

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Monday 23 October 2006****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A****Chair:**

Ms M.G. Thompson

Members:

Ms C.C. Fox
 Mr M.R. Goldsworthy
 Mr S.P. Griffiths
 Mr M. Pengilly
 Mr T. Piccolo
 Ms L.A. Simmons

The committee met at 11 a.m.

Office for State/Local Government Relations,
 \$2 572 000
 Administered Items for Office for State/Local
 Government Relations, \$944 000

Witness:

The Hon. J.M. Rankine, Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Volunteers, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting in Early Childhood Development.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr G. Knight, Acting Chief Executive, Primary Industries and Resources SA.

Mr M. Petrovski, Acting Director, Office for State/Local Government Relations, PIRSA.

Mr S. Archer, Acting Executive Director Corporate, PIRSA.

Mr M. Williams, Acting Director Finance and Shared Business Services, PIRSA.

The CHAIR: I will start the week by reminding everyone about the rules and procedures relating to estimates. It is a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask questions. The committee will determine an approximate time for consideration of proposed payments to facilitate changeover of departmental advisers. The minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have indicated that they have agreed on a timetable for today's proceedings. Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure that the chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date it must be submitted to the committee secretary by no later than Friday 17 November.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions, based on about three questions per member, alternating each side. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule. A member who is not part of the committee may at the discretion of the chair ask a question. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure

in the Budget Papers and must be identifiable or referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the Assembly *Notice Paper*.

There is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the committee. However, documents can be supplied to the chair for distribution to the committee. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. All questions are to be directed to the minister, not to the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response, and debate between an adviser and member of the committee is totally out of order. My observation is that it is not the advisers who are at fault. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular, Appendix C and the Portfolio Statements, Volume 2, part 5. Does the minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes. The Office for State/Local Government Relations is a small policy unit within government responsible for advising the Minister for State/Local Government Relations on legislation affecting local government and facilitating relations between the state government and local government here in South Australia. The office also provides administrative support for three statutory authorities that report directly to the minister, that is, the Local Government Grants Commission, the Outback Areas Community Development Trust, and the Boundary Adjustment Facilitation Panel. The government is committed to building closer and more collaborative working relationships between the state and local government here in South Australia, and over the next 12 months I am keen to further strengthen those collaborative relationships and, at the same time, work on initiatives to enable councils to build frameworks for greater transparency and accountability to the communities they serve.

A particular priority of mine, as minister, is community engagement. I think that local government in this state has generally had a reasonable track record in this area. Despite the positive examples among many councils, however, my principal interest is in greater consistency across the sector and seeing us improve our engagement processes with communities. We need to give much closer attention to identifying and encouraging the application of good practice models for real engagement of our citizens in shaping the directions and decisions of government. We should be looking to develop new and better tools for good consultation and involvement of the community.

Recent legislative changes, as members know, now require that the community is given a direct voice in the annual council business planning cycle, with the introduction of mandatory public consultation policy provisions in the Local Government (Financial Management and Rating) Amendment Act 2005. The legislation also provides for publication of information relevant to the business planning processes and for public meetings and council meetings to be held where members of the public may ask questions.

A natural extension of this discussion about civic engagement and participation is a focus on elections and representation. Following the November 2006 local government elections, I will be commencing an elections and representation review. It is my intention to work closely with local government through the LGA to develop a range of electoral and representational changes with a view to improving local

government elections from both a democratic and an administrative point of view.

South Australia's Strategic Plan target 5.5 is to increase voter turnout in South Australian local government elections to 50 per cent within 10 years, that is, 2014. Accordingly, a focus on developing strategies for improving levels of voter participation will be maintained during this financial year and in future years to ensure that the target is met. An important aspect of this target is also about increasing the number of nominations for local government elections and about a diversity of nominees. It is not difficult to realise that there is a real under-representation of women in local government at both the elected level and, more starkly, in executive positions in council administrations. A similar claim can be made for Aboriginal people, young people and people of non-English speaking backgrounds.

Over the past two years, in particular, the Office for State/Local Government Relations has worked with local government and the Local Government Association to improve financial management and rating practice in a number of areas, including:

- dealing with public concerns about the impact of rates;
- improving consultation with ratepayers about a council's proposed rating and budget decisions;
- developing improved strategic and forward financial plans;
- permitting the asset rich/income poor to postpone payment of council rates without jeopardising council finances;
- examining mechanisms for internal and external reviews of council decisions and best practice complaints management.

This work culminated in the Local Government (Financial Management and Rating) Amendment Act 2005. The main provisions of that act, which is to come into operation in early 2007, are designed to:

- open up to wider community scrutiny and participation council processes for planning essential expenditure over time and for adopting annual business plans and budgets and declaring rates;
- ensure that councils have flexible rating powers to respond to volatile property valuation movements and the otherwise consequential impact of rates decisions on individual ratepayers, especially those with fixed and low incomes;
- require councils to offer a rates deferral scheme for a range of seniors in our community;
- highlight the role of the South Australian Ombudsman in making sure that council decisions about rates impact fairly and justly throughout their communities;
- introduce requirements for long-term financial planning in infrastructure asset management plans;
- require community consultation on budgeting and rating proposals following impact modelling on the most recently available valuations;
- require each council to consider whether a maximum increase in rates payable will be set for an owner's principal place of residence; and
- improve administrative and financial accountability.

The report of the commonwealth House of Representatives inquiry Rates and Taxes: A Fair Share for Responsible Local Government (the Hawker Report) was tabled in the federal parliament in November 2003. A round table meeting of the responsible state and federal government ministers and all local government associations was held in early 2004 to discuss a coordinated response to the report. The meeting supported the principle that, where local government delivers

a service for which it does not have responsibility or the power to raise revenue to cover the cost of delivery, it would be appropriate to consider an intergovernmental agreement between the relevant levels of government on resourcing. That meeting also agreed that work should be undertaken to develop a draft set of broad principles to support such an agreement.

I am pleased to advise that, on 12 April this year, the federal minister for local government, state and territory ministers for local government and the President of the Australian Local Government Association, on behalf of all state local government associations, signed the new national Intergovernmental Agreement Establishing Principles to Guide Intergovernmental Relations on Local Government Matters. This agreement reflects the spirit of cooperation enshrined in the state-local government agreement, which is now entering its third year.

The intergovernmental agreement is focused on enabling all three spheres of government to work together for the benefit of communities. This will be better achieved through the facilitation of information between governments, the promotion of greater transparency in financial relations and a commitment expressed in the intergovernmental agreement by commonwealth, state and local government to achieving more open and productive relationships. The agreement also sets out the guiding principles for more specific arrangements between the commonwealth, states and territories with local government and provides a framework from which further agreements covering services and functions should be developed.

The intergovernmental agreement is consistent in spirit with South Australia's approach to its relationship with local government, as expressed in the State/Local Government Relations Agreement, to which I referred earlier. In fact, the South Australian agreement was a model for the intergovernmental agreement signed in April.

It is important to note that our emphasis on long-term financial planning and infrastructure has been endorsed by the LGA's own independent inquiry into the financial sustainability of the sector. The Financial Sustainability Review Board's final report and recommendations were released in August 2005. The inquiry raised a number of fundamental concerns that warrant a strong response by the local government sector. It emphasised the need to address serious shortcomings in financial governance policies and practices and the consequences of not doing so. It is in the interests of the community that the sector undertakes these reforms.

The consistent message from the state government has been to confirm its commitment to the financial sustainability of local government and to prioritise ongoing financial government improvements as a matter of some urgency. This has been done through the provision of expert Treasury advice and other assistance, as the local government sector itself makes progress in addressing the inquiry recommendations. The inquiry highlighted that other improvements were contingent upon the LGA initially taking steps to provide the necessary leadership in financial governance improvement. The LGA has endorsed a detailed implementation plan and the establishment of a task force to lead action to address the inquiry's recommendations.

In conclusion, I want to touch briefly on the continuing work of the Minister's State/Local Government Forum. The forum brings together state ministers, key state government administrators and the key political administrative leaders of the local government sector to tackle those difficult issues

where there is shared responsibility between state and local government. Some of the key issues dealt with by the forum are listed in the highlights and targets for the Office for State/Local Government Relations in the budget papers.

The forum will, among other things, continue to act as a facilitator for the closer strategic collaboration between state and local government. Local government is already demonstrating it can collectively take the initiative in the broader processes of state significance, such as contributing to the implementation of South Australia's Strategic Plan. My interest is working with the sector in continuing to take this initiative, and contribute even more significantly than it already does to the prosperity of this state.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Does the member for Kavel have an opening statement?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Yes, only a brief statement, thank you, Madam Chair. The three tiers of government (federal, state and local government) have served the nation extremely well over the years. I certainly believe in the relative autonomy of those three tiers, particularly the local government sector. Local government generally does a very good job in quite difficult circumstances and environments. It is the tier of government that delivers the majority of services on the ground. I commend the Local Government Association and the local government sector for their initiative of instituting the independent inquiry into financial sustainability. Looking into the extremely important area of any and every tier of government is a very worthwhile and noteworthy initiative.

I have only been the shadow minister for local/state government relations for a few months and, over that period, I would like to think I have established a good working relationship with the sector and I certainly look forward to continuing and building on that.

Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27, under the heading of Summary Income Statement. As we can see, the schedule of expenses and income is listed there. In the total expenses line for the 2005-06 budget, the figure is \$2.605 million. In the estimated result for 2005-06, the figure is \$3.639 million, a discrepancy of over \$1 million. Can the minister explain the reason for that discrepancy?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that the estimated results include something like \$700 000 as a result of the Virginia floods. There is \$175 000 in the estimated results for 2005-06 for the cost of the ministerial office that has been allocated in the budget line of the office.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: In the 2006-07 budget, the employee benefits and costs have increased by approximately \$400 000 from previous years. Can the minister give an explanation for what has caused that increase?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I would like to correct the answer that I gave you a moment ago. I am advised that the amount I gave you for the minister's office was not correct; it was \$263 000. I will refer to Mr Archer to explain to you the employee costs.

Mr ARCHER: The reason for the employee cost increasing by approximately \$400 000 is the direct result of the four-year effect of the minister's office coming into our budget. During the period 2005-06, the office of the Minister for State/Local Government Relations first became part of the PIRSA budget; and in 2006-07 it will be there for a full year. The impact of that is approximately \$400 000.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Does that mean that part of the budget for covering employee costs in the Office for State/

Local Government Relations had previously been met out of a different part of the PIRSA budget?

Mr ARCHER: No, that is not quite correct. During the year 2005-06, PIRSA became responsible for three ministerial offices. I refer to page 54 of the Portfolio Statements, which are in front of you. You will see that there are in fact three ministerial offices for PIRSA: one for minister Holloway, one for minister McEwen and one for minister Rankine. Previously, PIRSA only had one minister's office and that was for minister McEwen. The funding for that office previously would have been held in another portfolio other than PIRSA, so this is the first time it has been recognised within PIRSA's books.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to the income statement again. There is no figure in grants and subsidies line in the 2005-06 budget, but a figure of \$564 000 appears in the 2005-06 estimated result. Will the minister provide an explanation?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that the vast majority of that was for the Virginia floods and that had not been budgeted for.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I have a supplementary question. I thought earlier the minister said that a figure of approximately \$700 000 was allocated for the Virginia floods. That is about \$140 000 difference. It is either \$564 000 or \$700 000: it cannot be both.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Mr Archer will explain that for you.

Mr ARCHER: If you refer to Budget Paper 4 again, you will see two lines: one is entitled 'Supplies and Services' and the other is entitled 'Grants and subsidies'. In the estimated result for 2005-06, \$500 000 of that \$564 000 relates to the Virginia floods. There is a further \$250 000 within the supplies and services line of \$1.087 million, which also relates to the Virginia floods.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2 of the Portfolio Statement, Program 6 on page 5.28. Will the minister outline the progress of the Minister's State/Local Government Forum and advise whether the forum is still a useful mechanism for addressing state/local government issues and priorities?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you; that is a very good question. I have to commend the former minister for his initiative in establishing the Minister's State/Local Government Forum. As I said in my introductory statement, we are very committed to a strong and productive relationship with the local government sector in South Australia. There is no doubt that there are very significant and substantial benefits for the state as a whole, and the communities within the state from a constructive relationship based on the mutual respect of the two sectors.

The Minister's State/Local Government Forum, as I said, was established in 2002 as part of an election promise of the incoming Labor government. The aim of the forum is to provide advice to the Minister for State/Local Government Relations, the Premier, the government and the Local Government Association on issues which are matters of priority to both sectors of government and which require the cooperation of both state and local government to reach an effective resolution. The forum is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains an effective relationship and mechanism for pursuing solutions to the issues on its agenda.

As part of the current forum review, the forum members and the state government endorsed minor changes to the terms of reference and the membership, while the processes

document has been updated to reflect a broader approach to the forum. As part of the review, the Local Government Association proposed that the Minister's Local Government Forum be better named to reflect its purpose. I have endorsed that suggestion and a number of other initiatives have been progressed through the particular forum.

The stormwater management and flood mitigation issue is an item that the forum had on its original agenda, and I understand that it has certainly been warmly embraced by the local government sector, in the main. In relation to the community waste water management systems, the forum has overseen a significant reform of community waste water management (formerly known as STEDS). There have been a number of key activities, including the provision of information to councils on the necessity to make significant changes to the management and pricing of the community waste water management scheme; a study of the feasibility of the aggregation of community waste water management in a regional area, with the possible involvement of the private sector in order to achieve efficiencies in both the installation and management of the schemes; and an audit across South Australia to gauge the effectiveness of the current management and pricing schemes.

A whole range of those things have come through. The forum has been instrumental in progressing other strategic issues, in particular the forum sponsored a workshop on South Australia's Strategic Plan in 2004. The workshops engaged councils in the plan and explored areas of agreement and opportunities for the state and local government to discuss jointly agreed targets and objectives.

The forum continues to be, as I said, an effective mechanism for local government input into the plan. The activities undertaken by the Minister's State/Local Government Forum have not only significantly strengthened the working relationships between state and local governments through a cooperative approach to strategic issues but also driven major work in addressing longstanding problems. I expect that this excellent progress will continue as the forum pursues effective solutions to issues on its agenda.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28 of the Portfolio Statement (Program 6). Consultation and community engagement are important elements of democracy at the local government level. As minister, what are you doing to encourage and support best practice in this area?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Community engagement is one of those areas about which I have been incredibly passionate since becoming minister. Also, prior to my becoming minister, I was heavily engaged in my local area to push better engagement with the community. We know that local people want to have a say in the direction of their communities, and they know that councils have a direct impact on all that. Since becoming minister, I have seen some outstanding examples of councils developing engagement proposals which involve people being willing to fill out a survey form and returning it to them.

It has been identified that, very often, the same people are having a say. However, they are not necessarily getting to people of non-English speaking backgrounds, people who have literacy problems or people who otherwise may feel a little disengaged from their communities. I have been very impressed with some of the programs that councils have developed to ensure that they can engage with those people. The Office for State/Local Government Relations is working with the Local Government Association to develop a

community engagement strategy, which we are hoping will provide a very useful tool for local government to adapt.

Very clearly, one size does not fit all, but we need to develop something which is effective and which, irrespective of its size, the council can adapt so that it is meeting the needs of its communities, getting some real understanding of the needs and aspirations of its communities and being able to develop that accordingly. Again, one terrific example related to me related to the Onkaparinga council's redevelopment of the square at Willunga. One citizen came to the council with a plan and, rather than saying to that person, 'Thank you very much for your idea', putting it to one side and then developing its own plan, the council actually worked with the community based on the plan that had been submitted.

The council still had some hiccups along the way but, ultimately, it was found that was the best way. There was community ownership, engagement and endorsement of a project that could otherwise have caused some considerable grief. We are doing a considerable amount of work through the Office for State/Local Government Relations with the Local Government Association to push this agenda forward. Certainly, it is an issue that I am promoting as strongly as I can, and I am pleased to say that many councils are picking up on the initiative.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27. The figures for grants and subsidies (and I note the previous answer in relation to the additional \$500 000 that was expended last year in the Virginia area, and I commend the government for that) include an allocation of \$69 000. Will the minister provide details of where that money is intended to be expended?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The information I have is that that money is for the European wasp program. Mr Petrovski can give the honourable member some additional information.

Mr PETROVSKI: The European wasp program is allocated \$70 000 a year from the state government to local government. This funding is provided post-European wasp season, so it is provided quite late, and it is on application from councils once they have provided money for the eradication of European wasps. The amounts tend to be quite small—from \$1 000 to \$2 000. Overall, 15 councils might make an application. The total South Australian government allocation is \$70 000, which is funded 50 per cent by the state government and 50 per cent by local government.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: As a supplementary question, \$69 000 has been allocated to European wasp eradication programs. Is there any variance from the previous year's allocation?

Mr PETROVSKI: We do not have the final amount that has been spent because the moneys are spent after the end of the financial year. It is on application from councils, and we have not received all the requests from local councils.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: That is in the 2005-06-year?

MR PETROVSKI: Yes.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: What about in the 2004-05 year?

MR PETROVSKI: I do not have those figures in front of me. However, through the minister's office, I am happy to get that information for you.

The CHAIR: Mr Petrovski, you cannot make any undertaking on behalf of the minister.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We are happy to get that information for the honourable member.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: The member for Goyder might have a supplementary question.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Madam Chair, it relates to the effort that is being made to promote the local government elections, and it is very pleasing to see that the number of new nominations—

The CHAIR: This is a new topic. It is a new question, member for Goyder. Go ahead.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Again, Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27. With the effort that is being made to promote local government elections and the record number of nominations that have been received, can the minister please detail any expenditure lines, because the details are not provided to us, of that effort in advertising, seeking people to nominate and the promotion of it, and encouraging people to actually vote?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There was quite a deal of effort put into promoting both voter participation and people nominating for local government. There were, I understand, a total of \$54 000 expended from the Office for State/Local Government Relations budget in 2005-06 in relation to this, and some of the programs that we were involved in were joint programs with the LGA, and also bearing in mind local councils themselves have a statutory responsibility to promote the elections. But it was a total of \$54 000. A survey was conducted, and a youth campaign was conducted, which also included the LGA and the Office for Youth. A women's resource kit has been developed to both promote women involving themselves in local government, and, I understand, a second stage of that to support them in their role as councillors.

There have been ethnic radio translation and announcements, and also a state-wide schools competition and, I have to say, I was delighted to present the winners of that with their prizes on Thursday last week, and I think we had one short of a thousand children across South Australia involved in that competition, both primary schools and high schools. The state was divided up into seven regions so there were seven regional winners, two age-category winners, and the schools from which these children came also received a \$1 000 book voucher for books for the school.

So it was quite an effort to promote the importance, I think, of local government throughout South Australia, but also engaging young people in understanding that, and, hopefully, in some way educating their parents as well about the importance of voting. When we had our community cabinet in Clare, I was delighted to have a class of young children at one of the morning functions, and they were just bursting at the seams to meet with the Premier and tell him about their ideas and what they would do for their community. I have to say I was very impressed. Their ideas ranged from economic development right through to the sporting and recreational facilities they saw of benefit their community.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, and the statement at paragraph 5:

Progressed major infrastructure issues considered by the Minister's Local Government Forum. The Government of South Australia and the LGA entered into a 30-year funding and governance agreement for stormwater management and flood mitigation.

Can the minister advise what major infrastructure issues are being considered by the Local Government Forum, apart from those stated, concerning the 30-year funding agreement for stormwater management and flood mitigation?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As I mentioned earlier, the Community Waste Water Management Scheme is another

one of those that has been before the forum, and the Office for State/Local Government Relations has assisted the LGA in preparing a submission to the commonwealth. I understand that is progressing very well and discussions with the National Water Commission are now under way based on the local government's submission, and we anticipate the result of this submission will be known later this year. That is something then that the federal government is going to have to make a decision on. But we have certainly put an enormous amount of support forward for the LGA's submission. There is a range of other priorities listed on the forum agenda, and I am happy to outline those for you, if we can just find the sheet. There are a number those and they are, as I said, looked at on an annual basis to ensure that they remain relevant and pertinent both to the state government and the local government sector. I understand that climate change is one of them. Obviously at the next forum the drought will be one of the major issues on the forum agenda. The Financial Sustainability Inquiry is another one of those issues. I think there is something like 20 on the list of priorities, if I remember correctly. I am happy to get you that full list, if you like, but there is a range of those very topical issues that are reviewed every year and endorsed by the forum.

Ms FOX: Could we just return to page 5.27: minister, have you been actively involved in promoting candidates in the local government elections?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is a very interesting question. Look, I want to be very clear about this. I have never gone out and publicly endorsed a candidate in a local government election. In fact—no, I inadvertently endorsed the mayor of Mount Gambier a couple of weeks ago. I endorsed him and unendorsed him within about 30 seconds. I was talking about encouraging young people on to local government and said how lucky they were in Mount Gambier to have a young mayor, and then the mayoral candidate rang up and growled at me and I said, 'Well, you know, I'm talking really about engaging young people on council.' If I had endorsed him it was quite inadvertent.

I just want to make it very clear that—and I think you are probably referring to the leaflet that I have here—I did not authorise, write or design this leaflet for Mark Osterstock; I designed it and wrote it and printed it for myself—

The CHAIR: *Hansard* cannot see this leaflet; you will need to describe it.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Sorry, Madam Chair. During the last week of my state election campaign I released a full colour leaflet—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Point of order, Madam Chair. I would like to know what budget line this refers to, in terms of the minister's portfolio, bearing in mind that she is referring to a particular candidate in the Tea Tree Gully elections.

The CHAIR: I will answer that. The budget line was referred to by the member for Bright. It relates to the budget line that has been previously referred to by other members of the committee, relating to the minister's responsibility in promoting candidates for local government. I understand where the member's concern is coming from, in terms of the minister's portfolio responsibilities, and I am listening carefully to the answers.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I just want to make it really clear that as minister for local government I have not intentionally endorsed any candidate. I have become aware

of a leaflet that has been put out in the Tea Tree Gully area, in Golden Grove, that mirrors just about word for word a leaflet that I put out in my state election campaign. There was a tiny typo on the back—on my leaflet I said, ‘My family is important to me, so is yours.’ The one that Mr Osterstock put out just says, ‘Family is important to me, so is yours.’ So he left the ‘my’ off, and he also omitted the photograph I had in the middle of my leaflet of myself with the Premier. His does not have a photograph of the Premier in it, it has instead a graph.

I do not want people, out in my community or in the local government sector widely, to think that by him copying my leaflet that I was in some way endorsing him in the council election. It was either a case of my campaigning techniques and my design being so good that he needed to copy it, or he was trying to ride on the back of my considerable electoral success in the last election and to mirror the leaflet in order to benefit from it.

The CHAIR: Order! Minister, you are straying a little; relate to your portfolio responsibilities. I am quite confident it does relate to your portfolio responsibilities but that is the shape of the answer. Nothing further to add?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, Portfolio Statement, Program 6, page 5.28. Can the minister advise the committee: what has the state government done to assist greater financial accountability and improved financial management in local government—an area in which I have a personal interest because of my experience in local government.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you; and a very good mayor.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: They were both very good mayors; is that what you are saying? I am happy to let you take that kudos. As I mentioned in my introductory statement, the state government introduced a bill in 2005, the Local Government (Financial Management and Rating) Amendment Bill 2005, introducing comprehensive changes aimed at improving accountability, flexibility, financial management and rating decisions by councils. The measures in the act require long-term financial planning, transparency and public consultation in the adoption of annual business plans and budgets, and declaring rates.

The principal provisions of the act are consultation on a draft budget and business plan. So each council now will be required to publicly consult over a draft annual business plan before adopting the final annual business plan, including the council’s rating policy. Long-term financial and asset management planning: each council must prepare a long-term financial plan for a period of at least 10 years, and an infrastructure and asset management plan for a period of at least 10 years.

One of the new provisions introduced by the act also highlights a council’s existing power to obtain, from an auditor or some other suitably qualified person, an efficiency and economy review of any part of a council’s operations. Provisions of the act require each council to: make reasonable provision for rate relief, where appropriate; consider limiting rate increases on a ratepayer’s principal place of residence; and the offer of rate relief for eligible seniors.

Each council must also establish an audit committee; at present there is merely an option. The council’s auditor must be rotated after no more than five years. Council must report

each year about both the amounts paid to the auditor and the reasons for terminating an auditor’s appointment. The act authorises the ombudsman to conduct a review of ‘any aspect of the rating practices or procedures’ of a council, and permits the ombudsman to investigate whether any council rate or service charge has had an ‘unfair or unreasonable impact on a particular ratepayer’.

The Office for State/Local Government Relations, along with Treasury officials, has also been working very closely with the LGA to develop financial models for councils to adopt. I was particularly pleased on Friday to attend a ministerial council meeting in Canberra. For some time, states have been lobbying the commonwealth to improve the amount of money being paid to local councils through the financial assistance grants. I guess that one of the outs the commonwealth has had is the problem with financial accountability of local government. Indeed, this matter was reflected in the South Australian Local Government Association’s report, indicating that more money does not necessarily mean getting better outcomes for local government. So, it has been a priority for us to get that financial management structure in place.

At all the council meetings I have attended, I have stressed that we need, across all states, proper financial accountability and management measures, so that the commonwealth no longer has the excuse not to adequately fund local government. I was pleased that the draft proposals put forward were adopted by the meeting on Friday, and will be presented to COAG.

