

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Friday 20 October 2006****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A****Chair:**

Ms M.G. Thompson

Members:

Ms F.E. Bedford
 Mr S.P. Griffiths
 Ms L.A. Simmons
 Mr I.H. Venning
 The Hon. P.L. White
 Mr M.R. Williams

The committee met at 10 a.m.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet, \$69 405 000
 Administered Items for the Department of the Premier
 and Cabinet \$22 335 000

Witness:

The Hon. J.W. Weatherill, Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability, Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr W. McCann, Chief Executive, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.
 Mr R. Starkie, Manager, Strategic Services.
 Ms J. Formston, Senior Financial Consultant.
 Mr L. Morgan, Manager, Special Infrastructure Projects.
 Ms J. Mazel, Executive Director, Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular pages 2.6 to 2.8, and the Portfolio Statements Volume 1, Part 1. Minister, do you have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Just a brief one, Madam Chair. Of course this year we all witnessed the sad passing of Terry Roberts, my colleague and former minister for aboriginal affairs and reconciliation, and I acknowledge that much of what I have done in this portfolio is the continuation of his good work.

There have been a number of significant achievements over the past 15 months, in respect of which I have been either acting or operating substantively in this role. Probably one of the more significant changes is that in May this year I announced the realignment of the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and the Indigenous Affairs and Special Projects Division, which included the formation of a single integrated team within DPC named the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division. It was important to line up the various agencies in that respect.

At a local level there are a number of important initiatives: the Premier and the Prime Minister signing an overarching

agreement on indigenous affairs with the commonwealth to cooperate on a whole range of areas of shared endeavour; reaching a new housing and community infrastructure agreement with the commonwealth; pursuing the South Australian Strategic Plan targets, in particular the targets around well-being and Aboriginal employment in the state public sector; an Aboriginal Strategic Plan, which is also being jointly developed with the commonwealth; and the establishment of the South Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council to grapple with the question of representation in an environment where there is no ATSI, which is a very important piece of work (we have recently extended their remit for a further six months to carry out that role).

The first meeting of the new chief executives group has been held, chaired by Mr McCann and comprising the key state government chief executives, the aim being to ensure that they are meeting the state's Strategic Plan objectives in relation to Aboriginal well-being.

We are also having an important influence on the national stage. I became Chair of the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) in February, and the executive of AARD chairs the senior officers group. We are looking to drive a number of important agendas, including Aboriginal leadership and also the way in which Aboriginal people share in the prosperity that is undoubtedly occurring in this state and across the nation—prosperity in which they have traditionally not shared; and of course the continuing issues of violence in especially remote Aboriginal communities.

The other areas of our approach include participation in the National Summit on Violence and Child Abuse, and we are having bilateral discussions with the commonwealth about a range of measures to improve the way in which we respond to those communities. We are also working at a local level to deal with issues that are emerging in a range of regions, working at a local level to rebuild communities, some of which are getting into strife, in Yalata, Koonibba, Davenport, Point Pearce, Gerard, Port Augusta, Coober Pedy, the APY lands and Maralinga lands. That involves an enormous amount of work and the circumstances in each of those communities are very different. All of those communities have strengths, but a number of them are facing real challenges. Of course, we continue our important work in the APY lands, providing \$25 million of effort, which includes a range of projects, including community youth programs, land management, bush food initiatives, improvement to TAFE facilities and a range of other initiatives.

We are working on constructing pools in a range of remote communities, the most recent completion of which in Mimili is to be shortly celebrated. And very importantly, the Drug and Alcohol Services initiative to establish a rehabilitation facility in the lands is proceeding apace. In relation to Aboriginal heritage, we have seen a 100 per cent increase in the number of Aboriginal sites registered from 2004-05 to 2005-06 (from 38 to 75), off a base where under the previous government I don't think any were registered, or very few. During 2006 we also saw the construction of stages 1 and 2 of the new central power station on the APY lands.

We are continuing to play an important role on Reconciliation SA. I note the member for Florey's presence and acknowledge the role that she plays in relation to Reconciliation SA and the contribution that the state government has recently made there.

The CHAIR: Member for MacKillop, do you have a statement to make?

Mr WILLIAMS: No, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Proceed to questions then.

Mr WILLIAMS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 1.28, under program 8 and the performance criteria. Footnote A explains that the increase in the net cost of the program in 2006-07 is due to the reclassification of the APY central power station from investing to operating. First, can you explain to the committee what is meant by that, and can you also explain whether this change reflects the increase in the budgeted figure for grants and subsidies; and, if so, what portion of the total \$16.54 million figure is directly attributable to this project?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: To answer the first part of the question, it has now been classified as an operating expense for accounting purposes. That is the advice we have now received. I think it has something to do with the way in which the asset will be held, because it is not strictly held as an asset of government. In terms of accounting, it needs to be treated as an operating expense rather than an investing expense. That advice presumably comes from people who advise us about public accounts, but I think it has been endorsed by the Auditor-General.

With respect to the second part of the honourable member's question, \$11.05 million of the category described as 'grants' relates to stage 3 of the power station.

Mr WILLIAMS: Will the minister confirm that the solar power system built near Umuwa in the APY lands in 2003 is still not connected to supply electricity to any homes in the lands; and, given that the sun farm was completed some three years ago and the Premier's supposed enthusiasm for renewable energy, why is it that the development of the distribution network and the connection of the solar power station has been continuously pushed back originally from 2004-05 to 2005-06, and, as we see now, from 2005-06 to 2006-07? Why did last year's budget papers claim under 'highlights for 2004-05' the implementation of an electrical distribution system in remote Aboriginal communities?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: In fact, the solar power farm was operational for a period of 12 months and was supplying to households within the APY lands. With the advent of the upgrade of the power station, some reconfiguration of that arrangement needs to occur for complex technical reasons about which I do not have the answers. As I understand it, it is estimated that it will begin to feed power back into that whole network in January 2007.

Mr WILLIAMS: As a point of clarification, to how many houses was it supplying power and what portion of what is planned to be the final outcome was being supplied in the period to which you have referred?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The original sun farm was distributing only to Ernabella and Kenmore Park, and that was limited by the existing distribution network. Part of the power station upgrade also included an expansion of the distribution network, so that, when it is integrated with the new power station and the new distribution network, it will be covering a range of communities over a much more extended distance, I think, something of the order of 250 kilometres. Because a larger number of communities are connected to the local grid, a larger number will also be taking power from the sun farm, understanding, of course, that, because of the nature of solar power, it supplies only during a certain period.

Mr WILLIAMS: Madam Chair, instead of quoting the page number continually, I think it would be easier for the committee, since there are only two or three pages involved,

to indicate that all my questions will relate to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 1.27 and 1.28.

The CHAIR: If you are referring to particular figures, will you give a more accurate reference?

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes. In the performance commentary, listed as an achievement is: 'Working across government to improve the monitoring and reporting on initiatives which are aimed at reducing the gap between outcomes for South Australia's Aboriginal population in comparison to the rest of the state's population.' The Social Inclusion Board's Aboriginal initiative states: 'Specific programs to benefit Aboriginal young people are currently being identified and costed.' Minister, can you tell the committee what these initiatives and programs are; the progress of the programs which are being developed; how the reduction of the gap is monitored and what programs are in place to monitor such a reduction; and whether the results of that monitoring will be made available to the public or held within government?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Perhaps I will take the last question first. In a sense, the gap between the outcomes for indigenous South Australians in terms of wellbeing and non-indigenous South Australians is the South Australian strategic plan target, and that is public. Indeed, we are holding ourselves accountable to our performance in relation to it, so it could not be more public. We have set ourselves some very ambitious targets, and they are published in the South Australian strategic plan. We are currently going through a community consultation project called Have Your Say, I think, which is taking these targets to a range of community groups across the whole of the state and people are being asked to revise or comment on the existing targets. I think arising out of that progress there is likely to be further specificity demanded around some of those Aboriginal targets in relation to Aboriginal Affairs.

So the targets in relation to wellbeing are published, and we have set ourselves an ambitious goal to reach those targets. We will continue to measure ourselves against them. We will publish data—in fact, the data is commonly available, and lots of the data concerns issues of mortality rates and other forms of wellbeing outcomes which are published in the ordinary course by various organisations that collect that data, including state government organisations. So we will continue to hold ourselves publicly accountable in relation to those targets.

In relation to the specific programs and the way in which they are dealing with that gap, one of the issues that became obvious to us is that the target that we have in the state strategic plan in relation to wellbeing is essentially a generational target. The sorts of changes that would be needed to the circumstances of Aboriginal people will require a long-term commitment, and it is likely that these changes will only show up in measurable statistical outcomes over an extended period of time. That is one of the dilemmas, I suppose, to which the existing approach leads, and I think it is one of the reasons there has been a call for, perhaps, some slight changes to the way in which we approach the targets for Aboriginal wellbeing in the South Australian strategic plan. So, we want to move to a point where we retain those long-term goals, but we also have some more medium-term goals in relation to Aboriginal wellbeing that will enable us to see how we are going over a period of time.

To go to your specific question about how these individual programs and initiatives are operating in practice, the Aboriginal Strategic Plan looks at the way in which every agency operates in relation to the services and activities it

provides for Aboriginal South Australians. That comprehensive exercise that I referred to in my opening remarks is nearing the next phase in its development, where a further presentation will be made to a group of chief executives to endorse that approach, and that would also be the mechanism by which we monitor whether these programs are achieving their goals. In a more specific sense, in relation to one particular area of the state that has received a lot of focused attention—namely, the APY lands—we actually publish, on a regular basis, quite specific details of activities that occur in relation to the APY lands, and we update that. That is available on the DPC web site, which talks about progress on the APY lands.

The sorts of activities and services that we are talking about in relation to the health and wellbeing on the lands include the bike track that has been built at Ernabella for a dirt bike program. Funding has been provided for Nganampa Health Council to employ two men's health workers. We are pursuing closer working relationships between that program and the DFC substance misuse and youth programs. School summer holiday activity programs for young people are being developed and implemented by the community youth workers, and that is supported by DFC, Nganampa Health and NPY Women's Council. Youth workers have now been employed at Indulkana, Ernabella, Amata, Pipalyatjara and Kalka. We are pursuing workers for the remaining communities. Relationships Australia is contracted to DFC to provide accredited block training to community youth workers. Vehicles have been provided to youth workers so that they can visit young people in remote areas within the APY lands. Relationships Australia produces a special youth newsletter showcasing youth programs and positive images of young people across the lands.

A youth work summit was held in May near Port Augusta, and youth workers from the APY lands attended with other workers. State government officers have been working with representatives of the Australian government, Nganampa Health Council and NPY Women's Council to develop a culturally appropriate model for the design and operation of a substance abuse rehabilitation facility, and Amata has been settled on as that site. It has been chosen because it is near an airstrip, and that facility will be operated together with an outreach service soon. We are also establishing family centres in communities where existing infrastructure is available. We have a homemaker service which is operated by two workers on the APY lands and which services all those communities.

We now have Disability Services SA, which has transferred program responsibility for the APY lands to an APY lands based team. A physiotherapist position is being recruited to the DFC APY lands based in that team. We are engaging the services of the Northern Territory government positive behaviour support unit in relation to the APY lands to deal with some of the difficult behaviours of especially those people who had formerly been—and remain, in some cases—petrol sniffers. The independent living equipment program is now operating in the APY lands when it had not previously done so. There are myriad other efforts occurring on the lands, but that is just a summary of some of the particular activities and programs occurring on the APY lands. There is a similar story in relation to other remote communities where we are directing our attention, in particular Yalata, where there is a close working relationship with the commonwealth to deal with that area.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I refer to page 1.28 of the Portfolio Statement: what has been achieved from the

increased funding for Aboriginal heritage in the 2005-06 budget?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The Aboriginal Heritage Branch resourcing was increased to \$1.49 million in 2005-06. These added resources have enabled the Aboriginal Heritage Branch to make a number of improvements, including improving administration of the act, developing positive relationships with stakeholders, contributing to increased protection of heritage while ensuring increased certainty about access to information, and developing issues for further improving the management and protection of Aboriginal heritage as one part of the land use and management in South Australia. Staffing in the branch has increased threefold—an increase from five to 16 people, and half are Aboriginal people. One way to protect and preserve Aboriginal heritage is through the identification and recording, to some extent, of sites. Knowledge of sites can add certainty to negotiations between Aboriginal people and those seeking the use of the land.

In the 18-month period from October 2003 to March 2005, 161 sites were reported. In the next 18-month period from April 2005 to September 2006, 289 sites were reported, representing an 18 per cent increase. While much more needs to be done, this is an indication that necessary improvements are under way. There are a number of initiatives to take the matter further. Aboriginal people can record their own sites, and to this end training programs have been developed to roll out across South Australia, resulting in increased reporting of sites. The sites reported are placed on a central archive and register of sites to enhance the protection of these records and make that information available. A central database will assist in providing ready access to that information.

Aboriginal heritage sites also have an important role to play in land management and land use in South Australia, and to this end we have been involved heavily with the ILUA process and negotiations and are working cooperatively with the native title unit within government. The branch continues to process sections 12 and 23 requests from land developers as they are submitted. However, there is a clear trend and preference from developers away from this to engage with communities and enter into negotiated outcomes wherever possible, but the added resources provided to the Aboriginal Heritage Branch have enabled improved administration of this important area of endeavour.

Ms BEDFORD: I note that we meet today on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people. What progress has been made to reinstate air services to the APY lands following the collapse of Aboriginal Air Services in September of this year?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I was remiss in not acknowledging that we do gather on the lands of the Kaurna people, and I thank the honourable member for reminding us of that.

Mr Hanna: She is the conscience of the parliament.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes. The Aboriginal Air Service, in fact, ceased operating on Sunday, 17 September 2006, and went into liquidation on 25 September. AAS, an Alice Springs based organisation, was in operation for approximately 20 years. It was a consortium of four independent Aboriginal airline companies. The services provided by AAS were twice-weekly from Alice Springs to seven APY communities. It also provided weekly flights to two communities, and was subsidised by the Australian government through the Remote Air Service Subsidy scheme. The other

flights were not subsidised and paid for by organisations such as Nganampa Health and AP Services.

These communities were dependent on the airline to access health services, and it was estimated that 75 per cent of the passenger traffic was escorted medical patients. The airline also provided essential freight services. We took immediate action to approach the commonwealth, and we also sought not only to deal with the immediate crisis, but also a sustainable long-term solution. The government helps seven APY communities which do not receive any funding to apply to the commonwealth department for air service subsidies. On 10 October, DOTARS advised that the applications for subsidised air services and were successful. As a result, DOTARS agreed to transfer its existing contract with AAS for RASS services to a new operator, Chartair, on a temporary basis. These services began on 26 September.

