

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 4 July 2007

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Ms M.G. Thompson

Members:

Mr M.R. Goldsworthy
 Ms E.M. Penfold
 Mr M. Pengilly
 Mr T. Piccolo
 Ms L.A. Simmons
 The Hon. P.L. White

The committee met at 11 a.m.

Department of Primary Industries and Resources,
 \$163 061 000
 Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Resources, \$4 886 000

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 S. Archer, Acting Executive Director, Corporate.
 Mr M. Williams, Acting Director, Finance and Shared Business Services.
 Mr J. Hanlon, Executive Director, Community and Local Government Relations.
 Mr M. Petrovski, Director, Local Government Relations.
 Ms J. Gascoigne, Executive Officer, Local Government Grants Commission.

The CHAIR: The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. The committee will determine an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments to facilitate the changeover of departmental advisers. The information I have is that the timetable is as follows: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Office for State/Local Government Relations; 2 to 3 p.m., Office for Women; 3 to 3.30 p.m., Office for Volunteers; and 3.30 to 4.15 p.m., Office of Consumer and Business Affairs. Is that your understanding, minister?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is my understanding, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Member for Finnis, is that your understanding of today's arrangements?

Mr PENGILLY: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. 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 7 September. 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 House of Assembly's *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. I also advise that for the purposes of the committee some freedom will be allowed for television coverage which initially has been by allowing a short period of filming from the northern gallery. The normal rules relating to television coverage in the chamber apply.

I declare the proposed payments open for examination, and refer members to the Portfolio Statement Volume 2, part 5, in particular, pages 5.28 and 5.29. Does the minister want to make an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, Madam Chair. The Office for State/Local Government Relations is a small policy unit responsible for advising the Minister for State/Local Government Relations on:

- the constructive relationship between the state government and councils and other associated representative groups;
- whole-of-government policy and legislative frameworks as they affect local government; and
- the constitution and operations of the local government system, including the statutory authorities for which the Minister for State/Local Government Relations is responsible (these statutory authorities are: the Local Government Grants Commission; the Outback Areas Community Development Trust; and the Boundary Adjustment Facilitation Panel).

The relationship between state and local government in this state continues to be sound and constructive. In a range of important areas over the past year, there has been significant collaboration to progress common objectives. A few examples are:

- Local government has played a key role in the process of updating South Australia's Strategic Plan, and will continue to have an important role in contributing to meet target outcomes in the revised plan for the benefit of our communities.
- Some excellent collaborative projects to develop regional land use planning frameworks have been undertaken by councils and state agencies, and more are planned.
- State and local government officers have worked closely together in the development of a range of resources and tools to assist councils in improving financial governance and long-term financial sustainability.

We have a strong framework for state and local government to work together in this state. The main elements are the State-Local Government Relations Agreement, which was

first signed in 2004. The schedule of priorities under the agreement is reviewed annually and priorities for joint action are set. Currently, we are in the process of developing the new schedule for 2007-08. I chair the minister's state-local government forum, which continues to address priority issues, particularly in the infrastructure area. The National Intergovernmental Agreement, which was signed in April 2006, focuses on enabling all three spheres of government—commonwealth, state and local—to work more effectively together for the benefit of our communities.

We have made good progress in recent years in this state to establish a sound basis for joint state/local government discussion and negotiation on major issues and proposals. We may not always agree on the outcomes and, no doubt, there have been instances where consultation processes could have been better. There is always room for improvement, but I believe we have a good framework in this state and a sound basis for constructive debate and partnership building. Since becoming Minister for State/Local Government Relations, I have visited many councils around the state and the Outback areas, as well. I have talked to councillors, mayors, council staff and many community groups. As a result of these discussions, it is clear to me that the current priorities and concerns of councils focus around their financial sustainability, asset management, how best to meet the accountability expectations of the public and the parliament, the increasing and challenging expectations for services, getting a better handle on what communities really want from councils and what they are prepared to pay, and, in some areas, dealing with urban growth pressures and infrastructure and service implications. These are all areas and issues in which the state government is continuing to work with and support councils.

On some issues, where appropriate, the government has developed new legislative measures to provide a clear framework for action and followed up with assistance and support in conjunction with the local government sector. The local government sector itself has initiated a comprehensive program of support for councils, following recommendations of the independent inquiry into the financial sustainability of local government; and the state government has assisted where appropriate. In my discussions with councils around the state I have also been impressed that many councils are taking the initiative to look beyond their boundaries and are entering into cooperative and collaborative partnerships with other councils in their region.

As I have emphasised since I became minister, councils must be fully accountable to their community. Improving accountability and transparency of local governance and operations has been a key objective of a raft of measures introduced in recent years. This government has moved to ensure 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. These are important new steps in the ongoing process of administrative and financial accountability for local government in this state.

On another level I have also initiated dialogue with the Local Government Association on an ambitious agenda for democratic engagement at the local level. The Office for State/Local Government Relations has commenced work on a project focusing on leading practice in local government community engagement. I am looking forward to the outcome of the first stage of this project, which will provide a 'leading practice' case studies publication. This will be available to all

councils and will be designed to reflect the importance of effective public consultation and engagement.

In January 2007 legislative changes came into effect which are designed to improve the accountability of councils, as well as strengthening their financial governance, asset management, financial reporting and auditing arrangements. These very significant new provisions introduce new requirements for long-term financial and asset management planning, public consultation on draft annual business plans and the adoption of a set of 'model financial statements' for external reporting by local government, and strengthen the framework and independence of council audits. On this last issue there has been considerable recent debate about whether the present arrangements for external audit of councils provides an appropriate level of public assurance that resources entrusted to councils are being effectively administered. Further consideration has been given to these issues. I have given priority to the development by the Office for State/Local Government Relations of options that would further strengthen the current local government audit and accountability framework, including the role the Auditor-General might have in this process.

Another priority of mine as minister, and of the government more broadly, is to encourage greater collaboration and cooperation across the local government sector. Councils need to look to the opportunities that exist at the regional and state levels for progressing their areas of development. There is quite a lot of public debate at present around councils' capacity to deliver services as communities grow and change, and what structures could best support future development. I am encouraging all councils to explore the benefits of cooperation and collaboration in order to promote development in their region in a more strategic and effective way. A number of councils are now coming together to discuss how they might approach such collaborative arrangements on a regional basis.

The state government is keen to work with councils to develop coordinated regional approaches to service delivery. I want to stress that this is not a push for amalgamation. While amalgamation can be an option for councils to consider, I believe that in order for strong regional development to occur councils must take a broader and more strategic approach. I support councils working together to explore opportunities for overall service delivery benefits for their region. This can lead to increased economic development in the region and more efficient delivery of appropriate levels of physical and social infrastructure into the future. Regional coordination of local government services is about better planning and service delivery outcomes.

Recently, there has been some comment by the opposition alleging significant cost shifting by the state government to local government in this state. The state government budget papers this year—and for every budget during the life of this government—contain a table that indicates financial transfers from state to local government. The table shows that for 2006-07 financial year the estimated financial result is the transfer of just over \$90 million to councils for a variety of arrangements under which the state provides grants and subsidies to councils or payments to councils for local or joint state-local programs.

In 2007-08 funding of around \$100 million can be expected to be made available to local government by the state government. Over the last five years, the financial transfers from the state government to local government totalled \$428 million. If the 2007-08 estimated outcome is

added in, total funding to local government by the state over six years from 2002-03 to 2007-08 will amount to around \$528 million. It should be noted, too, that there are arrangements where the costs have in fact been transferred back from councils to the state level, such as the emergency services funding arrangements. The budget papers also show that, over five years, from 2001-02 to 2005-06, local government operating revenue has increased by more than its operating expenses. Therefore, no argument can be sustained that the state government has been systematically cost shifting to local government during this period.

Finally, I wish to refer to two priority projects for the coming financial year for the Office for State/Local Government Relations. I have initiated a review of the governance structure for the Outback areas. The Outback is currently experiencing significant change arising from the mining boom and tourist development. I decided that it was opportune to consult with the residents and other interested parties to seek their views on the future direction of governance for the Outback. The review is being jointly managed by the Office for State/Local Government Relations and the Outback Areas Community Development Trust. In mid-June an information package and an invitation to participate in the community consultation process was sent out to Outback residents and other interested parties. I am expecting a report back on the community feedback by the end of August. Subsequently, the review management team will provide me with a final report and recommendations for future directions.

Prior to the local government elections held in November 2006, I indicated that I intended to undertake a comprehensive review of those elections to assess outcomes, processes and issues arising. As I announced in April this year, an independent review of local government elections has been jointly commissioned by me and the President of the Local Government Association. The terms of reference developed for the independent review canvass an extensive range of issues. Ms Margaret Wagstaff has been appointed as an independent reviewer. Ms Wagstaff has recently released for public consultation a series of three issues papers. Ms Wagstaff's final report—expected by December—is likely to make recommendations for legislative and/or administrative change in three broad areas. They are: improving local government voter participation; improving local government representation; and, improving the local government election process. This is a very significant issue for local democracy and effective representative government. I look forward to contributions from my parliamentary colleagues. I hope that members will assist in encouraging interest and participation in the review among their constituents.

I am proud of what this government has achieved in local government relations over the past year. I believe that the relationship is fundamentally sound and moving to a new state of maturity and productivity as we work together to achieve real benefits for the people of South Australia.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Finnis wish to make a statement?

Mr PENGILLY: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for her comments. While I am in agreement with some of her opening comments I am quite at variance with a number of others. I suggest the minister's comments regarding the relationship between government and local government is an indication of that. I do not think that relations between the local government sector and the state government have been so low in a long time. Clearly, from

the things that are coming across my desk, as well as the phone calls and information I am getting, I believe it is very much an issue across South Australia, both in the metropolitan area and regionally.

I suggest that the Office for State/Local Government Relations has a lot of work to do—and very rapidly—if it is again to build up a constructive relationship with the local government sector in South Australia. It is a major concern to me. A number of issues are being circulated by members of the government at the moment which are causing a vast amount of angst across the local government community, not the least of which is the issue of amalgamations to which the minister referred. I am pleased to hear what the minister has said. However, some of her colleagues are actually indicating otherwise. I think that, in fairness to it, the local government sector would really like to know what is happening in that regard.

Clearly, the issue that has dominated local government in the last week or two has been the impact of the waste levy income which has been drafted by local government and which will go into state government coffers. That has caused an enormous amount of angst to the degree that we have seen mayors standing on the Wingfield dump and various places around the state. I am also aware at the moment of a campaign in local media and newspapers around South Australia on that issue. It is clearly unfair that local government becomes the revenue collector for state government and then it disappears, but I will get to that later.

Another issue that is causing quite a degree of angst is the NRM levies. When that was put in place a couple of years ago there was an understanding that those NRM levies would only be at the rate of what was currently being provided to the natural resources boards that existed, as well as the animal and plant control boards, soils boards, etc. However, we have seen enormous increases in those NRM levies in some areas, which is reflecting back. The issue is what happens when people get their rates notices. Ratepayers see the figure at the bottom, they go through the various levies and they think that it is all going to the council.

The councils, understandably, get a belt around the ears when ratepayers see a waste levy, an NRM levy and various other things. Clearly, the councils become the whipping boys. They get belted for that, and I think it is unfair. I ask the minister to look closely at the issue of the NRM levies, in particular. I know that the Natural Resources Committee of the parliament has raised that issue in this place. I think that the NRM and waste levies are not assisting in the relationship between state and local governments at the moment.

The minister spoke about cost shifting. If one looks at the federal parliament's Hawker report into cost shifting a couple of years ago one can see that it quite clearly showed enormous cost shifting by both federal and state government onto local government, which makes it very difficult for local government to move.

The issue of sustainability was raised by the minister. I have a lot of sympathy for local government in actually complying with the demands now put on them by this place. I would say that legislation that is drafted in this place puts so much onus on local government to carry it out, which, in turn, puts more impost on councils to raise money to cater for the legislation that is passed in the parliament of South Australia. That is a worry.

The council audit issue is something which we will be discussing over the next few months. I do not know that there is ever a clear and friendly way to have councils audited

correctly. We would probably find that, if the minister and I had some discussions about that, we would not disagree very much. You cannot bully local government. We have to be very careful from a state level that we do not bully them. Many of them are under enormous pressure: they just do not have the resources. Particularly in regional areas, roads are under an incredible amount of pressure and they do not have the capacity to deal with those problems. They are my opening remarks. I seek permission to read into *Hansard* the omnibus questions.

The CHAIR: Certainly, member for Finnis.

Mr PENGILLY: The omnibus questions are:

1. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of the baseline data that was provided to the Shared Services Reform Office by each department or agency reporting to the minister, including the current total costs of the provision of payroll, finance, human resources procurement, records management and information technology services in each department or agency reporting to the minister, as well as the full-time equivalent staffing numbers involved?

2. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors in 2006-07 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant and contractor, costs, work undertaken and method of appointment?

3. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees as at 30 June 2007 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 2005-06, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on projects and programs was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2006-07?

5. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what is the estimated or actual level of under expenditure for 2006-07? Has cabinet already approved any carryover expenditure into 2007-08 and, if so, how much?

6. (i) What was the total number of employees with a total employment cost of \$100 000 or more per employee, and 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 at 30 June 2007?

(ii) Between 30 June 2006 and 30 June 2007, 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?

7. For the years 2005-06 and 2006-07, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on all grants administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the names of the grant recipient, the amounts of the grant and the purpose of the grants and whether the grant was subject to a grant agreement as required by Treasurer's Instruction No. 15?

8. For all capital works projects listed in Budget Paper 5 that are the responsibility of the minister, list the total amount spent to date on each project.

The CHAIR: Do you have other questions?

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. In relation to the financial sustainability of local government, can you advise what resources of the Office for State/Local Government Relations was applied to assessing the impact on the local government budgets of the doubling of the solid waste levy; that is, what work was undertaken in

the cabinet process to ensure the impact was understood? What discussions have occurred in the forum and what sort of impact will the doubling of the levy have on local government budgets and financial sustainability?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am pleased that the member for Finnis asked this question, because it is time that we did have on the record some accurate information about the impact of the waste levy on local government. As we know, the levy was increased and, in fact, it has been doubled; that is, from \$11 million to approximately \$22.8 million. However, if members have been reading media reports of recent times, they would think that that total increase has been borne by local councils. That clearly is not the case. In fact, my information is that councils provide about 30 per cent of the waste going into landfill, therefore they pick up 30 per cent of that increase. Rather than picking up an increase of approximately \$11 million, it is in the vicinity of \$3.5 million across councils in South Australia. Of course, the thing about the waste levy is that it is a levy that councils can reduce.

The whole purpose of the levy, as I understand it, is to encourage recycling in South Australia. It has had some impact, but we still have a way to go because we have quite a significant target for reduction of waste into landfill. In fact, if council is reducing its landfill, it is reducing its levy. I also point out that the increase in the cost of the waste levy is in the near vicinity of the increase of council allowances across South Australia, but we have not heard from local councils quite as much about the impact of that. In relation to the waste levy, considerable funds have come back to councils to help them in relation to recycling. In the period from about 2004 to 2007, over \$7.5 million has gone back to local councils for initiatives such as kerbside performance incentives, regional infrastructure grants, regional waste management plans and hazardous waste collection.