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to the Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, Portfolio Statement, program 6, page 5.28. Again, on financial matters, can the minister advise the committee how improvements in financial management arising from the financial sustainability inquiry will advantage local government’s case for improved financial support from the commonwealth government?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think I have probably answered both of your questions at once. It is imperative that local government in South Australia and across the nation is funded appropriately. As you would know, local government gets its funds primarily from two sources: the financial assistance grants that come through the commonwealth, and through their ratings structure.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Not the state government.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No; through the commonwealth. It is part of the agreement, which the states signed on to with Treasurer Costello, that the federal government undertakes responsibility for funding local government. My understanding is that, in fact, since Malcolm Fraser was prime minister, the rate of taxation revenue that local government has received from the federal government has dropped from something like 2 per cent down to 0.7 per cent—allow me some flexibility on those figures, but it is about that.

As a result of a decision made in about 1997, local government bodies around Australia have lost \$174 million in financial assistance funds from the commonwealth; South Australia alone is down \$12 million. Local government has been dealt a significant blow by the lack of funds from the commonwealth government. The state and territory ministers are working very hard and putting on a lot of pressure for the commonwealth to honour its commitment to appropriately fund local government. We have a horizontal fiscal equalisation formula, whereby there is a baseline provided per head of population; and then it is about ensuring that like areas

within a state can provide similar levels of service. There is just simply not enough money being made available to allow councils to do that. That is why it was so important at the meeting on Friday for the ministers to endorse that draft financial framework.

I was pleased with the federal minister's response to this, bearing in mind that prior to Friday's meeting he had refused to come to the round table in Sydney where these issues were discussed. For the first time, he actually endorsed moving forward on this proposal. Hopefully, we will see some real movement as far as the federal government is concerned with its financing of local councils.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I seek clarification on that answer: referring to the \$12 million by which the minister has stated South Australia has been disadvantaged since 1997, is that per year, or is that a cumulative figure?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My understanding is that it is a cumulative figure; yes.

Mr GRIFFITHS: So, really, less than \$1.2 million per year since 1997?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is cumulative; it is accumulating every year.

Mr GRIFFITHS: But, the \$12 million total is the cumulative total of each year's lesser amount being provided to the state?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am told that it is 12 plus 12 plus 12 plus 12 each year, that we have missed out on it.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Okay. That is not cumulative.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28: 'Performance commentary'. Paragraph 6 refers to 'Revised the annual Schedule of Priorities for 2005-06, signed by the Premier and the President of the LGA in November 2005'. Does the schedule of priorities form the basis of the state/local government agreement that is signed by the Premier and the president?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The overarching agreement was signed in November 2004, if my memory serves me correctly, and it covers a range of issues about how state and local government will work together. Part of that agreement that is revised each year is the schedule of priorities that we will work on for that year.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: As a supplementary question, the schedule of priorities is a very important part of that agreement document.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: If we want to get work done; if we want to work together it is important that we have shared priorities, and I am pleased to say that the state cabinet has endorsed those priorities, as has the LGA executive.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Going on from that, the minister would obviously be aware of the public statement that the President of the LGA made at the annual general meeting of that body on Friday that at this stage he is not prepared to sign the agreement. What action is the minister taking to address that quite serious situation?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I understand that the President asked to defer the signing. We had a date, bearing in mind that this has been endorsed by the LGA and also by the state cabinet. We have very good working relationships with the LGA and I consider that they will continue.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: That is not really answering my question.

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, the minister provides information in relation to the estimates in the way she has information. The opposition asks questions.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: The minister is basically saying that she will engage in a process of consultation with the President of the LGA to overcome these difficulties?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In any relationship, whether it is the relationship between you and me or with the President of the LGA, there will be times when hiccoughs occur. We will work our way through those. I do not think this is anything that cannot be resolved within a very short time. It is in all our interests to work productively for the community that we both serve.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: The minister is aware that one of the main reasons that the President of the LGA is not prepared to sign the agreement is the lack of consultation in regard to the enormous hike in the waste management levy. What the minister is basically saying is that she is going to consult over a process where no consultation took place earlier. Be that as it may, I will continue to—

The CHAIR: I was not present a minute ago and I have not been able to detect where this appears in the budget papers. Can the honourable member give me a reference?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Page 5.28 under the heading of 'Performance commentary', paragraph 6, 'revise the annual schedule of priorities for 2005-06, signed by the Premier and President of the LGA in November 2005.' This line of questioning relates to the schedule of priorities, which forms a very important part of the state/local government agreement. That is what it relates to.

The CHAIR: Thank you. And your question is?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: In relation to the revised schedule of priorities for 2005-06, the document highlights the heading of 'Waste management.' Given the Rann government's decision to increase the waste management levy by 50 per cent, can the minister explain what consultation took place with her or her office with the local government sector prior to that announcement being made?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The honourable member would realise that the waste management levy responsibility falls with another minister. However, I understand that the Minister for the Environment and Conservation has already had contact on a number of occasions with Mayor Rich in relation to this issue. I will also point out that this actually was not a new initiative: this was a budget decision. I understand that Mayor Rich had some concerns about that and that Minister Gago was very prompt in contacting him and arranging meetings with him about that. As I said, this is an issue that we will be able to work through in a very short time. It was not a new policy initiative imposed on local government.

Ms FOX: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, Program 6, page 5.28. Will the minister advise what progress has been made on the Olympic Dam to Andamooka pipeline, which will deliver potable household water to Andamooka residents and which will, presumably, relieve them of the burden of having to pay the additional cost for water that is carted regularly from Olympic Dam?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In May 2005 my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure announced that funding of \$400 000 would be made available to the Outback Areas Community Development Trust for the construction of a pipeline to convey water to the residents of Andamooka. The trust has overseen the construction of the pipeline that will see potable water conveyed from the Olympic Dam desalination unit to a community standpipe in Andamooka. This will see significant reduction in the cost of water due to the reduced cartage cost to the residents of Andamooka. Work

on the pipeline is nearing completion, and connection to the supply will take place following the finalisation of formal agreements between BHP Billiton, the water supplier, the trust and the Andamooka Progress Association and Opal Miners Association.

It is evident that the pipeline will be commissioned by the end of this calendar year. The trust will own the pipeline infrastructure, and the cost of its operation and replacement in 25 years' time will be reflected in a per kilolitre charge for water distributed at the Andamooka standpipe, which will be determined in consultation with the Andamooka residents. This will ensure that asset replacement funds are available and that the community will not have to seek or raise the additional funds in the future.

Some initial assessment work also has been undertaken of the water supply needs of some other remote Outback communities—Yunta, Mintabie and Glendambo. State government funding was provided in 2005-06 for a study to be carried out by SA Water. Following on from this, further work is now required to be undertaken by the Outback Areas Community Development Trust in consultation with SA Water and the Department of Health to develop more detailed options and proposals for future action.

The Outback Areas Community Trust is showing strong leadership in seeking to address basic infrastructure issues for the Outback. It is playing a vital role in the coordination of infrastructure development within the Outback region and is working in partnership with a wide range of other agencies and bodies to achieve cost-effective solutions to the needs of remote communities. At the same time, the trust is giving attention to the development of practical management frameworks for essential infrastructure, including community owned water supplies, hard waste management facilities and effluent management systems.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I again refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. My question relates to the waste management levy, which we have previously discussed. Given that this increase will cost communities (and I want to emphasise the fact that it is communities that will pay this additional \$10 million), would the minister agree that this is a direct cost shifting to local government as a consequence of state government decision making?

The CHAIR: I point out to the member that opinions are not part of estimates: facts are what estimates are about. Is there some factual information that the minister has on the topic?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I again point out that this is the responsibility of minister Gago. However, I understand that the way in which this levy will be collected has not yet been decided and that negotiations are under way in that respect, including negotiations with the Local Government Association.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Madam Chair, my question was based on the fact that it is communities that will pay this increased cost. We are here to try to represent all communities. I refer to the intergovernmental agreement that exists between the commonwealth, state and local governments. The minister said that the commonwealth needs to adequately fund local government to carry out its roles. This decision is creating an impost upon local government to carry out roles that it might otherwise undertake that have a very high importance in the local community. That capacity has gone, and that is the reason why I asked the question.

The CHAIR: I understand why the member asked the question: it is just that it is not part of estimates. What is the next question?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I again refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. Does the lack of consultation between the state government, the LGA and the councils contravene the commitment made as outlined in the State-Local Government Relations Agreement and the national intergovernmental agreement, which establishes very clear principles on how to guide relationships between the three levels of government?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As I said, my understanding is that minister Gago is negotiating with the Local Government Association about this issue. As I also said, the way in which this levy will be collected has not been decided, and the LGA is being included in that consultation process.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. What funding in the 2006-07 budget has been committed for community waste water management schemes, and what are the forward estimates over the four-year period?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In December 2005, cabinet adopted a state government community waste water management systems policy that reaffirmed the state government's interest in the provision of waste water schemes in areas of the state not serviced by SA Water sewerage systems. The policy clearly restated the original principle that the state government subsidy is intended to achieve equity between users of community waste water management systems and users of SA Water provided sewerage systems in country areas. In May 2006, cabinet approved an extension of the current community waste water management systems program for the 2006-07 financial year at a funding level of \$3.206 million. That agreement is intended to be an interim measure until the outcome of a submission to the National Water Commission for commonwealth funds is known, and will allow current construction to continue unimpeded.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is in anticipation of the decision of the application that has been put forward. That submission is for a significant amount of money—over \$100 million—and was made to the National Water Commission by the Local Government Association on 6 June this year, with the full support of the state government and, as I said, in particular, the Office for State/Local Government Relations, as well as the EPA, the Department of Health and the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation. A new long-term funding agreement will be entered into by state and local governments once the results of that submission are known.

Mr PENGILLY: Is that more or less than has occurred in previous years?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My understanding is that it is a reflection of what had been provided in previous years, and it was just to keep that program ongoing until we knew the outcome of the submission to the federal government.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer again to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, under the heading of Performance Commentary. Paragraph 1 states:

Promotion of council elections to encourage nominations in regional areas, to increase representation and participation from under-represented groups and improve data collection and analysis, post election.

This follows from the question answered earlier by the minister in relation to a particular candidate in the City of Tea Tree Gully elections. Given the fact that local government is

considered to be an apolitical sector, does the minister encourage candidates to highlight their support for a particular political party? I note with interest that, in their promotional material, two candidates for the Levels ward in the Salisbury council elections have stated that they are active members of the Labor Party and that they are standing for council because they want Labor supporters to have a voice in council.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Kavel for that question because it raises some interesting questions. I personally have no problem with people being open and transparent about their involvement in community and/or political organisations. I am sure you would agree with me that the position we have currently is that neither party—certainly the Labor Party does not and I am assuming the Liberal Party does not—formally endorses candidates. We do not go through that sort of process and we do not develop policies for them to espouse. So, there is no formal recognition or endorsement of candidates.

However, I do not think it is inappropriate for people who are politically active—and it is only to be expected, I would imagine, that someone who has a political interest also has an interest in their local community. We just have to look at either side of this chamber at the moment. We have the former mayor of Gawler (the member for Light) sitting to my left and the former mayor of Kangaroo Island sitting to my right. So, it is only natural, is it not, that people who are politically and civic minded are involved in political parties? I do not have a problem with that.

When I was in Mount Gambier, this question was raised with me because, apparently, for the first time two people are running in the council elections who have an affiliation with the Labor Party. My comment at the time was that people only complain about political involvement when it is someone from a different political party. I have seen this numerous times. When the Mayor of Tea Tree Gully endorsed Trish Draper in one of her flyers, I did not publicly denounce that. People might say that that was inappropriate use of her mayoral position, putting her face (as the Mayor of Tea Tree Gully) on a flyer, endorsing a federal Liberal candidate, but I did not complain about that. I did not go out and publicly complain about the former mayor of Salisbury, who left office in less than salubrious circumstances, publicly supporting the Liberal candidate who was running against me.

People involved in local councils will naturally have some sort of interest in politics. I think it is really important, however, that they be open and honest about it and not do perhaps what Mark Osterstock has done, who has made out that he is a Labor candidate when he has been a Liberal candidate in two elections, an unsuccessful one, I might point out. He ran against me in 2002 and did not win; ran in 2006 and did not win; and I think he even ran for the Police Credit Union and my ex-husband beat him at that as well. Perhaps he thought he might join the Rankine family and see if he could not win his council election by copying someone's leaflet, but clearly not declaring his political allegiances. It is an interesting question that you raise.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You better believe it!

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: We will move on from that. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, again under the heading 'Performance Commentary'. In reference to the strategic alliance of public land, it states that the government will continue to explore benefits for more strategic use of

state and council land. Can the minister explain how that will be achieved? How will the benefits be measured?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Considering that both of us cannot find it, would the honourable member like me to take that question on notice and get back to him?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: That would be good, thank you, minister. I again refer to page 5.28 under 'Performance Commentary', paragraph 6: 'Revised the annual Schedule of Priorities for 2005-06, signed by the Premier and President'. In relation to financial governance, it is stated that the minister will provide a budget briefing to the LGA outlining any changes. Will the minister advise whether that briefing has taken place?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, the briefing was provided.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, again under 'Performance Commentary'. In relation to regional passenger transport, it states that local and state government will work together to consider strategic directions for the provision and coordination of passenger transport in regional areas. Will the minister advise whether the state government has committed actual funding for the increased provision of regional transport in regional and rural areas?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Can the honourable member tell me where that appears under 'Performance Commentary'? I think that the honourable member might find that that is the responsibility of another minister.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: It relates to the schedule of priorities.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, I understand that, but not every schedule of priority is my responsibility, and the honourable member is talking about the budget estimates. That is the responsibility of the Minister for Transport.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. I note that neither a balance sheet nor a cash flow statement has been provided for the Office for State/Local Government Relations. Does that mean that there are no assets or liabilities held within the office? We note that, in last year's estimates, a statement of cash flow was provided.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that all those things are consolidated within PIRSA.

Mr PENGILLY: I have a supplementary question. Is there a reason why that is not differentiated; that is, why it is rolled into PIRSA and does not appear here?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It was never separate in DTI and it is not a legal entity in its own right, I am advised.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I refer again to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. What is the annual cost of administering the minister's local government forum and how often does it meet?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I will take the question about the cost on notice. We are meeting on 9 November. We have three meetings a year. That meeting will be my second.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I have found the reference to the previous question with which we were having difficulty in referring it back to the performance commentary. It refers to the state/local government agreement document, the schedule of priorities. In that document it refers to the strategic assessment of public lands. Under that heading, it says that we will continue to explore the benefits for more strategic use of state and council land. How will that be achieved and what measures does the minister have in place in relation to the benefits?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As I said before, we are happy to take that question on notice. We can probably give some very good examples of where that has already occurred. Certainly as we travel South Australia with the community cabinet and meet with councils in their own regions and hear from them about specific issues in their areas, they have often identified how state-owned land could be better utilised for their community and there have been very good, healthy and productive discussions about how that can occur. I am sure that will continue into the future. We will provide a detailed response for the honourable member, as I indicated previously, in relation to that question.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, the net cost to programs. What savings initiatives or efficiency dividends are expected to be made by the Office for State/Local Government Relations?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The total cost of savings for the office is \$115 000, which will involve some efficiencies within the office.

Mr PENGILLY: As a supplementary question, does that mean a reduction in staff numbers?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised not.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: As a supplementary question, what is the FTE of the Office for State/Local Government Relations.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that it is something like 23. If that figure is not totally accurate, I will let the honourable member know. Mr Petrovski has some additional information.

Mr PETROVSKI: I want to make clear that that number does not refer to the number of individuals, because a number of staff members are part time. The FTE number is what is being referred to.

The CHAIR: I point out to the member for Kavel that the last question was not a supplementary: it was a new topic. It does not matter because you are being given the opportunity to ask as many questions as you like. For the edification of the honourable member, if it is a new topic it is a new question.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. Will the minister advise what general comments were made from local government concerning the Differential Rates Recommendation Paper? We understand that 30 separate submissions were made.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: A number of submissions were made. I cannot confirm that number—

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: It is on the web site.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I do not have the web site sitting in front of me. I am saying that I recognise that we received a number of submissions in relation to that paper. There are wide-ranging views around a range of topics and, if he would like a summary of those, we are happy to provide them for the honourable member.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 4.17. It is noted that the special purpose payments to local government in the 2006-07 budget were \$87.8 million, while in the 2005-06 budget they were \$97.8 million. Will the minister explain the reason for the \$10 million difference?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Geoff Knight will provide those details.

Mr KNIGHT: I think the answer to that question lies in quite a bit of the detail. However, looking down the table, members will see that a number of those lines are not able to be determined for 2006-07 as a result of separate funding processes. In fact, it is all the lines marked with a 'B', which

simply indicates that, while the figures for 2005-06 are available and printed in the papers, the figures for 2006-07 are subject to various assessment or eligibility processes. Included in that would be things such as open space applications made under the Planning and Development Fund.

Beyond that there is a second class of major difference where significant one-offs would have occurred in 2005-06. Also under this portfolio, the honourable member will see, for example, that the government provided a grant of some \$3.247 million to the Adelaide City Council for the North Terrace upgrade. That was a one-off in 2005-06 and does not recur in 2006-07. If he examines that list, the honourable member will see that there are others of a similar nature. If one adds those up one will get a substantial difference.

I guess that we might be sitting here in a year and we will find that the actual result for 2006-07 is likely to be quite different from that \$87.8 million just because of the process of councils applying for things such as places for people, grants and other open space grants, let alone the others that occur in other parts of the government. For example, under the DAIS listing you have recreation and sport grants which total \$0.29 million and the facilities grants which total \$1.3 million. There are no figures in there for 2006-07 because the process has not been finished. Those funds still sit elsewhere in the budget but they are unable to be printed at this time. It does not necessarily reflect a reduction in funding that will actually be available.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 4.14 and the local government balance sheet (table 4.5). With respect to the heading 'Liabilities' in the line of 'Borrowings, deposits held and finance leases', will the minister advise the committee what projects these borrowings fund through the local government sector for the long-term provision of services to our respective communities?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My advice is that this reflects local council borrowings. We would have to get that information from each individual council. Councils publish their own budget papers, but I understand that that is what those figures represent.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Generally, in the budget papers there is an estimated 2005-06 result and then a budget is produced for 2006-07. This balance sheet indicates no estimated result for 2005-06 and no budget is produced for 2006-07.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Is the honourable member talking about the same table?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Yes.

Mr PETROVSKI: This portion of the budget papers is an analysis that is done after the date, as it were, by Treasury officials in trying to provide information on the state of finance of the local government sector. As far as individual councils are concerned, it is public information that is both provided in their annual reports and in their budget process. Accordingly, it is not possible to have that kind of information in consolidated form for the whole of the sector in the state government's budget.

Mr KNIGHT: In terms of the member's substantive question, this table is prepared based on actual results, rather than budgets or estimated outcomes. Of course, it would be possible to do such a thing but it would be a momentous task. You are aware that this is prepared by the Department of Treasury and Finance based on final financial statements that would be published after auditing. None of this is based on state government expenditure, so the issue of estimated results and so on would be information that we would not

have access to. Of course, if you wanted to drill down into this information to see what lines are there it would be a significant task. It is all publicly available from councils in terms of their published financial statements, but it is just not possible for a state government to prepare the kind of information you are talking about now, a budget estimated outcome as well as the final result. These are the audited final numbers so they are what would be relied upon, and they are what councils have a statutory responsibility to publish.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Again Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, and it is a question relating to the Local Government Forum, minister. What has been the government's response to the Local Government Association's suggestion that progressive deregulation of council fees and charges should occur?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is an issue that was raised in the Local Government Financial Sustainability Inquiry. It was a recommendation that has been put to me by the President of the Local Government Association, and it is one to which I have not yet responded, but I have given an undertaking to the LGA they will have a response to that before the State/Local Government Minister's Forum on 9 November.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Again, as an extension of the Local Government Forum, and it is the same reference details: minister, can you please outline the government's position in relation to the development of legislation under which the councils have direct access to developer contributions from subdivisions being required for infrastructure?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Again, that is an issue on which I know discussions have been undertaken with minister Holloway who has responsibility for that. It was again an issue that was raised in their Financial Sustainability Inquiry, and one that will be responded to in my formal response to the President of the LGA prior to the forum. But it is the responsibility of another minister.

Mr PENGILLY: Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28: under the State/Local Government Agreement, the notion of having a transparent cost benefit analysis completed concerning changes made by state government that impacts on local government is generally supported. What action is the minister taking for this approach to be formally agreed upon?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to take that one on notice.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Again on Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, in relation to performance commentary. The Office for State/Local Government Relations is attached to PIRSA. I understand that the Local Government Association supports the proposal for the office to be relocated and attached to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Can the minister explain what work has taken place in relation to that proposal put forward by the LGA?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to answer the question, but I do not see where that is in the performance commentary. Perhaps you might like to point that out.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: It is in relation to the Local Government Forum, and the ongoing dialogue that you have between—

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Okay, it is one of these general performance commentary-type questions. As far as I am aware, the President of the LGA has not raised that as an issue with me. If that is not the case, I will be happy to let you know, but as far as I am aware I do not recall any correspondence from the President or any discussions with

him asking that the office be transferred to DPC. Personally I fail to see what you actually gain by doing that.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I am not sure where the reference point is but it relates to your introductory comments about the Outback Areas Community Development Trust, and the support that is referred to there. Certainly, I understand that the trust has responsibility for a vast area of South Australia with a lot of small communities. Can you provide some details on the resources that are provided to the Outback Areas Community Development Trust to allow them to do all those roles?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is an interesting thing. Whilst it is not a council, the Outback Areas Community Development Trust has evolved over time, much like councils have done. I know they have been doing a lot of work with progress associations within their area of responsibility. The trust received state government appropriation in 2005-06 of \$494 000; an ongoing base allocation in 2005-06 of \$238 000, together with new ongoing funding of \$256 000 in 2005-06 to support the expansion of community programs; plus two one-off grants of \$100 000 towards the Andamooka water pipeline and \$100 000 towards the Outback water studies. The state appropriation for 2006-07 is \$512 000.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As an extension of that line of questioning: given the projections in future years for the expansion of the mineral opportunities within South Australia and therefore, I would presume, the responsibilities that would fall upon the Outback Areas Community Development Trust to control development principles and to make sure that existing communities expand more, in the forward estimates for this area are you factoring in a significant increase in resources towards the Outback Areas Community Development Trust?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The trust is evolving in its responsibilities and, as you said, there are enormous potential growth factors in the north of the state, and we have to look at those. This interest, across economic and social sectors, has raised the capacity of the communities within the Outback to embrace change. The communities are struggling to comply with some of the expectations, for a multitude of reasons, including volunteer burnout in some cases, minimal critical mass, lack of understanding of institutional policy and implementation.

Outback communities are also facing much greater pressures to be accountable and improve their performance on a wide range of local management issues, and these issues were highlighted in the 2005 State of the Outback report commissioned by the trust. I have met on a couple of occasions with the trust, and what we want to do is properly establish clear directional priorities to improve the infrastructure and establish a separation of public versus private benefit, and reduce the reliance on volunteers to manage essential services in the Outback. This is something that we do need to work through with the Outback Areas Trust before allocation of additional funds.

Mr PENGILLY: Referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27, what is the cost of providing corporate services to the Office for State/Local Government Relations: for example, payroll, IT support, stationery costs, etc.?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We will take that one on notice and get a detailed response for you.

Mr PENGILLY: A follow-up question on the same budget line: have there been any increases in the FTE positions over the past 12 months; if so, how many?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In the office as a whole?

Mr PENGILLY: Yes.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Are you talking about the Office for State/Local Government Relations?

Mr PENGILLY: Yes.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My understanding is the answer is no.

Mr PENGILLY: You confirm that?

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: Yes; 23.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: 23, 24 FTEs.

Mr GRIFFITHS: My question relates to an earlier comment you made about the intergovernmental agreement that exists between commonwealth, state and local government. Being a previous practitioner in local government for 27 years and involved in the administrative side of things and in living with the frustration of the devolution of responsibility, I ask the minister whether she can provide details of specific examples of where financial support has been provided by the state government to local government for roles that local government has taken on?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Can you give me some examples of roles that councils have taken on?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I am asking you.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You need to give me an example so I can respond. I know that, for example, the state government has taken on responsibility for funding the CFS; so we have withdrawn that responsibility from local councils. There is a great argument about cost shifting onto local government. My argument would be: the biggest level of cost shifting onto local government would be the federal government not providing the funding that it is supposed to provide through the financial assistance grants.

When we talk about the lack of money since 1997, or that cumulative amount of money that should have gone to local government, if you want to talk about cost shifting, I have yet to have someone give me an example—and I am happy to take one and then respond to you—where the state government has put an impost onto local government and not funded it.