DOTARS expects to appoint an operator to provide weekly subsidised services to all nine communities by the end of October 2006. This will be an interim arrangement until January 2007. During that period, the subsidy will be competitively tendered, and a new contract awarded. The government has also investigated the provision of weekly subsidised bus services between Alice Springs, the APY lands, Coober Pedy and Port Augusta to supplement the communities' access to those services. In addition, \$150 000 a year has been allocated from the Premier's Aboriginal Lands Task Force. Matching funding has been sought from the Northern Territory government, and we hope that that will be formalised soon.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, page 1.28. Can the minister tell us what progress has been made in relation to reducing the cost of food available on the APY lands, and to support the Mai Wiru stores policy?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: This issue has recently been highlighted by a visit to the APY lands by a group of nuns who publicised their concerns about the nutrition of food. It has actually been the subject of a particular whole of government initiative led by the commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. It is one of the two APY lands COAG trial projects. Reducing the cost and improving the quality of food in the APY lands is an important initiative. The stores policy has been directed at that.

The objective of the stores policy is to make sure that Anangu have access to healthy, affordable foods, sold in clean store facilities, and that the sale of the food is compliant with legislation. The focus on stores is on nutrition, and supporting healthy eating programs. It is also to make sure that there is a free supply of cold water, healthy takeaway foods and adequate refrigeration. It also ensures that people are not ripped off, so that the fair trading legislation clearly applies. The other important part of this exercise is the employment and training of Anangu workers with appropriate wages and the exploration of career paths. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with eight stores in the communities.

Preferred supplier agreements for both freight and store merchandise were signed on 6 April 2006. These will provide for bulk purchasing opportunities which will enable discounts. A public health nutritionist position has been filled, and the person commenced in May 2006. Store manager contracts are being examined to make sure that they comply with the relevant award. A stores handbook policy is being published and distributed. The state government is contributing store inspections through OCBA, and making sure that use-by-dates are complied with, as it has been an issue of

some concern, and looking at some of the issues associated with the provision of credit on the way in which debt is handled in those stores.

There have been some concerns about some items being sold that were not fit for purpose, and so that has been clamped down on. We are making sure that error rates in relation to scanning audits are picked up so that people are not paying more than they should. There is a training program for Anangu project officers employed by the stores support unit to enable them to carry out inspections and delivery of training through the local TAFEs. We are also funding communities to develop bush food plots, which have been quite successful. Not only are these providing good local employment opportunities, but they are also providing a range of fresh produce for local Anangu.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to your opening statement, when you mentioned the difficulty that quite a few Aboriginal communities are having with self-management. I am grateful for and acknowledge your interest in the Aboriginal community within the electorate of Goyder and what we are trying to do there. Given that presumably some of these communities have had predominantly financial issues for some time now, can you expand upon the efforts the state government is making to correct that situation and confirm, if you are able, whether self-government within Aboriginal communities will still be a feature in the future?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Certainly. As to the vexed question of self-government, self-determination and self-management, lots of these terms are used interchangeably. My particular point of view is that self-determination, once handed to a community, is something that can never be taken back. One may be able to change the administrative arrangements that apply to a community, but a community's ambitions to govern its own affairs are not something that are actually capable of being taken away. How that finds its expression has been giving us a lot of pause for thought. I suppose the most stark example is the APY lands, where too many people probably felt that granting people land rights would be a sufficient response to ensure that their wellbeing and future would be assured.

To the extent that people believed that, I think that was obviously not a very well thought through idea. There is a need, and the need continues, for government to play the role it plays everywhere. One cannot not expect that remote Aboriginal communities should receive any less support from state government than any metropolitan community receives yet, for some reason, we seem to think that those communities can carry on their own affairs without our support and assistance. There has been an inadequate level of state and, indeed, federal government support for these communities over an extended period of time.

Many of those communities have operated under government arrangements that we believe have not necessarily supported them to deliver an effective outcome in their communities. We have seen a number of communities which have been denuded, if you like, of people who have the capacity to carry out the particular functions that are necessary to run the communities. I think that a good example is the one that concerns the member for Goyder—the Goreta Aboriginal Corporation. Over the years, the Point Pearce community have produced a number of incredibly talented and important Aboriginal people who have gone on to achieve much. However, for one reason or another, the community have been left in a state where there have not been sufficient people with the capacity to effectively cater

to the local needs in terms of the administration of its affairs, so it has found itself in difficulty. What we are concerned to do is to rebuild that capacity, but rebuild it in a way that we take responsibility for things for which we should take responsibility and work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to enable them to realise their legitimate ambition to manage their own affairs.

At the moment we are thinking through the boundaries around those things. It may be that the boundaries differ in different communities, and it may be that the arrangements into which we entered at one point in time are different from the arrangements which might exist in the future. It may be that there is a very heavy need for non-indigenous people to run particular elements of the services that are provided to Aboriginal communities. However, there should be a commitment to ensure that we work in partnership, and there should be a commitment to leaving skills and capabilities to ensure that Aboriginal people are able to aspire to the positions that are available within their communities. These are complex questions. I believe it is unfair to place Aboriginal people in positions for which they are not adequately supported or equipped with the skills to carry out those roles. I think that is a cruel hoax on those people and their communities and, ultimately, it only ends in difficulties.

We are concerned about a recent policy change of the commonwealth, which has sought to retrieve funding that was formerly provided for municipal services in a range of communities. Its concern is that the funds that have been provided for municipal services are being used for other purposes; for broader governance arrangements. While that might be true, the reality is that, in a number of communities, that funding has been central in ensuring that the local arrangements are sustainable. We have urged the federal government not to simply retrieve that funding because it is being used for things other than municipal services but, rather, to discuss with us, in conjunction with the local communities, ways in which that money can perhaps be recommitted in a more transparent and accountable fashion, but acknowledging that many of these communities have received so little support over the years that this funding is the only difference between them remaining viable.

We do not want further collapses of communities across South Australia. I know that there are real concerns at the moment about Davenport at Port Augusta and, of course, we have seen the difficulties at Point Pearce. I know that there are concerns in the Umoona community near Coober Pedy. It would be a great shame if the commonwealth were to withdraw its funding in this area and contribute to a further collapse of these communities. However, we are engaged in discussions with the commonwealth, and we are hopeful that we can persuade it to see our position.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I thank the minister for his detailed answer. His empathy and commitment to Aboriginal communities are very evident. Well done. My next question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 1.11, 'Highlights 2005-06'. Another achievement listed in the highlights was the signing of the overarching agreement on indigenous affairs between the commonwealth and the state. On 4 October, the federal minister for indigenous affairs, Mal Brough, released a discussion paper on the indigenous permit system. Whilst the discussion paper clearly argues for significant changes to the current system in the Northern Territory, the minister urged other jurisdictions to review their permit systems. Does the South Australian government, therefore, still believe that the permit system, which restricts

outside access to Aboriginal communities in South Australia, is in the best interests of the people in these communities?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will start at the end point first. The permit system, in fact, does not restrict access to remote Aboriginal communities. The permit system is the mechanism by which people are entitled to enter Aboriginal communities. In fact, it is not even the act of parliament that really restricts people from going into Aboriginal communities. There are some statutory provisions about attending certain Aboriginal communities without permission, and there are penalties associated with that. Fundamentally, if those acts did not exist, the common law would exist.

The common law of trespass applies to any private land holding. Whether it is a farm or your own property, you are entitled to refuse entry to someone whom you do not want on your property. I remain to be convinced about how the commonwealth government will change the arrangements in relation to Aboriginal communities in a way that does not offend the principles of the race discrimination act. We do have a permit system in South Australia, because essentially we have codified the circumstances in which people could go on to private land. Of course, there is a criminal penalty associated with that, and obviously that is different from the rights that exist at common law, but certainly the rights which do exist at common law and which apply to any land-holder apply in relation to Aboriginal land.

Even if one were to sweep away the existing permit system, one would still be left with the common law tort of trespass, which may be an ineffective way of excluding people but, nevertheless, it does represent a landowner's right to exclude someone who is not invited onto their land. I would be puzzled to see how one can get rid of that without bringing down the principles associated with the race discrimination act. Having said that, though, our position has always been maintaining the permit system, and if there has been some demonstrated evidence of its not operating, or operating in a way which is inappropriate, we would be interested in seeing that evidence. We just have not seen any cogent evidence in that regard.

We have heard some bleating by certain media outlets that they have had some difficulty in visiting the lands, but we have not really seen any cogent evidence. The only suggestion seems to have been that someone was delayed from going into a certain place, but I have certainly seen no evidence in South Australia which suggests that there is a difficulty with the system. The general principle by which we operate is openness. We support openness in relation to the Aboriginal lands. That is why we allow the Aboriginal Lands Standing Committee to attend the Aboriginal lands. I need to remind the parliament that that committee never set foot on the Aboriginal lands during the life of the previous government. Our position is one of openness.

There have been regular visits by members of parliament who, in fact, are not covered by the permit system. They are entitled to go to the lands at any time of their choosing, and police officers are also entitled to go to the land at any time of their choosing.

Ms Bedford interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is right. They can walk in at any time they like. Of course, as a matter of courtesy, we tend to request permits. The thing about the permit system is that, if you did not have the permit system, you would probably need to invent it, because it is a sensible way of regulating people entering remote areas of the state where there are some real risks in relation to health and

wellbeing and, indeed, there are concerns about the disturbance of local heritage and other sacred sites. Unfortunately, the sacred sites in the Aboriginal communities in the remote areas are very poorly protected. I had the privilege of attending a ceremony which I am forbidden to talk about. However, I was shown certain things which were very poorly protected and, if someone was to wander into that area, they could be very easily disturbed.

There is a whole range of reasons why a permit system is appropriate for the Aboriginal lands and we have not been given cogent evidence of why we should change our position. Indeed, I invited the Aboriginal Lands Standing Committee to look at this question, and they did so on a preliminary basis. They formed the view that there was no proper basis for change.

Mr VENNING: I have a supplementary question. I am one MP who has taken the liberty of using that privilege and, to say the least, I was quite shocked. I agree with the minister that they have the rights as apply to private property and no-one has the right to enter, but I do believe that the population ought to be allowed at least to drive on the roads and visit the community, but certainly not to enter private property. Will this issue be debated further? Is the government looking at both sides of this argument?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The commonwealth has published a discussion paper, and I think the commonwealth's rhetoric does not really match up with the discussion paper. The discussion paper points out a number of difficulties with removing the permit system. We are more than happy to participate in the debate. I must say that there does not seem to be any shortage of coverage about what has or has not occurred on the APY lands or any other remote community as a consequence of the current permit system. I suspect that these communities are the most talked about communities in South Australia—

Mr Venning interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Certainly, and it is a good thing that we have shone a light in relation to these communities. My point is that there does not seem to be a barrier to finding out about the circumstances on those lands under the existing arrangements. If one can point to someone applying for a permit and then being capriciously denied it, perhaps there would be a basis for looking at how that system operates. However, if someone wants to go up there at the moment and apply for their permit, they will be allowed. Next week some celebrations will be going on there, and I think the APY lands in particular have actually suspended the need for any permits.

Ms BEDFORD: They have invited everyone. I gave a grievance about it, so I hope you will be there.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: They have invited everyone, so there is a very broad invitation. The whole community can go up there and participate. I think they have issued a very general invitation—

Ms BEDFORD: It is open.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: —a very open invitation, including to the media. I do not think there is any need to even seek formal approval. I think they have acknowledged that this is a celebration, and they expect a large number of people in there. Because it is for a limited period, I think they have acknowledged that it would be an appropriate time to suspend the permits. I am certainly going up there, carrying a group of journalists with us, as part of the celebrations. This perceived culture of silence I really think might be a little overstated.

Mr VENNING: Since those comments were made, I think we have travelled a fair way and in the right direction.

Mr WILLIAMS: The minister has been most fulsome in his answers and, as we are running short of time, I might take the opportunity to read into *Hansard* a series of omnibus questions which the opposition is asking all ministers. My questions are as follows:

1. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of each of the forward estimate years of the specific administration measures (as listed in Budget Paper 3, Chapter 2, expenditure) which will lead to a reduction in operating costs in his portfolio?

2. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors in the 2005-06 year for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant and contractor, the cost, the work undertaken and the method of appointment?

3. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there as at 30 June 2006, and for each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the employee and the total economic cost of the employee?

4. In the financial year 2004-05 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister what underspending on projects and programs was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2005-06?

5. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the estimated or actual level of under-expenditure for 2005-06; and has cabinet already approved any carryover expenditure into 2006-07 and, if so, how much?

6. What is the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$100 000 or more per employee, and also, as a sub-category, what is the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$200 000 or more per employee for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2006; and between 30 June 2005 and 30 June 2006, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100 000 or more (a) which has been abolished; and (b) which has been created?

Mr HANNA: Minister, I have a number of questions. The chair has advised me informally that I may not ask questions on notice, so perhaps I will just read out a number of questions and see what can be answered before 11 o'clock, which is five minutes away. The minister out of goodwill may take them on notice and provide answers in due course.

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Mitchell is defying the chair. The member for Mitchell will ask a question. He is aware that any questions that he has that are not asked can be put on the House of Assembly *Notice Paper*. The member for Mitchell will ask a question and the minister will answer as widely as possible in the time available.

Mr HANNA: Thank you. First, are there any communities under the jurisdiction of the minister that the minister believes are not viable economically in the long term? With reference to page 1.28 and the performance commentary that refers to swimming pools for certain communities, why is there not reference to funding for a swimming pool for Yalata, and—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr HANNA: May I keep going, Madam Chair?

The CHAIR: No.

Mr HANNA: I have a few more questions.

The CHAIR: Is the member for Mitchell unable to understand English?

Mr HANNA: No, I can do that.

The CHAIR: The member for Mitchell may ask a question. The member for Mitchell has already had liberty in that he did not cite the reference of his first question. The minister will answer questions. I permit questions in a line where they relate to one topic. The honourable member is changing topics. The minister will have the opportunity.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think I can answer that question quite effectively in short form. The question of what is economically viable is a very moot question. Does that mean it is self sustaining? Does it mean that everyone there has to have a job? They are difficult questions. There are very few people employed in outside employment in a range of these communities. Many are engaged on CDEP programs. I would argue that the test of whether a community should continue to exist is whether they are economically viable in a narrow sense. I think there is a much broader set of circumstances at play. The other thing is that, even if one were somehow to deem these communities not economically viable, it rather presumes that the next question becomes, 'What are you going to do? Are you actually going to force people off these lands? Are you going to withdraw their services?'

Mr HANNA: I think the commonwealth is.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is certainly not our policy. It is the question I ask every time I go to a remote community: 'Do you want to stay here?' In some communities they have a range of difficulties, but the thought of their leaving their lands is something they would not be prepared to contemplate. I think it is a bit of a moot point, this notion of closing down communities, because there is a much deeper connection with these communities than merely what we might regard as economically viable. We do not presently have any plans to close down any of these communities. Indeed, some of the very remote homelands that are earmarked for potential closure by the commonwealth seem to be some of the more successful communities.

I recently went to a homeland called Scotdesco on the west coast and it seems to be operating in a very effective fashion. However, we probably have a different approach from the commonwealth on this question.

The CHAIR: Does the minister wish to answer the additional question asked about the swimming pool?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I did not hear the additional question.