Indeed, I think out of the Zero Waste funds, we even fund a project officer with the LGA to help councils. It costs councils annually something like \$100 million to deal with their waste and their recycling. They have engaged Bill Cossey to actually do a review of their waste strategy because there are clearly some real areas where these issues can be improved and, only a few weeks ago, I did a trip to the South-East with John Hanlon to visit a range of councils there. I have to say I expected complaints about the waste levy down there, but did not get any complaints. Do you know why? Because, after we gave the South-East Local Government Association a grant in the vicinity of \$55 000 to develop a regional waste strategy—they have an EPA-approved dump in Mount Gambier—councils in the southern region were about to sign contracts to pay \$130 a tonne to transport their waste from Naracoorte to Inkerman, so the levy increase was inconsequential when they were being denied access to the Mount Gambier dump.

I would have thought that managing those issues would be a perfect opportunity for councils to show how they can work together and save costs for their community. So, Naracoorte is building a transfer station and also looking at paying \$130 a tonne to transport their waste twice a week from Naracoorte to Inkerman. The member for Kavel looks stunned and I—

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, you should be stunned.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is an amazing thing that that would happen.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: What, that I look stunned?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No—well, that too. But that could happen. I have to say I was really concerned because I did speak to the LGA about this when I came back, and thought it was an ideal situation for the LGA to be showing leadership and getting better coordination and collaboration from a group of councils in a particular region. There is a number of councils in the electorate of the member for Finnis which have benefited from the levy, and funds have come back to them. For example, Alexandrina Council in August 2006 received \$25 847 to help them with their kerbside recycling.

Mr PENGILLY: I'm sure they will love this. Go on.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You don't think they appreciated the money—

Mr PENGILLY: No.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: —is that what you are saying?

Mr PENGILLY: I don't think they appreciate you saying they agree with the waste management levy, minister.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, I said—

Mr PENGILLY: I think they might have a few things to say about it.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: What I am telling you is how they have benefited from it—moneys that have come back to them. Kangaroo Island Council, \$35 200; then in December 2005 Alexandrina Council had \$112 460; City of Victor Harbor, \$70 700; Kangaroo Island received a regional infrastructure grant of \$150 000; Fleurieu Regional Development Authority, \$46 470 to develop a regional waste management plant. The list goes on. A number of councils which have looked to improve their waste management systems have benefited. It is also an interesting thing to do a comparison of council allowances for those paying for their waste levy. Again, not to be too crook on Alexandrina, because I think they are a very good council, but the impact of the waste levy on their rates is about 0.19 per cent, but the impact of their council allowances is about 0.74 per cent of rate revenue. The impact for Victor Harbor: the waste levy is 0.16 per cent on rates, but their allowance is 0.69 per cent. I use those figures to give you a couple of illustrations of the impact of the waste levy.

Mr PENGILLY: I have a supplementary question to that same budget line, Madam Chair, and I would suggest that the mayor of Victor Harbor has actually organised the other two mayors on the Fleurieu to take a photo this week for the local paper, absolutely chastising the increase in waste management levies, so that could have some interesting connotations. Can you also confirm whether or not the doubling of the solid waste levy will see an increase in outgoings from council budgets of around \$4 million this financial year, giving councils a further \$4 million headache and making their efforts to recycle even harder.

The CHAIR: I do not see that as a supplementary question, but we will be indulging you all the same.

Mr PENGILLY: Thank you, very much, Madam Chair, for your indulgence.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Sorry, Madam Chair, I missed his question.

Mr PENGILLY: Minister, can you also confirm whether or not the doubling of the solid waste levy will see an increase in outgoings from council budgets of around \$4 million this financial year, giving councils a further \$4 million headache and making their efforts to recycle even harder?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, I will not confirm that. In fact, it is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$3.5 million, and it is a levy that can reduce as their solid waste reduces.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. Can the minister outline the volume of resources within the LGA budget line which is applied to the following three areas:

1. Undertaking local government impact assessments as part of the accounting process.
2. Supporting the Minister's State/Local Government Forum.
3. Providing support to the LGA's financial sustainability program.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to get that detail for the member, but I can outline a number of initiatives where the state government is supporting local government and the Local Government Association. As I mentioned just briefly, the state government contributes something like \$30 000 towards a Zero Waste officer, who is working out of the Local Government Association. We have provided significant financial expertise to work on financial sustainability projects, including the development of model financial statements, developing long-term financial planning tools, and agreeing key indicators of financial performance. In fact, South Australia leads the way in having model financial statements adopted nationally so that there is some uniformity across Australia in relation to that. I think the member for Finnis referred to the financial sustainability inquiry.

I point out that the reason I argued so strongly for model financial statements is that the LGA's report (and I cannot quote it verbatim) basically said that governments will not be prepared to put more into local government until they get their financial management in order. It was a very pointed statement, which is why I argued very strongly that they needed to get their accounts in order before we would have any hope of getting additional funds out of the federal government for local government. The Minister's State/Local Government Forum is in the vicinity of about \$250 000, and we will get the rest of those figures for the member.

We have also funded a joint promotion of the local government election, and we are jointly funding a local government elections review. We have committed to 30-year funding for stormwater, we are supporting rural council projects, and we are making a significant contribution towards community waste water management systems. I point out that I lobbied very strongly both the federal Minister for Local Government and Malcolm Turnbull in relation to the community waste water management submission that was submitted by the Local Government Association, and we did a lot of work to help the Local Government Association with that submission. It was a very frustrating process, and I know that the Local Government Association, when it initially submitted its \$100 million submission, was hoping to get a little more than the \$20 million from the federal government. As welcome as that money is, it is way below what was originally applied for. Whilst it is a welcome amount of money, we did have to work very hard to get it. Very surprisingly, when we knew a recommendation had been made to the Prime Minister, it seemed to fall off everyone's desk until we got into the ear of the Minister for Local Government and had it resurrected.

The state government has a great deal of input and representation on local government boards and committees, the Local Government Mutual Liability Scheme, the Local

Government Compensation Board, the Local Government Finance Authority, the Financial Sustainability Advisory Committee, the Governance Advisory Committee, and Planning SA's master planning process, which will lead to greater strategic regional plans, and we have representation on the Local Government Disaster Fund.

In relation to individual councils, we are jointly funding a review on Kangaroo Island; we have provided significant funding for councils as a result of storm damage; and we are providing Robe council with mentoring and support in relation to the council's finance and governance. So, we are doing a whole range of things to support local government. I guess we could very much say that just about the entire budget is directed towards local government and improving local government systems here in South Australia. If you are interested in just those specific items you identified, I am happy, as best I can, to provide monetary values on those.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I want to ask the minister about the flood damage in January this year. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 3.42, the Local Government Disaster Fund line. What has the state government done to assist local government to reinstate its infrastructure following the flooding earlier this year?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Taylor for her question, which is, in fact, very timely. As we know, extensive flooding occurred in January this year across councils in the northern areas of the state and one council to the south of Adelaide. The flooding ranged from Kimba in the west to Peterborough in the east and Yankalilla in the south. The state government established the Local Government Disaster Fund, in association with the Local Government Association, in 1990 to assist local government to re-establish its infrastructure from damage caused by natural disasters or other major uninsurable events, such as those I have just referred to.

Immediately following the January flooding, the management committee whose responsibility it is to administer the Local Government Disaster Fund engaged an independent engineer to inspect the damage and to assist councils in planning to restore the damaged infrastructure by providing advice where appropriate and to assist in the production of an application to the management committee on the damage sustained. Councils that have made application for assistance include Port Pirie, Flinders Ranges, Orroroo Carrieton, Mount Remarkable, Peterborough, Kimba, Goyder and Yankalilla. The Premier was very keen to ensure that small councils in our state which had sustained considerable flood damage and which might have had a cash flow crisis were not disadvantaged. So, I was immediately on the phone to the councils affected. In fact, I visited some of those councils myself. We provided funding of \$100 000 to the Flinders Ranges Council and \$50 000 to the Orroroo Carrieton council in advance of consideration of their application to the Disaster Fund Management Committee. In May this year I provided Flinders Ranges with additional interim funding of \$300 000 from the fund.

The Disaster Fund Management Committee has now fully assessed the claims it received and, on 21 June, the committee approved the following payments to councils: Flinders Ranges will receive \$1.952 million; Port Pirie, \$1.032 million; Kimba, \$298 750; Mount Remarkable, \$26 050; Peterborough, \$64 550; Yankalilla, \$134 700; Orroroo Carrieton, \$856 900; and Goyder, \$5 062. The amounts for both Orroroo and Flinders include the advance payments they received.

While some of the claims have been paid in part in 2006-07, the budget allocation for 2007-08 for the Local Government Disaster Fund has been increased to allow for the additional demand for assistance. The 2006-07 budget allocation was \$1.2 million, and the base amount of \$1.2 million indexed has been increased for 2007-08 by an additional \$5 million to ensure that sufficient funds are set aside to meet the claims as I have detailed.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. Consultation and community engagement are important elements of democracy at the local government level. Minister, what are you doing in your portfolio to encourage and support leading practice in this area?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: For those of us who are interested in the state of our democracy, this is an important and relevant question in terms of the direction of modern government. I believe that leading practice in this area starts with the simple things, that is, with effective processes and practices for consulting citizens, many of whom are ratepayers, on matters such as council annual business plans and budget allocations. I have to say, at the very first function that I attended as minister for local government I outlined my very clear objective of improving community consultation and engagement within local government.

Indeed, this government has moved to ensure 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. The legislation also provides for publication of information relevant to the business planning process and for public meetings and council meetings to be held where members of the public may ask questions. These are important new steps in the ongoing process of administrative and financial accountability for local government in this state in the early stages of implementation.

On another level, I have also initiated dialogue with the Local Government Association on an ambitious agenda for democratic engagement at the local level. The Office for State/Local Government Relations has commenced work on a project focusing on leading practice in local government community engagement. Consistent with the shared understanding and agreed principles of the State-Local Government Relations Agreement the community engagement process has been developed to research local, interstate and international models in South Australia on the broader application of current leading practice and strategic initiatives for community engagement; to identify opportunities for improved citizen engagement with women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, indigenous and young people; develop and prepare a community engagement strategy discussion paper, with particular focus on the role of local government, in collaboration with the Local Government Association for broad discussion and feedback from local government in South Australia and wider stakeholders; and develop an initial plan for a major conference on community engagement at the local community level to be run this year.

The community engagement project is based on the principles of democracy, social inclusion and responsible government. It assumes that citizens' involvement inspires confidence and collaboration in the governing process, informs decision-making and enables public dialogue and the interplay of ideas to shape public policy. As such, community engagement is considered to be more than the practice of

consultation. It is about a stronger move towards participatory democracy. An approach was made to the Local Government Association at the senior executive level last year to canvas interest in this project. The association has expressed considerable enthusiasm for a serious look at citizen engagement in South Australia. It indicated that it would want the project to build on past and recent working councils and suggested a broader state involvement, possibly through the Strategic Plan Unit within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Education and Children's Services. I have been happy to agree that the project proceed in this way.

Mr PICCOLO: I draw the minister's attention to discussions which have taken place in the Economic and Finance Committee of parliament and also to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.9, which deals with audit framework for local government. Given the concerns raised by the former Auditor-General in his 2006 Audit Annual Report and in evidence before the Economic and Finance Committee of parliament, what are you as minister doing to improve the audit framework for local government?

The CHAIR: I am not confident that the member is able to refer to evidence before the Economic and Finance Committee, because I am not au fait with what stage this issue has reached.

Mr PICCOLO: The committee has reported on this matter.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Light for his question. He has a very strong and ongoing interest in local government and his local councils in particular. He was a very good mayor in Gawler and maintains, as I understand it, a very good relationship with those councillors and has a strong interest in what the local councils are up to and provides very good advice to the government about issues that he sees occurring in the local government sector.

I would like to tackle the question in two parts. First, I will outline the changes that have been made to strengthen the current audit framework and I will then discuss what improvements are required. I will briefly outline some of the initiatives that came into operation in January this year to strengthen the independence and accountability of the current audit framework for councils which include mandating the audit committees; a requirement for a council's auditor to be rotated after no more than five years; and a provision prohibiting a council from hiring its external auditor for any other work. This important provision was included following discussions with the Auditor-General.

Other initiatives include: a requirement of certification of independence by both the auditor and the principal member of the audit committee; a new provision highlighting the council's power to obtain from its auditor or some other suitably qualified person an efficiency and economy review of any part of a council's operation; and a provision that authorises the Ombudsman to conduct a review of any aspect of the rating practices or procedures of a council. It is also worth noting that in his 2006 annual report the Auditor-General acknowledged that significant improvements to the financial management auditing and reporting arrangements within local government have been made.

However, even with these changes I think it needs to be acknowledged that further reform is necessary to expand the current scope of the external audit of councils so that it parallels the broader scope of the public sector audit of public authorities undertaken by the Auditor-General. Generally speaking, councils with larger operating expenditure are more

complex organisations. One would expect these councils to require greater internal controls and a more complex external audit relative to a council with a smaller operating expenditure.

I have recently reviewed what some councils paid for their external audit in the 2005-06 financial year compared with those councils' total operating expenses for the same period. For example, the City of Charles Sturt paid \$6 000 less for its external audit than the City of Unley, yet the City of Charles Sturt had \$42 million more in operating expenses for that year. The Adelaide Hills Council and the City of Prospect paid about the same for their external audit, yet the Adelaide Hills Council had over \$13 million more in operating expenses for the year.

The Light Regional Council and the District Council of Elliston paid about the same for their external audit, yet, the Light Regional Council had over \$10 million more in operating expenses for the year. The District Council of Elliston had operating expenses of \$1.8 million in 2005-06 and spent \$6 670 on its external audit. In comparison, the Outback Areas Community Development Trust had operating expenses of the same amount (\$1.8 million) in 2004-05, yet it paid \$22 000 for its audit undertaken by the Auditor-General.

From this information, it is clear to me that there is a need to expand the current scope of external audits of councils. Importantly, this is not about the Auditor-General being more expensive than private auditors who are currently auditing local government. The issue, as I have stated previously, is about ensuring that the scope of local government audits more closely parallels the broader scope of public sector audits of public authorities undertaken by the Auditor-General.

In May, I provided a detailed response to the Economic and Finance Committee with my comments on the member for Enfield's proposals and the concerns raised in the Auditor-General's 2006 annual report. In that response I indicated that I aimed to further improve the framework for the external review of council management and administration and the accountability of councils as public sector bodies to the parliament and their communities. The Economic and Finance Committee Inquiry into Local Government Audit and Oversight is now complete and the committee tabled its final report in parliament on 20 June this year. The report made 12 recommendations including a call for greater involvement by the Auditor-General's Department in the external audit of local government. I have three months in which to respond to the recommendations.