Mr GRIFFITHS: So the inter-governmental agreement that exists between the three levels will only support federal government funds coming to the state and then in turn to local government, or federal government funds going direct to local government? There are no dollars anticipated, as an example, even towards road infrastructure from the state government to support local government expenditure?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No; and certainly road funding is one of those areas where South Australia is significantly disadvantaged. When the commonwealth calculates the financial assistance grants I understand they are calculated on a population basis, but when it comes to road funding for local councils it is not calculated on a per kilometre basis. So we have something like 11.6 per cent of the nation's roads and get something like 5.5 per cent of the funding. There were some special grants made available to South Australia that lifted that up to just over 8 per cent, I understand, but that agreement runs out next year. I have corresponded with the minister asking for some sort of permanent solution to be put in place, because it simply is not acceptable. If you want to talk about cost shifting onto local government, that is one highly significant area.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate that information. I think it was over \$26 million that the Prime Minister made available to local government in South Australia to recognise the road funding deficiency that existed.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That was a significant amount of money, and we were very appreciative of it, but it still does not bring South Australia up to the level of funding that it should have. Why they would use population-based funding on one level but not use a form of funding based on the state's length in kilometres of roads defies logic. It is clearly based on some historical formula; even the minister said on Friday that, if we change it, there will be winners and losers, and they are not prepared to be a party to that. There is a significant problem in relation to road funding that the commonwealth needs to address, because local road infrastructure is a heavy burden on councils. As I said, an agreement was signed by all the state ministers and the Treasurer for the federal government to take responsibility for the funding of local councils.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Previously coming from a council that had responsibility for 4 000 kilometres of road under its own control, I can appreciate that. I do not necessarily want to debate with you the historical argument about road funding. My last question to you was more specific: in the inter-government agreement, do you see opportunities for state government to actually provide additional levels of funding to local government to provide services and infrastructure?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think we have already done that in relation to stormwater management for which we have committed \$120 million over 30 years to assist councils in this regard. So, we have already done that.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Kavel wish to ask the omnibus questions, or will you ignore them in this instance?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: No; we have some omnibus questions, Madam Chair. The member for Finnis has a final question, then we will read in the omnibus questions.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2. In relation to the member allowances tribunal and the work being done by you and your office, can you give us an update on where that is currently?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Are you talking about my decision to lift the cap on council—

Mr PENGILLY: Yes; and the tribunal formulation.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is an undertaking I gave the LGA to work within over the next 12 months to develop a way in which we can better manage council allowances. Clearly, it costs people to be in local government. As I have said on numerous occasions, I am very keen to see diversity reflected in local councils. It is a costly thing to individuals, and I do not want it to be only people who have substantial personal wealth who can participate on their local councils.

The LGA engaged a consultant to develop a proposal in relation to member allowances and not particularly happy with that outcome, I understand, so it developed its own proposal, which was put to the then minister for local government, who at that stage did not endorse it. I looked at all of that information and indicated that I was not prepared to make a judgment about where each individual council should fit within an allowance allocation. I did not think that that was the role of the minister and, certainly, not of me as a new minister, bearing in mind that the performance and/or the requirements involving councillors is not reflected in the size of the councils. I have had it put to me—and having lived in rural South Australia for many years, I understand this only too well—that in some small areas that would have lesser budgets, the councillors themselves have a greater level of personal responsibility placed on them compared with their counterparts in the larger areas.

There is the argument that, if you have people managing multimillion-dollar budgets, they should be reimbursed accordingly. I have given the LGA a commitment to work with it over the next 12 months, because councils themselves currently determine within a range what they will pay themselves. I have told them that I am happy to work with the Office for State/Local Government to progress a more appropriate way of setting their allowances and, as that work progresses, I am happy to report to the house.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: My omnibus questions are:

1. Can the minister provide a detailed breakdown for each of the forward estimate years of specific administration measures as listed in Budget Paper 3, chapter 2 'expenditure', which will lead to a reduction of the operating costs of 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, the cost, work undertaken and method of appointment?

3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there as of 30 June 2006? For each surplus employee, what is the title or classification and the total employment 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? Has cabinet already approved any carryover expenditure into 2006-07; and, if so, how much?

6. What was the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$100 000 or more per employee, and also, as a subcategory, 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 of 30 June 2006? For the period between 30 June 2005 and 30 June 2006, will the minister list 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?

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

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.

Ms A. Chooi, Manager, Budgets, Financial Services.

Ms S. Pitcher, Director, Office for Women.

Membership:

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Goldsworthy.

The CHAIR: I will briefly remind people of some of the rules relating to estimates. It is important that questions be asked to the minister. The minister may refer questions to her

advisers if she chooses, but only the minister can make any commitments in relation to questions, etc. It is important that questions do continue through the chair and the minister and that debate not be entered into between advisers and committee members. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date it must be submitted to the committee secretary by no later than Friday 17 November.

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. Does the minister wish to make a brief opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you. The government of South Australia has shown its continued commitment to the women of South Australia by providing \$2 081 000 for the Office for Women for the 2006-07 financial year. This budget includes an allocation of \$534 000 to the Women's Information Service and \$233 000 to support the work of the Premier's Council for Women. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the excellent work undertaken in this portfolio area over the past 12 months and to outline some of the initiatives that are planned for the 2006-07 financial year. The operating budget for the Office for Women in the 2005-06 financial year was \$1 311 000. The office continues to lead the implementation of the Women's Safety Strategy, which is focusing on the way in which government can better deliver client-based services to victims of domestic violence.

The Women's Safety Strategy has a range of working groups that focused on developing responses in key areas such as indigenous family violence; the impact of violence on women and employment; the experiences of women from non-English speaking backgrounds; and women, safety and sport. The office oversees a variety of community projects that were funded through the Community Education Grant Fund, and these included:

- workshops with women of non-English speaking backgrounds in Coober Pedy on the effects of violence and abuse and its link to mental, emotional and physical health issues;
- development of an information package entitled 'Identifying DV in the primary health care setting' to provide the necessary skills to general practitioners to train their peers in recognising and assisting patients who have lived with domestic violence.

In addition, funding was supplied to the Non-English Speaking Background Domestic Violence Action Group to develop a web site with information about domestic violence and to expand written resources in a range of community languages. These are just a few examples of the excellent projects that were undertaken. In the coming year, we will also be working with the Premier's Taxi Advisory Board and the Taxi Council to develop a range of strategies to address safety issues for passengers, particularly women. There are also a number of key events that aim to increase public awareness of issues relating to women's safety and equality for women. These include International Women's Day, White Ribbon Day and the events surrounding the 16 Days of Activism Against Gendered Violence.

In December last year, the Office for Women also coordinated a Women's Safety Conference in partnership with various community organisations. The conference was attended by around 200 people from a broad range of organisations, and I am pleased to report that this conference will take place once again this year, on 23 and 24 November in the lead up to White Ribbon Day and the 16 Days activi-

ties. Ensuring that the voices of Aboriginal women in South Australia are included in decision making across government is another key priority of this government. In July 2005, 50 Aboriginal women from across South Australia attended the State Aboriginal Women's Gathering. Delegates presented a range of recommendations that were circulated to the relevant South Australian government agencies and a progress report was compiled in response to these recommendations and presented to delegates at the 2006 gathering.

I am pleased to report that as of 1 October this year women held 51.5 per cent of positions on government boards and committees. This represents an increase from 33.6 per cent as at 1 April following the release of South Australia's Strategic Plan. In addition, as at 1 October 2006 women held 31.98—so we can probably stretch it and say 32—per cent of chair positions on government boards and committees. This represents an increase from 23.8 per cent as of 1 April 2004, again, following the release of the South Australian Strategic Plan.

The Premier's Women's Directory has been an important online resource, profiling many of the state's most talented women, all of whom are available for appointment to boards and committees within government and across the community and business sectors. We will continue to develop and expand the Premier's Women's Directory. We have plans to identify skills shortages on the directory, and we are working to increase the number of women available to take up board positions in non-traditional areas.

Another key achievement within the Status of Women portfolio this year has been the development and launch of the Gender Indicators Online web site, in conjunction with the Premier's Council for Women, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Australian Institute for Social Research. This publicly available resource provides a diverse range of statistics which will enable policy and program makers to monitor the changes in the status of women across South Australia and which will prove a valuable resource for improving gender sensitive policy.

With an operating budget of just over \$500 000, the Women's Information Service has continued to provide high quality information, support and referral services to women across the state. This year, WIS launched the volunteer court support program for women in the Family Court. The first training program for volunteers was held in May, with nine women completing the training. WIS has since provided support for women at 16 court sessions. I am also pleased to report that WIS commenced an outreach service through Cafe Enfield, one of the government's new children's centres, at the end of the 2005-06 financial year. An information officer has been visiting the centre once a week since this time and providing information and referrals to parents, grandparents and community members.

The Premier's Council for Women, with an operating budget of \$233 000, has undertaken a number of important tasks during the last financial year. The 16 members of the council are from a diverse range of backgrounds, and provide valuable advice to government on a range of critical issues to enable us to achieve equity for women in South Australia. The diverse composition ensures that the voice of disadvantaged women in our community, particularly Aboriginal women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, is heard by the government. The council has continued to support directions and initiatives in South Australia's Strategic Plan and the government's Population Policy for South Australia.

The Premier's Council for Women contributed significantly to the review of South Australia's Strategic Plan as one of the key government advisory bodies in the update team, and the council was involved in the community consultations and also representation on the SASP audit committee. Advice provided to the Premier and me on a range of other issues affecting women in the past year has included:

- advice on modifications to the Strategic Plan, including targets and linking of targets to the need for an overarching plan statement aimed at achieving equity and equality, and the need for disaggregation of data;
- advice on strategies to improve women's safety, and support for implementation of the initiatives identified during consultations on the development of the women's safety strategy; and
- advice on measures to advance women's economic security and ability to contribute to the state's economy through employment and small business.

Considering the relatively small budget allocation this portfolio receives, in contrast to the large responsibilities inherent in the portfolio, I am pleased to report on what has, indeed, become been a year of significant and very positive achievements.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Bragg wish to make an opening statement?

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the fifth year of the Rann Labor government it is disappointing to note that, after looking at this budget and the provision for the Women's Information Service, the advisory councils and other important services of the women's unit, we have advanced at a snail's pace. In fact, I am sure that, if the Hon. Diana Laidlaw were here reading this budget paper, her disappointment would be made loud and clear. Let us just go back a stage.

In the 2001-02 annual report, at the time of the new Rann Labor government taking office, there were three important aspects of the unit (the then office for the status of women). One was that an advisory council representative providing advice to government had been operating. Secondly, it had presented a paper to government in that year, seeking reform for rape, sexual assault and domestic violence legislation and other associated reforms. Thirdly, it had a list of board opportunities for women to take up in the public and private sectors.

What has happened since then is that it took Premier Rann over a year to announce the new advisory council under his government, which he rebadged the Premier's Women's Council. We do not have an issue with that, except that I would be interested to hear from the Premier how many times he has met with the council. It is an existing advisory board and it is an important one, but the fact that the Premier took over a year to even establish it was most concerning, and we were most vocal about that at the time.

Let us move to the advance in relation to reform with respect to rape, sexual assault and domestic violence legislation, which the minister has so proudly paraded today as an important achievement of this government. Let the committee be absolutely clear about this: we are still in talkfest mode. We are in consultation and review mode. In the fifth year of this government, with respect to an area of reform that was on the table and ready to be initiated, I think it is scandalous that the government has taken so long and, furthermore, that it is still talking about it.

In relation to the women's directory (which the Premier, in his usual ego-driven way, has renamed the Premier's

Women's Directory), there are now fewer women on this directory than was the case under the Hon. Diana Laidlaw. The only thing this government has done is put it on a web site as distinct from having it in hard copy form. Furthermore, when the government put it on the web site, it excluded most people in South Australia from having access to it. One had to have permission to access it and, as I understand it, that is still the case. What will that do for the women of South Australia?

In relation to the female representation on boards, this initiative is one which I, for one, have supported the government on—achieving what we have heard again as a 51 per cent representation on boards. But let us understand this: the employment of women is skewed towards the lower end of the classification scale. The government needs to take leadership, and not just in relation to its own government boards—many of which it is axing on a monthly basis, so we might not have enough boards to put them on. We can have a percentage, nevertheless. If the government is serious about leadership and about giving women recognition at that level, then we need to see changes in the non-government and private sector. It is the responsibility of government to take leadership, not to cut the number of boards and then pretend—in the requirement of equal number of men and women—that it is actually doing something to advance women.

The ASX 200 CEO positions have 5 per cent female representation, while the working population is 44 per cent and females make up 50 per cent of the management courses at university. Therefore, I confirm today, on behalf of the opposition, our disappointment in the aspects, structures and policies that were on the table in 2002, which the government has done little to advance. Women still remain unrepresented, abused and without a proper voice in South Australia.

I commend the work that is undertaken by the unit and the women who work in it, in providing information (particularly at the Women's Information Service), such as referral and advice. Providing for women in South Australia is more than just giving them a pamphlet and a web site. The government needs to get serious on this. I ask the minister, in her new role as Minister for the Status of Women, to ensure that the Premier does more than just lend his name to directories and women's councils; that he does something serious about bringing that policy not only up-to-date but consistent with the 2002 recommendations, and to ensure that women are properly recognised.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Madam Chair, in my introductory statement I incorrectly said 51 per cent of women on government boards and committees. It is actually 41.5. I misread the figure. Sorry.

Ms CHAPMAN: I indicate that there are a number of omnibus questions which I expect have been provided to the minister in her other areas of responsibility. I am happy to read those again but, if the minister takes them on notice for this area of responsibility, I will not repeat them.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The department has received those so we are happy with that.

Ms CHAPMAN: I will note that as being received then. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.44. The government has referred to an increase in female representation on boards and committees. However, the soon to be axed Office for Public Employment and the Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment have consistently demonstrated, through applying an equity index across the SA Public Service, that 'employment of women is skewed

towards the lower end of the classification scale.' What measures is the Office for Women utilising to address this issue?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Can I make a couple of comments in prelude to answering your question? In reference to your quite disparaging remarks about the Premier, in fact, the Premier's Council for Women meets approximately four times a year and he is meeting with them, I understand, in November. The council provides a regular written report to both myself and the Premier. I well support your concern about the number of women both in employment statistics and on boards and committees, both public and private. I think we all have a responsibility to show some leadership in that and certainly whilst boards and committees are a target in our South Australian Strategic Plan, so is political representation.

I am very concerned about the level of women who are elected to local government. The numbers there are abysmally low, and it is even worse in executive positions. Here in South Australia we have one permanently appointed chief executive out of 68 councils and one acting. When you look around this chamber, it is also incredibly disappointing. I think we should pay due credit to the Premier who was very strong in his support of having women preselected to winnable seats here in South Australia. We have a very enviable percentage rate of women members of parliament in this chamber, something like 46.4 per cent (I think sometimes the 0.4 is hanging off my backside, but that is another story), with only something like 20 per cent, I think, on the member's side. So, she might like to look—

Ms CHAPMAN: It is the same whoever is in government.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, it is not the same. The difference is that we have very strong affirmative action in the Labor Party that requires women to be selected, I think, for 40 per cent of winnable seats, 40 per cent for men and 20 per cent variance. I well remember members of the opposition pooh-poohing that policy and we can see the result of that.

Ms CHAPMAN: How many safe seats?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Quite a few. My margin is 15.5. Is that safe enough, do you think? The fact of the matter is that if you are going to espouse that you want women in leadership positions—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I appreciate the fact that the honourable member herself has criticised her federal colleagues because of lack of preselection in the federal arena. So, I understand exactly what the honourable member is going on about. But it would be really good to see the Liberal Party in this state do something about the situation, not just sit back and carp and have a go at others.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! It is time to focus on the question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I certainly accept that we do not have enough women in the upper echelons of the state government. The government accepts that and is working towards lifting those levels. Just like we have lifted political representation in the parliament, we will be working very strongly to ensure that women progress through our Public Service, and we hope to have the support of the opposition in doing that.

Ms CHAPMAN: Perhaps then we will look at the profiles of the public servants who lose their jobs under the efficiency measures of the government to see what level of women go out with that lot, but that is for another day.

The CHAIR: Is that a question or a comment? Comments are now allowed. Minister, if you wish to answer that question—we can only interpret it as a question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.17. The 2005-06 highlights state:

Developed a 'Women in Leadership' plan to assist women with limited experience on boards and committees.

How many women undertook the Women in Leadership program to enable them to serve on these boards and committees?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I have already explained the number of people on our boards and committees. It is also worth pointing out that we have over 300 highly qualified board-ready women on the Premier's women's directory. The member commented earlier about the number having been reduced. Part of that process was the Office for Women going through those people who had been registered and interviewing them and ensuring that they were board ready. We do have—

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We did not take the same tactic that the opposition did when it was in government. If we look at some of our more high profile boards, I do not think that the government can be questioned or held to ridicule about its not being inclusive of people from other political parties. The Premier has said, on a number of occasions, that he is looking for people with skill and whoever can deliver best for South Australia, as opposed to looking at their political affiliations. I am happy to get the exact number of people who have participated in the workshops for the honourable member and get back to her.

Ms CHAPMAN: Has the Office for Women been allocated any funds to update its paper-based system?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that we do not have a paper-based system: it is on the web. I am happy to clarify that, but that is my information.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, Portfolio Statements, Program 6, Sub-program 6.1, page 11.44. What positive initiatives have been implemented to assist Aboriginal women in South Australia?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am pleased to say that a range of initiatives has been implemented through the Office for Women—and I am sure that there has been a range of others—to try to address the high levels of disadvantage Aboriginal women experience. This disadvantage is well documented and evident in many areas. It is particularly apparent in statistical comparisons with the circumstances of non-indigenous women compared to other women: for example, in areas of employment where the participation rate of indigenous women is 43 per cent compared to an overall participation rate of 55 per cent for all women; in education, where 18 per cent of indigenous women completed year 12 (or the equivalent) in 2001 compared to 38 per cent of all women; and health and safety, in particular, where indigenous women are almost twice as likely to be hospitalised as other Australian women, and whose death rates are around twice as high as those of all women.

Disadvantage is also evident in relation to leadership and decision making. To ensure that Aboriginal women's voices are heard and that Aboriginal women are included in decision-making processes across government, the Office for Women continues to convene a State Aboriginal Women's Gathering. A very successful gathering was held at West

Beach in July 2005 and, as I mentioned earlier, it was attended by about 50 women. They identified a number of issues of concern to Aboriginal women and passed those on to the state government, and an extensive report was compiled for presentation to the delegates at the gathering this year. The Office for Women has also facilitated and funded the attendance of four women delegates elected at the State Aboriginal Women's Gathering to represent South Australia at the National Indigenous Women's Gathering.

One gathering was held in New South Wales in September 2005, and this year it was held in South Australia. The Office for Women has provided funding and staff to support the Aboriginal Women Statewide Advisory Council to assist the council in its development and communication with Aboriginal women across South Australia. By improving the Aboriginal staffing profile in the Office for Women, the office has been able to work determinedly to progress initiatives that benefit Aboriginal women. Aboriginal staff currently comprise over one-sixth of the Office for Women staff, including a policy officer (Aboriginal Women's Initiatives), an Aboriginal project officer and an Aboriginal administrative trainee in January 2006.

The membership of the Premier's Council for Women includes three indigenous women who bring a great deal of experience to the council. This has been invaluable in making sure that we use Aboriginal women's experience and expertise so that the advice provided to government on a range of critical issues will enable us to achieve equity for all women in South Australia. Also, we have administered and overseen projects funded under the Community Education Grant Fund, which provided a round of one-off funding to 14 organisations.

Some of the significant projects include the Respect Yourself and Others Youth Ball, the Aboriginal Women against Family Violence program, an art project, a healing community project at the Port Augusta hospital, and a two to three day indigenous women's and children's safety retreat in the Riverland. The government will continue to implement the women's safety initiatives across government during 2006-07 and to include Aboriginal women in decision making with some outcomes already having been achieved in this new financial year.

Ms FOX: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, Portfolio Statement, Program 6.2, page 11.45. What is the government doing to assist women in the Family Court?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: This year has seen a very practical and quite exciting project emerge from the Office for Women and the Women's Information Service. We know that going to court for whatever reason (unless you are a highly paid lawyer) is an incredibly traumatic experience. It is particularly traumatic if you come from a background of domestic violence and you must go through the formal processes for dissolution of your marriage. The Court Support Service initiative is run by volunteers and hosted by the Women's Information Service.

I think nine women have been trained and, to date, they have had 16 court experiences. This initiative has been invaluable to a number of women in quite difficult circumstances. I had the opportunity to speak in depth with one of the volunteers recently. In my discussions with her she reinforced people's motivation for volunteering. She had been through an incredibly traumatic time; she had experienced a terrible marriage breakdown and was subject to domestic violence. She wanted to provide some support to women

experiencing the same level of trauma and upheaval in their lives.

Her story was horrendous, but the gift she is providing to other women both in metropolitan Adelaide and in rural areas will go a long way toward helping them through this very traumatic experience. These women are to be congratulated for giving of their time to support their fellow women. The Women's Information Service and the Office for Women need to be congratulated for developing a very practical initiative.

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, Portfolio Statement, Program 6, subprogram 6.1, page 11.44. Building on the response just given, will the minister advise what positive initiatives the government has implemented to address domestic violence?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As I mentioned earlier, domestic violence is one of those difficult issues with which any government must grapple. Certainly, it is a real blight on our community. I am pleased that many initiatives are being implemented through the Women's Safety Strategy, which was launched last year on International Women's Day. The strategy is led by a whole-of-government reference group chaired by Sue Vardon (Chief Executive, Department for Families and Communities) and run by the Office for Women. The Women's Safety Strategy has been focusing on how government can work better, smarter and faster to help those victims of domestic violence who are most in need of the service.

The whole-of-government reference group is providing high level leadership to address the critical issues of women's and children's safety. It includes a range of people not only from families and communities but also the police, education, TAFE and correctional services so that we get the strategy across government, as well as an understanding that it is not just a women's issue. If our women and children are not safe it impacts on every aspect of our community. Working groups with community expertise have been established and are working to improve government responses to indigenous family violence, the experience of women from non-English speaking backgrounds, the impact of violence on women and their employment, and women's safety in sport.

The Community Education Grant Fund, which was available for a round of one-off projects, provided funding for 14 organisations for a range of projects. These were administered and overseen by the Office for Women and implemented during the financial year. They have added to the depth of work that government has been doing. A free Women's Safety Strategy Conference was held in Adelaide in December 2005. As I said, that conference was attended by more than 200 people. We look forward to another very successful conference in November this year.

Ms CHAPMAN: Given the interest and commitment the Women's Information Service has to training in support of women in the Family Court, has the Premier's Council for Women had referred to it the issue of transferring the power for domestic property rights for women and men to the federal arena (which South Australia has been dragging the chain on), has the council considered it, and has it put any recommendation to the government to get on with it?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My advice is that that is not an issue that has come before me from the Premier's Council for Women, and that in fact it is an area of responsibility under the Attorney-General.

Ms CHAPMAN: Well, minister, let me ask you this question: so is rape and sexual assault and domestic vio-

lence—and so are women's property rights, so why is that to be excluded from consideration of the terms of reference of consideration of the Premier's Council for Women, when it is this very issue that needs to be addressed, and of which surely your Council for Women Advisory Board ought to have a view on, and even be given an opportunity to make a comment on.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I take exception to your comment that it has been excluded. That is not the case. What I said is I have not received any advice from the Premier's Council for Women in that regard. That is quite different from having been excluded. I am quite happy to take your comments on board.

Ms CHAPMAN: Minister, I will ask you the question again of whether you will get an answer—not take the comments on board—as to whether the Premier's Council for Women has, in fact, had that term of reference referred to it. If it has not, why not, and, if it has, what its recommendation is?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I will get a report and come back to the member.

Ms CHAPMAN: Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.17, and here we refer to the implementation of the safety strategy across government. Minister, how many shelters does the government fund for the protection of women from domestic violence, and what is the budget allocation for them this year?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to take that one on notice as well, as that is the responsibility of another minister.

Ms CHAPMAN: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.15: the South Australia Police Domestic Violence Strategy. How does this program, if at all, supplement to support the Women's Safety Strategy?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As I mentioned earlier, the South Australia Police is a member of the Women's Safety Strategy, so that is a very comprehensive across-government working group that is chaired by, as I said, Sue Vardon. We have people from SAPOL, Education, TAFE, Health, Corrections and Justice.

Ms CHAPMAN: Could I ask the minister to give some clarity as to what that Domestic Violence Strategy does? What is in that strategy that is to help women, apart from, presumably, getting information across departments?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is not about just getting information. It is about how the government responds more effectively to issues of domestic violence. I did read out very briefly to you a range of areas which the safety strategy deals with, including, as I said, indigenous family violence, experiences of women from non-English speaking backgrounds, the impact of violence on women in their employment, and women's safety in sport. There is a range of areas in which government has identified it wants to improve its responses. Is it not just giving information to women. As important as that is, the Women's Information Service is also a very important vehicle for doing that, and this year we are working in collaboration with the Minister for Education to ensure that that sort of information is not just city-centric, but going out into our suburbs in a range of ways. We have already established a service that is operating out of Cafe Enfield to help and advise women, and we are looking at integrating those services into the children's centres as they are established across South Australia. It is about positive and practical changes and implementation of strategies within government.

Ms CHAPMAN: On the SA Police Domestic Violence Strategy, how many people are currently on aggravated violence orders—commonly known as AVOs—in South Australia, and what is being done to support their needs in maintaining distance and protection from the offender?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is a question I would be happy for the member to ask the Minister for Police.

Ms CHAPMAN: As the Minister for the Office of Women, and given the Rann Government's 2006 ALP election policy on women—not police, not Attorney-General's, but on women—which said '...recognising cumulative breaches of domestic violence restraining orders and providing corresponding escalating penalties,' I am rather alarmed to hear, minister, that you do not consider that this is your area of responsibility.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: What I said is that the Minister for Police would have those statistics at hand, and obviously overall strategies in relation to addressing the issues of domestic violence. The Office for Women is very actively involved and, in fact, leading, as is the Department for Families and Communities. We do consider it to be a very important area. In relation to those sorts of statistics, we know a number of things. For example, 17 per cent of women experience sexual assault. Violence against women aged 45 and over has increased to 25 per cent in 2005; there has been a massive increase there. The violence against women aged 18 to 24 has decreased from 38 per cent in 1996 to 26 per cent in 2005, and most women who have experienced assault are likely to have been assaulted by a partner or a previous partner. But if you are asking me about the specific numbers of orders against men for violence, I am sorry, I do not have those figures.

Ms CHAPMAN: Obviously, minister, you did not hear the rest of my question, because not only did I ask you for the number but also what is being done to support their need to maintain the distance and to be protected from the offender? I would have thought, given it is detailed in your ALP election policy, that that would be within your area.