Mr HANNA: There is reference on page 1.28 to swimming pools for a couple of communities. Why not Yalata? I note that there is not a reference to a pool for Yalata in the budget estimates. Why is that so?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The capital funding is coming from the commonwealth, but we are certainly planning to build a pool at Yalata. I was in Yalata just last week or the week before. A site has been chosen and we are working with the community to bring that about.

The CHAIR: Member for Mitchell, one last question; I will be very generous.

Mr HANNA: Yes; I have a few more, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Last question, member for Mitchell. Three is the usual allowance and you are getting three.

Mr HANNA: That is right. What funding is the state government contributing this year to the establishment of the land management and tourist facility at Maralinga Village as part of the hand-back of section 400?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is actually commonwealth funding. I think that the latest in relation to the Maralinga Village is that negotiations are almost concluded and we are hopeful, given the state of the season now, of announcing, and potentially having, a ceremony around the hand-back in April of next year.

Mr HANNA: So it is going ahead, but no state money?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: In relation to that particular project, it is fully funded by the commonwealth.

Mr HANNA: Madam Chair, I have just a few more questions.

The CHAIR: In that case you can place them on the *Notice Paper* of the House of Assembly.

Mr HANNA: Madam Chair, it would be a convenient time to ask the minister.

The CHAIR: Member for Mitchell, the rules of the committee apply to you as they apply to everyone else. There was an agreement about omnibus questions. The rules of the committee are that, if a member does not complete their questions, they go on the House of Assembly *Notice Paper*. It is very simple.

Mr HANNA: The questions I have are fairly routine and they could be characterised as omnibus questions.

The CHAIR: Well, put them on the *Notice Paper*.

Mr HANNA: Can I put them on notice now, please?

The CHAIR: You can use the normal procedures for putting them on the House of Assembly *Notice Paper*.

Mr HANNA: Well, Madam Chair—

The CHAIR: Order! The difference is that special conditions apply in relation to questions that are asked now. This place is a burden on the Public Service. There are general rules about how these committees will operate. They apply to you the same as they apply to everyone else.

Mr HANNA: Madam Chair, if I could have two more minutes I could get these questions—

The CHAIR: Member for Mitchell, the time agreed for examination of this matter has expired. The same conditions apply to you as they apply to every other member. I have no understanding as to why I should make a different arrangement for you than any other person.

Mr HANNA: Madam Chair, if the committee is agreeable, could we extend the time for two minutes?

The CHAIR: For the purposes of your reading questions in to the *Notice Paper*, which I have ruled out of order. No.

Mr HANNA: Well, if I read the questions the minister may answer them on the spot. Could we at least ask if the minister is agreeable to that approach?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: It is just that we are intruding on other people's time.

The CHAIR: We are intruding on other arrangements.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I am happy to deal with his questions if they are put in the appropriate form. I am sure we can deal with them, but I think at the moment we are moving in to somebody else's time.

Mr HANNA: I just make the comment that this is budget estimates on Aboriginal issues and the Aboriginal budget and I think an hour, with half the time taken up with government questions, is a disgrace.

The CHAIR: Member for Mitchell—

Mr HANNA: It is not the minister's doing, but I think it really is silencing examination—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr HANNA: —of the money provided for Aboriginal welfare in this state.

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Mitchell, you are not a member of the committee. You have been greatly indulged. Please cease. I declare the consideration of the proposed payments completed and we now move to the next agreed line.

Department for Families and Communities,
\$624 712 000

Administered Items for the Department for Families
and Communities, \$121 565 000

Departmental Advisers:

Ms S. Vardon, Chief Executive, Department for Families and Communities.

Mr J. Ullianich, Director, Financial Services.

Ms A. Gale, Director, Office for the Ageing.

Mr A. Jalast, Departmental Liaison Officer, Office of the Chief Executive.

Ms S. Barr, Acting Director, Social Inclusion, Strategy and Research.

Membership:

Mrs Redmond substituted for Mr Williams.

Mr Pengilly substituted for Mr Griffiths.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular, pages 2.28 to 2.30, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 3, Part 11. Minister, do you have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes, I have a brief one. Madam Chair, though I am Minister for Ageing, many other ministers in this government are responsible for programs that cater for our growing older population, and I think what really needs to be pointed out is that the health needs of older South Australians have been clearly identified in the budget, and changes to this system need to be taken into account. For instance, an extra \$640 million will be spent on health initiatives, including four GP Plus centres and 50 primary health care nurses in GP clinics to help older people living independently in their homes. Also, the reduction in elective surgery waiting times and our dental health care programs will have a significant impact on this important group of South Australians. Then, of course, there are the massive investments in our law and order programs to ensure that the fears, especially of older people, who often have a significant fear of crime, are placated.

The purchases of new public transport buses and the new revamped public transport system and the upgrades in the funding for those systems will also have an important effect on older South Australians. In my own agency, the recently released 'Improving With Age', our ageing plan for South Australia, guides our work. It includes \$2 million of projects in key areas to kickstart implementation of the plan, and includes a number of programs such as: initiative to support Aboriginal elders; mapping of ageing services across the state; supporting services for isolated social housing clients; an elder abuse prevention guide; and an information booklet to assist seniors in relation to the legal system. So there is a range of ways across our broader portfolio, including our Housing Plan and, of course, our Home and Community Care Program, which has since 2002-03 increased by 35 per cent,

representing an extraordinary increase in the amount of services that we are providing for older South Australians. I think we should also make mention of our commitment to our carers policy through the charter and Carers Recognition Act which recognise, value and empower and support carers, many of whom are elderly.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Heysen?

Mrs REDMOND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to briefly make a comment about these two portfolios generally in opening on this, because it seems to me that in both ageing and disability, and I know we are just dealing with ageing at the moment, but in both of those portfolios, it seems to me that we are facing some massive changes. We have tidal waves or tsunamis about to hit us in both of those, for different reasons. I noticed in the budget papers there are some interesting figures on ageing, about how we actually have a lower than average share of the under-14 population, and a growing share of the elderly population. I remember a few years ago it was 13.8 per cent over 65, compared to 12 per cent. We have now gone to 15.2 per cent compared to a national over-65 age of 13.1 per cent. In fact, I think the most startling statistic I have seen on our ageing population recently was in a commonwealth document which indicated that at the moment we have something in the order of 2 340 people over the age of 100 in this country, and that by 2055 when we baby boomers get to be that age there will be 78 000 of those people, and that is going to have massive impacts, not just on health care but on a whole range of things because one cannot imagine that you can sustain a society where people do not start working full time until they are about 25, if they are going to uni and so on, and then leave work at age 58, on average at the moment, and then live to over 100. We simply have to come up with some new solutions.

One of the difficulties I found in preparing for this series of questions about the ageing portfolio is that, as the minister said, so much of it is actually impacted in other parts of the budget. There are a number of areas where I would like to ask questions, but I suspect, Madam Chair, that you will rule me out of order on them, and I am relaxed about that because I will just put them on notice to the appropriate ministers. But they are issues that I think we need to be looking at in terms of our older population.

In terms of disability, the same thing is going to happen. We have got this massive increase, and again it is for different reasons. It is not just the ageing of the population, but it is because about 50 years ago there was a tremendous change in the way we looked at how we managed disabled children particularly, and people stopped leaving those children in institutional care, as they had been encouraged to do, and started taking them home. The difficulty now is those people are 50 and their parents are elderly and becoming frail and dying, and in my view we as a society need to measure our worth by how well we take the obligation from those people as they age and become unable to care for their children. I have talked to so many people who are just desperately tired after 50 years of looking after their disabled child who, with tears in their eyes, say, 'But I just want to retire,' and they don't get that opportunity because of the nature of what our society now expects. It seems to me that as a society we need to be able to say, 'Well, you have saved us an enormous amount of money and an enormous amount of effort by looking after that child yourself, and we now owe it to you to allow you the freedom to retire and to leave this place knowing that your child will be well looked after.'

With those few comments, Madam Chair, I would like to move to some questions. First, I have six omnibus questions:

1. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown for each of the forward estimate years of the specific administration measures, as listed in Budget Paper 3, Chapter 2: Expenditure, which will lead to a reduction in operating costs in the portfolio?

2. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors in 2005-06 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant and contractor, cost, work undertaken and method of appointment.

3. For each department or agency reporting to the minister how many surplus employees are there as at 30 June 2006? For each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the employee and the total employment cost of the employee?

4. In financial year 2004-05 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on projects and programs was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2005-06?

5. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the estimated or actual level of under-expenditure for 2005-06, and has cabinet already approved any carryover expenditure into 2006-07? If so, how much?

6. (i) What was the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$100 000 or more per employee and, as a subcategory, the total number of all employees with a total employment cost of \$200 000 or more per employee for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2006.

(ii) Secondly, between 30 June 2005 and 30 June 2006 will the minister list job title and total employment cost for each position with a total estimated cost of \$100 000 or more: (a) which has been abolished; and (b) which has been created.

I refer to the proposed shared services reforms across government. Can the minister outline the baseline costs for the provision of corporate services for the department, including the total cost of the provision of payroll, finance, human resources, procurement, records management and information technology as well as the full-time equivalent staff numbers?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is an initiative being driven by Treasury, so I will take that on notice. Ultimately, it will be a question they will answer in consultation with us.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to Budget Paper 2, page 4, and Budget Paper 3, page 2.21. There is identified an amount of \$12.9 million over four years for reduced adult dental care waiting times that translates into 7 000 dental patients per year. Now, I recognise that this is one of those questions that the minister may not be in a position to answer but I think it is an important question. Can the minister identify whether that figure includes a continuation of the dental care programs for which there have already been pilot programs? I understand these were very successful both in dental care of the elderly in institutions and dental care of the elderly who are still living independently. So successful, in fact, that they should be continued, because I have heard stories about people suffering from dementia, for instance, who are unable to communicate that they have a dental problem and who can be in significant pain, which damages their quality of life. Does the minister have any information on the continuation or otherwise of those programs, or their expansion?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Madam Chair, that is probably not strictly in order for this but if the honourable member would like to put it on notice outside of these proceedings I am sure the government can answer.

The CHAIR: So indulge the 'does the minister have any information' part rather than 'any responsibility'. Obviously, we are going to have a bit of difficulty here.

Mrs REDMOND: I recognise that there are a few questions like this, and I will not proceed with the question about elective surgery waiting times for that reason. I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 2.29, on the question of electricity concessions. I assume that at least some of the electricity concessions apply to seniors—indeed, there is a reference further on in the budget papers to electricity concessions for self-funded retirees and pensioners. However, it appears that the additional money is being spent on administration costs and, given that the first of the baby boomers turn 60 this year, we are coming into a situation where (I assume) a rapidly increasing number of people will be seeking concessions as they enter retirement. Does the lack of increase in the concession amount mean that overall, with more people and no increase in money, there will be a lower level of concessions?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We have expanded the scheme to include a range of other people who are now entitled to receive these concessions—the most recent expansion, of course, being to people who live in caravan parks and retirement villages where they do not have a separate meter and to people who do not have any electricity but have their power supplied through another basis (bottled gas and those sorts of mechanisms, for instance). Despite that expansion of the range of people eligible, the projected growth in the number of concession holders has not increased very much and has remained relatively static; however, the cost of administering the scheme has grown, and that explains that.

I acknowledge that that is a little counter-intuitive, given the remarks that the member made earlier about the demographic trend. That trend really relates to people ageing and not necessarily to people who are eligible for concessions—so there may be a greater number of older people but not necessarily an increase in the rate of growth of the cohort who are eligible for a concession. That has certainly been the experience over the last few years.

The CHAIR: There are going to be richer older people.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Well that, I suppose, is one explanation. Certainly, in relation to these budget papers, the growth in the category of eligible people has not occurred over the last few years; whether it will in future years is something we are investigating.

Mrs REDMOND: Probably a consequence of superannuation and our preparedness for our ageing. I think the rest of the questions are strictly on the Ageing portfolio in any event. In relation to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.16, which is where the highlights of the past year and targets for the next year are listed, one of the standouts to me, of course, is the amendment of the Retirement Villages Act, which is listed as a highlight for 2005-06. My first question is: why is there an apparently long delay in the implementation of that act, the amendments having been passed? When will it be commenced and why—in the left-hand column on the targets—is there a reference to the 1997 bill and the implementation of that?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: What we proposed was a six-month period while we really engaged in a public

information program, and DFC has conducted 19 information sessions from 700 industry representatives, residents and other interested parties, as well as developing extensive information resources in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the amendments. All of those amendments will come into operation on 1 November 2006.

Mrs REDMOND: So they will all be in at that point?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes.

Mrs REDMOND: Thank you; because I was becoming concerned. I can understand that you need to set up systems to accommodate having a register of retirement villages and so on, but there were a number of key things occurring, such as the rules controlling retirement villages being unable to recoup legal costs from the residents and so on—concerning which, until that is commenced, you have still got those renegade operators doing that sort of thing. I did ask then about the reference on the targets column: to implement the Retirement Villages Act Amendment Bill 1997. That just puzzles me a bit—about the fourth dot point down. Is that a typo?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think it is intended to convey the implementation of the amendments. I think that is in the column 'Highlights for 2005-06'. Sorry, 1987 is the typo; is that the point you are referring to?

Mrs REDMOND: I was just puzzled; I assume that it is nothing to do with introducing some amendments from an earlier bill and that it refers to the amended Retirement Villages Act which, as the minister has already said, will commence operation on 1 November. I see a nodding head to your right, minister, so I think that is right.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes.

Mrs REDMOND: Can the minister explain what are the reforms to the funding processes for HACC funding in line with the commonwealth's *The Way Forward*, which was referred to on the same page, dot point 2, under objective 3 in the highlights for this past year?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The commonwealth has initiated a major review of community care, including the HACC program, and I think way back in July 2004 the commonwealth minister for ageing released a document on this called *A New Strategy for Community Care: The Way Forward*. That basically set out detailed areas for action.

The next thing that happened is a national body of community care officials was convened to progress carers, including eligibility and assessment for services, introducing a tiered community care system based on need and improved planning and accountability mechanisms across program areas. A major area in the process is the renegotiation of the HACC agreement, and while there is a broad level of agreement on directions, there are some significant concerns about conditions sought by the commonwealth.

In June 2005 at its meeting, COAG asked the health working group to consider opportunities to streamline responsibilities for older people and younger people with disabilities, and at COAG in October 2005 agreement was not reached and the matter was referred back to community care officials. In February 2006 COAG determined bilateral discussions would continue, with reforms of the Aged Care Assessment program explored and reported back to COAG by December 2007. June 2006: substantial progress has been made on a national consistent assessment tool for entry into community care, and SA is the leading jurisdiction participating in the trial.

In July 2006 issues outstanding in the renegotiation of the HACC agreement were largely resolved at a meeting of

ministers responsible for HACC: Minister Santoro advised that he would provide four years of funding estimates prior to the commencement of triennial funding; a \$30 million one-off commonwealth funding would be provided to implement common arrangement reforms; financial penalty arrangements were agreed; a protocol for a joint announcement of new funding would be developed; and Minister Santoro will consider a proposal by the states to increase HACC administration funding.