In principle, I am supportive of the committee's recommendations as they are consistent with my submission to the inquiry and the direction that I have talked about publicly, but I am currently considering the report in more detail to provide a considered response. In the meantime, I have given priority to the development by the Office for State/Local Government Relations of options that would further strengthen the current local government audit framework, including the role that the Auditor-General might have in that process. There are some policy questions to be resolved about the costs for local government and the timing of the new changes.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. In 2005 the Local Government Association released 'Rising to the challenge: financially sustainable local government in South Australia'. What resources are being applied from the Office for State/Local Government Rela-

tions line to advance the following recommendations from the report:

8.1(3)—That the LGA seeks a commitment on the part of the State Government to work towards strengthening councils' financial capacities so that local government can be an effective partner in achieving State-wide objectives and outcomes, in exchange for the local government sector committing to the pursuit of agreed strategies for achieving all relative targets in South Australia's Strategic Plan.

8.2(1)—That the LGA seeks the State Government's agreement to the Minister's Local Government Forum undertaking a systematic review of 'grey areas' regarding the respective service delivery roles and responsibilities of the State and local government sectors in South Australia and of any consequent overlaps and gaps in service provision.

8.2(3)—That the LGA asks the State Government to require its CEOs to include the potential role of, and impact on, local government in pursuit of South Australia's Strategic Plan targets as part of those CEOs' presentations to the Executive Committee of Cabinet, with the Office of Local Government acting as the coordinator of prior discussions by the CEOs with the local government sector.

The CHAIR: We do not have that LGA report before us, but is the minister able to comment?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It was a very long question. I will answer it briefly and perhaps come back with a more detailed response. I point out that the financial sustainability inquiry was undertaken by the Local Government Association for local government here in South Australia. It was not a state government report. However, I have responded to the Local Government Association in relation to a range of issues which I considered directly impacted on or involved the state government, and I am happy to provide that information in detail to the member. We have provided considerable support to the Local Government Association to work through those issues. In fact, we had one of our best Treasury officers working with the Local Government Association for some time. He continues to provide a range of supports for local government, working through those model financial statements and a range of issues which I have outlined previously. We have provided considerable support to them. It was a long, convoluted question, but I am happy to get a more detailed response for the honourable member.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, program 6, State/Local Government Relations performance commentary. It is stated that the annual schedule of priorities for 2006-07 was signed in November 2006. Assuming that we agree that waste management is a priority, is it a priority that the levies for waste management paid by ratepayers continue to rise? What percentage of the levies goes to Zero Waste and the EPA and what percentage into general revenue?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It sounds like the honourable member has confused the two issues. In relation to the agreement that we have with the LGA, the schedule of priorities, as far as I can recall, lists waste management as a priority. As the honourable member would know, responsibility for managing the funds from the waste levy is the responsibility of minister Gago, who is currently appearing before Estimates Committee B. I have given already a breakdown of what is happening with that levy and the contribution that local government makes.

Mr PENGILLY: The concern is that it is being raised and collected under the Local Government Act. That is why I ask the question of you.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The responsibility for the breakdown in distribution of those funds does not lie with me.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, waste management levy performance commentary.

Are you aware of comments made by Mr Fred Pedlar from the Southern Hills Local Government Association on 3 May this year that the announcement last year of an increase in the waste management levy was without consultation; it was out of the blue. Given that a significant part of program 6 is to provide policy and other advice to the government on the constructive relationship between the state government and councils, and advice on the whole of government policy legislative framework as it affects local government, do these comments raise concern about the advice you are getting? If not, why not? If so, how will you rectify the situation?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I want to clarify that the announcement of the increase in the waste levy was in September 2006 for the 2007-08 financial year. Councils have known that this has been coming for some time. It is not like it was announced one day and dropped on them the next. There have been some issues, admittedly, in relation to councils' concerns about the introduction of this levy but, as I pointed out earlier, a lot of misinformation has been bandied about it. One would think that, if one read everything that was reported, local government was picking up the total cost of this increase in the levy. That simply is not the case. Local government contributes 30 per cent of the levy and it is a levy that local government can decrease by reducing its landfill.

Mr PENGILLY: I have a supplementary question. Will any of the \$3.947 million allocated to program 6 in the budget be set aside to rectify the relationship problem?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: What relationship problem?

Mr PENGILLY: I understand where you are coming from.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Tell me what the relationship problem is?

Mr PENGILLY: Mr Pedlar made the comments this year. I hear what you say about its being in 2006 but, clearly, councils are trying to address this problem now. That is why they have picked up on it and been quite vocal about it now. The problem seems to be the relationship between your government and councils in that they do not fully understand what is happening.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We are talking about an elected government. How can councils not know what is happening when it was announced in 2006? I do not buy that. In fact, what they need to do is plan their budgets—just like we need to do. That has been one of the problems that councils have faced. They have been operating year by year and not doing forward planning. That is why we had to introduce the legislation. I would be keen to know what relationship breakdown it is the honourable member is talking about. Again, I point out that this levy increase is around the same figure as their council allowances increased. I have seen articles, and what every council representative says is not always accurate. There was a wonderful example just recently where the state government was blamed over a planning issue when, in fact, it was well within the realms of the council to deal with it but it just had not planned for it.

Mr PENGILLY: Again, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. Is the minister aware of comments made by minister Gago responding to Mr Pedlar in *The Advertiser* on 3 May 2007 when she said that any council refusing to pay the levy would be in breach of the EPA Act. Minister Gago was absolutely confident that 'individual councils will act in a responsible way in applying the levy.' Given the nature of the aforementioned program 6, was minister Gago briefed by your office about the issues facing councils in relation to this matter, and did her comments raise

concern in your office that minister Gago was potentially undermining State/Local Government Relations?

The CHAIR: Minister, you may be able to answer some of that question—that which relates to some of your responsibilities.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The member for Finnis draws a long bow that the Minister for Environment points out that not to pay a particular levy is a breach of legislation. I expect, as she would expect, that local government is a mature form of government; it knows its legal responsibilities and will be complying with its legislative requirements.

Mr PICCOLO: My question relates to the allegations of cost shifting to local government which were made earlier in this committee. I draw the attention of the committee to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 4, page 4.17 and table 4.7, which refers to specific payments made by the state to local government, and other footnotes. There has been some debate recently about cost shifting to local government and statements that the state government does not provide enough funding to support local government in its operations. What is the minister's response to these comments?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The budget papers this year and for every budget during the life of this government contain a table that indicates financial transfers from state to local government. Table 4.7 in Budget Paper 3 outlines specific purpose payments from state to local government and shows that for the 2007-08 financial year the estimated financial result will be the transfer of approximately \$100 million to councils for a variety of arrangements under which the state provides grants and subsidies to councils or payments to councils for local or joint state and local programs.

The most significant allocations are \$32.5 million in council rate concessions for pensioners and self-funded retirees and around \$16 million for public library services. Other estimated allocations to local government during 2007-08 include \$1.7 million through the Regional Development Infrastructure Fund; \$1 million through the Upper Spencer Gulf Enterprise Zone Fund; over \$3 million for community waste management systems; over \$4 million through the Home and Community Care Program; a grant of \$1.9 million to Port Adelaide Enfield for the Parks Community Centre; and the government has also committed to allocating at least \$4 million a year indexed for 30 years for stormwater infrastructure.

There are some other examples that show the cost to state government where the benefit is clearly enjoyed by local government. We do not often hear about these, so I think it is worth putting on the record examples where the state government has entered into arrangement where the cost has gone the other way. They include emergency services. Financial reforms associated with the introduction of the emergency services levy led to a significant reduction in council expenditure estimated to be well in excess of \$10 million a year, and councils no longer bear the recurring costs, such as operating and depreciation associated with running the plant, machinery and equipment previously owned by councils to fight fires. Councils also are no longer required to renew or replace any equipment, and statutory contributions by metropolitan councils to their operating costs are no longer required.

The member for Finnis referred to the natural resource management levy. Prior to the introduction of that legislation, councils were required by statute to contribute a specified amount to support the operations of the animal and pest plant

control boards. With the introduction of the NRM levy arrangements they are now no longer paying in the vicinity of \$2.9 million per annum. Regional development boards are funded in a resource agreement between the state and local government on a 3:1 ratio. So, decision making is at the local level with local government board representation and input. Statewide, under the resource agreement, the South Australian government contributes \$3.47 million, with local councils collectively contributing around \$1 million. The South Australian government also provides outside this agreement over \$1 million in additional project and program funding.

On 19 June last year, cabinet approved a new schedule of maximum development assessment fees. These increased fees which applied from 1 July 2006 adopted the annual indexation factor of 3.8 per cent for 2006, plus they incorporated substantial further rises. These fee increases were designed to both improve the cost recovery levels of councils and to assist councils to pay sitting fees for independent members of the development assessment panels whilst maintaining South Australia's competitive cost advantage. We did hear a lot of concern about the establishment and cost of those development assessment panels, but consultants doing the analysis estimated that the total additional development assessment revenue for all councils would likely be in excess of \$2 million for 2006-07.

In addition, the state government provides support that enhances local government effectiveness, for example, for the Local Government Finance Authority, the state government acts as guarantor without which local government borrowing costs would be substantially greater. It also provides support for the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission, which develops and maintains the road GIS system. In relation to the Local Government Mutual Liability Scheme, the state government underwrites the scheme through SAICORP, significantly reducing local government's cost of having disaster insurance, which is a significant saving to local government. Any broad analysis of trends in aggregate local government revenue and expenses over the past five years does not support assertions that cost shifting is occurring.

In a section on local government finances in these budget papers, an analysis of revenue and expenses over the period 2001-02 to 2005-06 reveals that local government operating revenue has increased by 15.6 per cent in real terms over that period. Operating expenses only increased by 11.4 per cent over the same period. If cost shifting was occurring, these increases could be expected to show the reverse of what they actually do show in that cost increases would be greater than revenue increases. I could continue on with a range of issues, but let me just say that one of the concerns I have in relation to so-called cost shifting is a lack of funding coming through from the federal government and South Australia getting its fair share in particular in relation to roads funding. If we had roads funding calculated on purely South Australia's road distance, I worked out the other day that South Australia would be getting—and people better able to calculate this than me can check my figures—in excess of \$17 million every year for its councils' local roads program. If we look at cost shifting, I think that is where it has been occurring most significantly using the broadest possible terms.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.9. What are you doing as minister to achieve the target 5.5 in the South Australia's Strategic Plan to increase

the level of voter participation in local government elections to 50 per cent by the year 2014?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Morialta for that question. That is a very important target for local government in South Australia. As I mentioned earlier, I indicated last year that we would be conducting a comprehensive review of council elections to assess the outcomes of the November 2006 election, the processes and the issues that have arisen as a result. In the lead-up to the elections, the Office for State/Local Government Relations and the Local Government Association worked together on a range of strategies to improve voter turnout and to encourage greater levels of nomination of candidates. A record number of candidates nominated for the election. A total of 1 236 candidates nominated for 728 positions, compared with 1 201 for 751 positions for the elections three years prior.

There was a 3 per cent increase in candidates standing. The voter turnout figure was 31.6 per cent, which was similar to the turnout of 32.7 per cent in 2003. I think the highest average local government voter turnout was 40.1 per cent at the 2000 elections, which I think coincided with the introduction of postal voting. As I announced in April this year, an independent review of the elections has been jointly commissioned with the Local Government Association. In my introduction, I outlined the three broad headings being looked at: improving voter participation, representation and improving the election process. As well as the independent reviewer, a reference group has been established to provide advice through to the interviewer, and they include officers from the Office for State/Local Government Relations, the Local Government Association, the State Electoral Commissioner, the Office of the Executive Committee of Cabinet, Multicultural SA, Office for Youth, Office for Women and Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division.

We have already released for public consultation three issues papers and Ms Wagstaff, the independent reviewer, is also developing a range of community engagement options to seek advice and comment on a series of key issues, including how best to increase voter participation at the elections. Ms Wagstaff's report, as I said earlier, is expected at the end of this year, and I look forward to the recommendations that she will be making because I do think it is important, when we know how important local government is—the impact it has on communities and on people's everyday life—that people are encouraged to participate and that we do have diversity on the elected body. It continues to be of great concern to me that we have such low representation of people from different ethnic backgrounds, indigenous people and women. In fact, the nomination of women at the last election was higher than the previous election, but we did not have an increase in the number of women elected. We need to look at a range of options to ensure that our community is truly reflected in the elected bodies of local councils.

We have the State Strategic Plan target of 50 per cent participation for the benefit of the honourable member. That target, 5.5, is aimed at ensuring that we have at least a minimum of 50 per cent of people participating in local government elections. This review will provide us with some insight into the views of the community other than people in this place, and I think that is what is important.

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Kavel has not been invited to ask a question.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I have a question regarding local roads funding, and I refer you to page 5.28 of Budget Paper 4,

Volume 2. Will the minister outline what the state government has done to secure a greater share of local road funding for South Australia? In particular, I am interested in those funds that are part of the identified local road funding program.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: South Australia's share of the identified local road grant is fixed at 5.5 per cent of the total of the national pool. The identified local road distribution between the states is based on principles existing prior to 1991-92, and South Australia receives less than a per capita share. The state government believes that the allocation to the states on a historical basis is clearly inequitable. South Australia has 11.6 per cent of the nation's roads, but receives only 5.5 per cent of the available funding. This is an inequity that is acknowledged by the commonwealth government through a separate, although closely-related program—the Roads to Recovery Program—where South Australia receives 8.33 per cent of available funds. A short-term solution to South Australia's continued concerns over its relative share of the identified local road component of the financial assistance grants pool was to establish an interim arrangement just for South Australia to augment the pool for three years. This has provided \$26.25 million over three years for South Australia, and this arrangement was due to expire on 30 June this year.

That coincided with a commitment by the commonwealth to respond to the Hawker report—a review of the interstate distribution by the Commonwealth Grants Commission—by 30 June. The commonwealth did not support the recommendation of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, choosing instead to provide for a continuation of the interim solution for South Australia for another four years. Since becoming minister, I have written and spoken to minister Lloyd, the commonwealth Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, on several occasions, urging him to permanently correct the funding anomaly that exists for South Australia, and ensure that we receive an ongoing fair share of local road funding. Therefore, South Australia will receive \$57 million over the next four years in additional road funding, of which \$13.48 million will be received in 2007-08.

I will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the inequity is addressed in the long term, and I invite the opposition to support us in this move and help us pressure the federal government to fix this issue. I know that many of the councils which they represent have small rates bases but extensive road networks, and they are really struggling to deal with them. So, it is an issue that I think we could work on collaboratively in lobbying the federal government to fix this particular problem. I am sure members opposite would agree that it is an anomaly, and it does need to be addressed.

Mrs PENFOLD: My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28 and the performance commentary that relates to stormwater management and flood mitigation. Compared to last year, what developments have been planned in relation to the 30-year funding and governance agreement for stormwater management and flood mitigation?