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Bragg, you are definitely debating. Please focus on a question. Was there a question? Minister, did you identify a question?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I understand that a considerable amount of work has actually been done in that area. It is certainly an issue that was raised with me in meetings up in Clare, in particular, where I had a meeting with a number of women, and it is an issue in country areas, most particularly, where it is very difficult for women to be located safely, but also within their own community. There are strategies being developed and they will be announced at the appropriate time.

Ms CHAPMAN: Given your statement that a considerable amount of work has been done, can you detail at present what, if anything, is being done to support these women in the meantime?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: A number of agencies are being funded through government to support women, to keep them safe. I have spoken—

Ms CHAPMAN: What are they?

The CHAIR: Order, member for Bragg!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There is a whole range of them.

Ms CHAPMAN: Give me one; that would be a good start.

The CHAIR: Order! We will just pause. Member for Bragg, the minister is answering your question and the minister will continue to answer your question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There are a range of things in relation to housing people, providing them with safety alarms, connections with the police—a whole range of safety strategies. The police have done a considerable amount of work in this area and I am advised there will be an announcement in relation to these specific areas in a very short period of time, but it is not my responsibility or appropriate for me to announce them just for the member's benefit today; she will have to wait, I am afraid.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! Questions are in order; comments are not. Does the member for Bragg have a question?

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 11.17. The ABS personal safety strategy released on 10 August 2006 shows that in South Australia within the last 12 months 9 700 females have experienced sexual assault, whilst 5 200 females have experienced other forms of physical violence. Does the government have targets in place to reduce these figures and, if so, what are they?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I agree with the member; it is an appalling statistic and it is a situation that women should not be facing. Every day we see people denouncing in one way or another protections for women. Sometimes it is couched in language describing the people in question as being do-gooders or politically correct; so, in fact, if you actually care for someone you are a do-gooder, and all of a sudden that becomes a bad thing. We, very disappointingly, witnessed an episode in here not so long ago where one of the members of this chamber said something to indicate that, if they had been present when a woman was dunked in a water trough, he would have applauded and cheered them on. So it is—

Mr Piccolo interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, I will not—

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am just relaying—

Ms CHAPMAN: Your memory of it.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am relaying my memory of it; that is exactly right. I am also relaying the shock that reverberated around the community when people heard of that particular incident. We all have our views about that, but it probably was not a helpful comment to make, and I do not in any way want to indicate that I am quoting that person verbatim. However, as I have said, I understand that it was along the lines that they would have cheered or applauded along with it.

We are working with the other states and territories in relation to a women's safety strategy to reduce these numbers, and it is an issue that was discussed here in South Australia just recently. Our target is to reduce the incidence, but I do not have any particular numbers that have been focused on or agreed to by the states and territories.

Ms CHAPMAN: I am still referring to the personal safety strategy. Is the minister aware of concerns, and indeed have any concerns been referred to the Premier's Council for Women, that aggravated violence orders are not being enforced in South Australia, and what action has the government taken to rectify this?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There has been, I understand, some concern about the aggravated violence orders, and certainly I have had discussions with people out in my electorate in relation to this. That is an issue that I understand is being addressed in the discussion paper on domestic violence which is being released shortly.

Ms CHAPMAN: Minister, has that been an issue that has been referred to the Premier's Council for Women? Do they know about it? Have they given a view on it? Have they expressed a recommendation on it, or anything?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Both the rape and sexual assault legislation, or reform, and domestic violence issues have been issues that the Premier's Council for Women has been actively involved in and has been pushing quite considerably, advocating within government to have those issues pursued.

Ms CHAPMAN: I understand that, minister, and that is commendable; that has been going on for years.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, you asked whether they were involved in it; they were.

Ms CHAPMAN: My question, minister, was: are they aware of this recent allegation that AVO orders are not being enforced? Are they aware of that issue? Have they been consulted on it? Have they made a recommendation on it and, if so, what is it?

The CHAIR: Minister, I am just a little concerned here. My reading of this page does not indicate that you have responsibility for the Premier's Council for Women. The office has lead responsibility. The office works with the Premier's Council for Women, but I am unclear as to the minister's responsibility for the Premier's council. I am wondering if she is being very generous here in responding.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We fund them, and they make recommendations to the government.

The CHAIR: And are you happy to take questions on the Premier's Council for Women, even though it is the Premier's council?

Ms CHAPMAN: Point of order, Madam Chair. I raise this point of order on your question. You have asked the minister whether she will answer a question, on which she is responsible to the Premier. The minister has already answered that she is responsible for it; it is in this budget. She is financially responsible and accounts to government. The fact that it has the Premier's name wrapped all around it has nothing to do with the issue. I take issue with your question of the minister, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Member for Bragg, I am trying to satisfy myself about this issue and seeking further information. I have heard your opinion on the matter. I am asking the minister for some information.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The issue of aggravated violence orders is not new, and is something on which the Premier's Council for Women has been advocating for law reform; it has been very active in that. The issue that the member is raising is not new.

The CHAIR: In terms of your responsibility in relation to the Premier's Council for Women, I am unclear about that.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I cannot be held responsible for the views of the Premier's Council for Women. We fund it, and it provides advice to the government and raises issues, but I am not responsible for its views.

The CHAIR: For its actions. Member for Bragg.

Ms CHAPMAN: Now that we have established that the minister is responsible for the Premier's Council for Women, and that it is her budget line—

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I fund them.

The CHAIR: Order! The minister clarified quite clearly that she was responsible for the funding.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I do not direct them.

Ms CHAPMAN: I want it clear and on the record that no-one is suggesting that the minister has directed the Premier's

Council for Women, but the council is a budget item, under subprogram 6.3: in the Office for Women. It is detailed in the budget paper on page 11.45, for your benefit, Madam Chair. Minister, it is given an allocation, according to this, of \$233 000. Now we have established that, and the minister at least knows that she is responsible for it. The Premier's council has been consulted on a number of important issues in relation to women: we understand that is continuing, and it has done it for years. If the minister does not know the answer, I would be happy for her to take the question on notice and find out. Has the Premier's Council for Women had referred to it the issue of non-compliance with AVO orders? If it has not, why not; and if it has, what are its recommendations?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I have no knowledge of that particular issue being referred to the council directly, but that does not mean that the council has not provided advice on it. I am happy to obtain the specific details requested and come back to you.

The CHAIR: The member for Bragg will show more politeness to the Chair. The issue of responsibility is quite clear. The minister does not have responsibility for the activities of the Premier's Council for Women. That is how I heard your question. I am happy to correct myself later, necessary. Proceed with questions.

Ms CHAPMAN: I will ask another question about the Premier's Council for Women. I will quote what is in the budget in relation to this issue, which has a direct responsibility, under this minister, 'for progressing the development of sound policy for South Australian women through advice and recommendations to the Premier and the Minister for the Status of Women in accordance with the council's terms of reference, and in support of the South Australian Strategic Plan priorities'.

The CHAIR: All right, deputy leader, I can read, and I do understand these things. Your question?

Ms CHAPMAN: Good. My question relates to Budget Paper 4, page 11.43. What are the reasons that the Protected Pet Project, for which the Office for Women is seeking funding, was rejected for a crime prevention grant?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is a really interesting question. I understand that one of the primary reasons that were identified in regard to women being reluctant to leave situations of domestic violence was that they were worried about their pets. That information came to light as a result of a phone-in conducted by the Women's Information Service, where 61 per cent of respondents stated that fear for their pets' safety actually caused them to delay leaving a violent relationship. The Women's Information Service has continued to work on this Protected Pets Project along with a range of other organisations in a working group, and they include the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League, the Domestic Violence Helpline, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Australian Veterinary Association. The working group put in an application through the RSPCA to the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department's National Community Crime Prevention Grants Program and, unfortunately, that was not funded; the application was not successful. The working group was obviously incredibly disappointed about that, and it is currently working to explore other avenues of funding for the future. But, I agree with the member, it was very disappointing that the federal government chose not to fund that project.

Ms CHAPMAN: How is the Office for Women now seeking to implement the program?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: it is not the Office for Women's program. As I said, it is a program that has been developed by a range of organisations. They are now getting back together to assess what other opportunities there may be to have this project funded, and we would welcome the honourable member's support to resubmit to the federal government and highlight that this is not just an issue for South Australian women but for women nationally. It is certainly something that I think the federal government should come to the party on and should support, but we will continue to support this working group in its endeavours to seek whatever funding may become available.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for examination of this line having expired, I declare consideration of the proposed payments completed.

Department of Primary Industries and Resources,
\$115 420 000

Administered Items for the Department
of Primary Industries and Resources, \$142 801 000

Membership:

Mr Pisoni substituted for Mr Griffiths.

Mr Goldsworthy substituted for Ms Chapman.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr G. Knight, Acting Chief Executive, Primary Industries and Resources SA.

Mr S. Archer, Acting Executive Director, Corporate Affairs, PIRSA.

Mr A. Hamilton, General Manager of the Office for Volunteers.

Mr M. Williams, Acting Director, Finance and Shared Business Services, PIRSA.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular to Portfolio Statements Volume 2, Part 5. Does the minister have a brief opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, thank you. The government is committed to supporting and developing the volunteer sector here in South Australia, and I am very proud to say that we have the highest participation rate of volunteers in the nation. A survey that we undertook earlier this year indicated that something like 51 per cent of all South Australians 15 years and over are active formal volunteers. This figure reaches the target set by South Australia's Strategic Plan four years ahead of schedule. We will continue to work with the volunteer sector by supporting community organisations to operate more efficiently, by helping them to promote and market their activities, and to encourage further development of support networks. We will also continue to foster links between community groups and the business sector by encouraging mentoring, skills transfer, corporate volunteering and general support from business for the community sector. A key part of the strategy to achieve this is the continued overall promotion of the value and mutual benefit of volunteering in general, and for volunteers themselves, who are such a valuable part of our community.

We are assisting community organisations to operate more efficiently and to promote and market their activities. The aim is to help them to become more effective and enable them to gather greater support from the general public. An example that illustrates how we are doing this is through a relationship forged by the Office for Volunteers with the Screen Studies Department of Flinders University. Non-profit NGOs are being invited to apply for a Community Voices Grant, which will see students develop video material for use as community service announcements, or in some other promotional capacity.

A similar relationship that serves the same purpose exists with the University of South Australia's School of Communication, Information and New Media. This is the expanded Community Web Site Project, which has been renamed the Online Community Engagement Project. Students develop web sites for community organisations, which are then hosted free of charge for 12 months. The expansion of the web site program has meant that University of South Australia students also provide event planning, development of promotional material (such as brochures) and development and implementation of databases, and will also overhaul an organisation's communication processes.

I am very keen to extend these types of relationships, because I am confident that there are great benefits to be realised by all partners and, in particular, the volunteer sector. Through such programs, we are providing community organisations with the tools and know-how to operate in an ever-changing environment. In the same vein, our free training program continues, with places for 1 500 volunteers to do short courses in subjects that community organisations have identified as necessary. These range from counselling skills to governance. We continue to assist community organisations financially through our Volunteer Support Fund, with grants of up to \$3 000 from a pool of \$150 000.

Providing training and resources which assist community organisations and which, very importantly, enrich the volunteer experience is an important part of our strategy to assist the recruitment and retention of volunteers. The annual South Australian Volunteers Day celebration continues to be a highlight of the volunteer sector's calendar. This year, the free event at the Adelaide Festival Centre was oversubscribed. This event is an excellent and popular means of recognising the contribution made by our volunteers, and provides the forum for the presentation of the Joy Noble Medal (which was presented this year for the first time), which recognises outstanding volunteers in state government and local government programs, and the Premier's Business Awards, which recognise the outstanding contribution and/or promotion of volunteering by the business sector.

The Office for Volunteers will continue to provide information through the development of fact sheets, newsletters and facilitating networks of community organisations. The Volunteer Congress, which is held each year on International Volunteers Day, will continue to play its part as the forum for providing information to leaders of the volunteer sector in South Australia. The congress has proven not only to be valuable as a measure of delivering information but also it has been an occasion when many networking opportunities have been developed. The excellent and productive relationship between the government and the volunteer sector has been, and remains, critical to the continued development of the sector. The close relationship between the sector and the government is at the heart of the Advancing the Community Together partnership that laid out agreed objectives and

mutual obligations as well as the mechanism that will help to achieve those objectives.

The ACT partnership has recently undergone its biennial review. The resultant recommendations are being implemented. Extensive community and volunteer sector consultations were undertaken, with staff from the Office for Volunteers visiting regions across the state conducting forums and distributing feedback requests. The response was excellent. It was gratifying that the overwhelming consensus was very positive towards the partnership agreement and its implementation. However, what was very pleasing was that the review highlighted some areas that could be improved, and we are working on those.

The government, through the Office for Volunteers, has a positive and productive relationship with South Australia's volunteer sector. I am proud of what has been achieved and I look forward with confidence to continued development of the sector.

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, do you wish to make any comments?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Yes, I have just a brief opening statement. On behalf of the opposition, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution that volunteers make to our community. As we all know, the state would not function at the level that it does without the contribution from the volunteer sector. We all know that volunteers are involved in all activities right through from A to Z, from the arts through to the zoo, and everywhere in between. There has been an exercise in costing out the value that volunteers make to the state economy, and that is around the \$5 billion mark. No government could find that amount of money if, for whatever reason, the volunteer sector did not contribute. So, I acknowledge the tremendous contribution that all volunteers make to our state.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.29, under the heading of Summary Income Statement. We can see the expenses line under five different categories and then an income line and the net cost of providing services. It states that there is evidence of a \$200 000 increase in the employment benefits and cost line in the 2005-06 estimated result to the 2006-07 budget, and a \$100 000 increase in the supplies and services line in the 2005-06 estimated result, compared to the 2006-07 budget figure. Can the minister provide details of those increases?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, and I thank the member for that question. The answer is similar to the one I gave when we were discussing local government. It is the allocation of the minister's office in that particular budget line.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: That there are shared functions within PIRSA that have been transferred in their entirety to the Office for Volunteers?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I will have Geoff Knight explain it to you in detail.

Mr KNIGHT: As the minister indicated in the earlier discussion involving local government, the minister's office comes into the PIRSA portfolio for the first time. Those costs were shown elsewhere in the structure of the budget. This year they appear in, and they are apportioned between, the two programs that PIRSA is responsible for that relate to the minister's office, and that is the Office of Local Government Relations and the Office for Volunteers. So, virtually of the entire increase for employee benefits of \$211 000, \$194 000 relates to a share of the minister's office expenditure. Of the increase in supplies and services of \$106 000, \$99 000 relates to an allocation in the minister's office expenditure. So, it is

not an increase in expenditure; it just appears in these lines for the first time. In previous years they would have sat in another portfolio.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Minister, what is the FTE for the Office for Volunteers?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: 8.5.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: What efficiency dividends is the Office for Volunteers expected to achieve over the next 12 months and into the forward estimates?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My understanding is that it has an efficiency dividend of something like \$2 000. I mentioned to the acting executive that I thought it was a bit lousy of him to take that \$2 000 off it, but he has maintained his stance.

Mr PISONI: Minister, can you advise how much was spent on publicising marketing and promoting volunteering in the 2005-06 budget, and how much will be spent on the 2006-07 budget?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We promote volunteering in a range of ways. Certainly the Volunteers Day celebration is one of the large areas in which we promote volunteering; the State Volunteer Congress; and the Office for Volunteers produces a regular newsletter that is distributed to a database of over 6 000 volunteers. We fund a scholarship program for volunteer managers that I think could be encompassed in that. We also fund the Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group, which provides direct advice to the government so that it can address issues which have been highlighted. We promote volunteering in a whole range of areas—the Joy Noble Medal, the business awards. It runs a whole gamut. I cannot give the honourable member a specific number, if you like, involving the \$150 000 which we give to volunteer organisations to support volunteers and the work that they do, but we can try to collate all those programs together and give a total amount, if that is what the honourable member is after.

Mr PISONI: I would like that minister, if I could have it.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is a significant part of our budget.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.30, the reviewing of the officers' volunteer grant process. Will the minister advise how the processes have been simplified for the grants programs?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, I can. This is probably one of the programs that has been most welcomed by the volunteer community. To start with, a Treasurer's Instruction was sent out, which lifted the level of accountability, if you like, for volunteer grants from \$1 000 to \$5 000. Prior to this, anyone who received anything over \$1 000 needed to go through a very complex accountability process to justify their grant. I thought it was excessively onerous and unnecessary, and it probably cost us more than we saved. Clearly it is important for government to be accountable for the moneys that it gives out, but we have been able to simplify the application process and the accountability involved in those small grants. I think they equate to between 80 and 85 per cent of the grants that the government gives to community organisations—not service agreements but grants. It has had a significant impact.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: In a previous answer, the minister talked about the ministerial advisory group in relation to volunteering. Has that undergone a restructure in recent times?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The people on that advisory group were appointed for two years and, at the end of that cycle, we re-approached the peak organisations. The govern-

ment has not appointed the people: we invite the organisations to nominate the people for that advisory group. Some members have changed; some have remained the same. It is good to have some stability in the group, but it is also good to have some new people who, if you like, have fresh ideas and vitality. As part of the review of the act, they identified one thing that they wanted within that structure. Previously three separate working parties worked on the areas of commitment identified in the partnership group. They thought that they would rather have a structure within this group of a targeted task force, if you like.

We have set up a smaller group which will get together and identify their priorities for the next 12 months to two years. They will then be endorsed by the volunteer ministerial advisory group. They will be able to bring people into work with them to implement that, including senior public servants. It is a tiny rejig, but it really was about revitalising the group and getting some new initiatives.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: How is that restructure working? What will the benefits be?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think the benefits will come because, in the task group, we have senior public servants and people from the volunteer sector coming together to identify issues both within the volunteer sector and within government which we can streamline and improve. There are always things that we can improve. The people concerned will come up with these initiatives, go to the wider group and the people with the expertise in those areas will be working on those matters, rather than being siloed in a formal working party, as was the case previously.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.30, 'Performance criteria'. In the performance commentary it talks about the delivery of free training programs conducted by volunteer organisations. In her opening remarks, the minister spoke about the provision of grants—that is, the \$3 000 grants, I understand.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, the honourable member has confused the two.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I will ask the question, anyway. In relation to the delivery of free training programs conducted by volunteer organisations, will the minister provide an outline of how that initiative is carried out? That is, does it entail the provision of funds to these organisations listed under, for example, Northern Volunteering, or does the Office for Volunteers provide resources other than funding?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No. What has historically been the case is that the Office for Volunteers has provided training grants to our volunteer resource centres, which provide the volunteer training within their communities.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: There has been no specific funding. The Office for Volunteers has provided resources.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, the Office for Volunteers provides the funding to the volunteer resource centres to provide training. That has been the process.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: What is the dollar figure provided under that funding, say, for the past 12 months?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We have provided \$20 000 to each of the regional centres for free training, and \$25 000 from the previous year's budget to the three metropolitan resource centres.

Mr PISONI: Volunteering SA called on the state government to support its endeavours to challenge the insurance industry to reduce premiums. What further work has the government undertaken to support volunteer organisations in the challenge to reduce insurance premiums?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As the honourable member would know, a range of legislative reforms aimed at reducing public liability costs were passed in this parliament a couple of years ago. Certainly, the Economic and Finance Committee began a review of the effects of the legislative amendments on the availability and cost of public liability insurance. The major issue that came to the fore initially was about availability—community groups simply could not get access to public liability insurance. Local government's Risk Services came to the party, as did NACOS Community Cover and the Community Care Underwriting Agency.

The availability issue was therefore not quite so paramount, although some concerns were expressed about the costs. Local government's Risk Services was very good at working with the communities in developing processes whereby like community groups could bulk buy their insurance. I understand that work is continuing in that regard to provide insurance cover at the lowest possible cost for our community groups.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for examination of these payments having expired, I declare consideration of the proposed payments adjourned until 25 October. Thank you, advisers.

Attorney-General's Department \$67 728 000
Administered Items for the Attorney-General's
Department, \$52 884 000

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Maguire, Chief Executive, Attorney-General's Department.

Mr Mark Bodycoat, Commissioner of Consumer and Business Affairs.

Mr Bill Pryor, Commissioner for Liquor and Gambling.
Ms Debra Contala, Director, Strategic and Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department.

Mr Andrew Swanson, Manager, Business and Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department.

Membership:

Ms Penfold substituted for Mr Goldsworthy.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement (in particular pages 2.12 to 2.16) and the Portfolio Statements, Volume 1, Part 4. Does the minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, thank you. The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs is established under and in connection with the Fair Trading Act 1987 to support the Commissioner of Consumer and Business Affairs in the administration of that act and some 30 others which together represent the main body of consumer law in South Australia. The ongoing activities of the office include the provision of advice and information, the resolution of disputes by conciliation and negotiation, maintenance of licensing and civil registers, monitoring and the enforcement of consumer legislation.

The main objectives of the office are to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the rights of consumers and those of businesses from which they buy their goods and services, and that consumer transactions take place in a fair

and informed marketplace. Among the legislation administered in the Office for Consumer and Business Affairs are acts such as the Fair Trading Act, which are acts of general application containing general consumer standards, and several occupational licensing acts, one of these being the Security and Investigation Agents Act which is committed to the Attorney-General, and which has recently undergone significant change in the interests of improving community safety and the quality of individuals participating in that sector.

In a similar way, to improve community outcomes and to ensure that the legislation can keep pace with the modern market conditions, the office presently has under way a number of legislation review projects. The first of these is a review of the law relating to landlords and tenants, which has already resulted in the preparation and introduction of amendments to law to deal with the residential parks, and will also generate proposals to make amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act. The second legislation review project will see the introduction of measures to refine the ongoing licensing of land agents and address some conduct of concerns surrounding buying and selling land.

I am pleased to be able to inform this committee that there is presently in circulation a discussion paper on payday lending, and that, following the release of discussion papers on secondhand vehicles and telemarketing, I expect to be able to bring forward packages for the improvement of consumer outcomes in these areas in the near future. I am also pleased to be able to advise that I have released a discussion paper in connection with the review of the Building Workers Contractors Act, and this will be the first of three papers examining aspects of the licensing and regulation of building work contractors. I expect the review of this act to be the first in a series examining occupational licensing more generally.

At the same time, the office is a participant in national projects to review and reform the management of trade measurement, product safety, real estate investment advice, finance and mortgage broker licensing, and responsible lending practices. In the last 12 months the office has also undertaken a detailed examination of improvements to its online service delivery, and will shortly commence the work of implementing online business names registration and online occupational licence renewals, followed by online applications for occupational licences. Online applications for birth and other certificates are already available, and payment of business names renewals can also be effected online now. Demand for OCBA Services continues at a high level, and, though both consumer inquiries and consumer complaints showed some reductions over the previous year, the marketplace activities of the agency have continued at high levels.

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, do you wish to make any introductory comments?

Mrs PENFOLD: Yes, just briefly. OCBA is struggling on its limited budget to provide the services that it is expected to provide to the people of our state. Cost-saving cuts are being made that are unacceptable. The independent body representing consumers in South Australia is Consumer SA, whose patron is former Labor member Anne Levy, but for which this government has so little value that they have ceased the small amount of funding, and even the photocopying, for it. I quote from their letter to the minister dated last week:

Dear Minister,

Thank you for a copy of the discussion paper on payday lending which you sent to me as the immediate past president of Con-

sumer SA. It is unfortunate that as the government ceased funding to the association we do not now have any staff to prepare comment or submissions on the many papers and legislation that we were once able to provide, nor are we now able to provide consumer representatives on the many industry/service consumer representative groups that has always been expected from us, as the association is now only served by volunteers. We will check to see if any of them have the time and resources available to make a submission.

Without staff and an office the consumer voice has, in effect, been negated and we are therefore unable to provide comment on topics and legislation that affects consumers, which is the whole of the South Australian population.

Should the government reassess their funding decision, we would be happy to cooperate in any way that we are able, provided that we are in a position to employ staff and have office space. Please note that the current President is Graham Pratt. He may be contacted on his mobile. . . or by email. Minister, we note that the promised part funding up to the end of September is yet to be received.

I will leave it there. The same attitude is shown by this government for the department itself, and particularly for regional consumers where regional development staff are being progressively cut from nine down to three. As the minister would be aware, every job lost in the Public Service from a regional area is not only a loss of a government service but also a loss with a multiplier effect of perhaps losing a family, the spouse and their job, the children and maybe a school teacher, and possibly one or two jobs in small businesses such as food and clothing stores, and the loss of the profit margin they need to employ more people or to take on a trainee and maybe a volunteer or two from local organisations.

The ripples are felt throughout the communities, and it affects the whole morale of a small town, which is of particular concern in this time of drought. Even phone services to the regions are being cut, as illustrated by a young man who rang recently to complain about the upgrade to his builders licence. It will cost him over \$1 000 to travel to Adelaide in time and money where a phone call used to be, and still should be, enough. If absolutely necessary, the Services SA organisation that was put in by our government, should be able to handle these things, or is that being curtailed as well? Once again, this Labor government is showing that it does not care for ordinary South Australians, particularly those who live in regional South Australia.

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, questions?

Mrs PENFOLD: I ask permission to put my omnibus questions on the record. Would the chair prefer those now or at the end of the session?

The CHAIR: I understand the minister has accepted them for all aspects of the portfolio.