Agreement is still to be reached on the interface between HACC and community-funded community care programs, and negotiations are still progressing regarding an increase in HACC administration funding. That is the nature of the update in relation to community care. We see the future of HACC programs in providing basic care, and we are concerned that some of the HACC funding might be sucked in to other more high level care programs. We are concerned to ensure that it actually is available to provide that basic level of care to sustain people in their homes.

Mrs REDMOND: Just continuing on from that, minister, I notice in the targets for 2006-07 (on that same page) there is a reference to developing an implementation plan for reforms to community care programs, including HACC and the Aged Care Assessment program. I was puzzled, particularly with respect to the HACC programs, how you can have implementation as a highlight of the 2005-06 year if in the 2006-07 year you are only developing an implementation plan.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will invite my officer to answer this question.

Ms GALE: With regard to the implementation of community care reforms, an implementation plan will be developed for us to negotiate with the commonwealth government for things such as implementing a common assessment tool across the nation and how we might go about that. So, during this financial year we will be bilaterally negotiating with the commonwealth to implement.

The other reference to reforms to HACC funding processes relates to our own reforms within the department—that is, the way we advertise HACC; to make it more streamlined for agencies submitting for funding; to implement direct allocations where appropriate, for example, Aboriginal service providers; to reduce the administration for both small agencies within the community and the department; and to move to three-year funding processes.

Mrs REDMOND: Still on the same page—and I have a lot of questions about what is on that page—can the minister explain what is meant by 'implement client-centred reform of the concessions program'? It is objective 3, the third to last dot point.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That reform is about taking some of the burden of people having to go to the various electricity retailers, Centrelink and Families SA to take records as between those agencies to clarify their entitlements. So it is about us, I suppose, behind the scenes, through our negotiations and discussions with those organisations, coming up with a protocol that relieves some of the burden on the citizen. It is proposed that will be achieved electronically.

Mrs REDMOND: There is another one I ask the minister to explain, and that is 'transfer the aged care assessment program evaluation unit from the Department of Health to the Department for Families and Communities'. Can the minister provide a bit more detail on what is involved? Who does aged care assessment, and is it simply a matter of a staff transfer

or is there some other basis or rationale? I am curious about the nature of the assessment, which I would have thought was going to be largely medically based, and therefore the rationale for it being moved from Health to the Department for Families and Communities.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will invite Anne Gale to answer that question.

Ms GALE: The aged care assessment program is administered by the Office for the Ageing, and the funding goes to aged care assessment teams in the community. There is no change to that. This transfer refers to the database and evaluation of information that comes in on a reporting responsibility to the commonwealth, so it involves the transfer of a small amount of money (less than \$200 000) from the Department of Health to the Office for the Ageing to undertake evaluation of data and reporting to the commonwealth.

Mrs REDMOND: Again, in the highlights for 2005-06 on that same page, there is an item: Launched 'Improving with Age—Our Ageing Plan for South Australia', and in fact the minister referred to it in his opening comments and it is also referred to later on at page 11.32. I assume that the plan actually involves some ongoing things that need to be done and it is more than simply launching a plan. What specifically is being done in regard to that program in 2006-07, that being the year, significantly, when the first of the baby boomers are turning 60 years of age; and does it recognise the need for early detection of Alzheimer's and other dementias? Does it provide funding for not only diagnosis of those sorts of things but also treatment? Does the minister have any figures on rates and expectations of those things arising in the community and how that will change as the baby boomer generation ages?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes, the ageing plan has a number of ongoing objectives. It has \$2 million of kickstart initiatives that are directed at achieving some of the goals set out in the plan. It also provides a broad policy framework. Its fundamental thesis is that ageing is an opportunity, not a burden. The ageing plan initiatives include the elder abuse conference held in June 2006 by Aged Right Advocacy Services, coinciding with World Abuse Awareness Week; and hosting a symposium, featuring overseas guests, on that topic. Earlier I referred to the seniors booklet. We have developed the *80 Not Out* booklet in collaboration with Volunteering SA, with stories about volunteers and their contributions. There are supporting services for Aboriginal elders in remote communities to support them when they need to travel, especially for cultural or weather reasons. Initiatives exist to link care services to older people who are isolated in social housing and local government initiatives develop strategies for building an increasing community capacity through active participation of older people and the ageing in place process.

In the dementia area a whole range of things are being done through the health agency, but in my area in the ageing plan we have carried out some tasks that reflect the priorities set out in the national framework for action on dementia that was recently settled by Australian health. They include: \$60 000 to identify the most appropriate memory loss services to people with dementia, their carers and families in metro and rural areas; \$120 000 to ensure that service guidelines and protocols are in place in acute and community care systems for effective diagnosis, treatment and care of people with dementia; and, \$40 000 to develop, implement and promote the state dementia action plan and forum. That

plan will be progressed through the Office of Ageing and reflect the principles and priorities in the national framework.

HACC has developed services for people with dementia to meet the needs of clients who wish to maintain their independence and live in the community. Alzheimers South Australia has also been funded to provide one-off projects and dementia specific programs that look into service delivery reform and dementia specific respite services and care and information provision in indigenous communities.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to page 11.32, subprogram 3.3, the Office for the Ageing. I note amongst other things that the office administers the seniors card program. My recollection is that there was some sort of problem with respect to reciprocal recognition of seniors cards from state to state. Is that still the case?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think that remains an unresolved problem in the transport area for senior cardholders. Most states and territories do not recognise interstate seniors cards for public transport concessions. Because we are such a generous state, interstate visitors to South Australia can apply and obtain transport concessions. The commonwealth actually announced some money for a national scheme. The commonwealth funding was unacceptable to almost all jurisdictions because it fell short of the promised concessions.

Following bilateral and multilateral negotiations, a revised offer was made that addressed many of the issues. The South Australian government accepted the offer. However, it stated that time was needed to thoroughly examine the implications of the South Australian direction on other jurisdictions. Although advice from the Office of Public Transport was that the offer to South Australia may cover costs, there was no advantage to South Australian seniors. Seniors can already get a transport concession in South Australia while our residents cannot and would not under this offer receive concessions when travelling interstate unless the other jurisdictions agreed to the offer.

The estimated cost for each state varied greatly, depending on the current concessions and visitor patterns. Some jurisdictions, for example, Victoria, previously indicated that they would only accept the offer if other states agreed. New South Wales is unlikely to accept due to the huge cost to its government of transport concessions for visiting seniors. The commonwealth announced in its budget the withdrawal of the offer of funding to states and territories, blaming them for failure to reach agreement—a common pattern. We always have our hand up and the other states seem to not come to the party. The Victorian government released a media statement expressing disappointment on the withdrawal of the offer. To date no further developments or discussions have ensued.

Mrs REDMOND: I am pleased to know that we recognise them here. It would seem that there is an economic benefit, even if there is a cost, when we have younger retirees travelling, as they are probably the most money rich and least dependent people with disposable incomes and can spend it in this state if we make them welcome. It seems to me to be a good idea.

Back to the Retirement Villages Act, which is administered by the office, there still seems to be a small number of renegade retirement village operators. I appreciate that the minister has advised that the act will commence on 1 November. Do you have any information on how many complaints from retirement villages have been referred to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal over the past 12 months and how many villages were involved?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will take that question on notice.

Mrs REDMOND: Referring to the details of HACC funding, the performance commentary on the same page of subprogram 3.3, there is a slight increase in funding but on my calculations it does not appear sufficient to provide services to existing clients at the same rates if you take the number of clients over the number of hours. It appears that it has gone down slightly from an average of 32 hours per person to an average of 31 hours per person. Will the minister comment on the anticipated provision of HACC services, given that there is an increase in numbers but overall it appears that they will get less service per person?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: It reflects our policy direction we spoke about earlier that a larger number of people are getting basic care assistance. That is the original intent of the Home and Community Care scheme and reflects our policy stance in relation to home and community care.

Mrs REDMOND: I have one further question, given that we had a late start. I remain concerned (and it's not a criticism of the minister or the office in any way), that we lack sufficient information. What research is being done and what statistics are being gathered in terms of the nature of our ageing population? We seem to have the very basics. We get them from the Bureau of Statistics, and they are really a hindsight reflection, rather than a look at what our community will look like. I would have thought that the Office for the Ageing would need to start expanding the scope of what it looks at so that, for example, we start to address these issues of an older work force. That would involve all those things like WorkCover being addressed. I wonder whether the minister is aware of directions that might be taken, rather than, officially, having literally one page of this whole complex budget document on ageing when, in fact, it will be a major issue in our community at large.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: There are two answers to that question; one is that there is a sense in which the whole budget is about ageing, in that a lot of effort was put into dealing with the demographic increase in the number of people who will need our health services. That is part of the story of the health care increase, but not all of it.

I think there is a fundamental sense in which the demographic trends really are embedded in the planning and policy decisions of every agency in government. The Office for the Ageing does not comprise the whole of the government's effort in relation to taking into account the demographic tide, if you like, that is coming at it in relation to the ageing of the population. There is a range of things, and I will take on notice where they are to assist the honourable member. Some important work is going on across government about that issue.

In our particular area, in relation to services for older people, part of the ageing plan is the allocation of \$100 000 to establish a State of the Ageing report for South Australia that highlights issues and opportunities to support policy planning and services. So, this is an acknowledgment of the need to undertake that analysis. In addition, \$40 000 has been allocated to develop an ageing services atlas and other graphic technology tools to improve service planning for population needs.

Other agencies are working on this area. Indeed, our research fund more generally provides a collaborative research grant for housing for older persons in non-metropolitan areas. This project examines housing pathways for independent older people in non-metropolitan locations and

focuses on housing careers and their ability to age in place. This is a collaboration between Flinders University and DFC. I am only talking about my bits but, across government, this influences our thinking everywhere.

I do not want to give you the impression that it is only the Office for the Ageing that concerns itself with ageing. We are also conducting some other research in the Office for the Ageing. The sum of \$70 000 has been allocated to undertake a longitudinal study on ageing to provide information for policy makers, service providers and care professionals on population ageing and its consequences; \$50 000 to examine needs, issues and opportunities in relation to the use of motorised wheelchairs by older people; and \$40 000 to undertake analysis on the impact of gambling on older people. In all our endeavours, we are really looking at the effect of ageing.

The CHAIR: That concludes the section relating to ageing. We now move to the Minister for Disability.

Additional Departmental Adviser:

Ms S. Nowak, Acting Director, Office for Disability and Client Services.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will make a brief opening statement in relation to the area of disability. The 2006-07 budget for disability services really builds on considerable work over the last four years in improving services in this area. Since 2002-03, state recurrent funding for the disability services line has increased by 36 per cent. In the last budget, we allocated an extra \$38 million over the next four years for services for people with a disability. We have met every election commitment. This includes an extra \$25 million for supported accommodation, which includes 40 new group home places and 30 in-home support packages; \$40.2 million for therapy and early intervention services for autism; an extra \$6.6 million for the state's commitment to young people in residential aged nursing homes, getting young people out of nursing homes; \$4.6 million in transport subsidies to boost the SATSS scheme; and \$2 million, through Rec and Sport, for a new specialised recreation supporting grant scheme for people with disabilities.

Important work also going on at the moment involves the Supported Accommodation Task Force and the governance reforms, which are about creating Disability Services SA. We are also working very hard to ensure that both those new initiatives achieve a much better service delivery outcome for people with disabilities and their carers. The basic principle is to provide a service commitment to people with disabilities and their carers; to work in partnership with carers; to increase community-based accommodation and support; to strengthen community connection and developmental services; to build work force capacity; and to put structural reform in place to create stronger governance and accountability. We are also engaged in a very important task at the moment to renegotiate the next commonwealth-state disability agreement. Those discussions are ongoing.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to Budget Paper 2, which is, in fact, the budget speech. It provides a summary of some of the things you have been talking about. I notice improvements in the transport subsidy scheme through the provision of an additional 40 vouchers per annum and a maximum fare subsidy increase from \$30 to \$40. Is there going to be any increase in flexibility as to how people use those? I have had a number of disabled people contact me to say such things as, 'I live at Clayton and it is a bit useless being able to catch a

cab for \$40, because it just takes me a certain distance out of the town and then I can get the cab back again but I cannot actually go anywhere, and I'd like to save up the vouchers and use them as a multiple thing and have one trip to Adelaide per year and get home again.' Will any flexibility be built into the system, as well as those other changes, which are welcome?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Unfortunately, that is actually covered in the Transport portfolio, but we have been describing these things generically so, notwithstanding that, I will take that on notice and ensure that an answer is brought back for the honourable member.

Mrs REDMOND: In relation to the funding of the extra \$1 million for autism spectrum disorder there are a number of references, as well as that on page 4 of the budget speech. I know that it is to assist families, but could the minister be more specific as to what assistance will be provided? There is some reference in a later part of the budget specifically on this \$1 million, but I want to be very clear about what that million dollars will do for those families with a child with autism spectrum disorder.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will take that question on notice and obtain details on the precise form of those services, but they are directed at therapy and early intervention services. It is really responsive to the demand by, particularly, the parents of young people with autism to provide that early assessment and treatment. We had provided some one-off money that dealt with waiting lists in relation to the assessment of young people with autism, and this was a response to the early intervention and treatment processes for those same young people. I will undertake to provide a more detailed answer.

Mrs REDMOND: In Budget Paper 2 on page 12 there is reference to a shared services delivery model, which is stated as 'to simplify and streamline internal administrative services.' It appears to me that what is happening, combined with what the minister has decided to do in terms of Disability Services SA, is that we have taken these small organisations and combined them into Disability Services SA, Housing SA, Families SA and so on, and then those new super organisations will be managed by some mega combined administration. I want to clarify whether my understanding of that is correct and, if it is, where the savings come from out of that arrangement.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: There are actually two separate exercises there. There are our internal efficiencies about bringing things together and then this further exercise, the Treasury question about the shared services more generally, and they are quite separate. I cannot answer the question about the Treasury exercise because that is a matter for the Treasurer, but in relation to our exercise, it is really part and parcel of no longer having these separate boards and organisations and having them then brought into the shared services arrangements for the existing Department for Families and Communities.

Mrs REDMOND: In Budget Paper 3 at page 2.28 and in a number of places throughout the budget there is reference to once-off additional funding being provided in 2005-06 for additional supported accommodation, and so on. How much was that once-off funding? Was it part of the \$92 million the government kept talking about?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I have to get the order of this right. Certainly, some of the once-off funding was part of the \$92 million, but then further once-off funding occurred after the \$92 million but before this budget in relation to the

Bedford homes project. The \$92 million included once-off funding. I will find out the answer to how much that once-off funding was. Then there was the budget, which included recurrent funding, and in aggregate over four years that came to \$92 million. There was then the further once-off funding allocated to Bedford Industries. In 2005-06 we had \$67 million recurrent funding, which included day options accommodation support, STAT scheme, once again, students with disabilities, and funding.