The CHAIR: Minister, is that your area?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As to the fact that councils need to deal with stormwater, the funding does not come out of our budget, but the government has committed to allocating at least \$4 million to local councils over the next 30 years, so it is a significant contribution to councils, and we have passed legislation in this place in relation to managing stormwater and assisting local government. The Local Government (Stormwater Management) Amendment Act

2006 has been proclaimed and came into operation on 1 July. The new framework requires councils to prepare stormwater management plans on a catchment basis, and to implement infrastructure works in accordance with the catchment plans. In some areas, catchment-wide planning is already quite advanced.

The Stormwater Management Authority, which, I understand, was established as a result of that legislation, is charged with working with councils to facilitate and coordinate catchment stormwater management planning, allocation of state funding to projects in coordination with council and other source financing, and facilitating cooperative action by all relevant public authorities in the planning, construction and maintenance of stormwater management. So, we are working with local councils to progress stormwater management, and providing considerable support for it.

Mrs PENFOLD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, statement 3, page 5.28, program 6 and the State/Local Government Relations performance commentary. Paragraph 8 states:

Regulations supporting the Local Government (Financial Management and Rating) Amendment Act 2005 came into operation in January this year and are designed to improve accountability, financial management, flexibility and rating decisions by councils.

Are all councils now reporting in a manner that is open and accountable? If not, how many have failed to report in an effective manner, and who are they?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There will be a staged implementation of the requirements under that act. Those requirements came into operation this year, but they have until the next budget cycle to have all mechanisms in place. Even before the legislation was put in place, many councils were already picking up the initiatives and working through a whole range of those issues, so the willingness of councils to comply with the legislation is very evident. A whole range of the requirements under the act do not come into immediate operation, and we are working with the Local Government Association on the model financial statements. I think I signed off on that only the other day, so it is still a work in progress.

Mrs PENFOLD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, page 5.28, program 6 and the State/Local Government Relations, net cost of program, performance commentary. Minister, the net cost of program budget amount for 2007-08 is \$3.947 million. The community Outback review announced in May 2007 is part of the program to increase the accountability of councils. Can the minister advise the amount that will be paid to the steering committee comprising the trust members and representatives from the Office for State/Local Government Relations to head up the public consultation, the estimated final cost of the review, when the review will be completed and the findings implemented? I know the minister mentioned this earlier, but she did not go as far as I would like, now that I have Outback areas within my electorate.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We are putting the majority of our own resources into the review of the Outback Areas Trust, and I am advised that the estimated cost to conduct the review is \$50 000. I believe the review is incredibly timely. At the invitation of the trust, I very recently toured the Outback with the Local Government Grants Commission. The impact of the mining boom and increased tourism, with people wanting to have that Outback experience, is having an incredible impact on the small progress associations that, in the main, operate the small towns in those areas. Those small progress associations get their funding from the trust, and they operate purely on a voluntary basis. Many people are

either feeling the pressure of the dwindling population in their communities, which means that there are not enough people to share the burden, or, in towns like Andamooka, which is literally going gangbusters, progress associations are experiencing the burden of the task being too big for them to manage, with no planning mechanisms in place in the town. When I was up there, I was told that something in excess of 800 people are now living in Andamooka, so there is great pressure on small Outback communities.

However, there is tremendous spirit in the Outback communities, and I was absolutely blown away by what they have achieved in Andamooka with a relatively small grant of not quite half a million dollars for infrastructure from minister Conlon. The people up there dug the trenches and laid the water pipe for a distance of 30 kilometres from the desal plant at Olympic Dam to Andamooka. A group of about 40 volunteers dug the trenches and laid the water pipe to a small filtration plant. I found out later that the blokes drove the machines and the women got on their hands and knees and pulled the rocks out of the trenches. I am told that is because women have more nimble fingers! Jokes aside, it was an amazing effort, and it just goes to show how committed those people are to their community. However, those people are being quite overwhelmed. In the case of Andamooka, funding of \$150 000 has now been allocated from the Local Government Grants Commission for a government-appointed municipal development officer to be located in Andamooka to help put some structures in place.

I think the review of the Outback Areas Trust and the sort of structure we want to see operating in the Outback will bring some relief to these communities. So, it is a really important review. I urge anyone who has not been up there to do so because we found that these communities were only too willing to come out and meet with us. The issues they confront are quite different from anywhere else, and the spirit of those communities really has to be seen to be believed. They really are to be commended for their efforts.

Mrs PENFOLD: That is the kind of pressure I am seeing with the Kingoonya to Wirrulla road and Scotdesco Aboriginal community. That is why I have been very concerned that this review be completed, because I do not think these communities can cope with those pressure. It is also why I want to know when the review will be completed. Does the minister have any idea when the review will be completed and implemented, because we badly need something in place to assist these communities?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We are undertaking community consultation at the moment, and I am advised that we expect an outcome in about six or seven weeks.

Mrs PENFOLD: Perhaps the minister would like to visit Wirrulla and the Scotdesco Aboriginal community?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I would love to be invited, thank you.

Mrs PENFOLD: I will make sure that you are.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. In relation to regional coordination of local government services, given that there is an emphasis in the South Australian Strategic Plan on coordinated regional approaches to service delivery in local government, what is the minister doing to encourage collaboration and cooperation across the sector?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to advise the committee that a substantial amount of work is in progress to engage local councils and their regional representative bodies in adopting new approaches to service delivery and collabor-

ation in their local regions. The approach includes: integrated capacity building, spatial planning, South Australia's Strategic Plan regionalisation work, as well as further development of shared service models. The objective is enhanced capacity to deliver results to local communities through better coordination and integrated approaches to decision-making. The process aims to encourage and enable practical reform to be initiated at the council and regional levels, and the Office for State/Local Government Relations, in partnership with Planning SA, is leading the initiative across the local government sector.

Again, I would refer to the visit to the South-East. When I talked about capacity building of local councils, there is increasingly a shortage of skilled people to undertake the roles that are required in local government. It was really concerning to see one council so completely depleted of its senior staff, most of whom, I understand, had been encouraged to move on to other councils. So, we do have to be really concerned about smaller councils losing skilled staff—effectively being poached by those who see them performing. The capacity of people within local government is a real issue and I know the Local Government Managers Association is very concerned about that and looking at what they can do.

Members will know that there are emerging debates around councils' capacity to deliver services as communities grow and expand their economic development and infrastructure requirements. Currently, some councils are experiencing difficulty meeting their scheduled infrastructure maintenance programs and others are struggling with the fundamentals of financial sustainability and viability. In light of the government's Strategic Plan population target and the regional boundaries initiative, there is a convergence of local government service delivery, development planning and coordination issues. Opportunities exist for a constructive new dialogue on local government service delivery of reforms and integrated approaches to decision-making.

I believe there is an emerging momentum for change in many areas of local government in South Australia. I have to say, in relation to our visits, I have not come across any councils in our discussions that are not very keen to move forward on this issue. I know my position is supported by minister Holloway in the planning portfolio, and he has called on councils in the South-East to explore the benefits of cooperation and collaboration in order to promote the development of that region in a more strategic and effective way. Again, it has not been about pushing for amalgamations down there but about how we can better develop that very important region of South Australia. I would invite Mr Knight to make some comments. He can perhaps outline some of the planning initiatives that have been undertaken.

Mr KNIGHT: I think as we see the onset of quite significant population growth in regional South Australia, as well as the metropolitan area, that has really stretched the resources of councils, something that in Planning SA we have experienced as well. So, there is a shortage of planners; that is not going to change overnight. The opportunity for councils on a more regional basis to cooperate, I think, is one of the real opportunities for innovation going forward. The planning level: this involves both the need for getting better coordinated development plans on a regional level, as well as a decision on how we respond to the pressures of development assessment. I think we saw the LGA, a couple of weeks ago, talk about the fact that councils are feeling the workload pressures just with the volume of development applications.

In South Australia we get about 55 000 development applications a year, about 95 per cent of which flows into the local government sector, as their planning jurisdiction, and from time to time you see councils simply unable to retain sufficient planners to process those in a timely way. From a Planning SA perspective, we are doing whatever we can, and that is everything from simplifying the planning system to the recently announced review. We will look at how we might be able to reduce the volume of lower level applications to ease the burden on councils. But equally, particularly in regional areas, the volume over a year is not sufficient to maintain one planner just simply because there are ebbs and flows, and it is just not efficient for each council, necessarily, to say, 'We have to maintain a workforce to deal with peak work loads', and that person then might be lying idle. Sometimes it means that you cannot even recruit someone because the level of work is not sufficient to interest a professional planner in regional South Australia.

So, we should be doing everything we can to move to more regional approaches, and the interesting thing for me is that councils themselves have been approaching us to ask whether we can help them develop regional approaches. John Hanlon has been involved in a number of those discussions also in the metropolitan area. I think that this is something regarding which, if we do not respond, then I think councils themselves will be left to deal with volumes of development applications. The other aspect here is that developers are saying what should be done in order for South Australia to continue to be competitive. Indeed, we are very interested in making sure that the planning system that we have here is the most competitive in Australia; that was the basis of the recently announced review. The report card that the Planning Institute of Australia released not that long ago showed that South Australia already performed as one of the best states in Australia, but we want to make sure it stays that way.

So, as we see population growth, that will put a lot of pressures on councils, with more regional approaches to respond to that as well as making sure that the legislative system does not impose more red tape requirements on councils than are absolutely necessary to ensure that we get timely development. I think in all those respects we have a very good collaborative approach. The minister highlighted a couple of areas, one being the South-East, where councils themselves have welcomed Planning SA's involvement with open arms. I think we are seeing that as being a very positive collaborative arrangement with respect to an approach which is about master-planning for the greater Mount Gambier region, which I think is proceeding very well.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. How is the government working with local government to progress South Australia's Strategic Plan?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Prior to the update of the State Strategic Plan, the LGA was invited to be involved in the development of that. We thought that was an important aspect of the plan and one that was highlighted by the fact that local government had not had the opportunity to be involved as strategically as it might have been in the original development of the plan, so it was really important to the state government that we include local government in that. There were two specific targets in our plan that had a direct impact on local government. One of those was to increase voter participation in local government elections in South Australia to 50 per cent within 10 years. The other one was to align state and local government strategic plans within 12 months of the release of South Australia's Strategic Plan.

The Office for State/Local Government Relations worked with the Local Government Association to progress each of these targets.

On target 5.5 in the lead up to the local government elections, as I said, we worked on strategies to improve voter turnout to encourage people to nominate as candidates, and the Local Government Association produced a range of resources and support material for use by councils at key dates during the election cycle. The state government approach was to undertake several joint projects involving the Local Government Association. They were targeted at women, Aboriginal people and young people, and the Office for State/Local Government Relations and the Local Government Association in partnership with the Messenger Press and the Country Press Association also conducted a statewide competition entitled My Local Council. I know that a number of members had the opportunity to present awards as a result of that. It was a competition involving primary and secondary school students, and it highlighted the role of local government in their area.

Following the 2006 elections, I announced the independent review, as I have outlined, and we are expecting that review at the end of the year. Since the plan was first released in 2004, several significant activities have been undertaken to advance target 5.7 in the original Strategic Plan in relation to the alignment of strategic planning between state and local government. In October 2004, the Minister's State/Local Government Forum sponsored a state/local government workshop on the issue and this resulted in the Local Government Association undertaking a comprehensive project in 2005 called Making the Connections. This project identified for local government the current degree of alignment between state and local government plans and ways to improve coordination of strategic planning between the two sectors. The Making the Connections project found that a significant number of councils had undertaken strategic planning processes which considered South Australia's Strategic Plan, and that is certainly the indication we get as we move around the state with our community cabinets where we give local councils the opportunity to present to government. It is very interesting how many of them have actually taken on board South Australia's Strategic Plan and worked their own plans into alignment.

Mid last year the state government initiated a comprehensive community consultation process to develop the revised strategic plan and, as part of the revision process, in September 2006 the Office for State/Local Government Relations facilitated a workshop to consider the preliminary recommendations arising from the community consultations for revised targets around the plan's building communities objective. The working group's recommendations were provided to the State Strategic Plan's update team for their consideration. The Premier launched the new plan in January this year. Target 5.5 is retained; that is the target around voter participation. However, the original target in relation to aligning state and local government plans has been discontinued in favour of a more comprehensive process of regionalising the plan over the next two years. As we have heard, from the work that has been undertaken already, the new focus has been well received by local governments and it will facilitate the possible adoption of targets at the regional level.

Mr PICCOLO: One of the issues that local government is grappling with is that of governance. I am aware that the minister has recently announced a review of the Outback areas in relation to governance. I refer to Budget Paper 4,

Volume 2, page 5.9, specifically the last dot point under the heading Targets 2007-08. The minister recently announced a review of governance structures across Outback communities. Can the minister advise the committee why this is needed and what is the objective of this review?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Light for his question but, in my answer to the member for Flinders, I outlined to a large degree many of the reasons why we have undertaken that review. Initially, it was at the invitation of the Outback Areas Trust because it was witnessing at firsthand the rapid changes that are occurring in our Outback. I was pleased to accept its invitation to visit the Outback. The stresses that are occurring in those relatively small communities as a result of the mining and tourism boom need to be addressed, and it is time. The Outback Areas Trust is in its 29th year; it will be 30 next year, so that is probably an occasion that will be well worth celebrating. It has provided an outstanding service to Outback communities for 30 years. If my memory is correct, I think it was initiated by the then premier, Don Dunstan, who wanted to attract federal funding for Outback areas so that the trust could provide some council-like services. Those services are provided through the small progress associations who, as I said, rely solely on volunteers for their administration.

The trust sees a need for its governance structures to change to deal with the emerging issues in those towns. I think it is a timely and opportune period in our history for us to review the trust and the services that it has provided and the expectations of the communities, because it is clear that those expectations are changing rapidly. We are keen in our discussions to put in place proper planning processes and a range of similar issues such as town-like infrastructure, which we take for granted but which is difficult to achieve in these areas if we do not look at the structures that are in place.

Those are the reasons we are doing this, and we are hopeful of a positive outcome. The information that is being prepared for the communities is excellent, and I commend Jane Gascoigne for that. She has done an excellent job of preparing the information to go out to the communities with easy response papers to enable people to articulate clearly the needs of the communities, and we are looking forward to the end result of the consultation process.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28—State/Local Government Relations—total cost of program. Will the minister advise why the amount budgeted in 2006-07 for the Office for State/Local Government Relations total program is \$3.476 million (as shown in the 2006-07 budget papers on the same page), yet the amount for 2006-07 in this year's budget is shown as \$3.786 million and the estimated amount for 2006-07 is \$3.823 million?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I will refer that question to Steve Archer.

