final form and I hope that it can be presented to Parliament early next year.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: When speaking about the vehicles going through Port Augusta I got my As mixed up with my Bs; I meant A trains, not B doubles. It is argued that it is A trains that are creating a problem for our primary producers, and I have some sympathy with them.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: My question is about road funding, which is dealt with on page 183 of the Program Estimates under 'Road asset preservation'. According to the department's annual report for 1990-91, which is the latest available, the average estimated annual road asset consumption was \$109 million. However, in that year the department spent significantly less on road asset replacement, namely, \$59 million. What was the department's estimate last year for annual road asset consumption, what is the estimate this year, what was spent on road asset replacement last year and what is to be spent this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A lot of work has been done on that. That work has gone to the Economic and Finance Committee, and I can make that report available also to this Committee. It does give the figures that the honourable member asked for. It attempts to answer the questions, but at the same time I will see whether a shorter answer is available and get that back to the Committee before 7 October.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Still on page 183, under 'Roads asset preservation,' my question is about road construction and maintenance. Did the department make a submission to the House of Representatives inquiry into the road construction and maintenance industry? If so, what initiatives did the department recommend to reduce the cost of road construction and maintenance, and will the Minister provide me with a copy of the submission?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes and yes.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: Supplementary to that, I note that the submission by the Australian Road Federation was critical of the manner in which

Governments traditionally let contracts, and I quote from that submission as follows:

In Australia it is traditional practice to decide what amount of money will be made available for road construction and maintenance in the ensuing financial year and to tailor the road-works program to suit. This is akin to funding work to keep people employed. As a consequence of this practice, desirable and even essential works are deferred for years, wasteful and inefficient alternatives are often substituted and appropriate new technology is often not utilised.

Does the Minister believe there is any substance in the federation's concerns and, if so, what measures are being introduced in South Australia to address these concerns?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There may be substance in it but certainly it does not apply to South Australia—I cannot speak for the other States. We have come a long way from those days. I know precisely what the federation is saying—I understand completely—but we have come a long way from that and, even if we had the funds to follow that philosophy, we are a lot more enlightened in this day and age.

The Hon. JENNIFER CASHMORE: I refer to the Auditor-General's Report, page 159, regarding private contractors. Last year, \$43 million or 15 per cent of payments for road construction and maintenance was awarded to private contractors, while the department itself undertook work to the value of \$241 million or 83 per cent of all work. What is the Government's policy with respect to the use of private contractors and will all maintenance and construction work this year be put out to tender?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: All federally funded work has to go out to tender, anyway. The Government believes that there is a significant role for the private sector, and that is occurring, but there is also a significant role for the public sector in maintaining our roads. We believe the balance is pretty fair.

Mr Quirke: A number of constituents have inquired about Main North Road and, in particular, some of the intersections on that road, such as the Research Road-Main North Road intersection and the Maxwell Road-Main North Road intersection. What is the program for Main North Road and the upgrading of these very dangerous intersections in the foreseeable future?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have those details with me, but I will get the program for the member for Playford and get back to him directly.

Mrs HUTCHISON: I refer to page 185 of the broad objectives and the section dealing with the improvement of road safety. I am aware that the Minister has already dealt with many road safety improvements, particularly those under the federally funded black spots program. What other action is being taken by the Department of Road Transport to ensure that motorists can safely use the rest of our roads other than those that are being dealt with under the black spots program?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Included in the programs is \$550 000, with some sponsorship from SGIC, for drink driving publicity, because drink driving is a major cause of road accidents. We have reduced the allowable blood alcohol content from .08 to .05; random breath testing is still one of our significant road safety programs; the back to school and fatigue campaigns were first aired during the latter half of 1991-92; and, again, they all reinforce particular messages. Obviously, the legislative program

such as bicycle helmets was introduced and we have participated in campaigns around that issue. So, quite a significant amount of effort has been put into road safety, not just on the black spot program but also, as I mentioned in my opening statement, something of the order of tens of millions of dollars are put into road safety, as we think it is critical.

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

[Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.]

Correctional Services, \$81 724 000

Chairman:

Mr K.C. Hamilton

Members:

Mr D.M. Ferguson

Mr P. Holloway

Mrs C.F. Hutchison

Mr W.A. Mathew

Mr E.J. Meier

Mr R.B. Such

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr M.J. Dawes, Executive Director, Department of Correctional Services.

Mr I. Winton, Director, Resources.

Ms B. Fergusson, Director, Support Services.

Mr K. Goulter, Manager, Financial Resources.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed payments open for examination. Does the lead speaker for the Opposition wish to make an opening statement?

Mr MATTHEW: Yes, Mr Chairman. Over the years, we have heard numerous statements and announcements by the Minister about activities within Correctional Services. However, these announcements have not placated South Australian taxpayers who, quite obviously, are becoming concerned about the number of incidents within our prisons, including the increase in the reported number of incidents of drug use, the high cost of maintaining a prisoner, the rate of recidivism and the lack of effective rehabilitation programs.

The average cost of keeping a prisoner in 1991-92 was \$65 000. While, as a result of the increase in the average daily number of prisoners, this cost is, I am pleased to note, at least a reduction on last year's cost of \$69 000, the cost of maintaining a prisoner is still far too high. Most noticeably, the cost of keeping a prisoner in the Port Augusta gaol is \$84 000 per annum, although I recognise that this also includes debt servicing costs on the redevelopment of that institution. The cost of keeping a prisoner at Cadell Training Centre and Mobilong Prison is \$66 000 per annum. I am sure many members would agree that this is a ludicrous cost, which surely can be reduced.

We cannot expect taxpayers to keep meeting these costs if something is not done to enforce a greater degree

of discipline within correctional institutions and also to implement rehabilitation programs focusing on education and training. Just \$637 000 has been allocated for 1992-93 for prisoner education. Bearing in mind that literacy and numeracy problems are a common complaint amongst our prisoner population, an allocation of less than the money needed to keep 10 prisoners for a year for the purpose of education to service an annual prison population turnover in excess of 5 000 prisoners is a very poor contribution indeed. The matter of rehabilitation training has been continually raised by the Opposition in past years in this Parliament, particularly during the Estimates Committees. To date, we are extremely disappointed with the Government's poor response.

Expenditure on correctional services is a regrettable but necessary part of government. As long as people continue to break our laws, appropriate measures must be in place to deter them from doing so in the first place and to provide a form of punishment for breaking those laws. However, prisons should be more than just punishment centres: they should be undertaking a rehabilitative role to reduce the rate of recidivism and, therefore, the annual cost of policing and correctional services in our State. In the past financial year, \$89.3 million was spent on the Department of Correctional Services, with \$81.7 million to be spent in 1992-93. The reduction is due, I note, to a \$10 million drop in capital expenditure, mainly due to the fact that works on the Port Augusta prison are almost completed. Recurrent expenditure, however, has gone up by almost \$7 million.

South Australians expect to see value for their tax dollar spent on correctional services and, to date, are not happy with what they see. Escapes from prisons, particularly institutions such as Cadell, are becoming too frequent. The Riverland community was horrified by the Minister's complacent approach to this problem when he declared in Parliament on 27 August 1992 that 'Cadell is an open prison and people do not have to escape from Cadell—they can walk away.' He then repeated himself by declaring, 'Cadell is an open prison and prisoners can, if they choose, with few impediments, walk away.' Drugs and alcohol are getting into prisons too easily, and internal discipline within prisons appears to be far too lax. Many of our prison industries are in a disgraceful state of neglect, and prisoners are not being placed into productive rehabilitation programs on a needs assessed basis. Opposition questioning through this Committee will expose just some of these problems.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, Mr Chairman. The opening statement by the member for Bright indicates how fresh and new he is to the portfolio and that he clearly lacks any understanding of the area, which is not surprising—some learn; some do not. What was notably lacking from his opening statement was any alternatives. We look forward, although we will not hold our breath, to what those alternatives may be. His opening statement was also factually incorrect: the cost of keeping a prisoner at Cadell is \$35 000 a year, not \$60 000-odd. Leaving aside the inaccuracies, the statement was short on alternatives. In the past 12 months, the Department of

Correctional Services has continued to undergo enormous changes.

The department has embraced the principles of structural efficiency and committed itself to restructuring, and has done so whilst offender numbers have continued to rise. The department's organisational restructuring is aimed at an integrated approach to correctional administration and the delivery of throughcare services. In association with award restructuring, we will provide a correctional system which is even more responsive to offender and community needs and which contributes even more effectively and efficiently to the administration of justice in South Australia. The department acknowledges that there is still some way to go before this outcome is fully realised. The significant achievements to date can, in part, be attributed to the extensive consultation with staff and their union representatives throughout the restructuring process.

The trend of increasing offender numbers has continued over the past year. The doubling in the intake of fine defaulters serving short-term sentences has placed great pressure on demands on prison accommodation and prison staff. In addition, in the first half of 1992 there was an increase of 85 per cent in the number of offenders applying to the courts to perform community service work instead of paying their fines. This has impacted on the workload of the community service officers who supervise the work orders.