Mrs PENFOLD: My question to the minister refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.98, subprogram 'Education and Information Services', which had a budget cut of \$69 000 over last year's estimated expenditure, leaving only \$1.627 million for research, training and publicity services, as well as maintaining OCBA publications and web sites. Can the minister explain why her department would deserve to be cut so severely when it would appear that more services are needed, not fewer?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for her question. In her opening statement the member highlighted that it is very important for the government to get best value for the very precious dollars that we have to expend in this area. The member talked about funding no longer being available to Consumers SA. I would have expected her to be as concerned when the Consumer Federation of Australia was de-funded by the Howard government some four or five years ago (I think it was) to the tune of many hundreds of thou-

sands of dollars. I do not recall the member at that stage expressing—

The CHAIR: Order! The member has a point of order.

Mrs PENFOLD: That is about a federal budget some time ago, not the current one that we are looking at now.

The CHAIR: I think we are getting to where the minister indicates the impact on the current budget.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I certainly am. What I am highlighting is that the federal government made a decision that they did not think they were getting value for dollar; whether they were or not, I cannot make that judgment. I took some time to meet with representatives of Consumers SA, having (like most members) received over many years a copy of the newsletter that they publish, *Consumer Voice*, which would come to my electorate office. I think that was printed with the help and assistance of the Office for Business and Consumer Affairs.

I have no doubt that these are very good and decent and well-meaning people, and I had a lengthy discussion with them because I understood how important that funding may be to them and the impact it would have by no longer providing it. I had to weigh up the issues of funding them and the services that they are providing for people here in South Australia. It was very clear in our discussion that they were no longer able to highlight cutting edge issues that were not already being addressed, either by the office or through the Ministerial Council of Consumer Affairs. I asked them about some of the issues in their reports, and I think the response by one of the members at the time was that it was really hard to come up with some ideas.

When you look at the reports in *Consumer Voice*, you see that they are issues being addressed at either a state level or nationally and do lack some considerable amount of substance. When asking about the numbers, when they conduct a telephone survey, using the Office of Business and Consumer Affairs to do so, they had no information about numbers and came to no conclusions; in fact, one of the conclusions on one of the surveys they conducted was to thank their volunteers and the Office of Business and Consumer Affairs who stood by to take the overflow calls for them, but they could not actually give me any information about the numbers. In this particular instance they were looking at a health issue involving access to doctors and dentists and they basically said, in relation to waiting times to see doctors and dentists, it would appear that shopping around, as one would for other consumer items, could be a good idea as waiting times appear to vary enormously.

I could go through example after example where they are very well meaning, and that is why I have asked the commissioner to consider and provide in-kind support for Consumers SA, but could not justify continuing that funding. In relation to the rationalisation of communication in OCBA, there is an increasing importance on the use of web-based delivery of services and publicity and publications, and certainly a lot of activity occurring in the media; and in fact I think that is up substantially, if you have a look at those figures. So it is about delivering those education programs in an efficient and appropriate way in which the consumers of South Australia will have access to them.

Mrs PENFOLD: My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, 4.98. I am aware that, despite requesting a mere \$38 000 from the Minister for Consumer Affairs, there is no funding in the budget for Consumers SA; and I point out that there is no point in blaming a past federal government budget for this problem when they have had a GST bonus of some

billions of dollars. Consumer SA is the only independently, largely volunteer body—

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, where is the question?

Mrs PENFOLD: The question is: can the minister advise the committee why she has stopped the funding to Consumer SA? Perhaps it is embarrassing the government.

The CHAIR: Order! That was comment, member for Flinders, which is out of order.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think I just answered that question, but I am happy to go back over the issue. The fact is that they are good and decent people. This was a difficult decision, because I think they are very committed in the work that they are trying to do. But there is nothing in their reports that would justify the amount of money that was being paid to that organisation. I am happy to go through this again in more detail if you like. The issues they come up with are very general. Even in relation to the one survey I talked to, their comment was:

Despite the disappointing number of responses to the survey, information obtained will assist the association in determining its future direction on health use.

They could not tell me how many people they spoke to. Their conclusions were—no conclusions—to thank the participants. I think I have a responsibility, if I am providing money for an organisation like this, to ensure that consumers in South Australia actually get some results for their money. In relation to a banking and credit card survey, their conclusion was:

Consumers SA thanks all participants for their input. In addition, it thanks for volunteers who took calls on the day, including those at the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs. . .

Their conclusion for the waiting list was:

Consumer SA thanks all participants for their input. In addition, it thanks volunteers who took calls on the day, including those at the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs who stood by to take any overflow.

There is not much more that I can add to that. I think they are well-meaning people, and they are receiving in-kind support from the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs.

Mrs PENFOLD: First, Madam Chair, I point out that even photocopying is now not being done by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, certainly, the Commissioner has been asked to provide those in-kind services.

Mrs PENFOLD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1: expenses, employee benefits and costs. It is of great concern to be told that six regional jobs with OCBA in regional South Australia, including the Riverland and South-East, have already gone or are going, and that the staff is 'trimmed to a point that the office is useless'. Can the minister advise how many staff there are and where they are based in the regions, justifying her cutting of regional staff, and tell us why this will not affect the quality of the service OCBA works so hard to provide in regional South Australia?

The CHAIR: Member for Flinders, the first part of your question sounded like you were quoting from the papers, but towards the end of it I thought that it was probably not quoting the papers. You said it is a great concern to be told—that is not from—

Mrs PENFOLD: My quote 'trimmed to a point that the office is useless' was a phone conversation I had from a person from the South-East.

The CHAIR: Again, that is out of order, but your question is perfectly in order, and the minister can address the

question. Member for Flinders, have quick look at your questions, as they will be completely out of order. Minister.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Rural communities have shown support for the ongoing service delivery partnership that has been developed between the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs and Service SA. This has been very effective, and figures show a very steady increase in the number of financial transactions undertaken for OCBA at Service SA centres. I know that, in fact, wherever we now go with community cabinet, the regional cities are all vying for these Service SA centres, where people have a one-stop shop to do their business. Over the last 10 months there have been almost 2 500 OCBA transactions, which include applications for birth, death or marriage certificates, lodging of a rental bond, applying or renewing an occupational licence, and registering a business name in the major centres of Mount Gambier, Port Lincoln and Whyalla.

It is very pleasing to see the community utilising its local Service SA outlet for OCBA-related transactions. Service SA outlets provide a central point, as I said, for the community to gather information about a range of matters, and conduct government-related transactions. Delivering transaction services through Service SA is one way that OCBA services can be more accessible to the community and, clearly, more accessible to communities in rural South Australia. Consumers can also contact OCBA by phone for advice for the cost of a local call, or visit the web site to download forms, conduct some online transactions and access useful information. The simple fact of the matter is that the vast majority of consumer contact with OCBA is by phone or over the net, and this is unlikely to change.

Mr PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.94. I note that fees, fines and penalties in the estimated result for 2005-06 amounted to \$19.487 million, which happens to be the exact same figure that was budgeted for in the same year. Can the minister advise whether this estimated amount is correct or whether it is a copy and paste error?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The Commissioner will be able to detail of this response for you, I am sure.

Mr BODYCOAT: It is my understanding that the figure of \$19.487 million, appearing in the 2005 estimated result, is an estimated result, but the actual may, in fact, be higher. It is a matter which, I think might appropriately be dealt with on notice, and I would be happy to provide the accurate information.

Mr PISONI: I am happy to take it on notice. Thank you.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to subprogram 2.4 on page 4.96. As a confirmed 'Christmas-aholic', which is why I am keen to ask this question, and with Christmas just around the corner, what action will be taken to protect consumers, particularly in relation to the return of goods, and what action should consumers take to protect their interests?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Each year around Christmas, the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) receives hundreds of calls from people who have been unsuccessful in returning Christmas presents for a refund. In the past, OCBA has visited round 700 stores, checking for business practices in relation to refunds, warranties, labelling and two-priced advertising. Particular attention was paid to refund policy displayed in stores and how it is worded on sales receipts. Usually, some stores are found to be not complying with the rules and regulations. Traders are not required to display a refund sign or policy but, if they do, it must not be misleading. Any retailers with signs that do not comply are asked to remove them immediately.

With very limited exceptions, consumers are entitled to a refund when the goods are faulty, do not match the description or are not fit for their purpose, irrespective of the price paid. However, consumers are not legally entitled to a refund if they simply change their mind or make a wrong choice, find the same item cheaper elsewhere, do not like the gift that was bought for them or it is the wrong size or colour. OCBA advises consumers always to ask about the store's refund policy before buying gifts. It is recommended that consumers find out whether the store will accept the return of the goods if they are the wrong size or if the recipient already has this item. The store does not legally have to offer refunds in this situation, but some do as a goodwill gesture.

South Australia's fair trading laws are in place to protect consumers and set standards for traders in the marketplace. Retailers and their staff should fully understand their legal obligations and make them known to customers. In the lead up to Christmas, OCBA will also be reminding consumers not to overcommit themselves through excessive credit card spending. Traditionally, it is at this time of year that people get themselves into the most trouble with credit, and OCBA ends up referring a number of consumers to financial counselling services. It is not until January when the bills start rolling in that consumers begin to realise that the party they had on credit has quickly come to a debt-induced hangover.

To avoid this, consumers should set a budget and stick to it; consider whether they can afford extra credit before accepting offers to increase their credit limit, importantly; not overspend on credit and try to pay the balance off in full each month; think about switching to a credit card with lower interest rates; think carefully before buying presents on interest-free arrangements and, if you do get into trouble, ask for help. In other words, as with all things Christmas, moderation is the key to an enjoyable time. I would also recommend that people do not leave their Christmas buying to the last minute like I do and pay the maximum for their presents.

Ms FOX: I refer to subprogram 2.5 on page 4.97. Will the minister explain what action is being taken in relation to ensuring the safety of children's dummies or pacifiers, which were mentioned in *Choice* magazine's 10 worst shonky goods of the year.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: This is a particular passion of mine. Having been a very doting grandmother for the last 20 months and now having a brand new baby girl in the family four weeks old tomorrow, the issue of the safety of products for children is very dear to my heart. I am advised that back in 1980 in South Australia we did ban a particular type of dummy. The ban, however, was lifted following the introduction of TransTasman Mutual Recognition, which saw a review of all Australian mandatory standards. In that review, all states were asked to review the ongoing need for any standards or bans that were either not national or not in place in at least four states or territories. Consequently, in 1998 the ban was lifted.

I am informed that, at a meeting of the Consumer Products Safety Advisory Committee earlier this year, the issue of voluntary standards being made mandatory was raised. I am further advised that this followed two reports of serious problems with dummies, where babies managed to get the whole of the dummy into their mouth. No doubt, this would have been distressing for both the mother and the baby. I am informed that this particular type of dummy complies with the European standard, which allows for a smaller shield than

that which is allowed for in the voluntary Australian standard. The ACCC wrote to Standards Australia with a view to reassessing the differences with other standards in relation to child pacifiers.

At the time, the ACCC issued a statement seeking information as a matter of high priority about any safety-related incidents with the use of infant dummies. The ACCC is currently developing a regulatory impact statement for a proposed mandatory standard for children's dummies. South Australia has provided details of consumer complaints regarding dummies, along with its views regarding the need for such a standard.

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to subprogram 2.6 on page 4.98. Could the minister advise the committee of what electronic scams are currently being used against South Australian consumers, what they should do to protect themselves and where they can go to find information in relation to such scams?

Mr PISONI: On a point of order, Madam Chair, can we please have a budget line?

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to subprogram 2.6, page 4.98.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We are always on the lookout in South Australia for new electronic scams. What is happening on a consistent basis is that the old is becoming new again: old scams are being rejigged as the use of modern technology comes into play. A number of electronic scams are infiltrating South Australia at present, but two in particular are the David Rhodes style chain letter by email and an SMS dating scam, whereby consumers are invited to unsubscribe via a web address.

Mr PICCOLO: I'd better be careful, hadn't I?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The member had better be careful. If he receives a message that he has a date, I would recommend that he wipe it or ignore it. He should not use his computer and go to the web address and unsubscribe, because there is the potential for these people to gain access to a whole range of information stored on a computer and, in some instances, they have been able to access people's banking details. It exposes people quite considerably. The David Rhodes style chain letter involves people receiving emails offering them supposed testimonials from people claiming that they are making something like \$200 a day. They are given instructions to forward the email to numerous other people, after sending \$5 via an electronic payment to the first email address on the list. It is very much like the old chain letter scam. Clearly, the consistent message to consumers is that, if it sounds too good to be true—that is, if the member is getting a date via an SMS message—no, I do not mean that, I am being facetious, that is not true—

Ms FOX: The town is heaving with ladies waiting for you, Tony.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is. But they would probably phone him and not SMS him. If the offer sounds too good to be true, it generally is. Consumers can check the Scam Alert on the OCBA web site to obtain information, because the scams that are prevalent in South Australia are constantly being updated on the web site. The baseline is that, if it sounds too good to be true, it generally is.

Mr PICCOLO: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. I am impressed by her knowledge of this area.

Mr PISONI: While we are complimenting each other, I would like to express my disappointment that the minister has lined up three Dorothy Dixers when we have only 45 minutes to ask questions on such an important portfolio. However, having said that—

Ms SIMMONS: I have a point of order, Madam Chair. It is our right on this side to ask questions, in the same way as it is the member's right. If the member reads the standing orders, he will see they state that three questions are allowed to his side and then three questions to our side. We can decide not to ask questions, but—

The CHAIR: Order! That is sufficient for a point of order. I think the member for Unley has the point.

Mr PISONI: Thank you, madam. I thank the member on the other side for raising the subject of scams in his question. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.91. I note that 9 600 complaints were received. I believe that, of that number, 1 364 complaints regarding scams were developed by the minister's office into formal matters requiring action. How many resulted in prosecutions and fines, and what contribution to the estimated figure of \$19.48 million did they make?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for that question. I am happy to take it on notice and obtain that detail.

Mr PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.97. The estimated figure of a number of consumer products inspected for labelling, correct measure, price and safety compliance was 56 102, which was more than double the target amount of 25 000. Can the minister confirm that the figure is correct, and what was the reason for such a variance? How many of the businesses that were tested were repeat offenders, and how many were prosecuted or issued with fines? Finally, why—

The CHAIR: Order! There are at least three components to that question. That is sufficient.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My understanding is that the figures the member is quoting are correct. I am sorry, I only got the first question about the number—

Mr PISONI: The second question was: what was the reason for the variance?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We will take the rest of the questions on notice.

Mr PISONI: The other question was: how many of the businesses that were tested were repeat offenders, and how many were prosecuted or issued with fines? Why is the targeted figure for 2006-07 21 000 fewer than the estimated result for 2005-06?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We will take those questions on notice. I think there was a concentrated effort in that area during the last financial year. The commissioner can explain that in more detail.

Mr BODYCOAT: There are two reasons for the substantial increase in the indicator mentioned. The first is that there was a concentrated effort put into it. That followed from a minor reorganisation of the trade measurement and product safety group, which allowed specialist attention to be devoted to those kinds of issues for that time.

Mr PISONI: So, they are no longer an issue?

Mr BODYCOAT: I would hesitate to suggest that they are no longer an issue. The issue in that instance was a decision to apply the resources of that group to particularly focus on that area at that time. The later figure represents a figure more in keeping with the estimates of previous years.

The CHAIR: The time allotted for the examination of this line has expired.

Witness:

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson, Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Additional Departmental Advisers:

Mr P. Louca, Chief of Staff, Attorney-General's Department.

Ms K. O'Connell, Acting Director, Justice Strategy Division.

Ms M. Dharmasenan, Acting Director, Strategic Development Unit.

Membership:

Ms Geraghty substituted for Mr Piccolo.

Mr Pederick substituted for Mr Pisoni.

Ms Redmond substituted for Mrs Penfold.

The CHAIR: Just to clarify, if the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the committee secretary by no later than Friday, 17 November. Questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. Attorney, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes, I would. Normally I would dispense with an opening statement but since we have a new shadow attorney-general I thought I would give her some chapter and verse on the portfolio as part of her understanding.

I am pleased to have this parliamentary examination of what has been a good budget for the justice portfolio. It is one of the government's highest priorities and one in which there has been much achievement, which is reflected in the latest budget. The budget papers highlight the new money for the justice system, including: funding for an additional 400 police officers over the next four years, at a cost of \$109.5 million; a new prison precinct near Murray Bridge—and I hope the member for Hammond has got over his initial shock at this tremendous boost to the economy of his electorate, and I hope we can talk him into supporting it—with construction valued at more than \$500 million; \$2.7 million more over the next four years for four more new prosecutors in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; and an extra \$5.8 million over four years to meet increased costs in the South Australian courts system.

The budget also delivers on election pledges in justice, including \$4.6 million over four years for enhanced DNA testing services; continuing funding for the Paedophile Task Force; the establishment of the Commissioner for Victims' Rights; and continuing funding for the sexual and violent offender treatment program in prisons.

The Attorney-General's Department budget also includes funds to increase grants to the Multicultural Communities Council and the Migrant Resource Centre, and continuing funding for two additional social workers who do guardianship work in the Office of the Public Advocate. Dear me, Madam Chair, that must mean more public servants. The opposition will not like that. The budget also includes continuing funding for an officer to handle freedom of information matters in the Ombudsman's office—another public servant. On the matter of capital investment, there has and continues to be much investment in new courts. This is a court building government—and we have built one in the member for Finnis' electorate which is long over due.

Mr PENGILLY: A fine building, Attorney-General.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I am glad you like it. I think the official opening is soon. I hope you find it agreeable that it is on the outskirts of town.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Thank you. I don't think we have ever met there, have we? In February 2007, a \$12.6 million new court will be opened in Port Augusta. New courts have been built in four regional centres: Port Pirie opened in March 2006; Victor Harbor was opened in April 2006; Berri opened in May 2006—and we sent a resident magistrate up there, reversing a Liberal government decision to abolish resident magistrates; and a new court will open in Port Lincoln in December 2006—all those courts in non-Labor electorates. From all the moaning that goes on about the Supreme Court redevelopment, it seems that some people's emphasis is exclusively on courts in the metropolitan area, but Labor is a government for all South Australia.

The Rann government has pledged a tough stance on law and order, and as Attorney-General I have pursued a serious legislative reform agenda that has included:

- The introduction of Australia first legislation making drink and food spiking a stand-alone offence punishable by imprisonment. The new law will make drink and food spiking, regardless of whether the victim is harmed, an offence carrying a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment. This should send a clear message that drink and food spiking are not trivial matters and that the offender will face heavy penalties whether or not a person's life is put in danger.
- The drafting of amendments to the Summary Offences Act to create a new offence of indecent filming, with a maximum penalty of \$10 000 or two years imprisonment (or both), in an effort to crack down on the offensive use of web cameras and mobile phones with cameras.
- The introduction of a reform targeted at rock throwers, creating a new offence of throwing a missile at a vehicle—I understand that the first person charged with this new offence was charged only a few weeks ago.
- Legislative amendments about reckless drivers who kill or seriously injure someone in aggravated circumstances. Madam Chair, I am glad that this government called the Kapunda Road royal commission. There was some criticism of our calling the commission at the time. I remember at the Mount Gambier sitting of parliament the member for Heysen supported a select committee to be proposed by the then member for Hammond, and one of the terms of reference was the connection between the Kapunda Road incident and paedophiles. Perhaps the member for Heysen could explain that term of reference for which she voted.
- Making it illegal for crossbows to be manufactured, sold or even possessed without lawful excuse.

In yet another example of the government's tough stance on law and order, the government continues to deliver on election promises by increasing fines for people caught smoking, selling or cultivating cannabis.

The Controlled Substances Act introduced in 1984 set fines by regulation and they have remained unchanged since 1985, meaning that current fines no longer reflect their original intent to prohibit the illegal use of cannabis. Our changes will see some fines double and others treble when the new fees come into effect on 3 December 2006. During our last term, we accepted the proposal by Robert Brokenshire (the then member for Mawson) and changed the law so people caught growing cannabis hydroponically would face

court and punishment, rather than being issued with on-the-spot fines. We have also announced that we will introduce legislation to make it tougher to buy hydroponic equipment, and police will soon have the authority to inspect known drug dealers' premises without a search warrant—a great relief that will be for the people of East Avenue, Allenby Gardens.

This government is also set to introduce changes to regulations covering crowd controllers. These are aimed at banning people from the industry if they have been found guilty of a cannabis offence, and this further demonstrates that the government will continue to toughen the law and back our police in the fight against drugs on our streets. Before the last election, the government gave a pledge that the rights of victims—not criminals—are the priority of our criminal justice system. As part of this budget, the government has delivered on this promise, introducing changes including: strengthening victims' rights through the creation of a new independent Office of the Commissioner for Victims' Rights—the first state in Australia to do so, second only in the world to the United Kingdom.

Victims of crime, for the first time, will have the legal right to be properly consulted about any charge bargaining between the defence and the prosecution. This arises out of the Nemer case and, as we know, there could not be a starker difference between the government and the opposition on the Nemer case. The shadow attorney-general takes the point of view that the government should never have intervened with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, that there should have been no appeal and that, therefore, Paul Habib Nemer should never have spent a day in gaol.

Mrs REDMOND: Madam Chair, the Attorney-General is obviously using up valuable time which the opposition would like to have. It is almost a quarter to five. We were only given 45 minutes to examine this portfolio line. I think the Attorney has had more than enough time to address the issues of the budget in general, instead of launching personal attacks on me.

The CHAIR: I did not check the clock at the exact time that you started, but 10 minutes is the maximum time allowed.

Mrs REDMOND: He is now well and truly over.

The CHAIR: You are very close to 10 minutes.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Thank you. I shall not use all the time. I am happy to defer to the member for Heysen. Bring it on.

The CHAIR: Member for Heysen, do you wish to make a statement?

Mrs REDMOND: No, Madam Chair. I will try to ask some questions. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.90: 'Policy advice and legal services'. First, I refer the Attorney to the second dot point under 'Description/Objective', which states:

Increase the South Australian community's confidence that the system of justice is fair, equitable and accessible.

I remind the Attorney of some questions I asked him during question time. I asked whether he reads every case, to which the Attorney said no, he did not. I asked him if he did not how did he choose which cases he would read and in which cases he would intervene. The Attorney did not give a very satisfactory answer to that question—

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: That is your opinion.

Mrs REDMOND: My third question was: did he recognise that, by choosing to read some cases but not all and by choosing to intervene in some cases but not all, he was

creating a system whereby people are no longer equal before the law, to which the Attorney replied 'No'. In addition, I remind the Attorney of the numerous adverse comments he has made about the legal profession, judges, the Parole Board and various other aspects of the legal profession.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Can you quote some?

Mrs REDMOND: Does the Attorney-General recognise the incredible damage that all these things do—

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: You're not thinking of the Premier, are you?

The CHAIR: Order!

Mrs REDMOND: —to the community's confidence, which he states by this policy objective he is keen to have?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Well, it is unusual for an estimates committee to begin with a Dorothy Dix question, but I thank the member for Heysen for the question. There could not be a more stark difference between the Rann government and the Evans/Redmond opposition on the question of criminal justice. The member for Heysen believes that Paul Habib Nemer should never have spent a day in gaol. The member for Heysen takes the view that the government was wrong to intervene in the Nemer case. The member for Heysen—

Mrs REDMOND: Madam Chair?

The CHAIR: Order!

Mrs REDMOND: The Attorney is not addressing my question about whether he understands that what he does is damaging to the confidence the community has in our legal system. It has nothing to do with my views on anything.

The CHAIR: The member for Heysen's question was a fairly broad assertion that was very close to skirting a question out of order. Given the breadth of her question, I will allow the Attorney liberty in response.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The question from the opposition is, among other things, why did we intervene in the Nemer case; and, according to the opposition, why did we respond to the McGee case in the way that we did? The answer is that we believed it was right for the Attorney-General to instruct the DPP to appeal against the suspended sentence given to Paul Habib Nemer. We believe it was right to appeal. Our appeal was upheld by the Court of Criminal Appeal. The High Court refused leave of Nemer to appeal against his sentence of imprisonment.

Because of the government, Paul Habib Nemer did time in gaol. If the member for Heysen had been the Attorney-General he would not have spent a day in gaol. The people of South Australia have more confidence in the criminal justice system because of what we did. Make no mistake, if a Liberal government is elected in this state and if the member for Heysen becomes Attorney-General and another Nemer or McGee case comes up, we know that nothing will be done by a Liberal government—nothing at all.

It is that attitude which undermines confidence in the criminal justice system. It is not what the Rann government has been doing. Our handling of these controversial cases has improved public confidence in the system, because we have made the system work in the way in which the public expects us to, and we have done so within the law of this state. Indeed, the attorney-general who introduced the Director of Public Prosecutions Act in 1991 has said that it was certainly his intention (and it is in the express provisions of the act) that the Attorney-General be able to direct the DPP to appeal against a sentence in an individual case.

Not only is it the text of the law, it was also the intention of the person who framed the law. If one goes back to the

parliamentary debates one will see the then shadow attorney-general (Hon. Trevor Griffin, of blessed memory) moving an amendment to try to take away the right of the Attorney-General to appeal against a sentence in an individual case, and that amendment was defeated by the parliament. What the member for Heysen wants is not the law of this state. Yes, I think that, if enacted, the attitude of the member for Heysen and the Liberal Party would create a crisis of confidence in the justice system.

The member for Heysen wanted to deal with the Kapunda Road case by having a select committee of the parliament, which was moved by Peter Lewis. The terms of reference of that select committee was going to be the intersection between the Kapunda Road case and circles of paedophiles in South Australia, whatever that meant. Instead, we had a royal commission, and I am grateful that we did.