Mr ARCHER: It is difficult to interpret the data that is presented in this year's budget documents. What occurred was that during the year the Office for Volunteers transferred to the Attorney-General's Department. This meant that the minister's budget, which previously was apportioned across both the Office for State/Local Government Relations and the Office for Volunteers, was shown in last year's budget papers across two different programs. This year the entire budget for the minister's office appears under the State/Local Government Relations program.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.42—cash flow statement—Office for State/Local Government Relations. In 2006-07 \$678 000 was set aside in

the budget for the Office of Local Government administered items. In 2007-08 there is no line to cover a continuing amount. Will the minister please explain why that is so.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I will ask Mr Archer to respond to that question.

Mr ARCHER: This situation is complex. This is the result of accounting standards that are applied through the Treasury and Finance Hyperian system. When you collapse the local government sector within PIRSA, what happens is that you eliminate internal transactions, so that particular transaction is silent within the budget papers. It is actually there, but it is featured as an appropriation rather than as a transfer coming in.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27 and the total expenses column of the summary income statement. The summary income statement advises that for 2006-07 total expenses were budgeted at \$3 796 000, but the estimated result for 2006-07 is \$4 038 000. Why is there an overrun in expenses and what has this money been spent on?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My understanding is that it is not an overrun, that it results from a transfer of money from the Local Government Disaster Fund, but Mr Archer will expand on that.

Mr ARCHER: The honourable member will recall from an earlier question that the minister made a decision very quickly to respond to the flooding in the Upper North and transferred to one council \$100 000 and \$50 000 to the other council. The minister initially got that money out of the office's budget and subsequently sought reimbursement from the Local Government Disaster Fund. If you look at the line 'other' under 'income' you will see that that has increased substantially to correspond to the payment that was made.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 5.27, Program 6: State/Local Government Relations—employee benefits and costs. In 2006-07 an amount of \$2 597 000 was budgeted. The estimate for that year has blown out to \$2 752 000. In the 2007-08 budget the amount is \$2 837 000. Is the blow-out of the 2006-07 figure caused by staff increases? If so, where were these people employed? The budgeted amount for 2007-08 is a further increase of \$85 000. How many extra staff will benefit from that amount?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The honourable member uses interesting language for some very small amounts of money. My understanding is that the increase was the result of enterprise bargaining with moneys previously held in Treasury being transferred across. I will ask Mr Archer to give you a detailed response.

Mr ARCHER: That is correct. In fact, the entire amount for the 2007-08 increase is as a result of the enterprise bargaining arrangements. However, in the year 2006-07 the increase was due to both enterprise bargaining agreements and a small supplementation from the line 'Supplies and Services' to top up some additional activity that occurred during the year.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare consideration of the proposed payments completed.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the officers of PIRSA, the Office for State/Local Government Relations and Local Government Grants Commission Executive Officer, Jane Gascoigne, for their support and for the preparation of documents for this estimates committee and I thank the members of the committee for their insightful questions.

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

Membership:

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Pengilly.

Attorney-General's Department, \$85 288 000
Administered Items for the Attorney-General's
Department, \$50 841 000

Departmental Advisers:

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

Mr S. Forrest, Executive Director, Social Justice.

Mr A. Swanson, Director Strategic and Financial Services.

Ms D. Contala, Executive Director, Corporate and Business Services.

Ms S. Pitcher, Director, Office for Women.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular pages 2.12 to 2.16, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, part 4. Minister, do you have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The Rann government is committed to ensuring the full and equal participation of women in the social and economic life of South Australia by providing innovative and balanced public policy advice and high-quality statewide information and referral services. This commitment is also demonstrated through a number of specific targets relating to women's leadership, diversity in the public sector and work/life balance as part of South Australia's Strategic Plan. This year has seen the Office for Women move from the Department for Families and Communities into the Attorney-General's Department—very timely, considering the range of reforms to legislation that impact on women. Currently, reforms to rape and sexual assault laws are being progressed, there is a review of domestic violence laws and a Women's Safety Strategy is being coordinated across government.

We continue to promote women into positions of leadership. We have the highest percentage of women ever sitting on government boards and committees. The latest figures show an increase to 42.45 per cent representation of women on boards and also an increase to the number of women chairing state government boards. As Minister for the Status of Women, I will take this opportunity to highlight some of the excellent work that has been undertaken in this portfolio over the past year and to set out some of the initiatives that are planned for the 2007-08 financial year. As part of the 2007-08 state budget, the government has approved additional funding of \$81 000 ongoing to cover the appointment of a new information officer within the Women's Information Service. This additional funding further demonstrates the importance that the Rann government places on addressing issues that impact on women in South Australia.

The Women's Safety Strategy is the South Australian government's key tool for addressing issues relating to women's safety and domestic violence and is led by an across-government reference group. The whole of government reference group brings a strategic perspective to the way in which government is delivering women's safety services in South Australia. The many excellent initiatives range from early intervention work focused on preventing violence through to community education to raise awareness about the

importance of women's safety. This work shows the cooperation that is taking place between government agencies and the community, and a commitment to working together to improve women's safety through practical initiatives.

The focus of the Women's Safety Strategy over the past year has been to undertake a critical analysis of the way in which services can better focus on those in the high-risk categories. The development of the family safety framework has involved a wide range of government agencies, including SAPOL, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Children's Services, the Department for Families and Communities, drug and alcohol services, and many others who are often involved with families experiencing violence. Services to families most at risk of violence are provided in a more structured and systematic way through agencies sharing information about high-risk families and taking responsibility for supporting these families to navigate the services system.

The Family Safety Framework involves a family safety agreement, which outlines a common understanding in relation to violence against women and children across South Australian government departments and which includes a protocol that clearly articulates the need for information sharing in relation to high-risk cases of domestic violence and the specific information that is required to be shared. Family safety meetings held at the local level assess the level of risk to a family and implement positive action plans in relation to increasing the safety of families and holding perpetrators of violence accountable. I am pleased to advise that we have commenced the trial phase of the framework with the first pilot being based in the Holden Hill area. It is anticipated that this new collaborative response will help to address some of the chronic problems surrounding families at the highest risk of domestic violence and serious injury by offering the best services and support possible.

As I have already mentioned, a key undertaking of the Rann government in relation to women's safety is the review and reform of rape and sexual assault and domestic violence laws. I am pleased to say that two bills were introduced into parliament on 7 February—the Criminal Law Consolidation (Rape and Sexual Offences) Amendment Bill and the Evidence (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2007. The new laws more clearly define offences, give better protection for victims giving evidence and give a clear direction to courts over what can be admitted as evidence.

On 8 March, International Women's Day, the Attorney-General and I released a comprehensive review of the state's domestic violence laws. The review examined how South Australia currently tackles domestic violence and compares our laws with those being used in other jurisdictions. With the release of the discussion paper, the Attorney-General and I called for public input on how best to deliver appropriate laws for the many recommendations. I am pleased to say that the level of community consultation has been extremely high, and the quality and thoughtfulness of submissions that I have seen will lead, I am certain, to South Australia having the best domestic violence laws in the nation. These reforms are important steps towards protecting women who have endured the most traumatic and unacceptable violence, and I look forward to the completion of these major reform initiatives in 2007-08. I now welcome examination of our budget papers.

The CHAIR: Before inviting the deputy leader to offer an opening statement, I will make a correction to the information given earlier about the Budget Statement

references. They are, in fact, Budget Statement, pages 2.9 and 2.10 and Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, pages 4.84 to 4.87. Does the deputy leader wish to make an opening statement?

Ms CHAPMAN: I will just indicate that there is reference to the Office for Women in the targets and highlights on page 4.53 of Budget Paper 4, Volume 1 to which I will be referring. First, will the minister indicate whether she has received the omnibus questions from the opposition which invite her to take on notice a number of issues for all agencies and portfolios for which she is responsible? If that is the case then, as I have said previously, the committee will be mercifully spared my reading them. However, if it is the minister's first appearance at estimates, I would be happy to read them straight away.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: They were read out to me in the previous estimates for local government, so I am happy to take them on board for all my portfolio responsibilities.

Ms CHAPMAN: I wish to make a brief opening statement. I thank the minister for indicating the importance of this area to the government. It attracts only a small funding provision in budgets every year, and that has been since its establishment. That is something that is consistent. Unfortunately, this area has usually had a number of homes in different portfolios. I have regularly attended these estimates over the last five years to find a new minister and a new home. However, I am pleased to hear the minister's statement as to the commitment of the government.

One of the two issues I wish to raise briefly in opening is the question of representation of women on boards and as chairs of boards, the targets for which were set out under the State Strategic Plan and which have been published by this government. In addition, I note in the documentation that has been provided by government on this issue a quote by none other than Suzanne Roux, Chair of the Premier's Council for Women. Ms Roux wrote to Premier Rann last year on 20 November 2006 not only congratulating his government on having achieved but also pointing out some of the deficiencies. I propose to read from her letter in which she points out, first, the progress of the State Strategic Plan's targets for women in leadership (T5.1 and T5.2). To refresh the committee's memory, those targets were to appoint women on state government boards and committees as members by 2006 and as chairs by 2008 respectively.

Given that we have passed 2006 and that 2008 is 180 days away, I think her comments are very significant. She points out that, as at 1 April 2004, there has been only an 8 per cent increase up to 41.6 per cent of positions on government boards and committees, and that the number of women who held positions as chairs as at 1 November 2006 is at 31.6 per cent. She points out that that is also an 8 per cent increase. Clearly, we have a long way to go. Her letter states:

While this year's target date will not be met by target T5.6 for the overall government figures, the Premier's Council for Women is delighted that five ministers have achieved gender equity on their portfolio boards and committees by this state. I recently wrote to ministers Gago, Lomax-Smith, Rankine, Caica and Hill and their staff to acknowledge and congratulate them on this achievement. Minister Weatherill is also very close to achieving gender equity on the boards this year.

That is a small portion of cabinet (but nevertheless a significant one) who have been acknowledged as achieving this, but it is fair to say that even the Chair of the Premier's Council for Women understands what a significant way there is to go if, in fact, these targets are to be achieved in the next decade, let alone the dates that have been set.

The second matter relates to violence to women. I have read reports under the previous Office for Women (that is, under the former government, namely, the Hon. Diana Laidlaw) as to the research that was done on reform on criminal protection for women under both the domestic violence and criminal law that applied for women who were the victims of rape and other sexual offences. I read her reports and I read the reports of the Council for Women that existed under her regime, as well as the work and review that has been done on legislation, and it saddens me to hear year after year advice of another review for the consideration of these matters and another report to be written and not a lot of action to be taken.

I listened attentively to the Treasurer when he announced the budget initiatives, and I have listened to the minister's announcement of a trial for a family safety framework which is to be initiated under your regime. I congratulate you on at least establishing a trial but, minister, for goodness sake, we are sick of hearing about reports and we are sick of hearing about trials.

We know that there are women out there who are victims of domestic violence. We have heard the shocking stories, even during these estimates, of women who are victims of domestic violence, particularly in Ceduna, but in the Aboriginal community and the APY lands as well, yet here we are having a trial in the northern suburbs. Surely, with your influence in cabinet, minister, you can initiate some overall protection of women and get these programs activated for those at high risk, let alone the females who are victims of abuse in the rest of the community. I can only urge you to listen to Suzanne Roux and to read the reports that have been around for years.

It saddens me again to know that the two bills relating to evidence and prosecution offences, for which we have waited a long time and which were introduced in February this year, have not even progressed in the parliament. Here we are in July. We are about to go into a six week recess of parliamentary sitting, yet for something that is purported to be a priority of the government, it will be seven, eight or nine months before this legislation even sees the light of day for serious debate. Congratulations, at least, for initiating a few things, but I despair that we will not have progressed very far by next year's estimates. With those few statements, I am happy to proceed to ask the first question.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.53. The 2007-08 targets/highlights states:

Lead the trial of the Family Safety Framework across the South Australian government, to provide the best possible outcomes for those families who have a high risk of experiencing family violence.

How much has been budgeted to carry out this program?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: One of the fundamental aspects of the Family Safety Framework is that it is really about how government agencies can work collaboratively together to provide the appropriate protection for women and children, or anyone, suffering from domestic violence. We know from past experiences that it is the very nature of government departments to operate within their silos of responsibility. I agree with the member that, for too long, we have seen women subjected to unacceptable levels of violence and too many women falling through the cracks. The aim of the Family Safety Framework is for agencies to work collaboratively together; that is, not one agency going off and doing their bit and shutting their door, and then you are off to the next one and then the next one doing the same, but getting the people who are involved in the life of and caring

for this family together, and having an individual responsible for coordinating the provision of services to those families.

We are setting up some trials not just in the north but one in the southern suburbs and one in Port Augusta as well. The reason we have not just rolled this out is that we actually want to get it right. We want to trial it in different areas so that we can work out the flexibility that is needed in any system that is being devised and the individual needs of certain communities so that it can be adapted appropriately. This is about how agencies can work better together to support women who are suffering domestic violence issues.

Ms CHAPMAN: How much has been allocated in this budget for this important initiative?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There is money right across government in relation to this initiative. SAPOL has a new domestic violence policing model which is due to be implemented throughout the metropolitan region this year. SAPOL's model is consistent with the underlying principles of the framework. A range of things is occurring in relation to this, but they are not within the Office for Women portfolio area. These initiatives will be shared right across government.

Ms CHAPMAN: Do I take it then that no money is allocated in the minister's budget to do this but that there is money allocated to the police and other departments for this purpose?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is a priority of the office to have this facilitated. The Office for Women, as the honourable member would well know, is a policy development office with a very small budget. Yes, it is a small budget, but I think it punches way out of its league with the outcomes that it achieves working across government. Initiatives in relation to this matter are allocated across all portfolio areas.

Ms CHAPMAN: I am not sure I understood the response. There is no actual budget allocation, but some of the staff within the Office for Women are helping to coordinate this, as I understand the minister's answer. Is any other money budgeted in other departments to do it?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There is money budgeted in other departments for people to do their work in relation to domestic violence. What they will be doing is working smarter.

The CHAIR: Member for Bragg, I remind you that this minister is not responsible for budget allocations in other portfolio areas, so she is not able to respond in relation to other portfolio areas.

Ms CHAPMAN: I refer to page 4.85—Women's Policy Office. Under 'performance commentary' it states that in 2006 the Office for Women 'established the Women in Leadership SA Whole of Government Reference Group'. What goals does this group have? How many times has it met and how is its membership constituted?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The leadership group has been established, I understand, with a focus on helping women progress through the Public Service and also in relation to boards and committees. The reference group is made up of key government stakeholders. The Director of the Office for Women, Sandy Pitcher, chairs that group; Tanya Smith, Deputy Chief Executive, Cabinet Office, is also on that group as are a number of senior representatives across the South Australian Public Service; and Premier's Council for Women representatives make up the group's membership. Three meetings have been held to date, with discussions covering key issues and ways to increase women's participa-

tion in leadership roles specifically and specially in the public sector.