A notable achievement during the year was the tenth anniversary of the community service order scheme and the completion of one million hours of community work by offenders. An indication of the acceptance of community service orders as an appropriate non-custodial sanction is the fact that one in every two offenders now referred to the department is either on a community service order or performing community service work in lieu of a fine.

This Government's commitment to providing safe, secure, humane prison accommodation and safe working conditions for prison staff can be seen in the capital works projects undertaken during the year. An additional 76 low security beds were provided with the completion of cottage accommodation at the Northfield prison complex, the Cadell Training Centre and Port Augusta prison. The continuing staged redevelopment of Port Augusta prison is one of the largest capital works projects in the State. This \$32 million project was officially opened at the end of July and has provided the north of the State with a modern regional prison facility as well as being a boost to local employment and business. Meanwhile, the department has proceeded with initial planning for the replacement prison at Mount Gambier.

Public release of the design concept has received a great deal of local interest and support. The Government has also budgeted for the provision of additional prison accommodation solely for fine defaulters, which will ease pressure on the mainstream prison system. The Department of Correctional Services looks forward to the coming year and building on what has been accomplished to date. Initiatives for 1992-93 respond to identified offender needs and the human and physical resources

required to deliver efficient and effective correctional services.

Mr MATTHEW: My question relates to drug and substance abuse and I refer to the Program Estimates (pages 202 and 204). The same statement is made on each of those pages relating to the management of drug and substance abuse prisoners. How much was spent in 1991-92 on routine drug testing in prisons? What did that testing involve? How many prisoners were tested and with what frequency, and how many of those tested tested positive?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure that I understand the question. Does the honourable member mean urine testing?

Mr MATTHEW: Yes, and any other drug testing method that might have been employed, including blood sample analysis.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is only urine testing and observation by officers. Whenever they are on duty, that is part of their responsibilities. One cannot isolate any part of an eight hour day to say that it is to do with drug detection. The whole of the eight hour day is to deal with drug detection, security, programs and so on.

Mr MATTHEW: The question still has not been answered. If the Minister prefers, I can couch it in terms of urine analysis only. In terms of urine analysis only, how many prisoners were tested and with what frequency, and how many prisoners tested positive?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To 30 June this year, 141 urine samples had been tested, of which 111 or 79 per cent had indicated the presence of a drug. These samples were conducted as a result of suspicion by prison officers. It is expected that the percentage of positive results would be high. Although amphetamines, benzodiazepines and opiates have been detected, the majority of positive results relate to cannabinoids, that is, pot.

As I stated, testing is undertaken on suspicion; it is not random sampling. The program of urine analysis is very new and, as we develop it further, it will move into random sampling and closing down a whole gaol at a given time and testing everyone to give us a better picture of the degree of drugs use in our prison system. I think it is a credit to our prison officers and their powers of observation that in 79 per cent of cases their suspicions have been confirmed by urine analysis. I think that indicates what I said in answer to the first question: all the time officers are on duty, they are involved in drug detection as well as other duties.

Mr MATTHEW: As a further supplementary question, I understand that the Minister said that the testing is undertaken not on a random basis at this stage but only where there is reason for suspicion. Is there any intention to introduce that testing on a random basis?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thought I just said that.

Mr MATTHEW: With regard to the same Program Estimates reference, what was the incidence of alcohol use detected?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not think we have a specific test for alcohol. We do not compulsorily take blood from prisoners and test them that way. If we suspect that a prisoner is affected by alcohol—and that usually involves some pretty vile home brew concoctions—we take action accordingly, whether

separating the prisoner or whatever is appropriate at the time. However, we do not have a compulsory blood test or anything like that.

Mr MATTHEW: As a supplementary question, I was not suggesting that there were blood tests for alcohol. The Minister made quite clear that there were no blood tests for drug analysis of any type. I asked, with respect to pages 202 and 204 of the Program Estimates, in particular in relation to the line relating to management of drugs and substance abuse by prisoners, what was the incidence of alcohol detected and how many incidents involved alcohol in prison?

The CHAIRMAN: Just before the Minister responds, I ask, to make it easier for the Chair, that questions be directed through the Chair to the Minister. The honourable Minister.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The number of home brews found is usually published in the annual report. It will be in the annual report this year; so, if the honourable member looks, he will find it there.

Mr MATTHEW: With respect, this same excuse is given every year. The Minister is well aware that the annual reports are quite deliberately not tabled before the Estimates Committee. Does he not have access tonight to figures detailing incidents in prisons involving alcohol?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: They are published every year in the annual report. If the annual report has not been tabled, it cannot be a million miles away. If ahead of publication we have those figures, I will certainly get them to the Committee.

Mr MATTHEW: Is the Minister trying to tell this Committee that his department takes no notice of incidents in prison involving alcohol and drugs until the production of the annual report?

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I believe this is a sensitive issue for every member of the Committee. The Chair will ensure that the Minister and those asking the questions are heard in silence. The Minister.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I heard only a statement, and a pretty irrational one at that, which does not really warrant a reply.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the member for Bright repeat the question.

Mr MATTHEW: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My supplementary question—had it not been for the interruption—would have related to the fact that, as the Minister would be aware, the number of alcohol incidents in prison has soared from 49 in 1989-90 to the point where in 1990-91 there were 95 incidents, a rise of almost 100 per cent. Has the Minister at least any indication as to whether that problem is now in check or whether it will be a greater problem when that annual report is released?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I said I would supply those figures if they were available. I am sure that the Committee would not want me to speculate. The number of home brews found depends to some extent on the vigilance of the officers, the number of times the dog squad is used and so on. It also relates to the opportunity for prisoners in certain areas. I would imagine that at Cadell it is extremely easy for anyone who wished to make a home brew to do so. It is a farm and an orchard; there are all the ingredients there. It is a prison farm: it is

not an enclosed institution. I would imagine that, at a place such as Cadell, if prisoners sought to brew up oranges, grapes or whatever—and I am not a expert on home brew or any other kind of brew—it would not be difficult. However, our officers are pretty smart and our dog squad equally so. I think the fact they detect home brews from time to time is a credit to them, particularly at a place such as Cadell. The opportunities to manufacture and the number of areas on a property of I do not know how many hectares in which one could secrete home brew would be very high indeed. So, the fact that our prison officers are pretty well into it and find it is a credit to them. The honourable member should talk to them about the way they deal with these problems; I am sure he would enjoy it. It would certainly be informative for him.

The CHAIRMAN: The third question for the member for Bright.

Mr MATTHEW: I appreciate that guidance. With your indulgence, Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister a further supplementary question. I am not getting any figures from him. Could he at least tell me how many times the dog squad has been used in the past 12 months?

The CHAIRMAN: Before the Minister replies, I point out that it is up to the Minister to respond in the way he deems fit. As Chairperson, I have to take into account that other members would like to ask questions of the Minister. The Chair, I believe, has been more than fair to all members of the Committee today. This is the final question in this bracket of questioning to the Minister. The honourable member will be followed by the member for Mitchell.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I do not have the figures as to how often the dog squad has been used—

Mr Matthew interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the member for Bright is saying that the Chair is disgraceful, he has it within his own powers to take further action. The Chairman has indicated that he has bent over backwards to be fair. I would ask the member for Bright to contain himself and respect the position of the Chair even if he does not respect the Chairperson. The Minister.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have the figures on the dog squad, but they can be supplied prior to 7 October if the annual report is not out by then.

Mr HOLLOWAY: As the Auditor-General points out on page 31 of his report, the average annual cost per prisoner has declined from \$69 000 to \$65 000. Would the Minister comment on this aspect of the department's performance?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The average cost of maintaining a prisoner within South Australian correctional institutions decreased from \$69 000 per annum in 1990-91 to \$65 000 per annum in 1991-92—a decrease of 5.8 per cent. Excluding debt servicing costs, which are associated with the provision of upgraded and humane institutional facilities, the average cost per prisoner has been reduced by 7.5 per cent in 1991-92.

Debt servicing impacts significantly upon costs per prisoner and accounted for \$16 000 (25 per cent) of the \$65 000 cost in 1991-92. This compared with \$14 000

(23 per cent) in the previous year. Debt servicing costs allocated against detention institutions in 1991-92 amounted to \$16.8 million compared with \$14.4 million in the previous year. Port Augusta prison debt servicing costs increased by \$1.8 million to \$3.4 million in 1991-92, but with only a minor increase in the daily average number of prisoners held at that location the cost per prisoner remains extremely high. The redevelopment plan is expected to result in a substantial increase in prisoner numbers at Port Augusta after September 1993 when average costs will begin to reduce.