On top of that was the \$25 million, so that takes you up to \$92 million of one-off funding, \$16.9 million of which was allocated to government agencies and NGOs for investing strategies, so the \$16.9 million was the one-off figure. I will need to give the honourable member the breakdown of that \$25 million figure. I do not seem to have that with me.

After that, we provided a \$5 million one-off grant to the Bedford Foundation for the Homes for 100 project. I think I need to take the question on notice and provide you with the breakdown. In broad conceptual terms, there was \$25 million as part of the \$92 million that occurred around the time of the last budget. There was then a further one-off sum of money that was provided earlier this year to the Homes for 100 project in Bedford. In this budget we have seen a further \$38 million, but I will come back and provide you with a breakdown of all of those over that period.

Mrs REDMOND: Thank you, minister, and when you do, could you perhaps give me some clarity about what is meant by 'investing strategies' because I am puzzled. Leaving aside the Bedford Homes for 100 project, if money goes in to disability and it is not buying specifically a building or some equipment, then it would seem to me that it almost inevitably needs to be recurrent. I am just curious as to what is actually meant by 'investing strategies'.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will give you one example of something where you can achieve with a one-off funding some ongoing recurrent benefits. The larger share of the \$25 million was, in fact, \$17 million to Minda, which was allocated to allow them to buy aged care licences. That had the effect of allowing them to repatriate a number of people with disabilities in their state-funded disability places into those aged care places. So, that had the potential effect of freeing up, I think, up to 50 places in those facilities, having the same recurrent effect of funding 50 additional places. That is one example where a one-off program is in the nature of an investment. In relation to the Bedford funding, Bedford is raising its own funds to match the money that we put in.

Mrs REDMOND: I think I have got my head around that. Minister, there is also a reference on that same page to younger people who have a disability: helping them to stay out of residential aged care facilities. What thought, if any, has been given to having a purpose-built nursing home specifically for younger people who do not belong in an aged care nursing home but effectively do need a nursing home and, also, I wonder whether we need to be a little bit flexible.

I have come across one situation—admittedly only one—where a younger person was actually very keen to move into a nursing home. This person had actually been there during the day, established relationships, got on very well with the older age group and was very keen to move in, but a block was put in that person's way.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think it is an important point that you raise and it is a particularly important point in rural and regional areas, where there is a trade-off sometimes between having an appropriate place to support somebody and keeping them in their own community. So it

may be that the only facility of any sort that is available—especially in some of the more remote areas—is, in fact, an aged care facility. The choice might be to be in a more age appropriate facility, but it might be out of that person's community, resulting in their being dislocated from their friends and family. So, there is a trade-off sometimes.

Ideally, in every community there would be a purpose-built disability facility. What we are really talking about here is people with a disability who do not require the level of support and assistance that is provided by a residential aged care facility. Generally speaking, there are not too many people with disabilities—unless they themselves are aged—who cannot be appropriately supported in the community in an appropriate group home or some other similar accommodation. This is really directed at those young people who are inappropriately placed in aged-care facilities. We certainly would not want to move somebody who expressed a desire to stay and their well-being was enhanced by them being in that facility. So, I accept the point that a degree of flexibility is needed.

In this area, South Australia is better off than most states. There are about 70 people aged under 50 who are identified as living in South Australian aged care facilities. South Australia was one of the first states off the mark to put its hand up for a pilot program in 2005. We have signed up, with alacrity, to the recent COAG offer, involving a five-year program that commenced on 1 July. Its initial target group is people under 50 who reside in aged care, and it is being implemented by us.

The state government has committed \$9.2 million over five years, and the commonwealth has agreed to match that amount. The aim is to move people who are currently accommodated into supported disability accommodation and also to divert future people, ensuring we close the front door on this problem. So, we are doing a much more rigorous assessment exercise before people are just placed there because it is the only place for them to go. The net reduction target has been set between 28 and 40 people over the life of the program. But on a per capita basis we are doing better than most.

Mrs REDMOND: Moving on to page 2.29, 'Savings and expenditure initiatives', under 'Operating initiatives' there is a heading of 'Electricity concessions—additional administration costs', and a significant amount of money is being put into that. Taking on board what the minister said about the fact that there has not been a great deal of uptake, and taking on board what I said that there did not appear to be much extra money to actually put towards concessions, I am puzzled then as to why there is such an apparent increase in the cost of administering what is essentially the same amount of money.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The Auditor-General's Report you would have noticed over the last few years continued to raise questions about whether everybody who is getting the concessions are really the people who are entitled to it. So there has certainly been much greater demands for us to tidy up, if you like, the books to make sure there is a match between the concession receiver and their eligibility. So a fair amount of effort has been going into that over the last few years. True, this was a cost pressure when we have been putting that extra effort in, and this now regularises, if you like, the additional resources that have been put into that area. It is also not unrelated to the question you asked earlier about understanding the demographic. Because this is an area of potential growth we really do need

to understand why this area is not growing; whether we are missing people. It is unfortunate that there is not an easy relationship between the commonwealth and the state. Technologically the sharing of information could be a little easier if there were not the sort of privacy concerns that are raised around having to go through separate statutory authorities that now provide a range of our utilities.

Mrs REDMOND: To standardise the basis upon which people get concessions, and then the commonwealth would say, 'Well, we'd better run that,' and then we and go round and round in circles. This next question may just expose my inability to read and understand budget documents, but going from that line under operating initiatives 'Electricity concessions—additional administration costs', I was then puzzled by the second item under 'Savings initiatives' which is 'Administrative efficiencies—concession administration costs', and where there is nothing for the first three years, but the estimate for 2009-10 has a million dollars as a saving. I do not understand the correlation between the initiative listed in the first part and the saving listed in the other part.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: No, it is a good question. It is simply that it is costing us more now to administer it, and we are actually going to be exploring some new technology to actually reduce the cost of doing it. That is obviously in year 4. We have got our cost pressures now and so, over time, we are looking at ways in which we can drag that back down again.

Mrs REDMOND: While we are down on those savings initiatives, can the minister explain what the 'Accommodation Cost Reduction—relocation of Independence and Community Connection to Julia Farr' refers to? Again, it is something that does not actually bob up in terms of an actual figure until 2009-10, and I would just like to know why.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think if you are looking at 'Investing initiatives', under which there is 'Accommodation Cost Reduction—relocation of Independence and Community Connection to Julia Farr'—is that the line?

Mrs REDMOND: Yes.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We are actually being allocated money there—\$1 million in 2007-08 and \$2 million in 2008-09—essentially to facilitate the consolidation of some administrative offices on that Julia Farr site.

Mrs REDMOND: Can I explore that a bit further because I really want to be a clear about what is going to be happening at the Julia Farr site. I can see the figures you are referring to of \$1 million and \$2 million, but then the year after that, on the next section, under 'Savings initiatives', there appears to be \$870 000 in savings, so could you perhaps explain that first of all?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Well, if you are not in those other buildings—for instance IDSC and those other buildings, there is quite a lot of administrative costs associated with being in the other premises that we presently lease, whereas we own Julia Farr now.

Mrs REDMOND: You own Julia Farr?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We occupy the property—I think we are about to own it.

Mrs REDMOND: My understanding was—

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The arrangements are, though, that we do not have to pay rent on Julia Farr, and in the arrangements we have reached with Julia Farr that will be ours for those purposes. So we are consolidating our administrative arrangements on one site and that will cause a saving.

Mrs REDMOND: So is that the administrative arrangements for the whole of all that Disability Services SA—is that what that refers to?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes.

Mrs REDMOND: The Independence and Community Connection—is that what we are now calling it?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes. We are calling it Disability Services SA from the point of view of the community. Within my department there are five strands of things we do, and one of them that describes a whole range of things, including Disability, is Independence and Community Connection.

Mrs REDMOND: Is Disability Services going to be served at all out of the building at 108 North Terrace?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think the core policy area will probably remain where the rest of the head office corporate services are, but the line agency arrangements, all of that will be in Julia Farr. I think that is the present thinking, anyway.

Mrs REDMOND: I noticed in the budget, a page or two on from there, there is actually quite a significant amount of money being put to 108 North Terrace, and one of the questions I was going to come to concerns what is being done at 108 North Terrace for that quite significant amount of money. I think it is about \$4 million. Can the minister explain what that is and what will be housed in there for that extra money?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: DFC is all over the place because it used to be part of the Department of Human Services, so there are people scattered around the city. Over time we are trying to bring them all into one place and consolidate them in the Riverside Centre on North Terrace and also (because they cannot all fit there) in the EDS building across the road. So some of that money is for that, as well.

Mrs REDMOND: With respect to the governance reforms that are leading to all this, my understanding is that there will be a number of premises throughout the state that will no longer be occupied. My recollection is that there will be some sort of rationalisation of the number of offices and, because you have disability and housing and so on all going into one, there will be a significant reduction. Can the minister indicate how many of the buildings are owned by the government and whether or not it is proposed to sell those off?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will have to take that on notice. However, the broad issue is that DFC now has basically three identifiable parts (or slightly more than that), which are disability, housing and families. The idea is to collocate them, and it may not necessarily be the disability premises that are freed up in the process—I suppose it depends on which are the most convenient. Perhaps new facilities may need to be built. Obviously, Mount Gambier presented a particular opportunity because it burned down, but that is not a policy—

Mrs REDMOND: It was a fortuitous burning down.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes; however, you can imagine that with leases and the way things work that will be a gradual process.

Mrs REDMOND: Still on that point, if buildings are being sold off will the moneys from that go into general revenue or will they be earmarked for the various strands of your department?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: When you sell any government land there is a strict policy around the disposal

of those assets, and I think the orthodox position is that the disposition of money is determined by cabinet. Of course, some of it is leases, which obviously represent a recurrent saving that would be captured by the agency, but presumably some of it is property that we own, and that would be subject to what I could persuade my colleagues of in a cabinet process.

Mrs REDMOND: Still on the whole governance alteration and the new situation, I want to ask about staffing. There has been a large increase in the work force for Families SA, incorporated government disability organisations and SAHT, which is referred to in Budget Paper 4 on pages 11.11 and 11.12. Can the minister break that down and advise how many full-time equivalents went into the incorporated government disability organisations?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: There is already a breakdown in relation—

Mrs REDMOND: You have the work force summary there indicating that an increase of 729 full-time equivalents between 2004-05 actual and the estimated results for 2005-06 is largely attributable to an increase in the work force for Families SA, incorporated government disability service organisations and SAHT. I want to know whether the minister is able to identify how many of that increased work force went into the disability organisations. The explanation is on page 11.12 under 'Work force summary'. What is the breakdown of the 729?

The CHAIR: Something more than is on the table above? I do not understand your question and the minister might be in trouble as well.

Mrs REDMOND: Am I right that roughly one-third of that 729 went into that area?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I am sorry; I think I do have that answer but I wanted to make sure I had it right. The incorporated government disability service organisations were:

- 143.1 FTEs for additional staff at IDSC;
- 33 FTEs for casual positions at Julia Farr;
- 22.3 FTEs for new group home services at Fourth Avenue, Cedar Avenue and Cawthorne Crescent;
- 17.8 FTEs at Julia Farr arising out of the disbanding of CASA;
- 14.8 FTEs for additional staff for IDSC for a range of things—6 FTEs for the Northlink program, 5.2 FTEs for the emergency accommodation program, one psychologist for the behavioural management program, and 2.3 FTEs for the volunteer services program; and
- another 4 FTEs for IDSC—

Mrs REDMOND: Minister, I think that is probably sufficient for the purposes, because it was really a preliminary question.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Sorry—offset by 2.9 FTEs for reduced staffing requirements within ILC.

Mrs REDMOND: On page 11.11, the first dot point under the heading 'Disability Changes: Key Elements' is a reference to every person needing a service coordinator. I think, from what you have said, those service coordinators will have to be new people, will they, because the people you have already engaged are not doing that particular job? So can the minister indicate whether that is the case and, if so, indicate how many service coordinators there will be and where they will get the training for what is apparently going to be quite a complex job of navigating people from cradle to grave through their disability service needs?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: This, of course, is not the entire work force for IDSC, or for government disability service organisations; that is set out in the budget papers estimate at about 2015. There is going to be a reconfiguration about how we do business, basically. So it will be retraining and reorientation of our existing resources. There is already a very large number of people involved in what was formally known as ‘options coordinations’. So it will be about the reallocation of those resources to that end.

Mrs REDMOND: Can the minister supply some information on how those people will receive training, and is there any connection between the need to train those people and the reference that I saw somewhere in the documents referring to a college of learning for people in the Department for Families and Communities?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes; it will be accredited training and it will be provided in a college that we have established within DFC for these purposes. That is a new initiative and it is something that we think will be crucial in achieving our aims in relation to this new role.

Mrs REDMOND: Minister, I still puzzle over this idea of the single waiting list, and it is referred to again at dot point 3 on page 11.11. I just puzzle as to how one can have a single waiting list when different people clearly have different disabilities and different needs. Someone who is blind has completely different needs to someone who is in a wheelchair, who has completely different needs to someone who has intellectual disability and to someone who has a combination of numerous other things. Equally, some people have different needs because of differences in family support, in terms of age, in terms of all sorts of things, as the minister can readily imagine.

So I am puzzled as to how one contemplates a single waiting list, or is what you are talking about actually a series of single waiting lists? If that is the case, that single waiting list in any given area, whether it be for the provision of a wheelchair or for respite care or whatever, presumably is not just a list created and you are plonked on it; there must be some sort of assessment as to priority, such as what happens with the Housing Trust. Is that the case?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is right. As you say, it is a series of single waiting lists. It is to overcome the difficulty of people being on numerous lists. Sometimes there might be two lists, but they might actually be almost mutually inconsistent. You might be seeking respite because you can’t get supported accommodation, so a carer might be seeking respite, and they might be on that list, but they might also be on a list for supported accommodation, in which case they would come off the list for respite.

In circumstances of shortage, people get on lists; they try and get on as many as they possibly can in the hope that one day they will reach the top of the list. So we are trying to overcome that anxiety. If people hear about a new service they say, ‘Quick, I’d better get myself on that list.’ It should not rely upon people having to hunt around to look for these things.

So the objective is for us to maintain, if you like, a consolidated and coordinated single place of entry and people can then be allocated to where they need to go. The individual service providers are not the keepers of those lists; rather, it is the system that is the keeper of the lists.

Mrs REDMOND: In terms of those service coordinators, the people who are going to help them from cradle to grave to navigate all of this, will they have a role in advocating for the needs and for the assessment as to where the person

should be on the list and that sort of thing, or are they purely an administrative assistant to them?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The idea is to come up with a single assessment system so that there will be a package of services that are specific to the needs of that person. Regarding the advocacy role, and there is quite a rich advocacy sector which is funded, it is not intended for that to disappear; those disability advocates will still play their role. What we hope is that they will be spending less time advocating. A lot of time is taken up at the moment with people asking for things that are not there, so there should be more clarity around that. A lot of time is wasted in that respect, where people talk to advocates—so a lot of the resources of the system are really going to a fairly non-productive purpose, and the aim is to redirect that. It will also be integrated with the sorts of accommodation services that will be available through the affordable housing arrangements that exist through Housing SA.