Ms CHAPMAN: Is the minister concerned that the Office for Public Employment has stated consistently that while women make up 65 per cent of its workforce 'there is continued under-representation of women in leadership positions'. Under the PSM Act, less than a third of all employees and executives (29.6 per cent) or senior management (36.6 per cent) roles are women?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, and there is a target in South Australia's Strategic Plan to have women comprising half the public sector employees at the executive level, including chief executive level, by 2014. So, there is a real challenge in front of us in achieving that. Obviously, in relation to women, we also want 50 per cent women in parliament, and it would be nice to see 50 per cent women elected to local government. It is important that we have women in those critical decision-making roles.

A number of initiatives have actually been put in place across government to support and encourage the promotion of women. I have had discussions with a number of women from a range of backgrounds and it would seem to me that very often women, without doubt, have the abilities and skills to progress through to these positions, but very often lack the confidence to put up their hand or take the next step. I will give the honourable member some examples. In the Treasury department, there is a Women in Treasury program designed to support and encourage women in senior management levels. This is sponsored by the Under Treasurer, who has fully endorsed the annual work plan and budget which provides assistance to the Under Treasurer, the Human Resource Committee and the Executive Management Group on issues relating to women. Women at ASO level and above are able to take a rotational role on the Executive Management Group, and the department has established a nursing mothers' room and a family room, adding an extra measure of flexibility for female staff in that particular department.

In other departments, for example, there are programs aimed at assisting leaders aspiring to gain school-based leadership positions in the education department, and women are targeted to attend a Fundamentals of Leadership middle management program, so a range of middle management programs is being provided. The MFS, which is a clearly male-dominated area, has introduced a pre-application program with a focus on ensuring that women are better prepared to participate in that male-dominated role. In the Attorney-General's Department, a program called Springboard for Women is operating within the justice portfolio area, and I understand that gives women who are at the ASO3 to ASO6 level encouragement and the skills to take the next step.

This year there are four senior women being supported to do the Australian Institute of Company Directors course. The list goes on. There is work happening within the police department, which is again a traditionally male-dominated area. We are working towards collating information in the programs that are happening across government so that we can get a really strong picture of how we can best support women through to those executive levels. We are very serious about achieving that target—it is well and truly on our radar—and a considerable amount of work has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken. I would hope that at our next estimates briefings I can give you some really good stories about positive outcomes that have occurred.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.85, which refers to the Office of Women Minister, can you advise the house of initiatives in place to support and promote women in the public sector?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Taylor for her question which I think, to a large degree, I outlined. There is a number of other programs underway, and I could perhaps outline some of the things that are happening in the police department, for example, which, as I said, is a fairly male-dominated area. There is a gender equity plan which is a key strategy operating in SAPOL and which is managed through their Equity and Diversity Branch. SAPOL's Women's Focus Group was re-established in 2003 and helps to support women employees within the department. They are looking at options to allow people to work from home, career breaks, job sharing, part-time work, and the ability of employees to purchase leave.

I have to say that this is a great improvement from my recollection of the history of the police department. It was not all that many years ago—certainly within my memory—that if a woman had a baby and she worked in the police department she was not allowed to continue working. I remember the hoo-ha when women became patrol officers; they were able to be plain-clothes officers but not patrol officers. We now have a number of senior women in the police department with a commissioned rank, so that is one area where things are moving.

We also have a target of work/life balance to improve the quality of life of all South Australians through the maintenance of a healthy work/life balance. SafeWork SA in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is the lead agency for this particular target, which obviously has a clear impact on a woman's ability to continue in her career. We know that women still hold the major caring roles and responsibilities within families.

The other target, of course, comprising public sector employees, is really focused on getting women to that executive level. As the member for Bragg said, we have many women employees in the public sector but still too few at the executive level. This is a challenge that we also have in local government. We have 68 councils in South Australia and 68 chief executives but only one woman chief executive officer. Something like only 26 or 27 per cent of elected members of councils are women. At least the statistics in the South Australian parliament are much better than that. We are certainly well ahead of the private sector in relation to the appointment of women to senior positions. I understand that 8.7 per cent of board positions in ASX 200 companies are held by women and only 12 per cent of executive manager positions in those same companies are held by women. So, whilst we are a long way off reaching our target, we are a long way ahead of the private sector. In relation to women in the parliament, as I said, we are doing quite well here in South Australia. In the Labor Party, 46 per cent of members of the House of Assembly are women, so we are very much nearing our target. It is difficult having that target in the Strategic Plan, because I do not have responsibility for nomination and preselection of women from other parties. However, we are doing our bit in that regard.

Ms SIMMONS: We are nearly there.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, that is what I said: we are nearly there.

Ms CHAPMAN: We also have our women in the Liberal Party. The member for Flinders and I have the strongest, safest and most coveted Liberal seats in the state, which we

do not always talk about from the rooftops just in case our male colleagues get very jealous. I have often said that, when the Premier and the Deputy Premier of this state give up their safe Labor seats to women, we may then have some equality. So, we can talk about women and representation.

The Hon. P.L. White interjecting:

Ms CHAPMAN: Poor old Annette Hurley got axed. Anyway, we will come back to that another day. While we are on targets—

Ms Simmons interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Bragg, I think the member for Morialta is desperately waiting to ask a question. Is that the case?

Ms SIMMONS: No, I was just commenting that the Premier did give it up and it did go to a female, which is really important in our party.

Ms CHAPMAN: And Annette Hurley bit the dust. Madam Chair, I am happy for my fellow committee member to ask a question if she has one.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.53, women's safety. Can the minister please outline the initiatives to alert women to the potential risks of drink spiking?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Under our very proactive legislative agenda, drink spiking is now clearly a crime in this state, carrying a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment. A newly created offence of food or drink spiking came into operation on 1 April this year. It is important to be mindful that drink spiking includes spiking drinks with quantities of alcohol. There have been suggestions that the level of drink spiking may be overstated, as many women tested have only traces of alcohol and not other substances in their bloodstream. This fails to recognise that alcohol is suspected of being the most common means by which drinks are spiked. Early this year, in order to raise awareness about women's safety issues, I launched an anti drink spiking campaign with the Attorney-General on International Women's Day, which also coincided with the opening of the Fringe Festival. This provided a strong focal point to begin a women's safety community education campaign.

Drink spiking can sometimes lead to sexual assault and rape, and it is estimated that four out of five drink spiking victims are women. A project undertaken by the Australian Institute for Criminology in 2004 identified that out of approximately 3 000 to 4 000 incidences of drink spiking, about a third of those incidences involved sexual assault. I am informed that these figures probably underestimate the extent of drink spiking as there is obviously a high level of under-reporting of these types of incidences.

As part of the campaign, 10 000 coasters with the women's safety message 'Protect your drink: don't get spiked' were distributed through pubs and clubs across Adelaide, with the assistance of the Australian Hotels Association, as well as the Fringe. Importantly, these coasters also listed crisis numbers of agencies, including the police, that offer support to women. Due to the popularity of these coasters and their effectiveness, a further 20 000 coasters will be distributed at key public events in the coming year as part of this campaign. Some were distributed at the recent Cabaret Festival. To continue to highlight and promote this issue, I am currently preparing little cocktail umbrellas which, again, highlight the drink spiking message and which also act as a cover for drinks. It is a fun way of alerting young people who are out in our pubs and clubs. We hope to have these items distributed at a range of festivals and events, because we have

found it is a really effective way of getting the message across to young people that they do need to be careful with their drinks when they are out celebrating.

Ms SIMMONS: By way of feedback, minister, my 24 year old daughter brought one back to show me, and there was a discussion about it, and she said it was a fantastic idea.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you.

Ms CHAPMAN: I have a supplementary question on this important initiative.

The CHAIR: You can ask a question, just not a supplementary question, and I do have to go to the member for Light. Would the question be in sequence if you asked it now?

Ms CHAPMAN: Absolutely. It is a supplementary question in its definition.

The CHAIR: It is not supplementary.

Ms CHAPMAN: Whether or not you allow it as a supplementary question, Madam Chair, it is on the same topic and relates to the coaster campaign initiative that was launched by the minister and the Attorney-General. My question is: did the minister, in launching this campaign with the Attorney-General, ask the Attorney-General why he declined to make a compensation payment to a victim of date rape through drink spiking? I have raised this matter in parliament, and the Attorney-General has declined to make any comment. As the Minister for the Status of Women, I ask whether you have made any submission to him to change the practice of refusing to pay compensation (which is at the discretion of the Attorney-General) where the police have identified that someone has been the victim of date rape.

The CHAIR: Minister, I think the deputy leader is well aware that not only was that not a supplementary question, as she had not asked the original, it is not a question for you. Member for Light.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, I am protecting the standing orders, not the minister; she is quite capable of looking after herself. Member for Light.

Mr PICCOLO: Madam Chair, the issue of ex gratia payments has been covered a number of times in parliament recently, and our record is quite—

Ms CHAPMAN: On a point of order, Madam Chair, do you want a diatribe here from another member of the committee about what the standing orders are, or as to what questions have been asked in the parliament, when you have ruled it out of order?

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Bragg, I allowed you to make your whole point, even though I knew very early it was out of order. I will comment on whether the member for Light is straying, and he is. The member for Light will ask his question.

Mr PICCOLO: I would like to address an issue which, as a local member, is very important to me. Like other members, I get women who come to my office seeking advice on a whole range of issues. Over the past 12 months it has sometimes been a bit difficult to get that sort of service. I draw the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.54, which refers to the Women's Information Service, which I have had cause to have contact with over the past 12 months. Can the minister please outline how the services provided by the Women's Information Service will be expanded?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I referred briefly in my opening statement to some additional funding of \$81 000 to cover the appointment of a new information officer for the

Women's Information Service. As the member for Light said, the Women's Information Service has been providing information and referral services to women in South Australia for almost 30 years, I understand, so it is quite an integral part of our community. I was very keen, on becoming Minister for the Status of Women, to ensure that we had a strong and public face and that the services offered by the Women's Information Service would be accessible by all South Australian women.

I have asked the Office for Women to develop a strategy and this is part of that strategy of having a women's information officer provide services in the community; that is, in our children's centres as they are being established, and already that is occurring at Cafe Enfield and has been warmly embraced by the community out there—we have an information hub set up at Cafe Enfield. The Office for Women has also established one at the Elizabeth Grove Children's Centre and The Parks, and I know that someone recently visited Keithcott Farm Children's Centre, which is due to be opened in a couple of weeks. So, it is really important, I think, that we have the Women's Information Service, this referral service, in an environment which does not stigmatise women, does not point them out in any way and that it is in a non-threatening environment where women will be coming and going on a very regular basis.

The Women's Information Service officers also conduct information services. They set up stalls in shopping centres with relevant information and they visit rural gatherings and field days. As part of our community cabinet process we are providing opportunities for women to meet with officers of the Women's Information Service and myself, as minister. These particular discussions have been incredibly informative and give us a really good idea of what is happening in different regions and the issues which impact on the daily lives of women in the many different areas where they live in South Australia.

The services provided by the Women's Information Service are focused on assisting women in very practical ways. One of those very useful ways is the Family Court volunteer service. I think we have trained something like 22 women to assist women to go through that particular process. I have to say that I am particularly pleased that we have been able to get this small budget initiative to have an additional officer to be out and about in the communities where the women are, rather than requiring them to come into the city to one shopfront. We are hoping that we will have an additional 20 of those as the roll-out continues.

Ms CHAPMAN: Minister, in opening I referred to the targets for female appointments to boards. I read from the letter from the Premier's Council for Women an acknowledgment of where at least four ministers had achieved the appropriate ranking according to the target you set. In the material provided to the Premier at the time—and you have referred to these targets—there is a considerable number who are under target. The three worst are the Hon. Carmel Zollo with 30.24 per cent in the portfolios that she covers; the Hon. Kevin Foley with 28.7 per cent; and the Hon. Patrick Conlon with 24.4 per cent. Ministers Weatherill, Atkinson, Wright, Maywald, Holloway and McEwen and the Premier are all under par, according to this letter from the Chair of the Premier's Council. Minister, can you provide an update on progress since November 2006 when the chair wrote that letter to the Premier; and have you taken any action to ensure that your colleagues comply with the target that you have set?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: First and foremost, I think it is important that we point out that at least we have a target. It is not an easy one to achieve, but we are pushing along with it. Month by month we are slowly increasing our percentage of women on boards and committees. At the very least, we have a target to achieve those outcomes for women on boards and committees. I do not recall that that was the case prior to our coming to government, but nevertheless we have a target. Since that letter was written, as of 1 July, women held just over 42.45 per cent of positions on government boards and committees, and this is an increase from 33 per cent as at 1 April 2004 following the release of the Strategic Plan, and this is a 24 per cent increase in women holding positions on state government boards and committees since the introduction of the State Strategic Plan. That is quite a significant increase, and we have a number of initiatives in place to ensure that we reach a target, but the numbers are going up.

As at 1 July 2007, women held 32 per cent of chair positions on government boards and committees. This is an increase from 24 per cent as at 1 April 2004, and it is a 33 per cent increase in women holding chair positions on state government boards and committees since the introduction of South Australia's Strategic Plan.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you for that information, minister, but my question was: what is the update? Five were above the line as at November last year and we still had, including the Premier, 10 who were failing. My question was: is there any update as to whether any others have got above the line yet?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The answer to your question is that, under your government, they were all failing I would presume because they do not think anybody took any notice. I am telling you that it is an overall figure and the overall figure is going up.

Ms CHAPMAN: The information is clearly available; it was provided by the chair of the Premier's Council for Women, which is in your portfolio, and I am simply asking, and if you do not have it with you as to what the position was—

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Are you asking me for a breakdown?

Ms CHAPMAN: No, my question was: for those ministers who were below the line as at November 2006, and we are now in July 2007, has there been any advance on any of the others getting up above the target that has been set?

The CHAIR: Minister, do you have any further information to supply beyond your two previous answers?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I do not have any additional information, other than to reiterate that the number of women on state government boards and committees is continuing to rise. It is at its highest level ever. The number of women on state government boards is continuing to rise. We lead the nation in that regard and we certainly outstrip the private sector. We have done well, but we have a way to go.

Ms CHAPMAN: I ask the minister whether she will take that question on notice and provide that information to the committee.

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

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you, minister. We have talked about targets in relation to board positions and chairs of board positions. You also referred, in answer to one of the questions from the committee, to the target which is a new one that was established this year—namely, target 6.23, which is the new target for public sector employees—reaching the half level

by 2014. The other two, unfortunately, have not been achieved and we have covered those. The ministers in other portfolios for which I have responsibility for the opposition, including homelessness and population, have changed their targets when they have not been able to achieve them. For example, minister Weatherill's new target on homelessness has changed and minister Maywald's population targets have changed this year. This is a new one for you, and I am asking you, minister, given that it has now gone out to 2014, can you assure the committee that this target will not be changed as we get closer to 2014, and what is the strategy you have to tackle the problem now?

The CHAIR: Minister, you are not required to answer hypothetical questions. If you want to provide any information, you are welcome to.

Ms CHAPMAN: It is her target, Madam Chair, with respect.