An increase in the daily average number of prisoners from 947 in 1990-91 to 1 064 in 1992-93 is a major factor in reducing costs per prisoner and emphasises that a large level of fixed cost exists within the prison environment. The department is continuing its work in seeking improved work practices to ensure an efficient and effective correctional system.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Can the Minister say what impact increasing the level of security at Cadell, as was implied by the member for Bright, would have on the average cost per prisoner?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The principle remains the same. If we had an increasing number of prisoners in an institution that has not had any capital works carried out on it, obviously the costs per prisoner reduce, and the converse applies. For example, in the old Adelaide Gaol, which varied between 200 and 300 prisoners, and which was paid for probably 100 years ago, the cost per prisoner was extremely low. Anybody who saw Adelaide Gaol would realise that the cost per prisoner was not the only criterion. To replace the Adelaide Gaol, as we did with the Remand Centre and Mobilong, probably cost \$40 million, so immediately we are allocating the servicing costs of that \$40 million across the same number of prisoners, which obviously jumps up the cost a great deal. There is no question but that for the past eight years the amount of building that has gone on in the prison system is still going on and the fact that it will continue for the next five years, in my view, will mean that the cost per prisoner is quite high. Ministers of Correctional Services in 10, 15 or 30 years will be able to boast about how cheaply they keep the prisoners, but it will be because of the spending by this Minister at this time.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I refer to page 104 in the Estimates of Payments, which shows the expenditure on capital works in the previous financial year of \$22.8 million and outlays for this financial year of \$12.2 million. Can the Minister provide the Committee with details of the capital works achievements in 1991-92 and will he outline the main elements of the capital works program for the current year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Some of the achievements in the 1991-92 capital works program included the provision of an additional 76 bed spaces for low security rated prisoners at Cadell; the Northfield Prison complex and Port Augusta Prison at a total cost of \$3.895 million; new industrial workshops at Port Augusta Prison and Yatala Labour Prison at a cost of \$4.451 million; and a new Murray Bridge community correctional centre at a cost of \$313 000. Other projects commenced during 1991-92 included further redevelopment work for both

Mobilong Prison and Yatala Labour Prison and the purchase of an office/warehouse building for a proposed Adelaide community correctional centre.

The main elements of the 1992-93 program relate to continued redevelopment at Port Augusta Prison, a new fine default centre at Northfield Prison complex, for which \$860 000 has been budgeted, a replacement prison for Mount Gambier and the commissioning of the proposed Adelaide community correctional centre which has been budgeted at \$500 000. I think that indicates the extent of the capital works money still being spent in this area.

Clearly, we would prefer not to have to do it; we would prefer, and I imagine it would be more electorally popular, to spend capital works money in almost any other area but this. Given the expanding prisoner numbers due to the law and order policies of this Government and also due to the system over the past 100 years falling into total disrepair, the money just had to be spent. I believe that we have spent it well, given that correctional institutions traditionally last for a very long time: they do not seem to push them over after 30 years. After 100 years they are still calling many of them, as they did the Adelaide Gaol, the new building as it was only 100 years old as opposed to the old building. I think that the investment is being put there for the future as well as the community having the benefits now. The community will not tolerate prison conditions that seem barbaric; by the same token they do not appreciate spending any more money on prisons. It is a bit of a dilemma that maybe the member for Fisher has been able to resolve, because he has an interest and some knowledge in this area.

Mr HOLLOWAY: There is a reference on page 203 of the Program Estimates to a strategy for the management of fine defaulters. Can the Minister give the Committee some details about that strategy?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: During 1991-92 the Government became aware of a rising number of offenders defaulting upon payment of fines and moved promptly to develop and implement a strategy to deal with the problem. A three-stage strategy is in place. Stage 1 began in 1991-92 when the use of administrative release for fine defaulters was reduced as much as possible having regard to existing prison accommodation. The Government will implement the other two stages during 1992-93. We will be building a fine default centre, with a capacity of 60 beds at a budgeted capital cost of \$860 000, and with annual recurrent costs of \$1.06 million. The centre is expected to be available in early 1993, and will ensure that we have the physical facilities to cater for fine defaulters.

The strategy's final stage involves serving fine default warrants cumulatively instead of concurrently. The legislative basis for this was included in the Statutes Amendment (Sentencing) Act 1992. The same Act also introduces a scheme which allows for the disqualification of the driver's licence of a person in default of a fine arising from an offence involving the use of a motor vehicle. Such offences account for approximately 45 per cent of all fine defaulters admitted to prison. The Government expects its policy initiatives to greatly enhance the effectiveness of the fines system. However, we also remain sensitive to the inability of some offenders to pay their fines. As a result, the Government

has already provided additional resources in 1992-93 to the Department of Correctional Services for the fine option program and we are closely monitoring the trends in the number of offenders on the program.

Mr SUCH: I am sure the Minister would agree that, apart from prisoners who pose a danger to the community, prisons achieve very little. This follows on from a previous question by the member for Mitchell. What alternatives to prison are being considered, taking the view that the fewer people in prison, the better?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The whole of the Department of Correctional Services, with the exception of the prison system, is devoted to alternatives to prison. I do not know of any program anywhere in the world that we do not have. We have every possible program that anyone has been able to suggest as an alternative to prison. They include home detention, probation, fines, community service orders—we have several thousand people on community service orders. You name it, we have it. I just cannot think of any other programs. We are very much in the hands of the Judiciary. As members know, the Judiciary has very wide options. They do use those options—there is no question about that. There are far more people on community service programs than there are in gaol. If only 10 per cent of those who are on community service programs were in gaol, we would have a real problem of over-crowding, so all the options are there.

Two things are happening: more people for whatever reason are electing to go to gaol rather than pay their fines. Everyone who goes to gaol in this State for debt is a volunteer, because they have the option of working off their fines on community service orders but, for reasons best known to themselves, more people prefer to go to gaol. That is very sad, but there must be some final sanction. You cannot say that it is a fine and, if you do not pay it, that is the end of it: goodbye. The system just could not cope with that approach. Increased sentences are quite significant. The Government has had a policy to increase sentences. The Attorney-General has taken many appeals against what were considered inadequate sentences for the more serious crimes. I believe that that action has the support of the community.

For armed robbers, murderers and rapists, the penalties have increased quite dramatically. I am sure everyone in the community would agree that they ought to, and they have. I do not have the latest statistics on how long someone spends in prison for murder. I remember (although the member for Bright would not know—and I will be happy to enlighten him over the next few months of all these things) that the average time a person spent inside for murder during the Tonkin years was eight years. That has now almost doubled, so people are not leaving the system with the same speed that they did in the Tonkin years.

Mr Matthew interjecting:

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Mrs Hutchison): The member for Bright will have a further opportunity to question the Minister later.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not mind, as long as the questions are not too inane. It is a serious topic. I am trying to explain to the Committee why we have the numbers that we have. Basically, it is for those two reasons: sentences are increasing for the more serious

crimes, and increasing quite dramatically, and more people are electing to go to gaol rather than pay their fines or work off their fines on community service orders. I am not quite sure what you do about the latter.

Mr SUCH: What incentives or policies are there to encourage prisoners to undertake education, training and work?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is a pay system within the prison at various rates for various jobs. Education is included in that. Members must understand—and I know that the member for Fisher does understand—that the average age of males in prison is about 25. If that is the average age, obviously there are many who are younger than that. Overwhelmingly, the majority are in for a short time. It is difficult to motivate young men who are in the prison system for a short time to do anything useful with that time. It has to be a two-way thing. You cannot beat somebody into learning. They used to try that many years ago, but it was particularly ineffective and, anyway, it would not be acceptable these days. People have to be motivated to do something.

It is very hard to motivate young men who are mixed up in the criminal system and with us for only a short time. We do have greater success with people who are with us for a longer time, not that we want them with us for a longer time. Nevertheless, if you have them for a few years, you have more opportunity to get them to do something useful with their time. If they are with us for a few years, obviously it is because they have committed a horrible crime. I am not suggesting there is anything good in having them with us for a few years, but we do our best. The TAFE system, which previously has handled our prison education, has always been very professional, and has done the very best it can generally with an unwilling group of clients.

Mr SUCH: It seems to me it is rather *laissez-faire* whether or not someone receives education or training, or undertakes work. It seems as if we are really recycling these people, when there is an opportunity to do something positive with them. I understand what the Minister is saying about their reluctance, but surely it is a golden opportunity for people who lack skills in literacy and numeracy to be assisted?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We cannot do any more than encourage them. The facilities and the skills are there; the workshops are there; everything is there, and obviously people do have to work, be it in education or some such program, at all times, except those who are on remand, for all the legal reasons. Those people cannot be compelled to work, but there is a great difference between saying, 'You will front the workshop every day,' or, 'You will front this particular education program.' I suppose they can be physically directed and made to go there and sit there, but they cannot be made to learn anything that they do not want to learn. The unfortunate part of it for the overwhelming number of prisoners who are young men and who are with us for a short time is that they are not terribly interested. That is very sad.