Mrs REDMOND: I am still puzzled as to how it is all intended to work. I can understand that you have lots of people who join lots of lists and they do not necessarily need to be on this queue and that queue. I understand there is a need to rationalise that and take out the doubling up. I think the minister and I are well aware of each other’s views, and we have a philosophical difference in that the minister thinks that government departments can do things better and I tend to think that private organisations can do things better. Will services generally still be provided, though, through smaller agencies rather than through the department?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We still fully expect that there will be quite a rich non-government sector. We are committed to the services that are provided at the moment by the non-government sector continuing. That is not to say there might not be adjustments at the margin. What tends to happen in disability services is that people with more complex needs tend to fall back into the government system and some government organisations—not exclusively—are not necessarily set up to handle the most complex of our clients. The disability sector has always had a very rich involvement by the non-government sector and we fully expect that to continue. Indeed, if anything, we have created a new non-government organisation through the floating back of Julia Farr. It was an incorporated health unit and it will now go back to being a non-government organisation. Our partnerships with organisations such as Bedford and Minda will continue, and, if anything, we would expect to see an expansion of the range of things offered through the non-government sector.

So, while there is probably a much greater degree of coordination of the entry points and the assessment processes so that we can gain a much clearer understanding of the service system and the service needs over time and we can be much clearer with citizens about what they can expect from the service system, that does not mean to say that it is our intention to move into the area of service provision in a much more extensive way than we do at the moment.

[Sitting suspended from 12.33 to 2 p.m.]

Membership:

Ms Chapman substituted for Mrs Redmond.

The CHAIR: We have no new lines to open, only the timetable to clarify. According to the information I have 2 to 3 p.m. is devoted to the South Australian Housing Trust, the

Aboriginal Housing Authority, HomeStart and the South Australian Community Housing Authority. Is that the minister's understanding?

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I understand that there is agreement to a different timetable: that the first session go from 2 to 2.45 p.m. and the next session from 2.45 until 3.30 p.m. We will not be asking questions.

Ms CHAPMAN: I indicate that our understanding is that some members of the committee do not have many questions to ask.

The CHAIR: I think that is a slight exaggeration. Perhaps it is that some members of the committee will refrain from asking questions.

Ms CHAPMAN: No, first that some members will not be asking many questions and as a consequence others will be asking a reduced number of questions. Accordingly, we will not be using up the entire time. In consultation with the minister's office that matter has been acknowledged.

The CHAIR: Minister, do you have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: This has been a period in the housing portfolio of significant activity. Obviously the housing plan for South Australia has been the focal point of our activities and a significant change in the way in which we organise ourselves, with significant reforms to the housing sector, bringing together a range of former statutory authorities into a concept now called Housing SA, containing now a new asset services division, a new housing policy and strategy division, and a new affordable South Australian Housing Trust. HomeStart Finance remains a separate statutory authority within that group. Very soon I will be tabling or giving notice to the house of a new affordable housing bill, which will address a number of these issues.

The main agency within the portfolio ranks is the Housing Trust and the national social housing survey has for the sixth time ranked South Australia first of all the other states in terms of customer satisfaction. We have also received numerous awards from industry associations in recognition of achievements in urban development and design. We have also been busy developing a range of new products, including the equity start loan, and we are on target to achieve 500 equity start settlements by 30 June 2007. We are well on the way to that with 441 loans having been settled to date. Earlier this year HomeStart celebrated its 50 000th home household loan since its inception in 1989.

We have also participated in a vision for developing a stronger community housing sector project, which was initiated and developed by the Office for Community Housing. Two other very important projects worthy of note are the Roseanne Haggerty Common Ground project to establish a similar arrangement here in South Australia, and the billion dollar Playford North project announced in February 2006, which will involve the redevelopment and community renewal of Smithfield Plains and Davoren Park areas and the creation of a new community on the greenfield lands at Munno Para West and Andrews Farm South.

The CHAIR: Does the deputy leader have an opening statement?

Ms CHAPMAN: In relation to this aspect of the budget, perhaps the SA Council of Social Service got it right when it published on 21 September 2006:

Adjustments to housing funds and the apparent axing of the energy efficiency program for low income households will affect vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians.

It is of concern to the opposition that in this year's budget there are a number of features that will be well remembered. First, we are in the last year of the existence of the Aboriginal Housing Authority as an independent body, as in next year's budget papers is its amalgamation. Whilst we take no quarter with the government in its capacity to make policy decisions about absorbing this, it is disappointing to note a target for 2005-06 of only a 2 per cent increase for Aboriginal housing, a staggeringly low target, and it could not even achieve that. However, we have only a 0.7 per cent increase in provision in that area. That does not auger well for the future of Aboriginal housing, which will hereafter be absorbed in the new structure.

Perhaps the other area of significance in the cuts that have been announced and have received some rather scant comment from both the minister and Treasurer as to their effect on the people concerned was, first, the \$5 million saving the government will make by charging more rent for aged people in cottage and bed sit accommodation. These are clearly very vulnerable people in the community and, although comment has been made by government representatives that this is only a small change, for the government to reap \$5 million out of the aged is an absolute disgrace. Similarly, to save some \$18.2 million by changing the formula for access to the private rent assistance program, clothed and concealed on the basis of its being necessary to deal with the alleged lack of commonwealth contribution, is a scandalous irresponsibility.

This is affected because we are now going to see a formula that applies to single parents. When their pension is taken into account, the \$50, \$60 or \$70 extra a week they get to feed their children will be taken into account for the purposes of assessing their rent. It is true that this may make a difference of \$5, \$10 or \$15 a week but, for the types of incomes we are talking about, the relativity is absolutely critical. I think that this is a dangerous precedent for the government to embark upon because it will increase the number of the 800-plus people who we know are on the streets every night and, because there are no other immediate resources proposed by the government throughout the whole budget, other than in the area of disability, obviously there will be an increasing demand.

We have the situation of public housing and the creation of new facilities to accommodate people at a poverty level or who are in high need, and to then reduce the opportunity for those people to go into the private rental market (which is the alternative to sleeping on the street, on someone else's lounge chair or in a car) means the difference in their being able to access suitable accommodation. I think that it has been an important initiative of state governments to provide this type of support in the past, and I think that it is shameful that the government should cancel it. However, some other aspects of the budget initiatives are to be commended, and they have been alluded to. Not surprisingly, they are the ones that have the attention of the government in a statement that has been released, and we will support those initiatives.

I refer to Budget Paper 3, chapter 2, pages 2.28 and 2.29. The budget describes 'a reduction in State expenditure on housing to eliminate over matching under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement'. We now know that this relates to the increase in Housing Trust rents for aged people who live in bed-sitter accommodation and to the cut to private rent assistance programs, to which I have just referred, resulting in a saving of some \$23 million for the government. When were these two initiatives first made available to the

public in South Australia? During which period, if at all, has the commonwealth ever provided matching funding for them?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The reality is that, over a period of time, the commonwealth's contribution has fallen in terms of its commitment to the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, whereas the state, even though it was not obliged to, maintained its contribution in relation to that agreement, adjusted by CPI increases. This has meant that, under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, there is an increment above that which we were obliged to contribute in order to meet the terms of that agreement and our current contribution. It is in relation to that that we have sought a saving, which has been offset by the revenue measures that have been introduced in relation to closure of the rent relief and the other arrangements that have been discussed.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 3, chapter 2, page 2.29. What are the savings to the government by increasing the rent on discounted accommodation, bed-sitters and small cottage rent, which is largely used for older pensioners, from 19 per cent to 21 per cent of income?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: There are no actual savings to the government. What happens is that all the money stays in the social housing system; it is just that, to a certain extent, it offsets the reduction in the over matching you identified earlier.

Ms CHAPMAN: What is the amount?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The amount is the net effect of the money that is raised in relation to those revenue measures and the over-matching, which is in the order of \$5 million in the fourth year of the arrangements because the rent increases are staggered and phased in. If you want a precise figure, I can give you that, but it is in the order of \$5 million by the fourth year of the forward estimates.

Ms CHAPMAN: What are the projected savings for the government, and/or in the same form you have described, by passing on excess water charges to tenants? How much in excess water charges did the government pay on behalf of tenants in the 2005-06 year?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I have given you the aggregate figure of the effect across all the various saving initiatives. I can, on notice, provide you with a breakdown of the particular initiatives in each of the areas, if you wish. If you are going to ask a series of these questions about each of the discrete elements, I am happy to provide you with information on how each of those contributes to the overall additional revenue held in the social housing system.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you. I will note that that question is on notice.

The CHAIR: Is that the intention, minister—that you provide that information subsequently and not now?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Yes. I think that there is a range of other things, such as the rent relief scheme, and we will set out all those measures.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 5, page 43. Under 'Annual programs' the South Australian Housing Trust is to receive \$6.864 million to upgrade its offices for fitout and equipment. At which sites will this money be spent and does this include the cost of restructuring and establishing the new Housing SA? If it is not included, is there a separate budget line for this and, if so, how much is allocated?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The lion's share of that amount is spent on ICT investment. The smaller part of it is in relation to actual fitout of office accommodation. There is no new office accommodation for the South Australian

Housing Trust or the Housing SA offices implied in this figure. It would be in the order of magnitude of \$5 million and the balance in other measures, but I will provide the deputy leader with a clearer breakdown of what that sum comprises, if she wishes.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you, and the site or sites where it will be spent?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Certainly.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 4, volume 3, page 11.92. I note that the annual programs for capital works in 2005-06 were underspent by \$18.8 million, and one of the factors detailed as an explanation for this is 'rescheduling capital works for later years'. I suppose it is stating the obvious but, given the chronic need for housing, what possible explanation does the government have for delaying these capital works that were approved, assessed and budgeted for last year?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The \$18.8 million variation is comprised of numerous factors, and it might be sensible to take the question on notice rather than running through them in detail. However, the broad point that needs to be made is that in 2004-05 the actual expenditure was \$97 million, so the estimated result of \$110 million is still a substantial increase on 2004-05 and really reflects the lumpiness of capital expenditure and the effect of slippage, essentially, in what occurs with large building and construction programs, especially in circumstances of an overheated housing market where often tenders are delayed while evaluations are made concerning rescoping of projects or deferring of projects.

There is a range of factors, including some reclassification of certain expenditure as recurrent expenditure; that came to \$4.5 million. I will provide a more detailed response on what the \$18.8 million decrease involves. Another particular factor, amounting to a \$5 million impact, is a land swap involving the Land Management Corporation in respect of Seaford Meadows. So, this \$18.8 million decrease comprises a range of factors, but it still represents a substantial increase on 2004-05.

Ms CHAPMAN: I look forward to receiving that information, minister. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.79. In July this year the minister announced the formation of a working party comprising business leaders who would kick-start development projects to provide housing for rough sleepers, similar to the Common Ground projects in New York. Has any money been allocated to the minister's announced Common Ground project working party, and how often has it met?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: This is a very exciting project. The basis for it was first identified in the housing plan where some moneys were set aside for new transitional accommodation for people who had been homeless. In order to progress this response, we relied heavily on Rosanne Haggerty (the founder of Common Ground, New York), who visited Adelaide as a Thinker in Residence.

The affordable housing innovation fund approved a \$5 million capital contribution to this project with recurrent funds of \$0.5 million to support the component of the Common Ground facility that has been identified as support needs. In July 2006, Rosanne Haggerty returned to Adelaide to fulfil the second part of her Thinkers in Residence commitment. The Common Ground concept was given a further push. During Rosanne Haggerty's visit we hosted a dinner with 70 of South Australia's business community, and a group of business leaders volunteered to take this concept

forward and to set up a future legal structure and a board. Not only has this approach provided new perspectives on the concept of a partnership with the private sector, it also allows us to use the private sector business practices and innovation to solve this particular issue.

Donations are expected to range from in-kind support (such as renovating a floor of a building) through to in-principle sponsorships greater than \$1 million. Other sponsorship ideas include scholarships and mentoring. The business leaders' group has met almost on a weekly basis since September 2006, has visited projects for homeless people and committed resources in the form of assessment of various buildings, including an engineer's evaluation and a future agreement to fund PR and advertising.

DMAW lawyers have agreed to undertake the legal work to establish Common Ground Adelaide Company Limited on a pro bono basis. The Helpmann Academy has expressed interest in a joint Arts in Residence initiative, with Helpmann to raise funds for the artists and Common Ground funding the accommodation component.

The business leaders' group is highly committed and well aware of the need to demonstrate a tangible result in order to maintain momentum. This month (October) a luncheon has been held in New York, co-hosted by John Olsen, the former premier of the state and now Consul-General, and Ambassador Robert Hill, former senator for South Australia, with major corporate sponsors from Common Ground in the US, to assist in the fund-raising effort. I understand that was a successful event. We are very happy with the momentum that has been generated around this particular project.

Ms CHAPMAN: Perhaps you could clarify how much money has been allocated in the budget by the government?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Theoretically, \$5 million has been allocated. There are a number of potential projects and it may be that we will choose a particular project that will not expend all of those funds. It could be that we look to more than one site to progress this project. But certainly \$5 million has been earmarked.

Ms CHAPMAN: Where is that in the budget?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: It does not exist in the budget because the budget papers do not deal with the South Australian Housing Trust; it is a separate statutory authority and its accounts are not dealt with in the Portfolio Statements that are presented on budget day. The cash actually sits within the Housing Trust but you will not find it in these budget papers.

Ms CHAPMAN: So there is money allocated to the South Australian Housing Trust—which it expends—and it has been provided in this report. So where in the money that you give to the Housing Trust is the line for this?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Interestingly, it was out of the \$37 million that was hidden away in the Department of Health, when the Department of Health used to rob the Department of Housing, which is something that your predecessor, the member for Finnis, presided over.

Ms CHAPMAN: You have still kept it, have you?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We took it back. We put it back into housing where it belonged and, as part of the housing plan, we earmarked a proportion of that (\$6.5 million) to be applied to projects of this sort. So, the Housing Trust holds that amount for projects of this sort.

Ms CHAPMAN: Has it already been allocated in a previous year? Is my understanding correct: that it is in the hands of the Housing Trust and it is at their discretion as to how they then implement it?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The chain of events was that \$37.266 million of Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement moneys was repatriated back from the Department of Human Services to the South Australian Housing Trust; \$6.5 million of that was then earmarked for projects of this sort, and \$5 million of that was earmarked for something in the nature of Common Ground. What proportion of that will be spent on a particular project is yet to be determined.

Ms CHAPMAN: We will look forward to seeing that in the annual accounts of the South Australian Housing Trust in due course. Thank you.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.91. A highlight for 2005-06 was, 'Implemented improved measures to prevent and manage disruptive tenancies'. As you are aware, minister, this continues to be a major issue for residents in Housing Trust accommodation, particularly as new tenancies are made available to people with complex needs facing high levels of poverty and health issues, particularly mental health issues, disabilities and the like. The opposition acknowledges that this is always a challenge, and the government has accorded these areas priority.