The CHAIR: It was a hypothetical question. The minister cannot say what will happen between now and 2014.

Ms CHAPMAN: Let me rephrase it. Will the minister assure the committee that she will not attempt to change this target just because she cannot reach it, as other ministers have?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I can assure the member that I will be doing my damndest to reach the target as it is printed in the Strategic Plan.

Ms CHAPMAN: Hear, hear! I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.84, Program 13: Office for Women, specifically to the summary income statement under employee benefits and services. This requires some comparison with last year's, minister. Over various financial years the government seems to have recorded in its budgets and actuals some inconsistency. I want to have some clarification on this. You will need to refer to last year's budget papers as well, but I will read it to you. In the 2007-08 budget papers, the budget is recorded as \$1.540 million. The estimated result for 2006-07 is at \$1.691 million. The budget for 2006-07 is for \$1.522 million and the actual for 2005-06 was \$1.444 million. In the 2006-07 budget papers, the budget was recorded as \$1.504 million and the budget for 2005-06 was \$1.261 million. Those figures appear to have been expanded from the previous budget papers. This is not the adjustment that is done annually as to actuals, but it is the actual budget replication that is recorded differently. The budgeted figure for 2005-06 of \$1.261 million is estimated to have blown out in this financial year to \$1.691 million, an increase in two budgets by 34 per cent, yet in 2007-08 the government expects to bring this back in to \$1.54 million. I ask the minister for some explanation.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As the member would be aware, during 2006-07 the Office for Women transferred to the Attorney General's Department from Families and Communities. The Office for Volunteers also transferred to the Attorney-General's Department from Primary Industries and Resources. Some reliance was placed on these agencies to provide financial information included the budget papers, particularly in regard to the actual result for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 budgets and in their estimated result. Whilst the Attorney-General's Department is aware of some of the variations associated with these numbers, there may be a need to take some of the more detailed issues on notice, so that we can come back with that. I point out that, in the summary income statement, the overall net cost of providing services between 2006-07 and the estimated result indicates only a \$29 000 difference over a \$2 million budget, basically.

Mrs PENFOLD: My question refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.53 and the 2007-08 targets and 2006-07 highlights. A 2006-07 highlight was to lead the implementation of the Women's Safety Strategy across the South Australian government. I have a particular interest in this because of Aboriginal women, and I am well aware of the difficulties and issues in Ceduna and some of the outlying areas, in particular. Given that this program has been implemented for some two years, does the government have any data that indicates what impact this program is having on the incidence of family violence? Does the government intend progressing the program in 2007-08, and, if so, how?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The Women's Safety Strategy, as we said, is, I guess, the key link that we are working on to ensure women's safety in South Australia. A range of initiatives have come out of that particular safety strategy. I have already referred to one of them, that is, the family safety framework, which is about trying to address issues impacting on those families that are at greatest risk of violence in our community, and dealing with them in a more structured and systematic way.

It also complements a number of other initiatives that are currently occurring in relation to women's and children's safety. These include the South Australian police department's new domestic violence policing model, which, as I said, is due to be implemented in 2007. We have issued a domestic violence law reform discussion paper. The public consultation phase of that, I understand, has finished, and Maurine Pyke QC is currently working on that. Child protection information sharing protocols and a range of other issues have been implemented. The Department for Correctional Services will hold cognitive behavioural programs for men, including a stopping violence program, a sexual behaviour clinic and a violence program. The DFEEST domestic violence workforce project will respond to professional development and training needs of workers, providing services to victims, children and perpetrators of domestic violence. The South Australian women's health policy focuses on developing a model of integrated responses across the regions to increase women's safety and the development and implementation of best practice standards in the provision of services to women.

On 23 and 24 November 2006 we held the Women's Safety Strategy Conference in Adelaide, following a successful conference in December the year before. Each conference was attended by over 200 people, and conference feedback indicated that both were quite successful events. They brought together service providers, police, emergency workers, government agencies and academics in the field. The family safety framework was actually borne out of those conferences, as I understand it. We have also undertaken work to support groups to identify priority issues and develop responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and violence against women with disabilities.

The lead for the family safety framework across the South Australian government—and the Office for Women will be doing that—is to provide the best possible outcomes for women. A child protection and domestic violence forum to assist with the implementation of the family safety framework and develop collaboration partnerships between child protection, domestic violence and SAPOL workers will be undertaken this year. Also, a culturally and linguistically diverse communities forum will raise awareness about issues facing women from these backgrounds who experience

domestic violence and abuse. There will also be a women with disabilities forum.

We have also hosted in South Australia the State Aboriginal Women's Gathering. The first gathering I attended was in August last year in Adelaide. The theme of that gathering was local community solutions to indigenous family violence. About 70 women from across South Australia attended that forum. Key recommendations from previous forums were developed at this particular gathering and, for the first time ever, senior public officials came along to the function and heard first-hand the stories of these women. They were required to respond about the initiatives that they had put in place in relation to the recommendations that came out of the women's gathering. That publication is available and I would be happy to send it to the honourable member. It will give a good oversight of what has happened across government in addressing the issues identified specifically by South Australia's indigenous women.

In the last two years we have held the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Gathering. That was held here in South Australia just a few weeks ago in sync with the senior officials meetings so that they could better inform the women's ministers council. When it was held in Adelaide previously, it was held at the same time the women's ministers were meeting, so there was no opportunity for the ministers to address the issues they had raised because the meetings were held in concert. We have now staggered those meetings so that they can feed directly into the women's ministers forum. I think that was a positive outcome. I can get a copy of the report that was developed across government about the initiatives that have been undertaken to address violence against indigenous women and their families and give it to the honourable member.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for examination of this section having expired, I advise that the proposed payments for the Attorney-General's Department and the Administered Items for the Attorney-General's Department remain open. I call the Minister for Volunteers to the table.

Membership:

Mr Pisoni substituted for Ms Chapman.

Departmental Adviser:

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

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

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The South Australian government remains committed to supporting and developing the volunteer sector in South Australia and is actively working with the community to promote volunteering. We will continue to help develop the volunteer sector, and this will be achieved by continuing to remove impediments to volunteering by supporting community organisations to operate more efficiently, helping them promote and market their activities, and encouraging further development of supportive networks.

We will 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. Strong links are continuing to be developed with the tertiary sector in South Australia. 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 volunteers themselves who are

such valuable members of our community. We are committed to volunteering in South Australia and, as a result, we have included a target in our Strategic Plan to ensure that volunteer participation remains above 50 per cent.

A survey commissioned by the Office for Volunteers and undertaken by Harrison Market Research in 2006 was purposely built using over 50 questions modelled on previously established ABS datasets in order to gain a clear understanding of volunteer participation in our community in all its forms, from coaching kids' sport to Country Fire Service volunteers. The finding of 51 per cent volunteer participation was not unexpected, as it clearly followed the trends reported by the ABS using a similar methodology in 1995 and 2000. The census that has just been released suggests a massive drop in volunteer participation across the nation, albeit from a very narrow question. When the opportunity arises, we will run another survey in South Australia, and I am sure it will again tell us what we already know: that volunteer participation in South Australia is strong, healthy and vibrant.

We have had a number of achievements in South Australia over the last 12 months in relation to volunteering. We launched our Community Voices program, which helps local organisations to promote and market their activities, and it is a great example of how we are working with a tertiary institution. We have developed a relationship with the Screen Studies Department of Flinders University. Community organisations were invited to apply for a grant, and the students developed video material for use by these organisations. I launched that the other night, and the work they produced was excellent.

We have a new online community engagement project where students develop websites for community organisations that are then hosted free of charge for 12 months. The expansion of the website program means that University SA students also provide event planning, the development of promotional material (such as brochures), the development of implementation databases and also the overhauling of organisations' communication processes. Free training for volunteers is in the same vein. Our free training continues with funding for volunteers to do short courses in subjects that community organisations themselves have identified as necessary, and they range from counselling skills to governance. Twelve standardised and nationally accredited training models are now available on the Office for Volunteers website. TAFE SA designed the models that can count towards formal qualifications.

I had the very pleasing experience only a few weeks ago to launch the Gawler Volunteer Charter. I know the member for Light was pleased to attend that event because it was a result of his initiation that we embarked on this partnership with the town of Gawler. We had an agreement to help Gawler develop a charter in terms of not only how it worked with its volunteers but also the establishment of its Volunteer Resource Centre. I think that the jewel in the crown of our year's work was our national award winning VERIS system, which reached the final stages of its development. It was very timely, in fact, because it was just prior to the terrible storms in Renmark. It has won national awards and provides us with an incredibly valuable tool to allow us to manage effectively our volunteers in times of disaster.

The VERIS system came about as a direct result of the fires over on the West Coast and dealing with those volunteers who flooded in to help out their fellow South Australians. We now have a system that will ensure that we get

volunteers where they are needed and when they are needed and that they do not end up in dangerous situations. Our Volunteer Support Fund has continued to supply small grants to community organisations to help them support volunteers in the work they do. I mention the recognition of volunteers with our South Australian Volunteers Day celebration being a highlight on the volunteer calendar. Every year—

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: It is oversubscribed.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Oversubscribed, exactly. Also, we had a presentation of Joy Noble medals, which honour volunteers who volunteer their time within government programs, as well as the Premier's Business Award, and this year we launched the inaugural Community Project Award, which we will continue to refer to as the 'Andamooka'. I am happy to expound on that particular award later if I am asked a question about it. It was a wonderful experience and the people of Andamooka well deserved that honour.

We continue to provide information through our fact sheets, newsletters and facilitating networks of community organisations. The Volunteer Congress, which is held on International Volunteers Day in December every year, is also a really valuable way of our being able to inform and involve volunteers. The government, through its Office for Volunteers, has a very positive and productive relationship with South Australia's volunteer sector. I am proud of what we have been able to achieve.

I thank the chair for her involvement in chairing our Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group. She has taken that workload off my shoulders, and I know that her efforts have been greatly appreciated. She has a strong commitment to volunteers, particularly in her electorate, and her efforts have been greatly appreciated. I look forward with confidence to the continued development of our sector in South Australia.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and for your personal remarks as well.

Mr PISONI: Madam Chair, can I confirm that we have half an hour for this session and that, according to the clock, the session commenced at 3.04 p.m.?

The CHAIR: The arrangement was to do with the time. However, I will indulge the honourable member in giving the half hour. I assume advisers are able to stay for an extra five minutes.

Mr PISONI: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: If it will assist, this side of the benches could defer all questions to the honourable member.

The CHAIR: And we can then stick to the timetable.

Mr PISONI: I have a couple of opening comments. First, I am very pleased to be sitting here as the shadow minister for volunteers. I am also very proud that it was a Liberal Party in government that introduced the Office for Volunteers. I sit here as a member of the South Australian parliament knowing full well that the commitment to volunteers in this state is a bipartisan effort from both the government and the opposition regardless of who is in government. I am very pleased to be able to say that and to say it in a manner that has meaning and depth.

My first question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.83—income statement expenses summary. The net cost of the program shows an increase in the budget of over \$180 000, most of which seems to appear as supplies and services as opposed to grants and subsidies. Can the minister provide details and a breakdown of the additional supplies and services to be provided and the intended recipients?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The increase in the net cost of providing services from the 2006-07 estimated result of \$1.472 million to the 2007-08 budget of \$1.654 million is mainly due to additional funding for sustainable volunteer resource centres. This amounts to \$100 000 in 2007-08. The increase in the net cost of providing services from the 2006-07 budget of \$1.44 million to the 2006-07 estimated result of \$1.472 million is mainly due to the additional funding for supplies and services and enterprise bargaining supplementation. The increase in the net cost of providing services from the 2005-06 actuals of \$1.077 million to the 2006-07 budget of \$1.44 million is mainly due to once-off revenue during 2005-06 for the restructure and the transfer of the office from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to Primary Industries and Resources.

Mr PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.83 and the performance commentary. The minister would be aware that the Minister for Tourism has ventured overseas to seek more international events for Adelaide. These events require significant resources and the goodwill of volunteers. How does the minister expect organisations such as Sport SA, a volunteer network, to support and participate in these programs? Previous programs supported have been the World Police and Fire Games, the Masters Games, the Tour Down Under, etc. How does she expect organisations such as Sport SA, a volunteer network, to support and participate in these programs when funding has been dropped from the 2006-07 year?

The CHAIR: Minister, I do not think you are responsible for funding to sports organisations.

Mr PISONI: The grant was from the Office for Volunteers—the \$2 000 grant.

The CHAIR: We are talking about \$2 000, not the overall funding to sports and rec.

Mr PISONI: I am talking about the \$2 000 grant from the Office for Volunteers that is no longer forthcoming to Sport SA, a volunteer network.

The CHAIR: Minister, you can comment on that part.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My advice is that we gave a \$2 000 once-off grant to Sport SA for the development of their volunteer database.

Mr PISONI: My understanding is that they have been getting a \$2 000 grant for three years and that grant ceased in the 2006-07 year.

The CHAIR: Thank you for clarifying that, member for Unley.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that the Office for Volunteers has only ever provided a once-off discretionary grant of \$2 000 to Sport SA.

Mr PISONI: My question relates to the same budget paper, same volume, page 4.82. The summary income statement shows an estimated result of \$533 000 for grants and subsidies for 2006-07. Can the minister advise whether the consultation process, negotiations and organising of the recent agreement signed between Volunteering SA and SA Unions was funded from money provided to Volunteering SA for volunteer services, a separate funding arrangement or by SA Unions?

The CHAIR: Minister, you may be able to comment on some of that.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I can give the member detail of funding that we provide to Volunteering SA, but I have to say that I am really disappointed. He has already asked a question in this house about the agreement between SA Unions and Volunteering SA. It was a really positive thing

for those organisations to do. It was not a commitment of funds. It was not a legal agreement. It was about shared values and principles. It was about honouring the contribution of volunteers, and, in fact, unions operate using volunteers. It was a huge mind shift for SA Unions to realise that they operate on the back of volunteers; that is, people who put themselves forward in the workplace to look after fellow workers and who stand up as union delegates and workplace safety officers. They attend their union meetings; they do a whole range of things to support their fellow workers. I do not understand what the member for Unley's gripe is about this particular agreement. I do not know whether he has taken the time to read the agreement at all, but, if he did, I am sure it would allay any fears.

Mr PISONI: I have a copy of the agreement; I have read it.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Then I do not understand. Perhaps you can articulate what your actual fears are in relation to this particular agreement. As I understand it, it has a number of principles such as workers—whether they are paid or unpaid—

Mr PISONI: I agree with that, minister, I have read the agreement.

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, don't interrupt.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE:—are entitled to respect and dignity and to work in a social, economic and political climate in which neither is compromised by the other. That can only be a positive thing. How many situations can you think of where that might happen? For example, in our hospitals not only do we have nurses, orderlies and doctors working but we also have wonderful people who volunteer and provide care to people, who take them around books or small gifts, or who sit and talk to them. They need to be valued and respected, as well as the paid staff.