Mrs REDMOND: I move to the next dot point of the same objectives, which is to maintain and enhance the state's systems of justice and law. I assume the Attorney-General has heard the saying that justice delayed is justice denied. Given that stated objective, how does the Attorney-General justify his failure to fund appropriately places such as the Forensic Science Centre. I am advised today that the Coroner has made adverse comment because delays are now so long that it can be up to 26 weeks before the results of post-mortems are available. Indeed, four matters are awaiting attention that have not been addressed at all. Could the Attorney please advise on what basis he says he is maintaining and enhancing the systems of justice and law?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: That is a good question. Since the introduction in 2003 of amendments to the Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Act, the ability to use DNA evidence has been vital in police investigations and subsequent prosecutions. Additional funding has been provided to forensic science for South Australia in years to come to keep pace with an ever-increasing workload and to contain backlogs within a reasonable limit. As part of the 2006-07 budget, a further total of \$1.5 million recurrent operational funding has been provided over four years, with an additional \$200 000 capital funding per year over the next two years for software development—in effect, around \$1.9 million.

SAPOL—that is South Australia Police—has been provided with \$2.6 million over four years for the expansion of DNA testing. Four additional DNA scientific staff will be employed to analyse individual crime scenes and items of evidence to achieve a rapid turnaround time for DNA results. DNA robotics will be enhanced by the development of software to achieve an integrated sample process from receipt to completion. Samples will be tracked by bar code, eliminating the possibility of sample mixup, and enhancing workflow efficiency. These additional resources for processing DNA samples have been made available to ensure that the fight against crime is not delayed by crippling backlogs of forensic analysis. We, as a government, have almost doubled the funding of the office of the DPP to \$13 million. When the Rann government came to office, a former Liberal MP—most of them are these days—told me that the office of the DPP 'runs on the smell of an oily rag'. That is what that MP told me when I first became Attorney-General. Well, we have done something about it. Funding to the courts has increased by 8 per cent. His Honour Judge Rice of the District Court has handed down what I find a most persuasive and sensible report on addressing backlogs in our criminal cases. Case lists: our civil lists are going well. The Magistrates Court, which is the court which is most important in South Australia

because it handles more than 90 per cent of the cases, is going well. You do not hear the Opposition asking questions about the Magistrates Court.

Judge Rice's report examined the matters outstanding in the criminal jurisdiction and the reasons for the delay. It made good recommendations for improving the criminal listing process and waiting time for matters to be listed. With a view to further improvements in the criminal justice system, the government has addressed a high-level task force to address the recommendations arising from Judge Rice concerning the backlog of criminal cases in the higher courts. The Criminal Justice Ministerial Task Force will deal with, in the first instance, the time taken for committal and trial processes in the criminal court in South Australia, and then provide leadership in responding to other inefficiencies within the Criminal Justice System. Many parts of the Criminal Justice System have to put aside their native prejudices if we are going to make this system work as well as it can. Figures published by the Productivity Commission have consistently shown the need for improvement of criminal processes in South Australian courts. So I take on board the member for Heysen's points. I think she would concede that these are difficulties of long standing; they predate the current government.

Mrs REDMOND: Just talking about Public Prosecutions, can we turn to subprogram 1.2 on page 4.92, and I know there has been an announcement about the increase in the four prosecutors for the Office of the DPP, but I also note there is an increase in the target for the number of matters finalised by the Committal Unit from 1 400 to 1 600, and I just wonder whether that extra target is going to use up the extra resource, or is the Committal Unit not going to utilise DPP people? If you look at the performance indicators on page 4.92, the target for 2005-06 was 1 400, in the very first line, and the target for this year is 1 600, which means that there is going to be an increase in the workload. I notice in the Estimates Committee last year the Attorney provided a great deal of information about the reduction in workload, but I take it from the comments that have been made by the DPP's office during the year that there is still an overload of work on the officers within the DPP. What I want to know is: given the increase in the targets, is there going to be any real decrease in the workloads of the officers working in the Office of the DPP?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The Committal Unit has finalised, this year, 16 per cent more matters, about 2 400 as at 30 June 2006, compared to 1 850 in June 2005. To meet the increased demand additional resources were approved with continuing funding provided by the Attorney-General's Department, and that has contributed to the target being exceeded. We are going to call on four new prosecutors. Two will be MLS2s and two will be MLS1s, and we will fill a deputy's position at the Office of the DPP. So we are optimistic that there will be progress in the Office of the DPP. One point that the review of the DPP makes is that the Office of the DPP, irrespective of who is in charge of it, has been suffering from what the consultant refers to as juniorisation; that is, there has been a turnover of staff, and there has been a generational change. A lot of young people have come to work in the Office of the DPP, and they are not going to be as efficient as some of the old hands, the experienced people. So we think that as these young people get more experience they are going to be better prosecutors and they are going to deal with things more swiftly; that is just obvious, it is commonsense.

There are some vacant positions in the Office of the DPP and that has contributed to an under-spend of \$300 000 in the office's budget for the last financial year. These vacancies, and therefore the corresponding savings, have continued in the first two months of this financial year. So when these senior appointments are made there will be a big increase in prosecutorial staff for the office this year.

It is not certain that the appointment of 400 additional police officers, and charges that might be laid by police as a result of the Mullighan inquiry, will result in more District Court trials. I mean, God forbid, the extra police might actually deter some crime. In any event, these things are not likely to have a bearing on the resources needed in 2006-07. The Lizard Drinking organisational review looked at current workload and trends in the rate of files coming into the office and made recommendations about how the office could handle these more effectively.

A great deal of baseline data was collected. Future trends can be affected by a range of matters, such as the general crime rate. The member for Heysen does not welcome it, does not issue press releases about it, but the truth of the matter is: in the life of this government victim-reported crime has been going down again and again and again. What is going up is police-generated crime, by which I mean public order offences and offences where there are not victims, like drug offences, because there are more police on the beat, more police enforcing the laws of this state.

My view is: while police-generated crime statistics continue to go up, that is good, it shows that there is compliance and enforcement of our laws; and while victim-reported crime goes down, that is a good thing because it is an indicator that there are fewer victims. So things that would affect the Office of the DPP would be changes to legislation, big cases such as the 'bodies in the barrel', changes to police prosecution practices and court practices.

It is not possible to anticipate and provide funding for every possible scenario, but I am confident that things are getting better and, unlike the situation that obtained under a Liberal government, the Office of the DPP is no longer 'running on the smell of an oily rag'.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88, in which there is specific reference to victims of crime, which is an area in which I have a particular interest. Can the Attorney-General please advise what is being done to increase the support to victims of crime and strengthen victims' rights?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: This is a budget in which the government has delivered on its promise to increase the support to victims of crime and strengthen victims' rights. The government has approved funding for the establishment of the Office of the Commissioner for Victims' Rights. Before the last election, Labor gave an election pledge to create a new independent Office of the Commissioner for Victims' Rights. South Australia is to be the first state to do so, and will be second only in the world to the United Kingdom. I would have said more about this in my opening statement but I was cruelly cut short.

In addition to the role of advising me on the marshalling of available government resources so they can be applied for the benefit of victims of crime in the most efficient and effective way, the commissioner's role will be: to assist victims of crime in their dealings with the Director of Public Prosecutions, police and other government agencies; to monitor and review the effect of court practices and procedures on victims; to monitor and review the effect of the law

on victims and victims' families; to carry out the functions related to the objects of the Victims of Crime Act assigned by the Attorney-General; and to carry out the functions assigned to the commissioner under other acts.

It seems that the emphasis that the Rann government places on victims of crime (especially in the Nemer and McGee cases) is, according to the Liberal Party, shaking the justice system to its very foundations and leading to a loss of morale. Well, I just think the member for Heysen ought to get out more.

In tandem with these measures we have provided funding of more than \$2 million over four years to increase direct support for victims. This additional funding will be used to provide legal representation in court for the new Commissioner for Victims' Rights and more than doubling grief payments to families of victims of homicide; currently families receive as little as \$3 000 for the death of a family member. All payments will be increased to \$10 000—breaking news: increased to \$10 000—to match the payments from the Motor Accident Commission for compensable road deaths; and increased reimbursement costs for the funeral of victims from \$5 000 to \$7 000.

I think Michael O'Connell's experience makes him a perfect choice as the interim commissioner. He was South Australia's first victims of crime coordinator (appointed by the Hon. Trevor Griffin) and before that was the state's first victim impact statement coordinator. Time and again, Michael O'Connell has proved that he is prepared to stand up for victims' rights, and act as their voice. As interim commissioner he will help draft the necessary legislation. The legislation will support victims of crime by giving them the legal right to consultation about charge bargaining between defence and prosecution. Importantly, it will provide victims of mentally incompetent offenders the same types of rights to information as other victims—a very important change. Legislation will recommend ways of strengthening existing victims' rights, including the right to make victim impact statements.

The Rann government has placed a great emphasis on the rights of victims of crime. If the member for Heysen placed the same emphasis on the rights of victims of crime, she would not have turned Heysen into a 53 per cent marginal.

Ms FOX: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88, which mentions the DPP organisational review. What has been done to address additional funding pressures of the office relating to the Mulligan inquiry, the extra 400 police and the recommendations of the organisational review that were not funded as part of the budget process?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is a good question, but one that I think, with due respect, has been asked in substance in the bracket of Dorothy Dix questions asked by the opposition to open this examination of the Attorney-General's budget lines.

Ms FOX: Indeed. Do you think you could run past the salient points?

The CHAIR: Order!

Mrs REDMOND: The Attorney just indicated to the member that he had answered the question already; and that was the third question from the government bench.

The CHAIR: That was the second question. I think the member was going to ask a supplementary question. Is that the case, or are you asking another question?

Ms FOX: Indeed. Actually, it is new question, although it does relate to the same line. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88, in which reform law relating to drugs

is highlighted. What is currently being done to prohibit the illegal use of cannabis?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: This is yet another area that illustrates the Rann government's tough stance on law and order. A review of the Controlled Substances Act has identified that fines for people caught smoking, selling or cultivating cannabis has not changed since the act was introduced in 1984. So, it means that the value of the current fees after the consumer price index rises over a generation does not reflect the original intent to prohibit the illegal use of cannabis. The new legislation comes into effect on 3 December this year—one day after the anniversary of Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, and Gough Whitlam's victory over Billy McMahon—and will see the fees double and others treble for simple cannabis offences, because I know the member for Bright abhors people changing or interfering with their consciousness.

Ms FOX: I do; a scourge!

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: A scourge, as she says. She is in the fine old Labor Methodist tradition of being against all those things.

Ms FOX: No beverages here.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: No beverages on the government's side when it is composed of the member for Bright. In addition to these changes, further legislation will be introduced to make it tougher to buy hydroponic equipment, and police will soon have the authority to inspect known drug dealers' premises without a search warrant.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Madam Chair, I am enjoying the member for Hammond's interjections, and I hope the member for Heysen will not do anything to shut him up. We have already changed the law so that people caught growing cannabis hydroponically will face court and court-style punishment. I give credit to the former member for Mawson, Robert Brokenshire, who brought this proposal to parliament. I was not too proud to pick up a good Liberal Party idea, and we sent it through the other house, and made it law. I do not care where good law originates; if it originates from Robert Brokenshire, I will support it.

Let us remember that the laws against hoon driving were introduced to this house by Bob Such, the member for Fisher, and it was a private member's bill that the government used as the vehicle to get that change to our law through. The new legislation demonstrates that the Rann government has pledged to toughen the law and back our police force in the fight against drugs on our streets. I thank the member for Bright for the question.

Mrs REDMOND: In my excitement at the prospect of being able to ask any questions at all, I neglected to clarify with you whether the omnibus questions have been put on the record. They are:

1. Can 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, and 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 the 2006-07, and, if so, how much?

6. What was the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$100 000 or more per employee, and also, as a subcategory, 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? Between 30 June 2005 and 30 June 2006, will the minister list 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?

I wish to ask the Attorney about the Office of the Ombudsman. I noted that in the explanatory notes on page 4.109 in subprogram 7 there is some explanation as to matters having been sent off to the Health and Community Complaints Commissioner, and so on, but it still appears as though there is a very large reduction in the overall provision for the Ombudsman's Office, coupled with a very large increase in the target of work to be performed from what was actually achieved in 2005-06. How does the Attorney envisage that the Ombudsman's Office will be able to undertake even more work with even fewer resources?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is the same target as the previous year.

Mrs REDMOND: But it is different from the amount they actually achieved working flat out with three legal officers.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is 67 fewer than the target actually achieved for the 2004-05 financial year. What is the point?

Mrs REDMOND: The point is that it is significantly more than they actually managed to achieve in the previous year, the 2005-06 year, when they had the third legal officer for which the Attorney has now removed funding.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The target is 67 fewer than the number dealt with in the 2004-05 financial year, which is right in front of the member for Heysen. I do not apologise for having an ambitious target and working my departments hard.

Mrs REDMOND: With fewer resources and fewer people to do the work, you expect them to do more work than they were able to achieve this year?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is well known that three full-time equivalents were transferred to the Department of Health from the Ombudsman's Office and there were 878 health complaints going to the Ombudsman's Office in 2003-04. We think non-health items may take up the slack.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for the examination of this payment having expired, it is time to move on and the Attorney now becomes Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Membership:

Mr Hamilton-Smith substituted for Mrs Redmond.

Additional Departmental Advisers:

Mr S. Forrest, Executive Director, Multicultural SA.

Mr R. Lean, Manager, Community and Government Relations, Multicultural SA.

The CHAIR: Does the minister have any opening comments?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: No, I think I will leave it open to the opposition to ask as many probing questions as they can.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Waite have any opening comments?

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: No, Madam Chair. The first question deals with Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.102. Will the minister list the grants provided in 2005-06, including the name of the organisation, the amount of grant and the total quantum of grant provided, and can he inform the committee of the same information for grants planned or already provided for 2006-07?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: We cannot do the amounts now but we will do that afterwards. They were as follows: to the African Communities Council of South Australia Incorporated, \$2 000 for the 2006 African Community Festival; the African Women's Federation of South Australia, \$1 000 for the Sharing Experiences in a New Country for African Women project; the Aldinga Community Centre Incorporated, \$1 000 for the multicultural Christmas project. It is not like America. Here in Australia we put taxpayers' dollars behind the celebration of Christmas; that is how much we like Christmas. The Anzac Remembrance Appeal, \$1 000 for the Trust Fund Incorporated Anzac Youth Vigils (which was another worthy expenditure, enabled by the Rann government's expansion of the program); the Association of Ukrainians in South Australia, \$2 500 for the National Festival of Ukrainian Arts; the Australia Sri Lanka Association, \$1 000 for establishing a web site for the Sri Lankan community; the Coordinating Italian Committee for Carnevale in Adelaide, \$20 000. I was pleased to work on the Calabrian Club's stall, making calzone rustico.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It was delicious—as delicious as the zeppoli. I can commend it to the member next year. The Glendi Greek Festival Incorporated, \$20 000 for the Glendi Greek Festival 2006; the Greek Orthodox Community of the Nativity of Christ, Port Adelaide, \$3 000 for the 2006 Semaphore Greek Festival (one of my favourite festivals; I have been going to it for years); the Hussainie Muslim Association of South Australia, \$1 500 for the establishment of its web site; the Indian Association, \$3 000 for the Mela Indian Festival, held in Elder Park (which I commend to all members); the Iranian Association of South Australia, \$1 000 for the NOROOZ Community Festival; the Iraqi Community Cultural Associations SA, \$1 000 for workshops leading up to Eid Al Adha Cultural Day; the Murraylands Filipino Australian Association, \$1 000 for the isolated women's computer training course; the Ogaden Community Association of South Australia Inc. (that is the Ogaden Desert in the horn of Africa), for the learner drivers training course and the computer literacy skills course (I note that the member for Waite has been reflecting adversely on some interpreters who assist migrants with their driving endeavours).

The Riverland Multicultural Forum Incorporated, \$1 000 for the aged care and invalid planning project for the Riverland; for the Taste the Limestone Coast, \$1 500 for its festival (this is, again, a government for regional South Australia); the Ukrainian Women's Association of South Australia Incorporated, \$1 500 for the Ukrainian Inter-

generational Workshops and Cultural Celebrations Displays; and the Vietnamese Buddhists of South Australia, \$2 000 for the Phap Hoa temple in Pennington, for a community sewing project. I was, indeed, pleased to visit Vietnam recently and to watch women in a Hoa Hao temple in Chan Doc province sewing the brown habits of Hoa Hao Buddhist devotees.

Ms SIMMONS: You have photos to prove it.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes, we do have a photo to prove it. The Vietnamese Christian Community Incorporated, \$2 500 for the women's intergenerational skills sharing project; the Vietnamese Farmers Association Incorporated, \$2 500 for the Virginia Vietnamese New Year Festival; the Acholi Community Association, \$700 for an African drum making workshop; the Adelaide and Metropolitan Malayalee Association, \$1 300 for hall hire and sound equipment of the ONAM festival (and I am pleased to inform the member for Waite that the Malayalee Association are people from the province of Karolan in India).

The Australian Al-Thakalian Islamic Centre, \$1 500 for a computer package; the Coromandel Community Centre Incorporated, for bus hire and promotional banners for an African Festival at Coromandel Valley; Ethnic Broadcasters Incorporated, for training young people from new and emerging communities to be radio operators for community radio programs. The Filipino Settlement Coordinating Council of South Australia, \$1 000 for the Filipino Communities National Conference; the Hindu Society of South Australia, \$1 000 for a sound system; the Kilburn Blair Athol Community Action Group Incorporated, \$1 000 for a youth awareness program.

Modbury Uniting Church, \$870 for African Women's Day projects; organisation of Hellene and Hellene-Cypriot Women of South Australia Incorporated, \$500 for a bilingual carols by candlelight; the Overseas Chinese Association (which is an outstanding organisation in my electorate, with whom I have had an intimate relationship over the years; it used to be next door to my office), \$1 000 for a multicultural open day, Together in Collaboration. The San Giorgio Martire Committee, for the hire of a marquee and publicity costs for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Feast of South Australian Giorgio Martire (and, for the information of the member for Finniss, that means that it marks the feast of St George the Martyr, after whom the town in Benevento, from which the member for Norwood hails, derives.)

The Tailem Bend Community Centre Incorporated, one for the member for Hammond, \$1000; for the International Women's Day Festival, Uniting Care Wesley Bowden Incorporated, \$3 000; for the Wesley Multicultural Festival, the Vietnamese Christian Community Incorporated South Australia at Pooraka, for their community family day, \$1 000—I think I attended that; the Vietnamese Traditional Music Club in South Australia, Traditional Music of Vietnam workshops, \$1 500—and I was pleased to attend that at the Dom Kopernika Club on Grand Junction Road at Ottoway. I escorted the member for Bright to a Polish function there. I recall the Chairman of the Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission, Hieu Van Le, remarking that he had heard an elderly gentleman who was playing Vietnamese music that night on Saigon radio in the 1960s.

We paid the Wandana Community Centre \$1 120 for culturally and linguistically appropriate first day training for local Muslim women and men and, having introduced my hooker and my lock, we paid the Woodville Rugby Club \$2 500 for a multicultural festival at the Woodville Rugby Club, a club that plays the game they play in heaven. So, I

thank the member for Waite for that tough question and I hope the necessarily long answer has covered up his dearth of questions.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.102 again. The Premier attended a celebration with the Polish community at Polish Hill, Clare, on Sunday 8 October, which included a church service at which a collection from the public was taken. I am advised that in his address to the Polish community on that date, the Premier indicated that he would provide a cheque or cash to equal whatever had been raised by the community through the collection. I am sure it is a very worthwhile cause, but I ask if the money will be provided from this budget line for which you are responsible, or does the Premier have separate funding for multicultural services or grants which he uses and which will be used on this occasion? Is the minister aware of the amount that has been paid to fulfil this undertaking?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Although I do, in my capacity as priest's church warden, take the collection at my own parish, I did not take the collection at the Church of St Stanislaus Kostka at Polish Hill River that day, so I am unable to say how much was in the plate. No doubt the Polish Australian community will provide that figure to the Premier and the matching funds will be provided from the Premier's community fund, a fund of which John Olsen was tremendously fond.

Mr HAMILTON-SMITH: Do you, as minister, also make such spontaneous grant approvals on the spot from this budget line and, if so, how does this practice stand up to scrutiny, audit and financial guidelines, given that other applications for grant moneys—and you have just run through some of them—must go through a process of application? Is there some form of taxpayer-funded funds—it is almost a slush fund really—from which the Premier or the minister can either write or guarantee to write and approve on-the-spot grants without reference to the relevant processes and outside the probity process? Would the Auditor-General be aware or approve of such a process?

The CHAIR: Minister, there were three questions in that. If you need them repeated I am sure the member would be happy to oblige.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The member for Waite has a record of targeting the Polish community. On this occasion it is a harmless collection at the Church of St Stanislaus Kostka at Polish Hill River on the 150th anniversary of Polish settlement. Last time it was his telling parliament that historians are not 'fully agreed' on the Katyn Forest massacre.

In my department, we have a grants committee that makes recommendations to me. Sometimes we have grant applications out of season, out of sync, and I try to deal with them as best I can. The member for Waite may condemn that as unduly discretionary, but sometimes discretionary funding is appropriate. I can think of many pledges made by premiers and ministers on the spot that had to be subsequently funded from appropriate places in the appropriations. I seem to recall the then Premier Dean Brown having a particularly enjoyable lunch at Football Park and making a commitment to extend the grandstand there at a cost of millions of dollars but, funny enough, I did not hear from the member for Waite about that. It was never raised by him in parliament. But he quibbles over a few dollars when the plate was passed around in a Polish-Catholic church. I do not know why he has such a disproportionate interest in that matter; it would indicate a dearth of legitimate questions.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88. Will the Attorney-General provide further information in relation to the grant scheme established to assist community organisations to meet their land tax obligations?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Ethnic community organisations provide important services that include: support programs for the aged; advice and assistance for recently arrived migrants and refugees; activities where people can maintain, express and share their culture and languages; cultural activities such as festivals, exhibitions, theatre, film, music and dance; and educational programs for the maintenance and transmission of language and culture. These services are mostly provided by volunteers and in buildings that have been built and paid for through the volunteer efforts of community members. If these services were not provided by ethnic community organisations, an additional financial burden would be imposed on the state government or other volunteer groups, or both. As many ethnic communities age, the demand for services is increasing. Meanwhile, the capacity of ethnic community organisations to raise funds to pay for items such as building maintenance and land tax is decreasing.

The South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission advised the government that the spike in land tax bills resulting from the housing boom was adding further pressure on ethnic community organisations to meet the costs. The Land Tax Act 1936 already provides exemption from land tax for organisations that use land in a manner similar to the use of land by ethnic community organisations. To compensate ethnic community organisations for the full cost of land tax, the South Australian government has made a continuing provision in the budget that allows Multicultural SA to provide a grant to organisations to cover fully the cost of land tax. The grant scheme allows ethnic community organisations to focus on the delivery of services, rather than the payment of land tax bills.

This was an idea I think first raised by the Hon. Julian Stefani. It was a good idea: it is another example of how the Rann government picks up good ideas from wherever it can. Isn't the Liberal Party suffering among the ethnic communities with the departure of Julian Stefani? Indeed, he attends ethnic functions that I attend more often than the shadow spokesman. Indeed, the member for Morialta and I have to look forward to a nice function at the Slovenian Club next Saturday night, and I am sure it will be an outstanding occasion. I would like to see the members for Hammond and Finnis one day at an ethnic community function.

Mr PENGILLY: I was there last Wednesday, and I have been to a couple of others.

Ms FOX: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88, which makes reference to women's leadership programs in the metropolitan and Riverland areas. Could the minister provide further information?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I can. This is a government for all South Australia and particularly for regional South Australia, and that is why the member for the Riverland and the member for Mount Gambier and part of the South-East are ministers in this government, this coalition government. For some years, women from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds have benefited from women's leadership courses—indeed, the Druze community from Lebanon have availed themselves of these courses—jointly funded by Multicultural SA and the Office for Women and delivered by TAFE SA. Multicultural SA, through its

continuing regional consultative process, identified a need for a regional women's leadership course and, in particular, the demand for such a course in the Riverland.

The women's leadership course has now been completed and 24 Riverland women have graduated. This is an excellent achievement because it increases the number of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are able to contribute to the leadership and development of the Riverland. This outcome also builds the capacity of the region during a period when it is going through some difficult times. After the success of the Riverland course, the next women's leadership course is scheduled to begin soon in Adelaide. Multicultural SA has also held consultations in other regional areas to determine the level of interest in another regional course in the future. The next metropolitan women's leadership course is scheduled to begin early next month. Information about the course is being distributed widely by Multicultural SA in its newsletter, fliers and through Multicultural SA's extensive networks in ethnic and women's community organisations.

Multicultural SA received more than 30 expressions of interest for the course. I am glad that there is this leadership course for women from a non-English speaking background, and I am pleased to see that Gala Mustafa from a Kurdish background in Iraq is running for the Mount Gambier council. Young Senada Hirkic from Brko in Bosnia Herzegovina is running for the Findon ward of the Charles Sturt Council. Certainly, I hope they will not be subjected to the vilification that Mr Tung Ngo was subjected to by the Liberal Party when he became the first Vietnamese speaking councillor in South Australian local government 11 years ago. He is still there.

The CHAIR: The time has arrived for the conclusion of this examination. I adjourn the proposed payments for Administered Items for the Attorney-General's Department to 24 October. I close Attorney-General's Department, \$67 728 000. Thank you, advisers.

State Electoral Office, \$2 180 000

Departmental Advisers:

Ms Kay Mousley, Electoral Commissioner, State Electoral Commission.

Mr David Gurry, Deputy Electoral Commissioner, State Electoral Commission.

Membership:

Mrs Redmond substituted for Mr Hamilton-Smith.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular Appendix C, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, pages 4.70 to 4.85. Does the minister wish to make an opening statement?