Mr SUCH: As a further supplementary question, the prisoners still get the same benefits irrespective of whether they work, apart from the pay. Do they get the

same range of food options? Is there any inbuilt incentive to perform?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The pay is one incentive, but we do not have a different diet for those whose behaviour we approve and for those of whom we disapprove. The bread and water days are long gone, and I know the member for Fisher would not want to bring them back. I know he is searching for an example to make his case, but he did not pick a good one.

Mr SUCH: I am not suggesting that we go back to bread and water, but I believe a whole range of incentives could be adopted. Is there an indication of the number of prisoners as at 30 June this year with serious contagious diseases such as AIDS or hepatitis B?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The difficulty with that is that I am the wrong Minister. The Prison Medical Service is under the control of the Minister of Health. Also, whatever ails a prisoner is confidential between the prisoner and the prisoner's doctor, as with any adult. However, by one means or another we do get some statistics, for what they are worth. The estimate is that it is about 1 per cent. We have compulsory testing for HIV for any prisoners coming into the system for more than three months—the reason for the three month period is obvious—so we do have a fairly accurate picture of how many people in the system are HIV positive.

The Prison Medical Service does not necessarily tell us what is wrong with a prisoner: it just says that a prisoner has a communicable disease and has to be treated with a particular regime. We do that and it works well. We do not have any great difficulty in doing that but obviously the prisoners' doctors do not say to us that this prisoner has that or the other. There are some ethical considerations, apart from considerations of privacy, and doctors quite properly will not do that with any patient, whether they are a prisoner or a member of Parliament. Doctors treat us all the same, and that is how it should be. About 1 per cent are HIV positive.

About five years ago the line was pushed strongly that prisons would be a way in which AIDS got into the general community, that prisons would be the area of incubation. That sounded a bit thin to me, and I have been proved correct and those who were pushing that line were incorrect. That is especially so in a relatively small system like ours. Whilst those things are confidential, there is not a lot of confidentiality in a prison. If one wants to avoid someone with AIDS, it is not difficult to find out or know who has it, and that is particularly so from associations outside as well. To date it has not been a vehicle by which AIDS has spread into the general community significantly.

Mr SUCH: As to the Budget and its Impact on Women, on the same point on page 16 a program is scheduled for this year to reduce the risk of HIV transmission between prisoners and their female partners in the community. Obviously, the Minister accepts that there is risk and he has a program to tackle and reduce it.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We have an extensive education program. The Prison Medical Service has such a program and so do we. Such education programs are there for all our prisoners. There is no excuse for a prisoner to say that he did not know. We ensure that the material is there for them.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My first question relates to the important topic of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. I refer to page 203 of the Program Estimates. Can the Minister indicate the amount spent in 1991-92 on implementing the interim report recommendations? Can he also outline the impact of the final report of the commission on the Department of Correctional Services?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In 1991-92 outlays of \$861 000 were incurred in implementing issues arising from the commission. All relevant recommendations of the interim report have been actioned. The Department of Correctional Services is working with State Aboriginal Affairs to determine the final action plan to implement relevant recommendations of the final report. These recommendations will be implemented by reallocation of funding levels in 1992-93. The department has undertaken other social justice initiatives by reallocations within the budget. These initiatives totalling \$469 000 include additional support and programs for Aboriginal offenders as well as providing departmental services to isolated Aboriginal communities.

One of the most significant areas of that is the Community Corrections Centre at Marla, which is supplying to communities in the north-west of the State a similar service to that provided to people who live in the metropolitan or rural areas of South Australia. For remote areas Marla has been a great initiative in my view and an outstanding success to date. It also has the effect of making available to the courts in that area realistic alternatives to sending someone to Port Augusta gaol.

To send someone to gaol for three or four days from some of the north-west communities, to fly someone to Port Augusta and back, apart from the expense, can be taken as something of an adventure rather than punishment for committing a crime. We have been able to work with the communities in the north-west so that community service orders are available from Marla. All those community service orders take place in various locations on the lands and the programs were developed with the communities themselves. They have relevance to the communities, rather than being something that we are comfortable with and would see as appropriate but which may not be appropriate for young people in the north-west. The best way to prevent Aboriginal deaths in custody is not to have Aborigines in custody unless it is absolutely necessary. I think our Marla office is playing a significant role in achieving that highly desirable aim.

Mrs HUTCHISON: As a supplementary question, the Minister touched on what I wanted to speak about, which was the social justice implications of the recommendations. One of those would be the employment of Aboriginal staff, obviously. How successful has the department been in recruiting Aboriginal staff (and I know that there are some difficulties in recruiting the right types of staff in correctional institutions); what programs are undertaken in the pursuit of staff development; and how has the department utilised these Aboriginal staff members within the system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The department currently employs 33 Aboriginal employees, and this represents over 2 per cent of the department's work force. In recent years the department has been very successful in the

recruitment of Aboriginal employees and has focused on Aboriginal communities in the various recruitment campaigns. This focus has been maintained through the department's Aboriginal recruitment officer, who has also taken an active role in the ongoing development and coordination of the department's cross cultural awareness workshops. The majority of the department's Aboriginal staff are in the custodial ranks, at various prisons. There are five Aboriginal staff in community service order programs, and two clerical officers. During 1991-92, employees from all levels in the Department of Correctional Services participated in the three day cultural awareness course. Fifteen Aboriginal staff were involved as presenters or facilitators on the course. There is also a component of cultural awareness training during the 12 week custodial officer training course or trainee custodial officers.

When the Government devised its program called the '1 per cent challenge', declaring its intent to have 1 per cent of Government employees of Aboriginal descent, I was particularly pleased that the Department of Correctional Services had already exceeded that. Certainly, now at 2 per cent we are ahead of the game, but I would very much like to see more Aboriginal people in the department. Some of the work is difficult, but there is no doubt that in some institutions and in some locations in institutions it is a job that in some circumstances Aboriginal people can do better than can Europeans; there is no question about that. As I stated, we have an Aboriginal recruitment officer whose job it is to go out and seek recruits. We are quite pleased with the numbers, but we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until there are a lot more in the department. Unfortunately, it is an area with increasing job opportunities which in this day and age is one of the very few areas of expanding Government employment, so we really would welcome as many people of Aboriginal descent as we can get into the department.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My second question refers to page 204 of the Program Estimates and also page 20 of the Capital Works Program. With respect to the redevelopment of the Port Augusta Prison, can the Minister provide an outline of the facilities that have been built, what progress has been made to date, and when does the department expect to have the increased prisoner accommodation available?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The redevelopment of the Port Augusta Prison incorporates two major components: first, the expansion of facilities and accommodation and, secondly, the upgrade of the existing high security accommodation complex. The first component comprised several buildings which have all been completed and which will all be commissioned and occupied by October 1992. These buildings include a range of administrative functions, the industries complex, medium security accommodation for men and women, and low security accommodation. Upgrade construction of the high security component is due to commence in November 1992, and will be available for occupancy in October 1993. At this time the total prisoner accommodation at Port Augusta Prison will increase to 195 cells. So, it will be our second largest institution.

I opened those extensions a couple of months or so ago and I would commend anybody who is going to or

passing through Port Augusta to make arrangements to visit the prison. It really is an outstanding prison; it is a credit to the department, to the designers and to the builders and the people who have seen that work through from the department. As I say, I object to spending any money on correctional services, but we all appreciate that it is necessary and I think everybody who looked at the new Port Augusta gaol would agree that it has been money very well spent. It is an institution that South Australia can be proud of. In no way is it luxury motel accommodation—nothing like that—but I think that, if one looks at the institution, gets the feel of it and understands its philosophy, one will see that it is a very complex institution, having high, medium and low security prisoners all in the one institution and the workshops and so on. I think people will appreciate that really they will not see better in Australia for a long time than the Port Augusta gaol.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My last question relates to the issue of staffing, with particular relevance to the recruitment of women. The reference for that is on pages 198 and 199 of the Program Estimates, which refer to the costs associated with staffing. How many women are employed by the department; in what capacity are they employed and at what level; and, further, can the Minister provide the Committee with details of any recruitment or development programs to encourage the recruitment and promotion of women within the department?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Ms Fergusson is in a very good position to answer that question.

Ms Fergusson: Of a total of 1 379 employees in the Department of Correctional Services, there are currently 361 women, or 26 per cent of the total work force. Of the 361 female employees, 134 are employed in the operational services stream, either as custodial officers, or community service officers; 156 are employed in a clerical capacity; 52 are employed in the professional services stream as social workers; two are employed in the executive level; and 17 are employed under award conditions. The department does place emphasis on the recruitment of women when undertaking custodial officer recruitment programs, and every effort is made to ensure a gender balance of new recruits. That effort includes having a gender balance on all selection panels. Of the 344 female employees under the Government Management and Employment Act, 169 are employed in positions above the base grade.