However, this objective is not repeated in the 2006-07 targets. Do I presume that that is because it has been achieved, or do you as a minister think it has been achieved and that there is no longer a problem? What funding therefore, if any, has been budgeted for to address this ongoing and quite alarming issue for tenants who are in the law-abiding peaceful category and are simply not getting access to relief from disruptive tenants and are sick to death of them?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I note the honourable member was blaggarding the Housing Trust on radio during the day. This is a pretty easy target for the opposition to score some cheap points. However, the truth is that we regard the management of disruptive tenancies as core business and, whilst it received a particular focus while we were responding to the recommendations of the select committee into disruptive tenancies undertaken by the Statutory Authorities Review Committee of the parliament, and whilst not all the work we undertake in the housing portfolio is referred to in the budget papers, it remains part of the fundamental core business of our social housing agencies to ensure that they not only care for the needs of tenants but take responsibility for the broader community in which their housing assets reside.

It is fundamental to and part of the core business of housing agencies to ensure that they maintain the peace and serenity of the surrounding neighbourhood in relation to their housing assets. There is no separate budget line for this but, in fact, much of the work of housing managers is directed to this end. There have been some important improvements. We are not suggesting that this has necessarily completely resolved the issues, but we have made some important advances in relation to this area. In 2005-06, Housing SA was contacted on 3 073 occasions regarding neighbours' disputes or alleged disruptive behaviour, but the actual number of disputes is smaller than this, because this includes multiple contacts.

During the first two months of 2006-07, Housing SA was contacted on 489 occasions regarding neighbours' disputes or alleged disruptive behaviour. Once again, the number would have been smaller than this. Of the complaints lodged, 66 per cent related to noise and general nuisance—loud parties and those sorts of things. During the first three months of 2006-07, Housing SA was contacted on 751 occasions

regarding neighbours' disputes or alleged disruptive behaviour by public housing tenants, and of those 64 per cent related to noise and general nuisance.

At any point in time, approximately 250 contacts regarding disruptive issues are being actively managed, of which approximately 8 per cent are considered serious and require our urgent intervention. We respond to the complaints lodged with policy guidelines reflective of the assessment of the severity. An evaluation of disruptive tenancy policy procedures and the computer systems was undertaken late in 2005, and that revealed that the use of the policy and systems provided a much improved framework. I know that when we reported back to the Statutory Authorities Review Committee, it was very pleased with the steps we had taken.

A range of changes have occurred in relation to the practices in relation to Residential Tenancies Tribunal matters where police are taking a much more active role in providing evidence that can support tenants who are concerned with not giving evidence themselves. That has enabled us to secure a number of evictions in circumstances where those tenants otherwise would be unwilling to present evidence before a tribunal for fear of reprisals.

There is an element of disruptive behaviour related to questions of mental disability and the lack of support for people in social housing situations. We have been dealing with that in a range of ways with our public housing liaison officers, and also by ensuring that appropriate services are brought in through our disability services portfolio. Appropriate services are brokered in to support those tenants who need additional assistance to cope with their disability.

Also, an important set of relationships have been established between both Housing SA and the police and Housing SA and mental health services through the preparation and execution of memorandums of understanding. Those memorandums of understanding have also assisted us to develop information-sharing protocols which are also important in ensuring that these issues are effectively and speedily dealt with.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 3, pages 3 to 10. The *Government Gazette* of 13 July 2006 states that land tax receipts in the March quarter for 2006 were low compared with the same quarter a year ago due to the earlier timing of land tax payments by the South Australian Housing Trust in 2005-06. The Housing Trust land tax liability for 2004-05 of \$97.1 million was paid into Treasury in the March quarter of 2004-05, and the trust's 2005-06 land tax liability of \$115.9 million was brought forward and paid in the December quarter of 2005-06. Will the minister advise the policy reason for this change and whether the Housing Trust had to borrow funds to finance this payment?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Sometimes I get asked this question, usually by new members of parliament. It relates to a thing called the tax equivalent regime, which will not make a whole lot of sense to you, except that it does not have a real impact—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Well, it does to me as well. It is one of those—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think it has a bit to do with commonwealth competition policy and the way in which they see government business enterprises act as though they were private business enterprises. What actually happens is that it does not have any net effect on the Housing Trust in real terms: it is money that has to show up and then is

essentially reimbursed. The South Australian Housing Trust is liable for payments under the tax equivalent regime (TER). They include land tax, and I think that is what your question related to.

In recent years the amount has increased, but the trust is fully reimbursed by the state government to comply with the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. It is an accounting exercise that appears on the book, but it does not have any real impact on the accounts of the South Australian Housing Trust. You might ask, 'Why would you do such a thing?', and that is a very good question. However, it is a requirement of the commonwealth.

Mr PENGILLY: As a supplementary question, was the minister asked by the Treasurer or Treasury to bring forward the payment of the South Australian Housing Trust land tax liability?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I have no recollection of that. I think this has occurred just in the ordinary course, but I probably need to check on that. I do not think this is any different from the way in which it operates in other years, but I probably need to check that in case there was some communication I presently cannot recall.

Ms CHAPMAN: I have a question in relation to Aboriginal housing, and then I will read a number of omnibus questions that the minister may or may not have already been provided details of in any previous session. In relation to Aboriginal housing (page 11.82), the average rent charged in 2004-05 as compared with 2005-06 was an additional \$13. The budget papers reveal that it was based on the Valuer-General's recommended rent. Why is it, minister, that the poorest people are required to pay rent according to the value of their properties when, clearly, their income has not increased in this time?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think the proper way of reading that particular line is the actual rent charged; it is not the rent paid. It is based on market rent. Those people, who would still have subsidised rent because it is pegged having regard to their income, would not be affected except to the extent that their income had increased. I think that line should be read as average rent charged, not average rent paid.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to page 11.80, again in relation to Aboriginal housing and the cost of service. The 2005-06 budget provided for \$18.82 million, and the estimated results reveal an under-expenditure of \$613 000 down to \$18.169 million. Why was this money not spent?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I would have thought that, in the world of capital programs, coming in within \$800 000 is regarded as landing almost on the eye of a needle. It reflects what I mentioned before, that it is very difficult to land your capital programs in one 12-month period given the vagaries of planning proposals and approvals, tender processes, and the costs associated with the quite over-heated housing construction market.

Ms CHAPMAN: Madam Chair, I have been advised that there are a couple of omnibus questions that have not been included so I propose to read those now, with your approval. This refers to Budget Paper 3, page 2.3, table 2.4: across government savings and implementation costs, and the shared services reforms across government. First, can the minister outline the baseline costs for the provision of corporate services in each of the departments and agencies for which he is responsible? The baseline cost is to include the current total cost of the provision of payroll, finance, human resources, procurement, records management, and information technology services, as well as the full-time equivalent

staffing numbers involved. In addition, what particular issues from the departments and agencies for which the minister is responsible need to be resolved with the proposed centralised shared services unit?

The second question relates to Budget Paper 4, page 4.12, which I understand relates to the work force summary. I have not checked this myself, but I understand that the work force summary table shows that between 2004-05 and the 2005-06 estimated result there is an increase of full-time equivalent staff going into the department, and between the 2005-06 estimated result and the 2006-07 budget estimate there is a further full-time equivalent increase going into the department. Could the minister provide a breakdown of the increase in each of those years, indicating which branches of the department and agencies? I think the minister will already be on notice that the other work force questions, which are included, relate to numbers of employees over a certain limit and, I think, a breakdown in relation to consultants and contractors. There does not appear to be anything that overlaps, so I hope that is clear.

The CHAIR: We will now move to Families and Communities.

Additional Departmental Adviser:

Ms B. Dunning, Executive Director, Families SA.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will make a brief opening statement in relation to this matter. This is the second year into Keeping Them Safe, the South Australian government's program to reform child protection services and systems. We have been making extraordinary progress. The amendments and changes to the child protection legislation are on track, being systematically proclaimed and worked through as we speak. The Council for Care of Children, the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee and the Guardian for Children and Young People are all in place and working. During the past year there have been fewer notifications of child abuse and neglect, with a 14 per cent decrease in the number of notifications screened for investigation or assessment, and an even larger decrease for Aboriginal children, with 16 per cent fewer notifications for investigation or assessment. There are also fewer confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in 2005-06, with a 22 per cent decline in the number of investigated cases where abuse was deemed to have occurred.

It is too early to be jumping for joy about those sorts of figures—and I could safely predict a small increase would be likely to occur with our mandatory reporting regime expanded to cover a number of additional categories; and that will come into effect at the end of this year, training with those people having occurred this year—but it does seem to indicate that the approach we are taking in terms of encouraging people to see child protection as everyone's business, not just the business of child protection agencies, seems to be beginning to have some effect. The important initiatives concerning the home visiting service from nurses, our sustained home visiting follow-up and our Stronger Babies, Safer Families program are also assisting in that regard.

The past year has seen the greatest number of children ever residing in out-of-home care. In order to support this we now have the most foster parents in the history of this state. We are also supporting through placements a greater number of children in kinship care than ever before. This is a growing phenomenon. Recognising the need to deal with this, I announced recently a document entitled 'Keeping Them Safe

in Our Care—new directions action plan'. It is about an overhaul of our out-of-home care system which is under extraordinary pressure. It arises out of many things we have learnt through the Layton review. We have incorporated a new initiative, the Rapid Response, which is a whole of government commitment to young people in our care. That has achieved excellent results so far. A number of agencies are providing additional support and services to guardianship children, including access to dental services, take-up of baseline health assessments, access to mental health services, take-up of TAFE courses and individual education plans in school; and also negotiations with Housing SA for young people to make a transition out of care.

A very important announcement in the budget is our commitment to rebuild our youth detention facilities—a longstanding demand. I know the member for Morialta (who is present) has been a fierce advocate for this over a number of years. The finalisation of the project brief is well under way.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Well, she was talking to me long before she came in here; poor old Joyce has been asking for this, as well. Finally we have got there. We recognise that child and youth protection issues are a critical part of our work. I want to mention another two highlights: the Carers Recognition Act, where we are promoting the interests of carers; and the important improvements we have made in the government's equity concession scheme.

The CHAIR: Before calling the deputy leader, I mention I was able to attend the celebration of The Corner House recently and heard from some of the parents who have been supported by it. In terms of the decrease in notifications it seems clear that that is a service that is assisting in the decrease of notifications of level 3 child abuse issues.

Ms CHAPMAN: Again, the SA Council of Social Service is illuminating in their assessment in relation to this area. It is a difficult area for anyone in government to deal with those who are most vulnerable and need protection, and largely that relates to our children. So it is an important feature of the attention of any government. Their comment in this regard was particularly their concern as to the 'cuts to anti-poverty services'. We endorse those comments, particularly as the Treasurer's speech—which went on for some time, as his speeches usually do—included an announcement about the increased demands for children suffering from autism and similar conditions and some disability housing support, but otherwise did not mention this. Given the high level of child protection issues—Justice Layton QC's report, presented some three years ago to the state government, and Mr Ted Mullighan's inquiry in relation to the abuse of children in institutional care—it was staggering to think that there should be absolutely no reference to the priorities of this government during the forthcoming budget period.

Nonetheless, when we look at the detail it is important to identify that, although the government have announced some commitment to the rebuilding of the youth detention centre currently located at Magill, apart from some investigative money over the next two years, the member for Morialta might have noted there is absolutely no moneys allocated thereafter to actually build the thing. So it is very disappointing that the provision of funding in this budget and the forward estimates is for preliminary and maintenance work, fixing up the security and fire security at the current Magill facility, but is otherwise inadequate provision.

Another aspect of concern for the opposition is that the provision of care by foster carers in South Australia has had national media attention. There have been national conferences. The government has announced that it has issued a discussion paper in relation to what it may do, including providing petrol vouchers for foster carers. That is a start but, frankly, given that it is three years after we received Her Honour's report, it is very disappointing that it takes the national media to announce yet another talkfest and yet another discussion paper for consultation for this matter to be addressed. I only hope that the minister will deal with that issue rapidly and ensure that some consideration is given to these people in next year's budget, because I can see none in this year's.

Another aspect is in relation to the provision of capital works for this area. Whilst it is always acknowledged that those who are working hard in this area for the protection of our children need accommodation which is able to give them some level of morale in what is otherwise a very challenging area of work, to have announced over \$4 million of expenditure on refurbishment of offices does carry the taint of some lack of priority when we still have a major problem in relation to child abuse, particularly when we know that the bulk of the 100 people who have been referred to the police under the Mullighan inquiry have yet to even be investigated by the police.

It is concerning to note that no extra money and resources have been allocated to that; no extra money and resources have been allocated to provide for these children. We are, of course, awaiting the final outcome of that inquiry, and that will put some budget restraints on the government, because more funding is needed to be allocated for the purpose of an inquiry which has taken longer than anticipated. But, of course, it seems that these things always do take a long time, and that is an area of anticipated expenditure that, frankly, should have been on the horizon.

I raise that as a possible excuse the government might use for dealing with it. We recognise it but, in our view, it neither explains nor justifies a lack of provision of dollars for those people coming through the system and not being given a reasonable hearing and resolution to their matters arising out of the Mullighan inquiry. That continues to be a concern to the opposition.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Bedford): Does the honourable member wish to ask a question now?

Ms CHAPMAN: Yes, thank you. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.36. Justice Robyn Layton provided a report to the government three years ago. What provision has been made in this budget, if any, for one of her report's key recommendations (about which she was recently critical of the government for not attending to), that is, the government's failure to deal with the issue of rapists being able to question their alleged victims in court? This recommendation, as Justice Layton highlighted, was to avoid compounding the revictimisation of children in particular. Is there any funding to ensure that the recommendation goes from this minister's office to the Attorney-General's office, and for that amendment to be drafted and brought to the parliament?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We need to put this into perspective. When we came to office the child protection agency was groaning under the weight of the crisis in our public hospital system. It was so far down the list of priorities that it did not even rate with the previous government. We have increased funding to our child protection agency by 75 per cent since coming to office. That is our commitment

to child protection. Within three weeks of coming to office, we commissioned the most far-reaching review of our child protection system that has ever been undertaken. The only reason we are talking about a Mullighan inquiry is that we raised these issues, and that—

Ms CHAPMAN: You raised these issues?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Exactly. We put child protection on the agenda within three weeks of coming into office. We had the Layton inquiry. There were all sorts of calls at that time for us to deal with the question of the adult survivors of child sexual abuse. We always said that we would be dealing with these things. We took the rational decision to deal with the children of today first. That is what we did. We then made the very sensible decision to set up a paedophile task force to have the police deal with these matters. It was also important to deal with perpetrators who were still in existence.

The next thing we did was to put in place a support service—Respond SA—for those people who needed services. Then we did take our time to consider the appropriate mechanism for dealing with those people who wanted to come forward and tell their stories about child sexual abuse in circumstances where the perpetrator might be dead or, perhaps, where a therapeutic response was not enough. That had to be very carefully dealt with. As we have seen in this place, it is very easy for people to hijack those agendas and make the most heinous of allegations about someone. Once it is made, an allegation is a very damaging thing.