Ms SIMMONS: I move:

That the time for the sitting of the committee be extended beyond 6 p.m.

Motion carried.

Mrs REDMOND: This line will not involve a great many questions. It is nice to have a straightforward area where what the office does is fairly obvious; however, I want to clarify

a number of things. I refer to Budget Paper 4, page 4.71. I notice quite an increase for the anticipated serving of interstate electors. Page 4.76 makes a reference to the specific numbers. Only 50 were served this year, but it is anticipated that more than 1 000 will be served in the next year. Will the minister explain the massive increase?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer the question to the Commissioner.

Ms MOUSLEY: Could the honourable member repeat the budget numbers, please?

Mrs REDMOND: I am sorry, it is in subprogram 1.1, 'Performance Indicators'. In 2005-06 there was a target of 10 interstate or territorial electors to be served. The result was actually 50, but the target for next year is to serve more than 1 000.

Ms MOUSLEY: Yes, because next year we are providing services for interstate electors. We had a Queensland election in September this year, we have Victorian elections in November this year and in March next year we have New South Wales elections. We assist with pre-poll in-person voting at the office when people attend to vote.

Mrs REDMOND: Do we get reciprocal support for our voters interstate?

Ms MOUSLEY: Yes, we do.

Mrs REDMOND: Has that been an ongoing situation?

Ms MOUSLEY: It has been an ongoing arrangement. Also, we provide voting for people from New Zealand who might be in Australia at the time of the New Zealand elections.

Mr PENGILLY: Are there thousands?

Ms MOUSLEY: Not thousands; it depends on who is in the country at that time. We make our offices available for that service.

Mrs REDMOND: Is there a reason why the numbers are so much higher with New South Wales and Victorian electors? For instance, Tasmania and Queensland have had elections and they do not appear in these figures.

Ms MOUSLEY: We look at the estimates and the actual figures from the last event as to how many of those electors from that state are in South Australia at that time. We do that as a forecast estimate and what number of people we anticipate will approach the office for assistance for their state elections, as well as the fact that many New South Wales and Victorian people come through to South Australia on holidays at different times.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to the program net cost of services summary, page 4.72, I assume that the reason for the budget and actual costs for 2005-06 being so much higher was the state election. Could I confirm that that is the case. Also, I refer to page 4.72, 'Electoral Services', which indicates an estimated result for 2005-06 of \$10 107 000 down to a budget this year of \$1 940 000. So the first part of my question is: I assume that that is because of the state election that we have just had. So the second part of the question is: I then was wondering why it is still even so much lower than the figure for 2004-05, given that we do have local government elections, and yet if you look at the 2004-05 actual, that was \$2 518 000. Why is it going down to \$1 940 000 for this next year, given that there are the local government elections and those various elections that the office takes care of?

The CHAIR: Minister, do you wish to refer the question to the Commissioner?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I do.

Ms MOUSLEY: To the best of my knowledge there is an additional appropriation from the Rann government's moneys which will be forwarded to the department to bring us up to our normal operating budget which will be around the \$2.18 million.

Mrs REDMOND: Sorry, I missed the beginning of that.

Ms MOUSLEY: There will be a top-up appropriation of \$154 000 to bring us up to our normal operating budget of around \$2.18 million.

Mrs REDMOND: So how come that does not appear in the budget papers?

Ms MOUSLEY: Because that has been done after the budget papers were submitted.

The CHAIR: Commissioner, the questions have to be asked to the minister. He may refer them to you. The questions cannot be asked directly, Commissioner.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer that question to the Commissioner.

Mrs REDMOND: I am just a bit puzzled, Madam Chair. I have already mentioned previously in estimates that I am bewildered for a start that we have estimated results for 2005-06 when the budget is presented four months late, but now to find out that the budget target in the figures is not actually the budget target at all, because we already know that it will be topped up from appropriations and therefore the figure is in there, seems to make a mockery of the whole basis of budget estimates.

On page 4.74 in the performance indicators, the percentage of people eligible to vote enrolled on the roll was greater than 95 per cent in its result in 2004-05, had a target slightly lower of 94 per cent in 2005-06, but has had the target reduced again in 2006-07 to 90 per cent. I am curious as to why that target is going down when I would have thought that the idea was to increase the percentage of people eligible to vote who are enrolled on the roll and head for 100 per cent, rather than going from 95 per cent to 94 per cent to 90 per cent.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer that question to the Commissioner.

Ms MOUSLEY: We have a slight decline there from 95 per cent in 2004-05 to what we perceive to be about 90 per cent in 2006-07. Because of the program for the continuous roll updates that are constantly undertaken between ourselves and the Australian Electoral Commission as part of our joint roll arrangements or agreements, we are finding that a lot of the letters that we are sending out to people who we find are at particular addresses are not coming back with as much relevant and useful information as may be possible. So at the moment there is a review under consideration as to: is the current programming working, how efficient and effective is that program, and if there are problems how might we be able to introduce some new measures to capture the people? We are finding that initially when that program started a number of years ago there was a very good solid response of people enrolling and updating their information, but we have found that over the years, people, when they are getting letters in their letterbox, are obviously putting them in the bin or disregarding them totally. So we are aware there has been a slight decline. We are trying to get out there and be proactive and promote enrolment activity, etc., and council elections are one exercise where we try and get out there and promote the fact that there is an election: get your name on the roll.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: If I may add to that: I have doorknocked continuously over 16 years as an MP, with a special emphasis on delivering personally addressed mail to

people who are new constituents, and even with people who have enrolled comparatively recently a certain percentage of them move on swiftly, and it is pretty hard to find out where they have gone. I think the State Electoral Commission is only being realistic in its targets. For instance, I was letter-boxing recently for a street-corner meeting in my neighbourhood of Kilkenny, and I came across a house in my street where there were five letters for a family, and I am aware that that family had moved out of the neighbourhood to Mawson Lakes in March.

Mrs Redmond interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It would be a street-corner meeting where they can meet their local member of state parliament, moi.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: We do them all the time.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: At my most recent street-corner meetings, they got to meet not only their local councillor but Senator Dana Wortley, so all levels of government were present in the Beverley and Allenby Gardens street-corner meetings. So I am conscious that it is a never-ending and impossible task to have correct enrolment in the high 90s in percentiles; that 90 per cent is a pretty ambitious target. People do not place a high priority, having moved house, on changing their electoral enrolment. Yes, they do the phone, the gas—

Mrs Redmond interjecting:

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: If the member for Heysen did some doorknocking she would understand. So electricity, gas, phone, council rates; they are the kind of changes that people notify. Alas, informing the State Electoral Commission of their move of house is a low priority. On top of that, some people are deliberately not enrolled; I come across them too when I am doorknocking. I offer them an enrolment card and they say they are not interested. I would say that the town of Coober Pedy is in two halves: those on the electoral roll and those who are purposefully not on the electoral roll.

Mr PENGILLY: On that last budget line, can the minister give any indication as to what number of nominations were refused on the grounds that people were not Australian citizens, during the recent nominations for local government elections? I had one case; that is why I ask.

The CHAIR: That was not a supplementary; that was a new question.

Mr PENGILLY: Well, I was having a go.

The CHAIR: It is a very new question but we are prepared to allow you to have a question.

Mr PENGILLY: It was a long bow.

The CHAIR: It was not a bow. Minister.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer the question to the Electoral Commissioner, but just in my own area of Charles Sturt, I am aware of people who are not enrolled on the electoral roll but are enrolled on the supplementary roll as ratepayers, whether they are landlords or pay rates for their own home or have a business in the area. In each ward in Charles Sturt, you are looking at 800 to 1 000 voters in that category.

My recollection—and I stand to be corrected on this—is that during the Bannon government when local government was democratised and everyone on the House of Assembly roll was entitled to vote for local government in accordance with Labor Party policy, a clause was put in the bill that said that, if a person were not an Australian citizen and therefore

not entitled to be on the House of Assembly roll, they would be entitled to be on the supplementary roll if they registered as a ratepayer. So I wonder if the case, with the member for Finnis' information, is a non-citizen who would be eligible if he or she were enrolled on the supplementary roll but did not so enrol.

The CHAIR: The commissioner, Ms Mousley.

Ms MOUSLEY: There were very few nominations rejected, if any, on the grounds of not being an Australian citizen, because, as the minister has rightly pointed out, if they are eligible as a ratepayer or a landowner or a body corporate or group within the council area, they are able to enrol under those conditions. There was the odd instance where we found—in filling out the nomination form—that people were not sure of their eligibility as to whether they were an Australian citizen or not. Our office has gone to quite extensive trouble to even arrange for a citizenship ceremony for one person in particular to take place before nominations closed.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I would add that if Andrew Robb, the parliamentary secretary for immigration in the Howard government, gets his way there will be a lot more people who will have their nominations refused because it will take four or five years to become an Australian citizen, whereas it now takes only two years. The former member for Hartley would be outraged by the notion of a non-citizen running for local government, relying on his contributions to this chamber over the 12 years he was here.

I point out that there are many non-Australian citizens voting and eligible to run for local government and parliament because they come in under the old clause which allows British subjects to be enrolled on the House of Assembly and Legislative Council roll without taking Australian citizenship. Indeed, the Liberal Party protested long and loud when British subjects were put in the same position as all other non-citizens and required to be citizens before they could vote. I think that change occurred about 1984, if my memory serves me correctly.

Ms FOX: Minister, at the risk of going down a path that you may have previously covered, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.72, Electoral Services. Can you please advise me which new initiatives were carried out by the State Electoral Commission at the March 2006 general election?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I can tell you that 48 elections were conducted successfully for the state election held on 18 March, which was the first conducted under fixed terms; an innovation we owe the member for Mitchell. Forty-eight returning officers (47 for the House of Assembly and one for the Legislative Council) were appointed to undertake the conduct of elections, together with a number of support staff, including one deputy returning officer, two reserve returning officers and three returning officer liaison workers. By and large I am satisfied with my local returning officer, although it is the fourth election in a row where he has deprived me of the donkey vote, which, of course, would be my due under the old system of alphabetical order.

The state government adopted initiatives for the 18 March election. These included inspecting polling booths eight months before the election, and completing a polling booth safety hazard checklist for each venue; issuing pre-poll votes from the offices of 10 returning officers and three other officers, coordinated by returning office liaison officers; hiring three liaison officers to provide support and assistance to returning officers and State Electoral Commission staff; hiring two spare returning officers to understudy current

returning officers and be on standby should problems arise; redesigning various forms, booklets and training manuals, including home workbooks, declaration envelopes and employment booklets for staff; using triangular-shaped pencils on tabletop voting screens to help the elderly and frail mark their ballot papers—and I think it would be a sad day if pencils were no longer the way we exercise our franchise in Australia.

The initiatives also included using coloured striping on voting screens and ballot boxes to help the visually impaired, as well as using covered labels to identify different ballot boxes in polling booths; using one-piece voting screens and ballot boxes in polling booths, direct delivery of cardboard equipment to polling booths, and picking up all cardboard equipment from metropolitan polling booths; using queuing equipment in about 240 polling booths; using 180 laptop computers in polling booths to determine electors' voting entitlements, compared with 134 laptops at the previous election; and, finally, the last but not least initiative of the State Electoral Office during the March state elections was to project the results at the tally room onto a screen.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to page 4.74. I am still on the issue of the number of people eligible to vote who are enrolled on the roll. I would like to explore an issue that you touched on, Attorney, in relation to the issue of who is enrolled and how they are enrolled. I have had a letter from the member for Flinders in relation to a matter about which she had written to the Electoral Commissioner to which she had a response which did not seem to entirely address the problem. She claimed that many people come to her office to complain after the election that they had been taken off the roll. Apparently, staff in booths spent a considerable time—running at some hours—checking particulars and re-enrolling people who had not moved.

The difficulty appears to arise from the way in which constituents are recorded on the roll in South Australia. Constituents give (I think) both their physical and postal addresses, or they are invited to do so, but, when letters are sent to residential addresses, they are returned to sender, usually marked 'insufficient address' in a lot of country areas. It does not matter how many times you resend such a letter, that is no way of checking whether they are still there, because those people are still living at that address, but their postal address, if it is not used, creates a problem. Has any action been taken to address that particular problem of electors whose residential and postal addresses are quite different, but if the State Electoral Office is not sending out things to just the postal address, people are getting knocked off the roll who should not be.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer that matter to the Commissioner.

Ms MOUSLEY: There are a number of instances where material is mailed out to electors, and, usually, in the first instance, it is mailed to their postal address. If we find that the mail is returned to us undelivered, we then look at their residential address to see if we can determine whether that might be the better address at which you might be able to catch them. Often, if people are moving, they are not updating their postal address, but they might have a higher tendency to update their residential address. All measures are taken to try to capture those people on the roll by one means or another before we take further action. We also have rather long consultations with councils at times to make sure that we have the correct information for people's enrolled addresses.

Mrs REDMOND: The second issue, again raised by the member for Flinders, is that she had been told that in Port Adelaide 3 000 votes were obtained by letter dropping postal vote applications, then checking which ones were not removed from the mailbox, and mailing those off to obtain a postal vote on behalf of someone who had not received it. She says that, although it may sound implausible, she suspects that can be done, and so do I. Is any action being taken to address that sort of problem?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer that question to the Commissioner.

Ms MOUSLEY: If people are applying for a postal vote at the time that their application is made, they are required to sign the form. We then do internal processes and, in preparation for voting material to go out there, we include a declaration envelope which requires certain information to be provided by the elector when they are returning the ballot material through the mail to us. When that material is returned to the office, it has captured the elector's signature again when they are returning their material. When that material is received in the office, as part of the preliminary scrutiny process, we then go through and do a signature check to ensure that the signature on the application matches that on the declaration envelope.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer the question to the Electoral Commissioner.

Ms MOUSLEY: A good portion of the high amount of sale of goods and services in the budget year 2006-07, some \$3.5 million-odd, will be for revenue from the conduct of the council elections this year and the remainder will be from the roll products that we receive ready in from other agencies requiring information, and at this time also from the sale of MPs' roll data and for the joint roll services that we provide to councils. A good proportion of that is for council elections.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for examination of this line having expired, I declare consideration of the proposed payment completed. We will now move to the Courts Administration Authority.

Courts Administration Authority, \$74 464 000

Departmental Advisers:

Mr G. Thompson, State Courts Administrator, Courts Administration Authority.

The Hon. J.J. Doyle, Chief Justice.

Mr T. O'Rourke, Director, Corporate Services, Courts Administration Authority.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular Appendix C and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, pages 4.46 to 4.69. Does the Attorney wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: No.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Heysen wish to make an opening statement?

Mrs REDMOND: No, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Please proceed to questions, then.

Mrs REDMOND: I have one question that I expect will be taken on notice but I will get that out of the way first. I refer to the proposed shared services reforms across government. What are the base line costs for the provision of

corporate services in the Courts Administration Authority, including the total current cost of the provision of payroll, finance, human resources, procurement, records management and information technology services, also including the full-time staff equivalents involved? Also, what particular issues, from the Courts Administration Authority's viewpoint, need to be resolved with the proposed centralised shared services unit for that to be effective? Am I right in assuming that that should be taken on notice?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: You are.

Mrs REDMOND: Referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.47, which is the Objectives of the Courts Administration Authority, there are a couple of the dot points at the top of the page I want to refer to. They are:

- improve court facilities and other aspects of dealing with the courts; and
- foster an environment and a management framework wherein judicial officers, staff and volunteers can contribute to improved performance of the courts system;

If that is the stated objective, why has the Attorney been so determined that, in spite of clear statements about the need for major upgrades, especially in the Supreme Court buildings, he will not proceed with any?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is a question of priorities. This is a court-building government. Since we have come to office we have built courts in Port Pirie (opened), Port Lincoln (about to open), Victor Harbor (open, about to have its ceremonial opening) and Berri (open). We have appointed two resident magistrates to Port Augusta, where there is going to be something like a \$12.5 million court opened, I think next year.

This government places a very high priority on courts. That is why we have had built for us brand new state-of-the-art courts in country areas. The member for Heysen can only ask the question she does by entirely overlooking all that construction outside metropolitan Adelaide. So, the point of view that the member for Heysen brings is a city-centric point of view. I think we could do with some extra criminal courts, and the government is looking at ways in which to eke out another criminal court in the Sir Samuel Way building, or even to build up to four courts on the land abutting Wright Street.

However, on the question of a full-blown \$100 million plus Supreme Court redevelopment, we do not currently think that is a priority, alongside the other things we have to do. Merited though it may be, it will not be happening in this budget. If something happens in the next budget, it will be more modest. I take it from the question that we can add a \$100 million-plus Supreme Court redevelopment to the list of Liberal Party election promises, which need to be funded by South Australian taxpayers—and this at a time when the state is gripped by drought and will have a diminution in its revenues of many millions of dollars. I do not think that is a responsible expenditure.

Mrs REDMOND: Just to make it very clear for the Attorney's benefit, I am very much in favour of all those regional courts. I have no difficulty at all with their establishment.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: You never talk about them.

Mrs REDMOND: However, last year the Chief Justice referred to three to four people having to share an office, and in estimates last year the Attorney said:

We care about the occupational health and safety of public employees, and we are happy to meet with them, listen to what they have to say and respond.

Surely those two statements are indicators that there is a crying need for adjustment of the facilities available to those who work in and around the Supreme Court. Yet the Attorney seems quite insistent that no real money be spent on refurbishment or on building a new complex appropriate to house the Supreme Court.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Although no specific additional funding was provided for building maintenance in the 2006-07 budget, the Courts Administration Authority received an additional \$1.4 million for operating costs, which could be allocated towards building maintenance costs. The authority's building maintenance and minor works budget covers all court facilities through the CBD metropolitan and regional areas. The current approved budget is \$1.696 million, comprising \$1.17 million in building maintenance, payable to DAIS, and about \$500 000 in repairs and maintenance for building minor works.

An independent review of courts building maintenance requirements was done a few years ago, indicating that additional expenditure was required to maintain building assets. As part of the 2004-05 budget, one-off funding of \$300 000 was provided for minor works for the Supreme Court, and continuing funding of \$250 000 for general building maintenance.

Ms SIMMONS: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.47, refers to the improvements made to the Supreme Court that the Attorney has talked about and, in particular, to the closed circuit television facilities. Can the Attorney advise whether this matter has been completed since the release of the Layton report in 2003?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The Layton report into child protection, commissioned just after the Rann government was installed, made 206 recommendations ranging across health, welfare, education and justice agencies and departments. Of this, 24 were about the Children's Protection Act 1993. As a result of the recommendations, a vulnerable witness facility has been established and made available within the Supreme Court precinct. The facility will enable evidence to be taken via closed circuit television. The facility, as per the recommendations, has been soundproofed and fitted with video equipment that is linked to the Supreme Court. The use of closed circuit television promotes a safe and comfortable environment for child witnesses, the judiciary and legal professionals working with child witnesses. I can report that the project was completed last year, and is fully operational.

Ms SIMMONS: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.47, refers to the implementation of electronic transcripts in the Court of Criminal Appeal. Can the Attorney please advise why this method has been adopted?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: With a view to further improving the criminal justice system, the government has introduced the use of electronic transcripts in the Court of Criminal Appeal. The provision of transcripts through electronic means is expected to be more cost effective in improving courtroom and administrative staff efficiency. The initiative will enable quick and efficient searches of transcript, resulting in an overall decrease in time required for hearing. This will ultimately lead, we hope, to a decrease in production costs in the Court of Criminal Appeal. Both the court and the parties to a case will benefit most from these improvements owing to the efficiency gains expected. I understand that this initiative became available in the Court of Criminal Appeal in July this year.

Ms FOX: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.47 refers to the development of the Port Augusta courts facility. Attorney-General, can you please advise which stage of construction this project has reached?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Since cabinet funding approval of \$12.59 million on 5 December last year, construction of the Port Augusta court has proceeded. The development will provide for a three-courtroom building that provides rooms for associated agencies within the building, a registry and mediation rooms, points of entry security, open plan for internal waiting spaces, and sheltered external waiting areas.

One of the things that delayed the construction of the Port Augusta court was local lobbying about the site. We wanted to build it near the town square where the existing courts are. There was very strong lobbying from her worship, the Mayor of Port Augusta, Joy Baluch. She is a formidable mayor and someone whose point of view must be taken into account. We consulted and decided to build the court a little further out of town. It is a contemporary court. It will make clear statements about the accessibility, accountability and transparency of the judicial process. I understand that the successful tenderer, Candetti Constructions, started construction on 9 January, and it is expected to be completed on 9 February 2007. We certainly hope that the project will meet its budget.

As you know, the government reversed an earlier policy of the Liberal government under Trevor Griffin, Chief Magistrate Jim Crammond and Chief Justice King, about resident magistrates. Resident magistrates were abolished as one of the first acts of the incoming Liberal government from 1993. This government and the governing party, when we were in opposition, took the view that we ought to restore resident magistrates. We have done that. We have a resident magistrate at Mount Gambier, Garry Haskey; we have a resident magistrate in Berri, Peter Snopek, whose family were originally from Monash in the Riverland; and we have two magistrates at Port Augusta.

Now is the time for me to pay tribute to Magistrate Fred Field who did such an outstanding and pioneering job in volunteering to go to Port Augusta and staying for longer than we expected. He has done an outstanding job and I thank him for his stalwart service in Port Augusta.

Mrs REDMOND: I endorse the comments of the Attorney in relation to Magistrate Fred Field. Can we just return to that question of electronic transcripts, which has been raised in a dorothy dixer already? When reading about electronic transcripts, improvements in efficiency and costs are referred to. I wonder whether that efficiency and cost saving is just for the benefit of the Courts Administration Authority, or will there be cost savings in terms of access to transcripts for participants? I was involved in more than one trial over the years where my clients were simply unable to afford the cost of the transcript, which was always running at an extraordinarily high rate compared to the cost of photocopying, and so on. Could you first of all indicate whether there is a benefit to participants in the court process, parties in particular, in accessing transcripts through this electronic transcript system?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will handball this one to the Chief Justice who has an opinion about the matter.

Chief Justice DOYLE: Trial transcript is unaffected by this proposal; it relates only to appeals. So, if you are in a criminal trial and want the transcript, you will still have to pay the same fee, unless you get it for free through legal aid. Other than that, you have to pay the fee. I am not sure what

it is—about several dollars a page. The reason it is much more than the cost of photocopying is because of the cost of employing the reporters and all the staff. If you charged just the photocopying cost you would never recoup the cost of recording. This particular item refers to the Court of Criminal Appeal, so it is only for appeals. The court prepares the appeal books for appeals and provides them to the parties free of charge.

If you are in a criminal appeal, you will get transcript and a whole appeal book free of charge. There is not a saving to the parties only because we have always borne the cost. There should be some saving to the state, because what we find is that when we ask the parties what material they want in the appeal book, it is much easier for them to say, 'Put everything in', because it saves them time thinking about it. We finish up copying hundreds of pages of transcript from the trial, and then on the appeal it is rather frustrating that you find that you might be referred only to four or five pages. At least doing it electronically, while it is not cost free, we are avoiding some wastage and we are saving some staff time that would go into the photocopying. I am not sure that, in all honesty, you could precisely quantify the savings. We could probably quantify them roughly, but intuitively it does not make sense to photocopy literally hundreds of pages of evidence for perhaps five or six appeals each month and then find that, as I said, we are referred to 10 or 20 pages along the way.

Mrs REDMOND: I take it, through the Attorney, that what happens now is that the parties to the criminal process will get a disk rather than a hard copy.

Chief Justice DOYLE: Yes.

Mrs REDMOND: Is there any prospect of that sort of technology in the future—and I know not in this year's budget? Are we looking at moving to that sort of technology for other transcript to make it more accessible for people at large in other parts of the court system?

Chief Justice DOYLE: My understanding is that, in most areas, you can get a disk now, it is just that we will charge you the same rate as we would for the paper. If a disk contains 200 pages of evidence, we charge you the equivalent of 200 pages of evidence because the cost to us is the same. While it is possible that it will spread to other areas, unless there was a change by the government in terms of cost of recoupment, the charge would remain the same and so the cost problem for the litigant would remain the same. The other thing that we have to bear in mind is that people who are not computer literate or people who do not have computers still want the hard copy; and so for a long time we will have to run both systems in parallel. It is not a situation where we can say that we will make a clean cut and abandon hard copy and go electronic. We might make more savings if we did it that way, but access to justice issues indicate that, for a long time, we will have to continue to run a dual system, which comes at a cost.

Mrs REDMOND: I return to this issue of accommodation for the Supreme Court. We are all aware of the fact that the new Federal Court building has opened. I discussed the issue with the federal Attorney-General on the basis that, after the Supreme Court being very gracious hosts to our federal colleagues when they came to town over 100 years ago, it seemed to me appropriate that they might extend the courtesy back and supply some accommodation. The federal Attorney-General indicated that it was really a matter for the justices to decide, rather than for yourself as Attorney-General, him or me. I wonder whether any discussions have been had, or

whether there is any prospect of getting any accommodation for the Supreme Court, at least temporarily, in the brand new Federal Court building.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: No; we have given up on that.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to subprogram 1.1 on page 4.50. I want some explanations about some of the figures. First, the Court of Criminal Appeal with a target for this year for 160 matters has an estimated result of 113, which is significantly below the target. Given that 160 was achieved in the previous year, I was wondering whether there was some special explanation for that lower result in 2005-06 and also why the target is again lower for 2006-07.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer that question to the Chief Justice.

Chief Justice DOYLE: The short answer is that for us these targets are almost meaningless, because basically we hear the cases that come along. It is not the sort of target where we can say that we will aim, as it were, to get 160 appeals in. The target is nothing more than an estimate of what is going to happen. As it happened, as far as I am aware, the explanation for this year is that there were fewer appeals. We have found that, over the years, they go up and down for no apparent reason. I would be pleased if this turns out to be a long-term trend, but my information suggests that, for most years, the number of appeals will be around 150-odd—sometimes a little more, sometimes less.