Mr MEIER: What is being done to stop drugs getting into prisons, and does the Minister have any figures available on how many people have been charged or disciplined in the past 12 months for distributing drugs in prisons or directly to prisoners?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We would not necessarily have any figures on who has been charged by the police; the police would have those figures, but departmental action would be taken against people found with small quantities of drugs, and we could obtain those figures for the Committee. The honourable member asked what action we take. I invite the member for Goyder and any other member of the Committee to have a look at what we do in gaols. I think it is generally accepted that the main avenue for drugs entering the gaol is during visits,

particularly contact visits. All prisons around the world have exactly the same problem. They say, 'If you to have contact visits, the price you will pay is that more drugs and contraband will get into the gaols.' Yatala would have the greatest problem with drugs because of its size and the type of prisoner. I invite members to attend a visitor session at Yatala to see what we do. We strip search every prisoner after a visit: they are stripped and clothes are changed. One wonders how they still manage to get drugs into the prison, but they do.

Obviously, it would not be acceptable to the community if we instituted a strip search (including an internal search) of everyone who enters a gaol—and I mean everyone, including members of Parliament, members of the clergy, families and prison officers. That is what we would have to do if we wanted to make an extreme attempt at eliminating it. We still would not do it, but we would have a good tale to tell the public. Obviously, that would not be acceptable. Another thing that could be done would be to have dogs available to go over the prisoners at every strip search. Again, that is not a pretty picture and I do not think it would be acceptable to the community: it certainly would not be acceptable to me.

Prisoners manage to get amphetamines, some cannabis and very little opiates. Most prisoners are poor and cannot afford them. Drugs are expensive on the outside and, with the shortages, they would be even more expensive on the inside. I do not have any idea of the price, but commonsense tells me that, and most of our prisoners are extraordinarily poor. Cannabis is rife throughout the community outside the gaol, and its presence is significant within every gaol in the world. Whenever we detect any, we take whatever action is available, and we publish the statistics in the annual report. It is not as if we try to hide it: we certainly do not. We publish right up front. Every time we find something, it is all there for people to read. In extreme cases, we have even published pictures of needles and things like that, which I think is a bit extreme; I do not think we need to make such a show as that, but we have done that from time to time.

In order to get a real understanding of the measures we take, I think the honourable member would have to go and see them, and he is free to do that. We would arrange that without any difficulty and he would see our standard procedure. The media have said that they want to see how the dogs operate. We have told the media, 'If you turn up at a prison, tell us and we will have the dogs there straight away so there are no set-ups.' We have done that, and we show everyone what the dogs do—and they do find them. However, it is very difficult to eliminate, and no-one in the world has the answer except probably the member for Bright.

Mr MEIER: Four days ago, I received a letter from one of my constituents in which he said:

How do drugs get into prisons? Are guards too lax or are visitors allowed too close contact?

Does the Minister know whether any of those who have been charged or disciplined in the past 12 months have been correctional services officers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure whether any correctional officers have been charged. Allegations are

made from time to time: it is easy to make allegations against prison officers, but it is a different thing altogether to find any. In the eight years I have been in this job, I do not think we have had an example of prison officers being involved with drugs in a prison itself. I cannot think of any. But prison officers have been involved with drugs outside a prison in their own time, and they have resigned from the prison system. They are members of the community just like anyone else, and what they do in their private life is their private business, one would argue, but we prefer them to resign if they are involved in drugs outside the prison whilst they are employees of ours, and they do.

Mr MEIER: By institution, how many incidents other than those involving drugs and alcohol occurred in the 1991-92 period? I am referring to incidents such as attempted suicide, assault, setting fire to items, etc.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We have a scale of incidents—whether A grade etc. I assume that the honourable member is referring to the more serious incidents and not where someone swears at someone else. I can obtain statistics on the more serious incidents. Again, I think they are published in the annual report but, if we can get a sneak preview, I will obtain the figures of the most serious incidents for the honourable member.

Mr MEIER: Will the Minister include in those figures, by institution, the number of prisoner escapes that occurred during the same period?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, those figures are contained in the annual report, but I have that information with me and I will make it available to the honourable member.

Mr MEIER: I understand there have been 12 escapes from Cadell in the financial year. What action, if any, has been taken to improve security at Cadell to try to prevent these continual walk-outs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As members are aware, Cadell is an open prison; that is, it does not have a fence, other than the normal fence around the property. It is an open institution and does not have gates and barbed wire and all the other paraphernalia of a closed institution. From time to time we will get walk-aways. While the honourable member did not ask me how many escapes there have been from Yatala—and that is where our most dangerous prisoners are—I know the Committee would be interested. Since I have been the Minister, there have been only two or three escapes from Yatala. For the past six or seven years, there have not been any escapes from Yatala, because we have made it very secure.

Mr Meier interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: He did not escape from Yatala at all; they do not get out of Yatala. As I have said that, someone might have a crack at it tomorrow. It is very interesting and I urge the member for Goyder to look at these places. I know all members of Parliament are busy, but I think there is an obligation on members to be aware not just of our theatres, schools and hospitals but also of our gaols.

The problem at Cadell is the problem of all open institutions. If one wants to stop escapes from Cadell, one must close it down, because it is an open institution. If one wants to stop escapes from Yatala, one should do what we did, because the escapes in the Tonkin years were legion. They used to break into Yatala with the oxy-

gear, cut prisoners free and take them out—and very famous prisoners too. If the honourable member talks to the present member for Kavel, he will hear some real horror stories about the escapes from Yatala. They were almost on a monthly basis and it was quite a serious issue at the time. We spent quite a lot of money securing Yatala and fortunately we have had few or no incidents of escape since we have done that. Apart from asking our prison officers at Cadell to increase their vigilance, we are not going to fence the place in. There is no point in establishing it as a high security gaol: it is a prison farm.

Mr MEIER: I have one brief supplementary question, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chair is most generous to the member for Goyder.

Mr MEIER: I note from the table that was issued that all but two prisoners were returned to custody by 30 June 1992. Does the Minister have the number of escapees still at large as of today?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Not on me, but I will certainly get that information. But they all come back; I do not know any who do not come back, unless they get killed, which happens from time to time. Some of these characters live a pretty dangerous life. They all come back eventually; they get picked up in other systems. They do not go far.

Mr FERGUSON: I refer to the performance of prison industries. At page 31 of the Auditor-General's Report reference is made to a review of prison industries. Will the Minister indicate what mechanisms are in place to ensure that prison industries provide appropriate training for prisoners and contribute to reducing the costs to the taxpayer of operating and maintaining prisons?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Prison industries are undergoing significant change both in terms of the types of industry activity undertaken and the attitude towards productivity, reliability and customer responsiveness. This Government has developed policies that are designed to enhance skills training of prisoners to assist the prisoner to develop a work ethic to help them obtain and maintain employment outside prison. In addition, we aim to involve prisoners in ventures that are commercially viable.

Where practical, a combination of both on job training and formal trade training is encouraged. In all industrial training programs, the concept of multi-skilling is followed. Importantly, the resources in prison industries will be used as efficiently and effectively as possible to offset operational costs of prison but not to the detriment of providing the significant skilling of prisoners in vocational areas.

This Government has established a Prison Industries Committee consisting of Department of Correctional Services' management, representatives from the Public Service Association, the United Trades and Labor Council and the Chief Executive of the South Australian Centre for Manufacturing. This committee will advise the departmental executive on specific industry initiatives, having regard to Government policy objectives. It will also provide advice as to the type of ventures prison industries should embark on in the future.

Prison industries will seek to become involved in ventures with private sector companies. This may, for example, involve the leasing of productive capacity of

prison workshops to entrepreneurs, with a view to reducing their dependence on imported items. The South Australian Centre for Manufacturing has been commissioned to identify appropriate technologies that could be employed in prison industries and appropriate South Australian companies that wish to be involved in prison industries. The value of prison industry production was up \$280 000 to \$1.1 million in 1992. This represents an increase of 33 per cent on the previous year.

I want to emphasise one point. There are two major difficulties in prison industries. First, there is the lack of skilled labour. Few prisoners have significant skills, so this involves more training than production. However, the other problem is that this Government has a very strict policy of not getting into any significant competition with the private sector. We do not believe it is the role of prison industries to put ordinary workers and ordinary businesses out of work and out of business.

I had to smile when there was some criticism a few months ago in this Chamber about the lack of profitable orders in prison industries. Only about a fortnight ago I saw in the newspaper that New South Wales employers—I think it was the equivalent of our Chamber of Commerce and Industry—complained bitterly to the New South Wales Government that its policy of getting orders from anywhere to employ its prisoners and offset the costs of prisons was putting New South Wales businesses out of business. Good companies in New South Wales were going out of business. I had an argument with my Victorian counterpart, because the Victorian system was sending to South Australia furniture made in Victorian prisons at minimal labour cost; that was putting a business in Adelaide out of work. It was closing down the business.