We did take our time to design a very unique process, which is the Mullighan inquiry, and we are very proud of the way in which we have set that up. At no stage has there been anything other than complete diligence and attention to the question of child protection. I completely reject the suggestion otherwise. In relation to this important area of reforms to the criminal law, I think that the honourable member would have heard the Attorney say on numerous occasions that presently there is a review of the whole range of criminal laws as they relate to sexual assault, whether they be of children or, indeed, any other citizen, and the difficulties associated with the securing of convictions in that context. Arising out of that review, I am sure the Attorney will attend to these issues as well.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.37. The estimated number of adoption orders granted in 2005-06 was 72. How many of these were overseas children placed with South Australian parents, and what are the total funds paid to overseas adoption agencies which have contracts with the South Australian government for the placement of children here?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I might have to take on notice the exact number, but I think almost all of the adoptions last year were overseas. That is something I will need to check and report back on, and I will take on notice the other question of costs.

Ms CHAPMAN: Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.41. In 2005-06, \$6.171 million was spent on providing leadership business development and the like, and this year it will be increased to \$8.511 million. I note an application as disclosed in the budget has been lodged by your department to become a registered training organisation. How much money is to be received from the commonwealth for training for your employees, and why is this training not being undertaken by TAFE colleges? Since when has the department gone into the business of education and training, including the creation of

the college for learning and development within the department?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I will invite my chief executive to answer that question.

Ms VARDON: Thank you for the question. Our department has always spent a lot of money on short courses. At any one point of time in our history we could identify all around our organisation small pieces of money, and a lot of it was what I call Mickey Mouse courses—short courses that do not do very much. We believe that the quality of the work needed to be done by our people needs to be substantially improved, and one of the ways of doing that is to turn the old staff development centres, as they were, into a registered training organisation, which is fairly standard practice in the industry. Every single piece of training we do in our organisation now is an accredited certificate. We now have about 15 accredited certificates. We do not deliver them all but we use the TAFE system to do it, and we have identified a need for training for every single job in our organisation. So we have upgraded our own training capacity, which was always there, and we have become very good at working with existing TAFE courses to get them to tailor them to our work. It is the modern way of training inside an organisation and it is considered to be best practice.

Ms CHAPMAN: I will ask the minister again and perhaps Ms Vardon may wish to comment further. My question is: how much money is budgeted to be received from the commonwealth as a result of being a registered training organisation?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We will get some commonwealth money, but we will take that on notice and provide you with an answer.

Ms CHAPMAN: Budget Paper 5, page 42. The only new works for 2006-07 is the fit-out and furnishing of 108 North Terrace for Families SA, costing \$1.985 million. Will this payment complete the final cost of the restructuring of the department to the new Families SA and Housing SA, and what is the total estimated cost for this project and the claimed total savings?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think that particular sum of \$1.985 million is the cost of moving us out of the city centre, which is where the current Department of Health is located. They need the additional space and it is rational for us to consolidate our operations in the one building. So, that is part of that process of disengagement from the Department of Human Services and the creation of the new Department for Families and Communities. 108 North Terrace is, in fact, the EDS building across the road from the Riverside Centre.

Ms CHAPMAN: Perhaps the minister did not hear the balance of my question which was: will this payment complete the final cost of the restructuring?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That will conclude the costs associated with the disentanglement of DHS from the Department for Families and Communities and Health.

Ms CHAPMAN: I am happy for this question to be taken on notice. What is the total estimated cost for that project—that is, the disentanglement, as described by the minister—and the claimed total savings?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I do not know entirely whether it could be described as a single project as it has a range of different elements to it. We will certainly provide you with the information associated with the consolidation of the Department for Families and Communities into the Riverside Centre and the building across the road at

108 North Terrace as a consequence of the break-up of the department.

Ms CHAPMAN: Perhaps we are at cross-purposes because, in addition to the physical aspect of this, the minister has announced that this whole restructure would provide various efficiencies, resulting in some savings. I am asking whether, in fact, as you are about to come to the end of that process, there are any. If so, what are they?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I think that is a different exercise.

Ms CHAPMAN: Exactly.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The Families SA, Housing SA and Disability Services SA exercise is a separate exercise from the one that occurred sometime ago when the Department of Human Services was broken up into the Department for Families and Communities and the Department of Health. In respect of the creation of Families SA, Disability Services SA and Housing SA, one-off costs and ongoing savings are associated with that separate exercise, but it is quite different from the de-merger of the Department of Human Services and the Department for Families and Communities.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you, minister, because that is exactly what I am referring to. I accept that the previous separation from the megaministry is not the one I am referring to; I had referred to it as the new Families SA and Housing SA. I appreciate that Disability Services SA is already in that, although I had not specifically asked for that because it is not an area of responsibility for me. However, I am referring to that second—

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The second arrangement? That changes the answer to the first question I gave you because the Families SA item at \$1.985 million does not relate to the establishment of Families SA. It relates more to the split up of the Department of Health and the Department for Families and Communities.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 2, page 2.29. It is claimed that the efficiency dividends will save \$6.14 million over the next four years. What are these efficiencies, and what is the number of full-time equivalent staff who will have their employment discontinued arising out of this initiative?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We will take that on notice.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 2, pages 2.28 and 2.29. Funds of \$4.2 million in additional support over the next four years have been allocated to assist people with autism and their families. This is particularly important given the unprecedented level of referrals to Autism SA, which have risen by 51 per cent from the previous year, as indicated in its annual report of 30 June 2006. I note that Autism SA has bank balances totalling nearly \$1.152 million as at 30 June 2006, which was a result of the disclosure in its annual report of income of interest of \$73 323. Will the minister assure the committee that Autism SA will not be required to forfeit its interest on these investments? As the Treasurer has announced, he will be taking the interest funds from public schools that have underspent moneys earning interest.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is a non-government organisation unlike schools which are part of government. We have no policy of retrieving interest from the non-government sector on moneys that are granted to them unconditionally.

Ms CHAPMAN: In relation to the Youth Detention Centre, I refer to Budget Paper 3, chapter 2, page 2.29. The government has committed to a new youth detention centre that seeks bids from the private sector providers for infrastructure for this purpose. The project team costs allocated for this and the next financial year total \$1.624 million. There is no allocation thereafter for this project. This was a key recommendation of the juvenile justice committee, which reported to the parliament last year and of which you, Madam Chair, and I were both members. Apart from opening a bidding process, no money has been allocated for this project in the 2008-09 and 2009-10 years. What is the point in doing the preliminary work if there is no funding to build a new centre, particularly when the Magill site is a valuable piece of real estate that could recover significant funds for the government?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is a misrepresentation of the effect of the budget. There has been an announcement in the budget to fund the Cavan rebuild of a youth detention facility. It needs to be remembered that the forward estimates cover four years and the first major payment will occur in year five, so it is therefore not reflected in the figures contained within the forward estimates. It is as simple as that. The money has been allocated and the decision made. Careful consideration has been given to the range of options. As much as the opposition may try to minimise this, it is an historic announcement, something that no government has had the will to grapple with. It is axiomatic to say there are not a lot of votes in youth detention centres, and this has nothing to do with anything other than a commitment by this government to do the right thing. I am proud to be the minister in the job when this decision has been made.

Ms CHAPMAN: We are in the presence of the portrait of Joyce Steele, who in 1959 made this part of her maiden speech and who, during the time she was a member, had the Magill Training Centre, as it then was, completely rebuilt—bearing in mind, incidentally, that the district she represented covered an area similar to that represented by the member for Morialta. It is fair to place on the record her contribution. It is fitting that 30 years later it is time to do it again, so at least if we start it in five years' time, we can thank the government for that.

As to case management, I refer to chapter 2, page 2.29. An investing initiative for improved case management by Families SA in this and the next financial year will cost \$3.858 million. Additional operating initiatives are also detailed in the budget on that same page. What will this money be spent on and how will it improve case management?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: This does not look very eye-catching when you read it in the budget papers, but this could be the most important thing we ever do in this portfolio. Victoria spent about \$30 million developing this case management system and has agreed to give it to us for nothing. We are spending this amount of money to tailor it to our own needs and system and to acquire the hardware we will obviously need to support it. If the Layton report stands for anything, I think Robyn Layton in her own words would say that the key to getting a better system of child protection is inter-agency collaboration. I think she uses those words in the introduction to her very extensive report. Inter-agency collaboration, ensuring that we share information and are aware of what is happening in relation to each of our portfolios in the way in which they provide services to each of these—

The CHAIR: Order! I inform the camera operator that no photography is allowed from the southern gallery but from the northern gallery only. So, do not use any of those pictures or there will be correspondence with your editor.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: The sharing of information and the notion that agencies should work closely together in the child protection area is absolutely fundamental. It is the key reason that we will have our first-class child protection system. It goes to the heart of shifting the culture in our child protection system away from a system of mandatory notification and investigation to a system of early intervention and family support. One of the things that we have always got wrong in child protection in the past is to think that, by ringing up the child report line and telling a story, somehow that is going to protect the child.

The real protection of children will occur when we have a sophisticated relationship between all our agencies—the police, domestic violence services, home visiting services from nurses, playgroups—all these sorts of things. All of these services need to better connect to ensure that families who are isolated, or getting into trouble, are provided with a helping hand. It is frightening the number of times when agencies are helping and dealing with families, each unaware of the other's existence.

A common risk assessment tool, capable of being developed and used through this process, will be an incredibly important reform. This gives us the capacity to do that and feed all this data into a system. Once again, it does not sound like much—it sounds like a piece of ICT—but it could drive some of the most important things that we are trying to do already but will be greatly assisted by this system.

Ms CHAPMAN: When will it be in place?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Money is allocated over the forward estimates, I think, of the next two years. It will be built in a staged approach. Elements of it will be up and running over a period of time, and it will be commissioned in parts. As parts of it are completed, it will be brought online. I think the money is allocated over the next two financial years. I am hopeful that we will begin to see it operating, at least in part, during that period.

Ms CHAPMAN: And if not, at least by 30 June 2008?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Certainly that would be our ambition. I am also conscious of the fact that the Victorian system had quite a few hiccups in its initial commissioning. We have been looking carefully at the Victorian system and obviously (like all ICT systems) there are teething problems. Data is critical in this area. Measuring what is going on is absolutely crucial.

Ms CHAPMAN: Is there a budget provision or is it necessary for any legislative change to facilitate the exchange of information between the agencies?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is a good question. I do not think so. We think that most of the barriers to the exchange of information are purely policy based. Assertions of confidentiality and privacy are, more often than not, policy decisions, but we will be alert to that, and we may need to call upon the legislature to consider changes that may support this system, although at this stage we think not.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Volume 2, page 2.29. Under the administrative efficiencies and, in particular, concession administration costs, there is a saving of a million dollars to be made in 2009-10. What is this for? In particular, what concessions does it apply to that will no longer be required to be administered?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: This was asked earlier by your colleague but in a slightly different form. Over a period of time, through the use of technology, we are expecting to be able to reduce the cost of administering the concession scheme. It will not have an effect on concessions. It will not affect the scope of the concessions or the entitlement, the actual quantum of the concessions. It will be a reduction in the costs of us administering concessions.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Volume 3, page 2.29. It is noted that TVSP savings up to 30 June 2006 provide a saving over the next four years of \$4.1 million. How many full-time equivalent staff does this represent?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I have to take that question on notice. It comprises part of the overall savings that I think we reported.

Ms CHAPMAN: This was up to 30 June 2006, minister, not the next four years. They have already gone.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: What you are looking at on page 2.29 are the recurrent savings that arise out of that earlier scheme, where 222 people left. You want to know how many of those were in—

Ms CHAPMAN: Full-time equivalents.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: We will give you that number.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you. In relation to children in foster care, what budget amount has been allocated for their accommodation in hotels, motels or apartments for this current financial year?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That item is part of the alternative care emergency accommodation budget line, although I do not know whether it appears in the budget papers described as that; I do not know whether it is separately described. Within our own programs, we have an alternative care emergency accommodation budget, but there is no particular budget for motels. Indeed, it would be our ambition to reduce that as far as we possibly can, and it is presently under review. It is contained in the broad subprogram of guardianship and alternative care.

Ms CHAPMAN: On page 11.37?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: That is right. You will not see it expressed in the budget papers as emergency accommodation for alternative care, and nowhere is there a particular budget for motels. In fact, it is a recent phenomenon that we measure that; it used to be dealt with by each district centre. It is only now that we aggregate that data and collect it centrally, and it was only when we did that that we saw the extent of the difficulties associated with the number of people who were using motel, caravan parks, etc., as alternative accommodation. That has led to the review we have undertaken more generally, and this comprises part of the discussion paper that was launched at the most recent national conference on alternative care.

Of course, the ambition is to reduce the number of children in hotels, and we are seeking to source other emergency accommodation options. However, that itself cannot be seen as independent of the broader child protection agenda. We know that placement breakdowns, which are the usual source of children who end up in motels, are a consequence of the way in which we deal with the question of the

removal of children from their family, the way in which we place them and the attempts we make at family reunion.

There is a complex set of interrelated policies that cause the increase in complications for children who come into our alternative care system on an emergency basis. We are seeking to deal with those globally. We are presently seeking to expand the number of emergency accommodation places to be provided through the non-government sector, and we are pursuing that by way of a number of proposals to expand the range of options.

Ms CHAPMAN: I appreciate, minister, that you do have a specific budget line on what you might spend in this financial year, and I am happy for you to take this question on notice. Can you tell the committee how much of the \$53.487 million in the 2005-06 estimated result was spent on hotel, motel or apartment accommodation for those children in need of that care?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: Certainly.

Ms CHAPMAN: Are all of the 10 transitional care houses for children in need and care operational, and what is the total average number of children housed in government-run transitional facilities on a given night?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I have only an estimate.

It would depend on which night you chose, but it is probably about an average of 20. Nine of the 10 houses are operational.

Ms CHAPMAN: In relation to ensuring police checking of all persons who are involved in foster care, what provision has been made to ensure that all persons in charge of children, including taxi drivers, hire car operators, hotel proprietors, and the like, actually undergo police checks for the time the children are in their care?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I need to clarify this, but my understanding is that all taxi drivers undergo police checks. In relation to the other persons with whom we place children, whether they be short-term arrangements or, indeed, our own officers or foster carers, there is a requirement for police checks in relation to each of those particular people. That is not, of course, the complete answer to ensuring that children are safe, but that and a range of other measures to ensure that children are left in a safe environment are routinely undertaken by the department.

Ms CHAPMAN: I do not have any other specific questions, Madam Chair. I understand from the previous session that the minister has taken on board the omnibus questions and the two extra ones that were read out. We look forward to receiving the responses for those in due course. I thank you on behalf of the opposition, Madam Chair, for the operation of the committee meeting today and, indeed, members of each of the respective departments who have attended to assist today.

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL: I add my thanks to the officers who have attended throughout the day to assist me, and all members of the committee.

The CHAIR: I declare the consideration of the proposed payments adjourned until 23 October. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3:28 p.m. the committee adjourned until Monday 23 October at 11 a.m.