What we tend to find is that, if there is less demand in that area, then we can get on with other work faster. In a way, if you look at judges as units of production, we move them where the need is. If there is more need in crime (because we give it priority), you may find that civil appeals are waiting longer. If there is less need in crime, we are able to get the judgments done in civil appeals more quickly.

Mrs REDMOND: On that same series of performance indicators on page 4.50, there is a continuing pattern under the second half of that column; that is, in the Supreme Court, not including appeals, an indicator states that no more than 10 per cent of lodgements pending completion are to be more than 12 months old. On that line, we see that in 2004-05 there was an actual result of 22 per cent, then the target for the next year was set at 10 per cent, but 25 per cent was achieved. The target again for this year is 10 per cent. Further down we have the District Court showing the same sort of pattern, the actual being 26 per cent; target for 2005-06, 10 per cent; actual achieved, 26 per cent; target, 10 per cent. Lastly, and probably more startlingly in the Magistrates Court: 2004-05 result, 43 per cent; again the target, 10 per cent; estimated result for this year, 32 per cent; and the target again for next year, 10 per cent. There seems to be a consistency about not just the targets being at 10 per cent but the fact that, in all cases, at the very least there is a result of over 20 per cent—and in the Supreme Court it is trending upwards, rather than downwards. I just wonder what explanation there is for that and whether it is a matter of resourcing.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Before I ask the Chief Justice to respond to that, I point out that the timing of cases is often in the hands of the lawyers themselves, and either one or both of the lawyers engaged in the case do not give the case a high priority or they see some advantage in not progressing the case to trial. The court—and by extension the government—can hardly be responsible for the conduct of lawyers. I shall ask the Chief Justice whether he wishes to say anything.

Chief Justice DOYLE: I could talk for about an hour on this one, but I will not.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Feel free.

The CHAIR: There are 43 minutes left.

Chief Justice DOYLE: The figures used are national figures. They are arbitrary. In other words, there is no science that says that, in theory, not more than 10 per cent of your lodgements should be more than 12 months old. It is not scientific: it is an arbitrarily selected figure. I think everyone accepts that it is a reasonable figure, and there is some value in having a uniform national benchmark. The trends to which the honourable member refers are concerning us because, as she has observed, an increasing number of cases are exceeding the benchmark. This is part of the general problem we are having with getting criminal trials on as promptly as we would like, and so the focus here is criminal trials.

That problem is caused by many factors. Lodgements have increased over about the past five years. Some figures I looked at show that in 1999 the lodgements for the District and Supreme courts combined were 1 322 and, by 2005, they were up to 1 964—a 600 lodgement increase. Not all lodgements are trials, but this is indicative of the problem. The worrying figure is that the number of cases outstanding at the end of the year had increased from 90 in 1999 to 299 in 2005. That reflects that every year another 10 to 15 cases cannot get heard. It is partly due to lodgements, but then also length of cases. The average length of a case has increased a little.

The figure is only, say, from about 5½ days to 6½ days a case across the whole system. However, you can add one day to every case you hear in a given year. In 2005 it was 388 cases, so it is 388 sitting days. It is the number of cases and the length of cases. The big thing we are trying to work on is time taken to prepare the cases to which the Attorney referred. With respect to criminal cases, we believe that the police are taking longer than they should to get them ready, there are delays (that there should not be) with forensic science, there are then delays with the DPP and then there are delays with the defence lawyers.

Perhaps I should not use the word ‘delay’, because that has a pejorative sense. When one looks at it, one can see that it is all taking too long. We think it should be able to be done faster, because we do not like setting a trial date until we know the case is ready. If we set a trial date before it is ready then what you find is that you run into problems with bringing it on. Delay in preparation is another factor. The number of courtrooms we have is a factor, although it is very difficult to pin down scientifically exactly how many courts you need.

Obviously, if we had 10 more courts it would be much easier, but you could not use them efficiently. We believe that another three or four criminal courts would help, but that comes at a cost. The number of judges is a factor, which is closely linked to the number of courts. There is no point in having five more judges if you do not have two or three more courtrooms for them to sit in. Other participants in the process will have their views about our methods of listing and how efficient they are. They will probably criticise our methods of listing.

All those factors are in the mix, but the bottom line is that the position has deteriorated over a number of years. We are trying to turn it around, but the telling figure is the outstanding number of cases going from 90 to 299, and it is just reflecting the fact that each year there are just a few more cases we cannot get to, and so the backlog is building up.

It is not good. People should not have to wait two to three years to get into court to tell their story—neither witnesses, nor victims, nor the accused. So, the quality of justice does suffer. Realistically, there will always be cases that cannot meet that benchmark. If you take a case like the so-called Snowtown case—Bunting and Wagner—no way would that case ever be heard in a year, particularly in the Supreme Court. There is always going to be a handful of cases you will just never get through in a year—perhaps not even two years. However, the fact remains that the performance needs to improve but, if you said to me, ‘Have you analysed exactly how to turn it around?’, the answer is that we cannot because there are so many factors bearing on it. However, what we are trying to do is make a difference, but it will take time. That is the short version.

Mrs REDMOND: Can I perhaps get a bit more clarification on the short version. First of all, I refer to the Attorney’s comment that the timing of cases is often in the hands of lawyers themselves. I did not work much in the criminal jurisdiction, but my understanding is that these days you have introduced case flow management into the criminal jurisdiction, not just the civil jurisdiction. So, I wonder to what extent that is in the hands of lawyers. However, more importantly, you mentioned those delays in police, forensic science, DPP and defence lawyers (and I have put a question mark about the availability of judges), and you said in your response, Chief, that the number of judges is a factor. Can you indicate how many judges more we might need in order to deal with the problem?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer that question to the Chief Justice.

Chief Justice DOYLE: We have case flow management, but it is not very intensive. The same national statistics to which I referred have an index, which is the number of attendances by the parties before the case comes on for hearing, and the general theory behind it is that the numbers should be as low as possible. There is a view on case flow management that, really, all you are doing is bringing the lawyers up to court and incurring further costs and that, if you just set a deadline and told them to get the case ready, that would be a more efficient way of doing it. I think most people think that a bit of case flow management is a good idea but too much becomes counterproductive. We do do it; it is not intensive, but I think it helps.

The number of judges is very difficult. We are pretty tight for courtrooms—in fact, very tight in the Sir Samuel Way building, where all the criminal cases are heard. We have talked to the Attorney about the possibility of appointing an additional judge ahead of a pending retirement, so that for a period of time there might be one or two extra judges. At our request, for the moment, really, we have deferred that, because the last thing we want to do is have that happen and then find that the judge is twiddling his or her thumbs for much of the time. I think the Chief Judge’s view was that he could not be satisfied at this stage, when you look at courtroom numbers and one other factor I will refer to in a minute, that if we got an extra one or two on that basis we would be able to use them completely productively. So, in effect, we have invited the Attorney not to pursue that just for the moment.

The factor I said I would come to is the DPP. If the DPP is unable to get extra trials prepared, there is just no point in us having even extra courtrooms and extra judges there. I do not single out the DPP, because the size of the defence bar is also relevant—there have to be defence lawyers available to

do the cases. The DPP has indicated to us that he would find it difficult—I think he would say impossible—to increase the number of cases he gets ready within a given period of time. That is something that you might say is an ongoing dialogue between us and the DPP—and I think between the Attorney and the DPP. However, there is no point having extra judges unless the cases are there to hear.

The short answer is that I think some gains might be made if we had a couple of extra judges for a period of time—perhaps for a year or two—but we have to have the court-rooms and we have to have the assurance that the cases will be there to be heard and ready to go. I think that, when we can be confident of that, we will invite the Attorney then to look at it on that basis.

Mrs REDMOND: Just before leaving that page, I want to refer to a couple of things on the summary income statement on page 449. First, could you explain why there is a decrease in the employee benefits and costs from the estimated result this year of \$37 928 000 to \$37 594 000 next year? Where is that saving going to come from, or that decrease?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: TVSPs.

Mrs REDMOND: Could the Attorney explain where they are targeted, if at all, seeing that they are targeted voluntary separation packages?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will ask Trevor O'Rourke to respond.

Mr O'ROURKE: They were from the redeployment section. We have 11 redeployees, or transition employees, and they were offered, under the TVSP scheme—

The CHAIR: Mr O'Rourke, could you move your microphone a little closer, please.

Mr O'ROURKE: They were under the TVSP scheme. We had 11 redeployees and they were offered TVSPs; six redeployees took up the offer and left the Courts Administration Authority before 30 June, and the budget has been adjusted accordingly.

Mrs REDMOND: Were those 11 people the sort of people who were sitting aside in a room somewhere without actual duties to perform because they were redeployees?

The CHAIR: Attorney, if you ask Mr O'Rourke to respond, could you ask him to respond a little louder, please.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes. Mr O'Rourke, please respond.

Mr O'ROURKE: Yes; the majority of them were doing special projects in various divisions of the Courts Administration Authority.

Mrs REDMOND: On that same summary income statement: on the fees, fines and penalties, the budget for this year was \$165 000, an estimated result in excess of double that, and then an almost trebling of that figure for the target for next year. Can the Attorney explain why that is going up at such a rate?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I might ask Mr O'Rourke if he would like to answer that question.

Mr O'ROURKE: Part of that is related to the road safety program.

Mrs REDMOND: That was another question I had anyway, so perhaps I could get an explanation about how that impacts—

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Mr O'Rourke?

Mr O'ROURKE: The question is what?

Mrs REDMOND: When you look at that line for fees, fines and penalties, you see that last year's budget was for \$165 000 on income; what was achieved was more than

double that, and the target is more than treble that figure. I am just curious as to why it is going up so rapidly.

Mr O'ROURKE: The reason for it is the implementation of the red light cameras. At the start there were problems with implementing the red light cameras, so we could not estimate accurately at the start of the financial year. As the year progressed more cameras were implemented and more fees were received through the actions coming out of the red light cameras. In 2006-07 there is a revised estimate up for an increase in the number of cameras.

Mrs REDMOND: On subprogram 1.2, the specialist courts: I had a couple of questions there. First, on the performance indicator referring to the Drug Court at the top of the table: the number of offenders accepted into the program—and there is an explanation by way of a footnote saying, 'Indicator description updated to better reflect the process'—I was still puzzled as to why, with 91 people referred this year, there was only likely to be 75 people referred in the coming year onto the Drug Court program.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The Drug Court is not a soft option.

Mrs REDMOND: I did not suggest that it was.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I am glad you are not suggesting that. Some people are deterred from subjecting themselves to the rigours of the program designed for them by the Drug Court; they are content to go back into the mainstream court system. The Chief Justice would like to amplify on the answer.

Chief Justice DOYLE: I would like to make the point that, again, target is a bit of a misnomer. It implies that we are out to get that number of people when it is really an estimate based, I suppose, on the capacity of our staff and associated services to meet the needs of the people and the number of people who come into the system. If, in a given year, there are a few more arrests than expected you would probably find that there would be a few more people eligible for the program, and if you can squeeze them in you will. These targets will always be fairly loose and, from the information I have, all I can say is that it is not suggested there is anything out of the ordinary in the past year; I think it is just a matter of there being a few more people who indicated that they would like to go into the program, and the view was taken that they could be accommodated.

Mrs REDMOND: A couple of lines lower down there is another reference to the Drug Court and it particularly caught my eye. It is the percentage of the participants completing the program, and the target and estimated result are both at 40 per cent. Why is that target so low? I appreciate that people who have drug addiction problems are fairly difficult to manage in many ways but even so that seems extraordinarily low, given that these people are in a criminal court system and are, presumably, potentially avoiding other consequences by participating in it. I guess the question is in three parts: why is it such a low percentage, what happens to the 60 per cent who do not successfully complete the program, and is there any information on what has subsequently happened to the people who did successfully complete the program? Are there recidivist indicators or is there any documentation regarding the outcomes?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: The Drug Court has operated in the Adelaide Magistrates Court since May 2000. The government funds the Drug Court recurrently with a budget of about \$1.7 million a year across four departments. We took a decision soon after coming to government to redirect funding to keep the Drug Court alive, because money

had not been allocated for it. The Drug Court has been evaluated by the Office of Crime Statistics, and that evaluation has found that people who complete the program reduce the frequency and the severity of their offending. The Drug Court program targets serious and recidivist drug-dependent offenders who, on the basis of the charges being faced, are likely to face a term of imprisonment. Successful rehabilitation, evinced by evaluation, is an important achievement in reducing crime and further cost to the system.

As at 15 August, 126 people have completed the Drug Court program, and the overall completion rate is 28 per cent—higher than most other Australian drug courts. On the basis of learning through the program's operation and evaluation, the completion rate is increasing. The Drug Court has never reached its original anticipated level of Aboriginal participation, which was 25 per cent. The program has increased its participation slightly over the past two years to about 10 per cent of all participants, and this is comparable with interstate drug court programs.

The completion rates over the past three years have been 38 per cent, 40 per cent and 40 per cent, and I think that that is a good outcome. It is a rigorous program; people will drop out of it over a 12-month period because they have to stop or minimise using illicit drugs, cease drug-related offending, engage with treatment and support agencies, attend regular court reviews, and undergo regular urine testing. A lot of these people do not like to undergo urinalysis; they regard it as a burdensome imposition on them. Their life is not structured in such a way that they necessarily turn up at appointments, especially repeated appointments, for this purpose with a variety of agencies.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Heysen have other questions?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: We are happy to give the opposition all the questions; let that be recorded.

Mrs REDMOND: I am still curious. A couple of things arose from the Attorney's response. First of all, I understood him to say that the completion rate overall is 28 per cent, whereas the figures seem to suggest that the outcome was 40 per cent, so is—

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: That is the past three years. This is a program that commenced when Trevor Griffin was Attorney-General.

Mrs REDMOND: So, the 126 people to whom you refer, who have completed it, that is 126 overall in three years?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes.

Mrs REDMOND: The main point that I am trying to get at is what happens to people who drop out. I assume that these are people who have significant drug problems, and they avoid other legal consequences, at least in the first instance, by saying, 'No; I'd like to be referred to this program.' If 60 per cent this year are not completing it, what happens to them when they do not complete it? Do they fall back into the system and face the original penalty—

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: If I can put it vividly, they are frog-marched back into the ordinary court system.

Mrs REDMOND: Do we have details of the outcomes for those people and their cases?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes; we will try to get them for you. The chief justice advises me that it would be difficult to track them, but we will try, just as we have acquired some very interesting information about sentencing for arson for the member for Heysen who took questions on notice on Leon Byner's *Radio 5AA* program the other day.

Mrs REDMOND: I thank the Attorney again. I cannot get over his generosity today. The Attorney has, though, satisfied me. I just wanted to make sure that those people who do not complete the program actually fall back into the ordinary system and do not just escape via that route.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: They go for sentencing anyway. If they could just avoid their obligations and then walk away without penalty, what incentive would there be to be in the drug court?

Mr HANNA: Of the many topics I would like to address, I would like to choose one which relates to alternative dispute resolution services. I refer to page 4.54. The question relates to trials of restorative justice processes, which, I believe, have taken place in the Magistrates Court and also the District Court, to a limited extent. I wonder whether the Attorney-General, or perhaps the Chief Justice, will comment on the success of those trials and whether there is any funding in the pipeline for continuance of such procedures?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Experimenting with restorative justice in the criminal jurisdiction has been a particular passion of mine and has occurred during my tenure of the Attorney-General's office. I will ask the Chief Justice to report to you on the outcome of those experiments.

Chief Justice DOYLE: A pilot program was run for 12 months in the Magistrates Court to June 2005 dealing with adult victims and offenders. Some 27 individuals were dealt with in the pilot program, involving 14 conferences with 76 victims. The program was evaluated by Flinders University and the evaluation suggested that the process was found worthwhile by most victims, but there was no further funding at the expiry of the pilot, so the program has not been renewed. These can be relatively high-cost programs, but I think we have to look at all options. I am sure the magistrates would be pleased to pilot it further to see whether an ongoing program could be justified. I am not aware of its being in the District Court; I could be wrong. I thought it was only in the Magistrates Court that we did the adult restorative justice approach.

I could add that ideally we would have a range of alternatives to the traditional sentencing option. Many people feel that, increasingly, there are better ways of doing it, rather than the existing approach where you sentence them in court—talking to the lawyers with the victims, at best, putting in a victim impact statement and with the offender not being required to say anything—but none of these things are simple. I suppose the one truth in this area is that most of the alternatives are quite high cost and intensive in terms of the use of resources. I think we have to keep trying and looking.

Mr HANNA: I have a supplementary question. I appreciate what the Chief Justice says about the relatively high cost of such programs. The question is whether there is a net benefit. One can look at it in terms of either an economic benefit—

The CHAIR: A question?

Mr HANNA: —or a benefit taking into account victim satisfaction.

The CHAIR: Do you have a question? This is not the time for making a statement.

Mr HANNA: It is a rather long question or sentence—

The CHAIR: It does not yet sound like a question: please start the question.

Mr HANNA: The question is whether the report that has been done actually comes to conclusions in relation to net benefit, either economic or in other terms, and whether the

Attorney-General is therefore committed to continuing such procedures?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Quite.

Mrs REDMOND: I would like to look at penalty management services, which commences on page 4.56 and continues on page 4.57 but which is also referred to on page 4.48. The net cost of the subprogram in the criminal jurisdiction has increased quite markedly from an actual of \$1.851 million in 2004-05 to \$5.4 million in 2005-06. Although that was not fully expended in the 2005-06 year, there has been another significant increase in the budget for the current year. I wonder whether there is an explanation as to why that is increasing so dramatically and what is being achieved with that increase?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Which subprogram are we looking at?

Mrs REDMOND: Subprogram 3.1 on page 4.57, but the same pattern flows through on the summary of penalty management services generally, on page 4.48 on the third item in the program overall, at the top of that page.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer the question to Mr O'Rourke.

Mr O'ROURKE: That is the fines collected in relation to the road safety program. The road safety program, as I noted before, was the reminder notices from the court cases, etc. This is the actual increase in fines collected from the road safety program.

Mrs REDMOND: So why is that increasing so dramatically at the moment? Since 2004-05 has there been a massive increase in the level of the fines or is this really through red light cameras and the like that are more in use?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is cost, not revenue. It is not fines. It is extra money coming in from the budget for road safety enforcement, in particular, more cameras. We think that deterring people from running red lights is a good thing.

Mrs REDMOND: And we agree. I want to pursue a little the issue of enforcements in the civil jurisdiction, and I refer to subprogram 3.2. More generally, could I comment first about the difficulty that arises for many people who contact me and I have no doubt contact the Attorney as well, individuals and often small businesses that have legitimate claims that they win in their court case and then strike the next barrier, which often is the barrier they cannot cross, that is, getting satisfactory enforcement of a judgment which they have won. I would like to hear a general comment, first, on what is being done to address it, because it really can be a problem, particularly for small business, that ends up putting them out of business.

They have a legitimate right to be paid, they take their action, often expend a lot of money, because they have to pay their solicitors. They have a good case and they win it but, at the end of the day, if they do not get satisfactory enforcement, that failure can often break a small business.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I have come across cases just like the member for Heysen mentions, including cases in my own electorate and cases I have come across by dint of being the Attorney-General. It is true that there is a class of deadbeats, I would describe them as, who have judgments made against them and who then maliciously seek to punish the successful plaintiff by going to extraordinary lengths to avoid paying. It must cause them a lot of embarrassment and muck up their life, but they try to go underground. I can think of one political activist debtor who will not go on the electoral roll. It must hurt him, but he does not want to pay

his former landlord. Even when they are in receipt of regular income they seek to avoid payment, avoiding the Sheriff's officers. They hide in the thickets of the privacy provisions of the federal government to ensure that they will not even have to pay a sliver of their social security. So, yes, it is an enduring problem, but I think this is one area where Mr Thompson might be able to comment.

Ms THOMPSON: I am actually not sure that I can add much more to what the Attorney has just said. I think he has described the issue very well. Our sheriff's area has significant difficulty in enforcement, and a lot of it is because the successful party, usually the plaintiff, has a perception that, because they won their case, the other party is sitting there with the money waiting to pay. They also have perceptions about the net wealth and asset holding of the other party which, to be frank, is quite incorrect when we go to execute the warrant. So the sheriff's office does everything we possibly can. We bring the parties in for examination. But we are also reliant on instructions from the plaintiff, or the winning side, about which steps of enforcement we are able to take.

So, as I think the Attorney has just explained, it is very complex in relation to getting the funds out of the unsuccessful party and, as I say, quite often the winning party, quite frankly, has unrealistic expectations as to how we are going to recover the amounts from the other side. I can assure you that our sheriff's officers throughout the state do a significant job in trying to enforce our warrants at every opportunity.

Mrs REDMOND: I take it, firstly, that that is why the percentage of civil court orders which are executed and, indeed, the enforcements referred to in subprogram 3.2 in the performance indicators are actually relatively low. I see a nod from the table, so I am satisfied with that. The percentage of civil court orders which were executed in the current year was 71 per cent, so that appears to me to be a relatively low figure in terms of people having already won.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: That is just a matter of opinion. I understand the member for Heysen's point of view, and I wonder whether this level of execution has varied at any time in recent history.

Mrs REDMOND: I do not know. I accept everything that has been given in explanation in terms of people who hide and do that sort of thing, but one of the other problems with civil execution appears to be that, when some of these people are finally dragged before the court, they are offered a system whereby they are paying \$5 a week on the never-never. I am not sure how one addresses that, but it seems to me to be incredibly frustrating for people who have their judgment to go through all the processes necessary to drag the person back to court in terms of enforcement and get an order that the person pay \$5 a week, or whatever it is; and, to compound the problem that is then created, if the person relapses they have to start the process all over again. They make one payment and they relapse and the process has to start again. I wonder if there is a better system that can be implemented in terms of those enforcements, as opposed to the people who are generally hiding.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: It is the old problem of chronic debtors, and we seem to still have chronic debtors despite the economic boom of more than 10 years in Australia. Some people are quite determined, even if they have the means, to not pay what is demanded from them by judgment. Others are just awful managers of their lives and \$5 a week is beyond them. All I can say is that I have looked at these cases and, if I were in the situation of a chronic

debtor, I would attempt to avoid the pain of embarrassment by offering the payment of instalments just to get the authorities off my back. For most of us, the kind of enforcement used would be humiliating. However, the chronic debtor is usually impervious to embarrassment or humiliation, and sometimes that is why they are a chronic debtor: they get away with it and persist in that behaviour and cop what comes their way from the authorities. Most of us just could not bear that. The Chief Justice has just said that chronic debtors and enforcement of judgments would be a good topic for the courts open day next time the MPs' personal assistants attend the court.

Mrs REDMOND: I thank the Chief Justice for that suggestion, because it certainly is a problem that I am sure every elected member has to deal with. I refer to sub-program 1.4, page 4.53, relating to the Coroner. There is a small increase in the budget this year compared to what it cost in 2005-06—although I appreciate that there is quite a significant increase from the budget. However, clearly, it cost \$6 173 000 to run the Coroner's office in the 2005-06 year, and it is increasing marginally to \$6 220 000. Can the Attorney advise what resources would be required to ensure that the Coroner is not told, as he was today by police, that matters cannot proceed because the Coroner's office has not even looked at them yet, or because they have to wait for up to six months for a post-mortem report?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I think the member for Heysen, who is part of a political party that made a monstrous personal political attack on the Coroner, Mr Mark Johns—

Mrs REDMOND: I didn't do any such thing.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON:—no, you did not personally, but Mr Lucas did—should realise that the hold-up is on the forensic science side of things. We are investing more money in the Forensic Science Centre, but I cannot guarantee that that will necessarily result in a decrease in delay in the issuing of final death certificates. Interim death certificates are issued swiftly, but sometimes a final death certificate is required. I understand how families feel about the delay. I hope that, as time goes by, we can find sufficient staff in that specialisation to get those things done quicker. However, we are in a labour market where it is hard to find the kind of people we need to do those jobs.

Mrs REDMOND: I did not catch all of what the Chief Justice said before about alternative dispute resolution, in answer to the member for Mitchell's question, but I was curious as to why there was such a small increase, apparently, in funding of alternative dispute resolution services, which looks to me to be about a 1 per cent increase. With the CPI running at about 3.8 per cent, that would, in real terms, be a reduction in the money available to provide the services. Is there some explanation for that?

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: I will refer the ultimate question of the evening to the Chief Justice.

Chief Justice DOYLE: I think the answer is that we have not developed new programs, probably because we did not anticipate we would get funding for them, so the funding you see is really for the steady state, which is what we are doing at the moment. The cost of that increases gradually. If we were to make a bigger effort, there would have to be new programs and new funding for it.

Mrs REDMOND: The fact is that there was only a 1 per cent increase; presumably the costs have gone up and therefore it will not even maintain what we are doing currently.

Chief Justice DOYLE: I am not aware of any intention to cut back on what we are doing at the moment. Your point seems right and obvious, but we are not planning to cut back on any of the existing things, nor are we magicians with money, so there must be an answer that does not occur to me. The existing programs will not be cut, but it is an area where a lot of creative and new thinking is called for. Going back to the adult restorative justice program, there are only 27 people in it, and it is difficult to base long-term recommendations on such a small sample. While intuitively we think there is scope for it, just as we do with the Drug Court, at the end of the day you still have to prove that the benefits are there.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare consideration of the proposed payment completed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7.31 p.m. the committee adjourned until Tuesday 24 October at 11 a.m.