We have to be very careful that we take on—and take on aggressively—only virtually import replacement. Then we can be quite sure we are not putting anyone out of work in this country—maybe overseas, but that is a bigger problem. That is a big constraint upon us. We are not prepared to put people who have not offended out of work or to jeopardise companies here in South Australia. However, within those constraints, again I invite all members to visit our workshops to see the range of goods produced and the skills that we teach our prisoners. I think the member for Fisher is aware of them.

Mr FERGUSON: On page 206 of the Program Estimates reference is made to the Justice Information System. What progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Justice Information System in the Department of Correctional Services and what information is now stored on the system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In July 1989 the department successfully completed the replacement of the manual registers which had previously provided the principal system of identification and tracking of offenders. The 'prisoner movements' system was implemented in 1989 and records details of offenders who are imprisoned under the custody of the Department of Correctional Services: details of the offender, the date of admission to an institution, dates of transfers to other institutions and the details of release are also recorded.

During 1990-91 the system was enhanced to enable the recording of a prisoner's movements to court, on leave and under escort to hospital. The enhancement also provided an ability to record more specific details concerning a prisoner's escape from custody. The 'register community corrections clients' system, also implemented during 1989, records basic offender details for all persons given a non-custodial penalty by the courts and for which an element of supervision or community service is required. In addition, the system records basic details of reports requested by the courts to aid in sentencing offenders.

The 'prisoner details' system was completed in the latter part of 1991 and subsequently implemented throughout all institutions in conjunction with the award restructuring process which has seen a large increase in the number of custodial officers using the JIS. This system allows custodial staff to record a prisoner's physical description, preferred contact in case of emergency, home address, whether the prisoner is a protectee and who the prisoner claims as his enemies within the general prison population, specific details of any prior known escapes, the history of a prisoner's security ratings, medical conditions declared by prisoners which could affect their wellbeing and, finally, general demographic details to assist in research. The physical description details are combined with similar descriptions collected by the Police Department to form the most comprehensive and up-to-date descriptions of offenders possible. We find it a tremendously helpful system.

Mr FERGUSON: Page 204 of the Program Estimates refers to the construction of a new prison at Mount Gambier. Will the Minister outline the current status of the proposed new prison?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Land was purchased for the new Mount Gambier prison in the 1990-91 financial year at Moorak, seven kilometres west of Mount Gambier. Detailed design and tender documentation is now being finalised for the new prison. Tenders were called last Saturday 19 September for construction to commence in December 1992. Approval has been given for the allocation of capital works funds to the project in 1992-93. The total project costs are estimated to be \$10.275 million on completion in March 1994. The new prison will have a capacity of 52 bed spaces for both male and female remand and sentenced prisoners.

Mr MATTHEW: I refer to page 104 of the Estimates of Payments and Receipts, and to the program 'inter-agency support service items not allocated to programs': with respect to operating expenses, minor equipment and sundries, were funds from this line, which has increased by \$1.3 million over the 1991-92 figure, used to cover the cost of the meal that the Minister had this evening at Da Peppe's in Rundle Mall with the Premier, the Attorney-General, the member for Hartley, the member for Elizabeth and the member for Semaphore, and for what reason has this line increased by over 50 per cent?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No.

Mr MATTHEW: As a supplementary question—

The CHAIRMAN: There is no supplementary; if the honourable member wants to ask a serious question, the Chair will consider it.

Mr MATTHEW: With respect, Mr Chairman, it did also relate to the increase in the budget line. I asked why it increased by over 50 per cent.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Kevin Goulter will have those details at his fingertips. He has been waiting all night to give them.

Mr Goulter: The most significant element in that increase of \$1.4 million is about \$600 000 which has been given to the department as a cross-charging element for JIS this year. It is an accounting adjustment only. About \$400 000 is in there for staff training at Port Augusta, when we recruit for the redevelopment up there later in the year. That totals about \$1 million. There is an additional allocation of \$140 000 given to our department this year because we will be responsible for the payment of our WorkCover levy. That was previously paid by the Department of Labour, I think. The next significant item is \$84 000, which relates to some savings made last year on Muirhead money that has now been reinstated into the budget. There are one or two other smaller items.

Mr MATTHEW: My second question relates to pages 20 and 21 of the capital works document, in particular the allocation for Port Augusta prison. What was the cost of the curtains manufactured for the prison, including the cost of material per metre? Is the material Australian made, and has similar material been used in any other correctional institutions?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I know little or nothing about the curtains at the Port Augusta prison, or any other prison for that matter. I will have someone check out the curtains for the member for Bright.

Mr MATTHEW: As a supplementary question, at the same time perhaps the Minister would check my information that I am happy to pass on to him. I am given to understand that the material purchased in fact retails at \$65 per metre. It was fully imported and was purchased wholesale by the Government at \$38 per metre. However, the average cost of curtain fabric, I am given to understand, is \$25 per metre, and this imported expensive curtain fabric was allegedly also used at Northfield and Cadell.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: What am I supposed to say—are you waiting for me? The member for Bright has made a statement. I have no idea whether or not his statement is correct. I would assume that the Minister of Housing and Construction, who will be here on Thursday, I think, would know more about the curtains than we do. We do not build the gaols or buy the curtains. The member for Bright does not understand—

Mr Matthew interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am saying nothing other than the honourable member is examining the line for correctional services. We do not actually build the gaol. We place an order for a gaol with SACON. If he wants to know anything about the curtains, carpets, bricks or anything else, the honourable member should ask the Minister from whom we bought the gaol about those items, if he has nothing else better to ask. I suggest that at least he get the Minister right.

Mr MATTHEW: With the mention of Cadell, I am reminded that the Minister corrected my slip of the tongue earlier today in my opening statement that Cadell has a \$66 000 per year cost per prisoner. He is quite correct: the cost at Cadell is \$35 000, and the Minister is

well aware that I should have referred to the Adelaide Remand Centre, which has a cost of \$66 000 per prisoner. I thank him for correcting that oversight of mine. My final question relates to workers compensation and, in particular, I refer to page 33 of the Auditor-General's Report. I am aware that, in 1989-90, there were 388 workers compensation claims, 47 of which were stress related. In 1990-91 there were 386 workers compensation claims, 76 of which were stress related. How many workers compensation claims were lodged in 1991-92 and, of these, how many were stress related?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Winton would have boned up on workers compensation and I am sure would be pleased to enlighten the Committee.

Mr Winton: There were 76 stress claims in 1990-91, and they reduced to 70 in 1991-92. With the initiatives pursued in the department we are confident that further savings can be achieved this financial year. Out of the total budget last year there was a saving of \$900 000, and we believe that this has been achieved in a climate of organisational change in the department. We have set up a consultative mechanism in the department which we believe is helping us to talk to staff and bring about structural change. As part of our budget initiatives this year we are appointing a staff counsellor and providing ongoing training for supervisors and managers, which should help in bringing this expenditure under control.

Mr MATTHEW: How many workers compensation cases were there?

Mr Winton: There were 386 claims this year, which is the same as last year.

Mr MATTHEW: Were any of those AIDS-related?

Mr Winton: Not so far as we know.

Mr HOLLOWAY: My first question relates to the number of offenders within the prison system. At page 204 of the Program Estimates, comment is made on the continuing pressure on available prison accommodation. Can the Minister tell the Committee of the total number of prisoners held at the end of the financial year? How does that number compare with the previous financial year and what is the expected growth in the prison population and what planning is being undertaken to accommodate this future growth?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The total number of prisoners at 30 June 1992 was 1 151, and the corresponding figure for 30 June 1991 was 1 042. The most recent long-term prisoner projections were undertaken in March 1992. These projections indicate total prisoner numbers of 1 400 in the year 2000 and 1 607 in the year 2005. To accommodate these increasing numbers, the Government approved the construction of a 60 bed fine default centre to be available during the first quarter of 1993, the completion of the Port Augusta prison redevelopment to increase the accommodation capacity by a further 80 cells in October 1993, and an additional 24 cells will become available in April 1994 in Mount Gambier.

Planning has also commenced to identify a property as a site for construction of the State's next major prison. The capacity of this proposed new prison will depend on prisoner projections. To give some indication of the increase in prisoner numbers over the years, this week we probably have over 1 200 prisoners in the system but, during my time as Minister, the number has been as low

as about 550, so there has been an extraordinary increase of over 100 per cent in my relatively short term as Minister, for the reasons indicated earlier.

If we have an increased population, all the gurus in this area tell us to make provision for increased prison populations because, sure as eggs, you will get them. Compounding that is the large number of fine defaulters and the long sentences now being handed out for the most serious crimes, and quite properly so. Also, there has been an explosion in the number of people involved in community corrections, community service orders, etc. South Australia has the highest ratio of police officers to population in the country and our prison numbers partly result from that. It is certainly a problem to be dealt with rather than to be deplored.

Mr HOLLOWAY: As a supplementary question: am I right in assuming that the future predictions would be based on the trend to home detention and all the other measures that are alternative to prison?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, it would include that. The number on home detention these days is about 100.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Can the Minister give the average number of detainees held under the home detention program over the past year and can he say what is the cost of the program in comparison with other options? Is there likely to be any further expansion of that program in the current year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: During 1991-92, 296 prisoners were placed on home detention and, as at 30 June 1992, 101 prisoners and three bailees were active on the program. The cost of home detention for the year was \$6 794 per prisoner compared with an average of \$64 800 per prisoner in prison placement. It is around 10 per cent of the prison cost. It is expected that home detention numbers will average over 100 prisoners per day during the current financial year and the costs per detainee will not increase.

Home detention provides the capacity to maintain the credibility of the sentencing process by ensuring that persons ordered to be in prison by the courts are deprived of their liberty while at the same time minimising the impact of imprisonment on their family. Home detention reduces the likelihood of prisoners becoming institutionalised and provides an opportunity for graduated movement from imprisonment in institutions to parole. This is particularly useful where prisoners are being detained for lengthy periods. This Government believes that home detention is the most humane and cost-effective imprisonment option in certain circumstances.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Supplementary to that, I mention the comparison of costs between home detention and other options. Can the Minister say how the cost of community service orders compares with the cost of maintaining a prisoner in prison?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Very favourably. The average cost of maintaining a prisoner in the South Australian prison system is about \$65 000 per prison bed per annum, or \$1 250 per week. The average cost of maintaining an offender in the community service order scheme for both community service offenders and fine defaulters for 1990-91 was \$803 per annum, or \$15.40 per week. Through cost-effective management practices

and the cooperation of the numerous participating agencies now supervising offenders on their own projects, the Department of Correctional Services has been able to reduce the cost of this community-based penalty significantly since the commencement of the scheme in 1982. The total cost to the taxpayer of the community service order scheme in 1991-92 was \$1.735 million or \$4.81 per offender hour, for which 361 000 hours of service were provided to numerous non-profit organisations and individuals.

I think that highlights, along with the cost of home detention, the extraordinary cost of security for keeping people in prison. It is the cost of security through having to design buildings to be secure, having to staff them at levels that ensure security and also to fence them in physically and electronically that is horrendously expensive. I could not begin to put a price on doing that at Cadell. I am not sure whether the member for Bright has been to Cadell; I understand he has. Perhaps then he would know—he ought to know—that there has to be a place in any integrated prison system for an open prison.

If the member for Bright is complaining about the cost of the prison system, he cannot with any intellectual integrity argue for minimising costs, then argue for turning Cadell into a high security institution. Of course, the member for Bright wants it both ways. He will find in life, including political life, he cannot have it both ways. He may be able to get a cheap headline from time to time but that will not take him the long haul. I suggest to the member for Bright that, when he is discussing costs, he discuss it first with somebody who knows a little about it, for example, the member for Fisher and particularly, the member for Kavel.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I refer to page 34 of the Auditor-General's Report, where reference is made to overtime and call-back costs. Will the Minister provide information on the management of these costs, and will he say why the extensive use of overtime and call-backs is necessary within the prison system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: By far the majority of overtime in the department and all call-back expenditure is incurred within the custodial ranks of prison staff. Prisons are complex organisations in which a myriad of activities occur daily. Movements in and out and within institutions require supervision of some sort. However, the most significant costs are those associated with replacing staff. Absences due to sick leave and workers compensation and vacant positions account for 45 per cent of all call-back and overtime expenditure. The estimated cost of the factors that contribute most significantly to the total of \$3.5 million are: staff replacement, \$1.6 million; hospital watch, \$280 000; late admissions, \$280 000; response for training, \$180 000; industry requirements, \$130 000; and fine default escorts, \$100 000.

The argument is the same in any area of employment—whether to put on full-time staff to cover any eventuality or to use overtime to take care of the peaks and troughs. I know it is far more cost effective to use overtime. However, overtime must be managed carefully like any other area of expense. If the Department of Correctional Services or any other employer had to take on full-time staff to cover all

eventualities, there would not be an unemployment problem in Australia but there would be a few other problems, because it is not cost effective to cover every possible eventuality with full-time staff.

Mr MATTHEW: One of the objectives and goals (page 202 of the Program Estimates) is to ensure safe and secure custody of inmates in a stable and healthy environment. I refer, in particular, to the isolation cell in G Division at Yatala. How does the use of this isolation cell meet this objective, as I am given to understand that inmates are left in this cell without clothes other than jocks and with no mattress or bedding other than two canvas sheets, and they are given nothing to occupy themselves. I understand the cell is referred to as 'the fridge'.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I was answering questions about 'the fridge' in Adelaide Gaol eight years ago. I concede that the member for Bright has not been around very long, but I wonder again whether he has been to G Division and had a look. If not, I invite him to do so. The circumstances that are described are for one reason and one reason only, that is, to prevent suicides. I suggest that the member for Bright arrange a visit for tomorrow, because then he would not be surprised, as he appears to be, at the existence of cells particularly for that purpose.

I would have thought that even the person with the most casual interest in Australia over the past couple of years or so would be aware of the Aboriginal deaths in custody issue, apart from anything else, and that from time to time prisoners who we feel may damage themselves seriously are put into observation cells where they can be observed and which, as much as we are able, are suicide proof. If the member for Bright had taken any interest in, at minimum, the interim report of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody, he would be aware of the recommendations of Commissioner Muirhead in this area.

Mr MATTHEW: Supplementary to that, of course, I have no argument at all if that cell is used to stop a prisoner from suiciding, but the Minister has received letters—I know he has, because I have received copies—from relatives and inmates who are complaining that they are put into those cells after they have received a good beating and that the cells are not always used for their intended purpose. With that in mind, I ask the Minister how many complaints have been lodged in the past two years with respect to G Division, and how many are pending?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If the member for Bright has any shred of sense of responsibility at all, if he has any allegations of abuse of prisoners in G Division or anywhere else—that would be a criminal offence—he should go to the police. If the honourable member wishes me to arrange for the police to interview him, I will certainly do that. However, to make accusations against prison officers in the way the honourable member just did is, in my view, contemptible. I suggest that tomorrow he go to G Division, have a look and speak to the officers in charge of the division. I will certainly attempt to establish what complaints we have had and let the honourable member know. I almost said I would have more respect for the member for Bright, but that would be lying to the Committee, and that is something I am sure I could never achieve. But I would suggest that the

member for Bright not slander prison officers under the protection of parliamentary privilege—

Mr Matthew interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister has the floor.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Rather, the member for Bright should go out there and have a look. At least he would then have some idea what he is talking about. He should talk to the manager of the institution and the prison officers who are in charge of that area. That can be arranged for him at any time he wishes. I will pass on his remarks to the prison officers—that he feels there are some beatings going on there.

Mr Matthew interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am abusing! You are abusing—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Bright will contain himself. The Chair has been most tolerant of his interjections. The Minister.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I feel it is an abuse of this Committee for prison officers to be slandered in that way. I think it is contemptible, and the member for Bright ought to have the decency and the courage to go to G Division and talk to those prison officers. At least if he came back and wanted to slander them he would be doing it with at least a modicum of knowledge, which is something he does not have at the moment—or decency.

Mr MATTHEW: Those disgraceful allegations and misconstructions by the Minister are not worth responding to. My next question relates to prisoner education. I refer in particular to the Program Estimates (page 202) and the broad objectives and goals, which refer to provision of opportunity for education and training. I note from page 35 of the Auditor-General's Report that \$587 000 was spent on prisoner education in 1990-91 and \$567 000 was spent in 1991-92. Further, on page 199 of the Program Estimates it is stated that \$637 000 has been allocated for prisoner education in 1992-93. While an increase this financial year as opposed to the previous decrease is certainly welcome, in view of the objective on page 202 to which I referred and the fact that literacy and numeracy problems are significant among offenders, does the Minister realistically expect the Committee to believe that prisoners have an adequate opportunity to participate in education programs given the amount expended and given the number of prisoners who pass through our prison system in a 12 month period?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have that question examined and bring back a reply for the Committee.

Mr MATTHEW: The Program Estimates at page 202 refer to 'Improved security and the living and working conditions of prisoners'. Is it intended that this objective should be satisfied through the showing of sex videos to prisoners at Yatala Labour Prison, videos which I understand are hired from a northern suburbs video store allegedly run by the spouse of a Yatala prison officer, and does the Minister or, indeed, the department approve of such activity; if so, which other prisons undertake a similar activity and for what purpose?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, this is a hardy annual. I really wish that the member for Bright had been here a little longer and perhaps we would not get this somewhat tedious repetition. All videos shown in our prisons are videos which are available to the general public.

Mr MATTHEW: As a supplementary, is there any checking of the classification of the material that is shown to people who have been convicted of crimes of violence and also sex offences?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The videos are those that are available to the general public through the ordinary video store.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My first question relates to page 206 of the Program Estimates which refers to a report on the incidence of stress amongst correctional officers and which I have been made aware of over the past couple of years. Could the Minister outline what value the report added to the department's strategies on the issue and what recommendations will be accepted or what steps will be taken to reduce the incidence of stress in the department?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The study into stress among correctional officers was undertaken by Techsearch Incorporated, the research and development arm of the University of South Australia. The report is a useful document which provides a focus for the department to continue with occupational health and safety initiatives already in place and to develop appropriate new ones.

The report has also provided a better understanding of the impact of strain in the workplace. The provision of support systems for staff is highlighted in the report and, whilst acknowledging that supervisors and the department's employee assistance program provide a level of support, employment of a staff counsellor is recommended. This recommendation has been accepted and it is planned that such an appointment will be made by 31 October 1992.

A number of recommendations of the report focus on selection and training of custodial staff. Recruitment and selection procedures are currently under review. A management development program is also being prepared, partly in response to a recommendation for increased management training. The report maintained that the role of correctional officer has an inherent level of strain and recommended that officers be provided with training to develop individually appropriate coping mechanisms. Programs are already in place which provide training in conflict management and stress management. These programs will continue and will be supplemented by institutionally-based training activities in 1992-93. The Department of Correctional Services and the Public Service Association are working together on the implementation of these recommendations, as well as continuing work on enhancing the role of correctional officers to assist in reducing the incidence of stress in the occupation.

Mrs HUTCHISON: Given the findings of the stress report and including that in the whole area of sick leave, and given the comments at page 31 of the Auditor-General's Report for 1991-92, will the Minister advise the Committee as to the sick leave record of the department generally, and draw a comparison with the previous year's performance; and will he indicate what action the department has taken to manage stress leave other than sick leave?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In 1991-92 an average of 7.8 sick leave days were taken by Correctional Services departmental employees, which compares with 7.7 sick

leave days in 1990-91. This is a very low rate for this occupation and compares well with interstate correctional jurisdictions. All managers are provided with monthly statistical reports on sick leave usage and are encouraged to identify patterns and instances where employees may be abusing sick leave provisions. Where appropriate, staff are counselled and action taken is reported to associate directors on a regular basis. During 1991-92 a strategy was developed by the department which dealt with issues raised in a previous audit report. Implementation of some aspects of the strategy have been delayed by the extensive amount of work necessitated by award restructuring and an organisational restructure. However, the work done provides a strong base for the future management of sick leave.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My second question relates to page 205 of the Program Estimates, and I refer to prisoner education funding, which has been touched on previously by other members. Has a transfer of responsibility for prisoner education between DETAFE and the Department of Correctional Services been effected and, if so, how will this transfer impact upon prisoners generally?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Stuart is quite right. Agreement has been reached between DETAFE and the Department of Correctional Services to transfer an amount of \$593 000 for prisoner education. This amount will be transferred progressively over the period from 1 July 1992 to 31 December 1993. With full financial and policy responsibility for prisoner education, we believe that the Department of Correctional Services is better able to match prisoner education policy with the needs of the offenders and the management of the agency. The funds transferred for prisoner education will be utilised in several education programs.

An important program is basic adult education—literacy and numeracy. Many prisoners have had limited and disrupted education, and consequently many basic skills have not been developed. Some prisoners extend their vocational education. This is often managed in conjunction with prison industries. With full responsibility for the management of prisoner education, the Department of Correctional Services is investigating the use of development education programs which may be able to directly address the offending behaviour of prisoners.

Mrs HUTCHISON: My last question relates to program evaluation, and I refer to page 206 of the Program Estimates. Given that the Chief Executive Officer of the department is also Chairperson of the Government's Program Evaluation Steering Committee, will the Minister detail the initiatives undertaken by the Department of Correctional Services to evaluate its own programs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The program evaluation initiatives undertaken by Correctional Services have been significant and extensive. The departmental executive has fully embraced the concepts of program evaluation and has taken steps to coordinate the program evaluation process across the agency. An education program for line management has been conducted to ensure that the evaluation process is sustained with minimal external resources by operational managers. The program structure

of the agency has been redesigned to ensure that evaluation processes are linked with the program performance budgeting reporting processes.

Members of the departmental executive and the majority of managers of prisons and district offices have attended training courses on program evaluation. An evaluation framework with associated outcome indicators for community service and fine option has also been developed. Other programs within the agency have been evaluated in accordance with the Premier's directive of May 1990.

Mr SUCH: In relation to Program Estimates page 203, offender community services, can the Minister explain why the successful completion rates of community correction orders has been diminishing over time from about 68 per cent successfully completed in 1987-88 to 64 per cent in 1991-92?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot give a precise reason. There are almost as many reasons why people default on community service orders as there are people on them. Individuals vary enormously. I believe the overall rate is fairly static and there have not been huge fluctuations in the rate. It may be just the sheer volume that we have these days, or it may be the judgment of the judiciary as to who is suitable these days for community service orders as opposed to a number of years ago. It is almost impossible to assess that, but I think the overall rate is stable. It has been around that as long as I can remember. I do not think there have been significant changes, but I will see whether there is any way we can better evaluate those variations in the figures.

Mr SUCH: As a supplementary question, can the Minister indicate what happens to those people who fail to complete their order satisfactorily?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: They go back to court under the legislation.

Mr SUCH: In other words we have a recycling process going on because the order is not enforced strictly in the first place?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If they default on the order, clearly the order has been enforced. If someone defaults, they go back to court. The choice is always with the individual. We have no coercive power to say, 'You will turn up and you will work.' That is a decision of the court and, if people choose not to do that, it is for the court to deal with them and not the Department of Correctional Services. We are not judge and jury. We just carry out the wishes of the court.

Mr SUCH: As to prison industries, can the Minister indicate what percentage of the normal working day the workshops are fully utilised at Yatala?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The workshops are used for about five hours a day.

Mr SUCH: Does that include the leather shop, or has that been closed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know whether the leather shop is open now. With the industries complex it depends on the skills we can attract in correctional industry officers. At times we can attract correctional industry officers with certain skills and at other times we cannot. We cannot conscript people to work in prison industries. Sometimes we just cannot get instructors in those areas. I do not know whether leather work is

available this week, but I will find out for the honourable member.

Mr SUCH: As a supplementary question, I understood that making shoes and so on was a traditional part of prison life and work, but I understand it may have fallen by the wayside.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Sewing mail bags and breaking rocks also have been a traditional part of prison life over the years. I cannot say why prisoners are not making shoes these days but, if they are not, I will find out and let the honourable member know.

Mr SUCH: This is one of my perennials: does the Minister consider that the stage has now been reached where approved prisoners will be able to spend a night or part thereof in private room facilities within the prison system in the company of their marriage partner?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No. The member for Bright would go right off his face, would he not? The sleaze involved in that would send the member for Bright into absolute paroxysms of goodness knows what. Good gracious me, I can see the veins popping and the face flushing now. He would be absolutely beside himself—absolutely uncontrollable—and would get all overexcited and would disgrace himself. Notwithstanding the member for Bright, I do not think the community in South Australia would accept that. I know the member for Fisher is asking a serious question and I know that, knowing something about the area, he certainly would accept it, but I would argue that he is somewhat ahead of the community.

Mr FERGUSON: I refer to infants in prison and to the project 'Children in prison' mentioned on page 17 of 'The budget and its impact on women'. There has been recent media interest in infants in prison and associated equity issues. Would the Minister outline the department's policies on this issue and tell the Committee what measures are taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the parent and the child?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government has a commitment to providing suitable accommodation, in appropriate circumstances, for the very young children of prisoners. The opening of new accommodation at Port Augusta Prison for both low security and medium security women has, for example, increased the range of options available for accommodating infants. The Department of Correctional Services has developed a procedures manual to assist staff in this issue, and these procedures are currently the subject of discussion between the department and the Public Service Association.

In addition, Crown Law advice has been sought to clarify a number of aspects. The policy as outlined in these documents recognises the importance of maintaining parent-child relationships, especially when very young children are involved. In appropriate circumstances, where it is in the best interests of the child and does not jeopardise security, good order and management of the prison, provision may be made for a child to live with the parent in prison.

Mr MATTHEW: My question relates to fraud management procedures. I refer in particular to Program Estimates targets and objectives, 1992-93 (page 206), which state:

Introduce more effective fraud management procedures.

What incidents of fraud have been either detected or suspected to render it necessary to introduce more effective fraud management procedures, and where are the existing procedures deficient?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will check the numbers for the honourable member as to how many incidents there were, but very extensive information has been imparted to the community as regards the Government's policy in this area. There are various procedures and committees in place, involving the police, the Government Management Board and so on. I can send a copy of the Government's

policy in this area to the member for Bright and, if we can find the number of incidents, we can let him have that information as well.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 10 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Wednesday 23 September at 11 a.m.