The memorandum of understanding shows that SA Unions respect and value the volunteer sector. It is a really important thing to happen. Both parties agree that, while a volunteer job might add value to a paid job, it should not replace one. I think that is a fundamental principle which is really important in our community and one with which I cannot imagine anyone would have a problem. The principles provide a really clear statement of how the union sector and the volunteer sector can work together to ensure the rights of both.

Mr PISONI: What do volunteers have to do with the union?

The CHAIR: The minister is not responsible for that, and I think it is a rhetorical question, in any case, but the minister may care to amplify her answer.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: This was not a government-funded agreement. This was an agreement between SA Unions and Volunteering SA, and was negotiated by those two sectors.

Mr PISONI: Volunteering SA is 87 per cent funded by government. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.82 and the summary income statement, expenses 2006-07. I note that the budget figures in the 2006-07 column vary significantly from the figures given in last year's budget papers in the same column. For example, the employee benefits and costs budget in the 2006-07 column were at \$612 000, and last year's budget paper—that very same column for 2006-07—said it was \$817 000. The supplies and services budget in the 2006-07 budget is \$384 000. However, last year's papers in that same column for 2006-07 said \$489 000. That is a total variation of \$310 000. I can understand estimates and actuals varying, but I do not understand how

the budget can be different from one year to another in the very same column.

The CHAIR: You are asking for an explanation, are you?

Mr PISONI: Yes, can I have an explanation?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The difference between the budget published last year for 2006-07 and the budget published for this year is due to the fact that last year's budget for the Office for State/Local Government Relations and the Office for Volunteers in PIRSA included a cost for my office, for the minister's office. When the Office for Volunteers transferred to the Attorney-General's Department, the minister's office budget did not transfer to Attorney-General's. Therefore, the budget in the Attorney-General's Department for the Office for Volunteers is lower than the budget published last year, so it was the transfer of my office.

Mr PISONI: Thank you, minister. Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.82 and the summary income statement, income 2005-06 actual. The income for 2005-06 actual figure of \$35 000 is given in fees, fines and penalties. Can the minister give details of this income?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I will take that question on notice.

Mr PISONI: I refer again to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.82. In program 12 relating to the summary income statement, we see a result for 2006-07 showing an income of sales of goods and services of \$72 000, which was unbudgeted in 2006-07. Can the minister provide details of what goods and/or services were sold, and who they were sold to?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That amount of money is due to the additional revenue as a result of funding for the Emergency Management Australia VERIS database system, so it was money in relation to VERIS that we were paid to develop.

Mr PISONI: You were not aware of that for the budget, because the budget line is blank?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No. We applied for the grant during that financial year and received it. It was a grant from the federal government that the office applied for. It was developing the VERIS system and applied for that grant and won it, so that is why it is in there.

Mr PISONI: There is a grant of \$338 000 from the commonwealth.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, \$72 000.

Mr PISONI: There is a grant figure of commonwealth revenue for 2005-06 of \$338 000, but I do not see a commonwealth revenue line for 2006-07 or a budgeted line for 2006-07. However, there is an actual figure there for 2005-06. Perhaps you can give me details of that generously-funded source in 2005-06, and then perhaps let me know where that \$72 000—

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: \$338 000 is associated with the transfer of the office from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to Primary Industries and Resources during 2005-06.

Mr PISONI: It is under the line 'Commonwealth revenue'.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We will have to check that out, but the information I have is that that was a transfer of funds.

Mr PISONI: What you are suggesting is that it is commonwealth revenue?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am told it has been incorrectly categorised.

Mr PISONI: So, it is not commonwealth revenue?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No.

Mr PISONI: Getting back to the \$72 000, that is in a line of sales of goods and services, yet you are saying it was a grant?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am told that, because it is income, it is in that income line.

Mr PISONI: Should it not be in a grants category? You have grants categories there.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It would appear that the definition may be incorrect, but it is a \$72 000 grant that came from the commonwealth.

Mr PISONI: This is still Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.83 and the performance commentary. Referring to the claim of the SA Strategic Plan target of 50 per cent being reached ahead of schedule, can the minister confirm that this figure is based on a survey of only 1 500 South Australians by Harrison Research in 2006?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes. We undertook a survey in 2006 as a result of concern from our volunteer ministerial advisory group. It was an initiative that came out of that group because they felt, with their knowledge of the volunteer sector, that participation in South Australia was much greater than the ABS survey statistics were indicating, which was at 38 per cent. At that stage I do not think there was a specific question in the ABS general statistics, in any case. The ABS did a separate survey, but it was not in the general overall survey that is undertaken by the ABS.

We commissioned Harrisons to undertake this survey. During the survey, 1 503 interviews were conducted, and I understand the questions were developed for us by the ABS. The standard statistical methods and Australian Bureau of Statistics definitions were strictly adhered to in this survey, with interviewees being 15 years of age or older. We have widened the age group of people being interviewed in relation to volunteers, because we know that young people do volunteer. The results of the survey indicate that the volunteer participation rate for formal volunteers in South Australia increased from 38 per cent in 2000 to 51 per cent in 2006 and that the time volunteers devote to volunteering has increased from 1.5 hours per week in 1995 and 2000 to 2.31 hours in 2006. This effectively represents 610 South Australians providing an estimated 1.4 million volunteer hours per week. The recent 2006 census indicates voluntary work of only 20 per cent in South Australia and 17 per cent in Adelaide.

As I have said, the ABS carried out two surveys on voluntary work, the first in 1995 and the second in 2000. The major aim of these surveys was to collect data on rates of volunteer participation, the characteristics of people who volunteer, the types of organisations they work for and the activities they undertake. Our survey in 2006 was modelled in a consistent manner to these particular surveys. There was one specific question in the recent ABS survey, which, if I remember correctly, came under a series of questions about employment. It was technically correct but perhaps it might not have triggered people's memory or the relevance of volunteering in their particular area.

So, I am concerned about the current census in that having been asked about paid employment these people would see volunteer work as perhaps being a Lavender Lady at the Royal Adelaide Hospital as opposed to a lawyer doing pro bono work. So, I think a bit of work needs to be done on the questions that are asked. This survey shows a massive downward shift in the rate of volunteering across the nation. If that were the case, I would venture to say that many of our community organisations and services would not be function-

ing. The survey indicates that volunteering has dropped to a massive degree here in South Australia, which is something that would send tremors right around our state if it were accurate.

Mr PISONI: When drafting the Strategic Plan, the baseline figure aimed for was 50 per cent. Can the minister advise where that figure comes from?

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, the time agreed has expired. There being no further time available for questions for the Minister for Volunteers, I advise that the proposed payments for the Attorney-General's Department and Administered Items for the Attorney-General's Department remain open. I thank the advisers to the Minister for Volunteers, and I call the Minister for Consumer Affairs to the table.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr M. Bodycoat, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs.

Mr B. Pryor, Liquor and Gambling Commissioner.

The CHAIR: I refer members in particular to the Portfolio Statements, Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 4.77 to 4.81. Does the minister have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, I do, Madam Chair. I am pleased today to welcome examination of the budget papers for Consumer Affairs and the liquor regulatory areas of my responsibility. The commitment to fair trading and the protection of consumers, along with the encouragement of responsible attitudes towards the promotion, sale, supply, consumption and use of liquor, remain a high priority for my government.

As part of the 2007-08 budget, the government has provided the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs with an additional two full-time equivalent positions to increase the detection of unlicensed operators. These investigations will assist in reducing the level of unlicensed trading in key industries to improve consumer protection. The consequences of inappropriate people performing regulated work can be very serious. For example, unqualified electricians pose a serious threat to public safety and inappropriate builders can, through shoddy workmanship, threaten a person's life savings. Increased detection of unlicensed operators in regulated industries will also reduce unfair competition with ethical businesses and increase confidence with business investment in South Australia.

As Minister for Consumer Affairs, I am committed to press on with real estate reform despite concerted attempts to water it down. I am committed to the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs ensuring that fair trading occurs in an efficient, informed and competitive marketplace where there is a balance between the rights of individuals and those of the businesses with which they deal. The marketplace continues to be monitored with an active program to ensure compliance with all acts and Consumer Affairs has been very active in the past 12 months in product testing to ensure that only safe and dependable goods are on sale to consumers.

OCBA also continues to work to ensure that all building and trade operators are licensed and fully trained as required by law. In the last 12 months, substandard, itinerant and backyard operators in the building and secondhand vehicle industries have been targeted. Disciplinary action has been taken to ensure that unlicensed and substandard operators are penalised, removed from the industry where appropriate, or forced to undergo further relevant training. Additionally, OCBA has promoted the media-based message about the

importance of ensuring consumers use licensed operators. OCBA has demonstrated its commitment to work with other consumer affairs agencies by participating in a number of national initiatives. One example was the National Scams initiative, which was designed to raise awareness and alert consumers to the multitude of scams that are operating. Some of the scams are so sophisticated that they appear legitimate and even diligent consumers can be caught out.

South Australia has taken the lead in the area of product safety, especially with regard to hot water bottles and prams and strollers. OCBA has been responsible for a number of awareness and education campaigns aimed at disadvantaged consumers. The services of OCBA have been expanded in regional areas through Services SA, with two new outlets being opened in Gawler and Kadina and further expansion planned. Since the passage of the Residential Parks Bill, we are working on developing regulations, with a view to the act being operational in the near future. This will provide a level of protection for residents of residential parks which has not previously been available. Families who live in caravan parks will benefit from being able to formalise their relationship with the park owner and have a formal structure for resolving any differences. These measures provide basic protection for residents and equitable access to affordable housing. The member for Taylor, I think it is worth again reiterating, takes the credit for ensuring that this bill remained before the attention of our parliament, and the people in those parks can thank the member for Taylor for the protections which they will be afforded.

The other area of my responsibility under this portfolio covers the regulation of liquor licensing. The Liquor and Gambling Commissioner is responsible for the administration of the Liquor Licensing Act 1997, the key objective of which is to encourage responsible attitudes towards the promotion, sale, supply, consumption and use of liquor and to minimise the harm associated with the consumption of liquor. The commissioner, together with the Licensing Court judge, comprises the licensing authority which has responsibility for determining all matters under the act. The commissioner is responsible for determining all non-contested matters, all contested applications for limited licences and contested applications where conciliation fails and the parties elect to have the matter determined by the commissioner.

There are over 5 000 licensed premises in South Australia and during 2006-07 the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner received about 15 000 applications under the Liquor Licensing Act, ranging from applications for new licences to approval of crowd controllers to work at licensed premises. Of interest was the fact that 96 per cent of all contested applications were conciliated successfully, and of those that were not conciliated 97 per cent were determined by the commissioner. In addition, the commissioner is responsible for conciliation of complaints, reviews of barrings, inspections of licensed premises and disciplinary action before the Licensing Court. During 2006-07, almost 2 400 licensed premises were inspected for compliance with the act, the regulations, conditions of licence and the Code of Practice. This represents a 22 per cent increase in activity. During 2006-07, 14 noise and disturbance complaints were lodged under section 106 of the act, with only one having to be referred to the court through failure to conciliate.

The office works with councils, police and other stakeholders on the development and operation of local liquor management plans and accords. In particular, the office will continue to work closely with SAPOL to develop and manage

effective harm minimisation and responsible supply, service and consumption strategies. Over the next year, the commissioner and I will also continue to work closely with SAPOL to ensure that organised crime and, in particular, bkie gangs do not infiltrate the industry. Another key objective will be to continue to work with Aboriginal and other rural communities to minimise the adverse impact of liquor on their communities.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the very good work that is being undertaken by the people in both these agencies, and I now welcome the examination of our budget papers.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I take this brief opportunity to say how much I welcomed the officers of OCBA providing information at the Southgate Shopping Plaza. Member for Unley, do you have a comment?

Mr PISONI: Just briefly. I too would like to commend both the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner and the Consumer Affairs Commissioner on the great work they do in what is a difficult area to keep everybody happy. The Liquor and Gambling Commissioner should be commended on these high results and his ability to conciliate complaints. In my own electorate we have had some situations which have been dealt with in a manner which has kept everyone informed of the outcomes.

My first question is to the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner. I believe that, historically, the liquor licensing area does not get very many questions; it must mean that it is very well run. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.89. I note that, in reference to the priority categories, there has been a shift in emphasis in inspections from priority 3 to priority 2 premises in 2006-07 and for the current budget year. Can the minister advise the rationale for this change in emphasis and explain how the extra inspections in priority 2 are being achieved?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As I have said, throughout South Australia licensed premises are inspected on a regular basis. Premises considered high risk are flagged priority 1; premises considered medium risk are flagged priority 2; and low risk premises are flagged priority 3. Priority 1 premises are inspected at least once every 12 months, and priority 2 premises are inspected every two years. Priority 3 premises consist of direct sales licences, producer's licences without cellar door sales or sampling areas, and wholesale liquor merchants' licences are inspected on a less regular basis. The priority rating of the premises is reviewed after each inspection and, accordingly, the number of premises in each category can change from year to year. A number of premises were upgraded from priority 3 to priority 2—in particular, restaurants and producers with sampling and cellar door sales—which accounts for the increase in the actual inspections of priority 2 premises. The inspection program was given higher priority with resources being allocated to the task, and this also contributed to the number of gaming venues inspected during the reporting period. The targets set for 2007-08 are based on the experience of the estimated results of 2006-07.

Mr PISONI: That was all in the budget papers. I wanted to know how it is being achieved.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It was achieved by going out—

Mr PISONI: That is not in the budget papers. What you have told me about the different categories is all in the budget papers, but I would like to know how it is being achieved.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I do not understand what you mean. People go out and inspect it.

Mr PISONI: Obviously there are more resources used in inspecting things more often. You might like to explain how it is being achieved.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: They were able to achieve a greater outcome with the same resources basically because the time taken in gaming venues reduced substantially as gaming venues understood better their requirements. In many instances, I am told that visits to particular premises were reduced by an hour to an hour and a half, so they were able to get through a lot more than in previous years.

Mr PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88, Program 14: Liquor Regulatory Services, specifically to the summary income statement under 'Expenses'. The expenses section on the income statement shows an amount designated as 'other'. For example, the budget for 2007-08 is \$35 000. Figures are shown as expenses 'other' for 2006-07; however, these figures and this line did not appear at all in last year's budget. I am wondering if you could explain that and what those 'other' expenses may have been. There is not even a line in last year's budget for 'other', yet there is an estimated amount this year and the budget figure for last year is not there this year.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am advised that those figures were an allocation for the audit costs, enterprise bargaining and moneys set aside for workers compensation. Last year they were allocated within the budget.

Mr PISONI: So, they have come from somewhere else, have they?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: They were included in other lines in the budget previously—in supplies and services, I am told.

Mr PISONI: In supplies and services, thank you. I move now to consumer affairs. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.80. As to the number of expiation notices issued, the estimated result for 2006-07 is listed as four, while the target for 2006-07 was 15; the target for 2007-08 is 15, and the actual number for 2005-06 was 40. Can the minister advise if this pattern indicates a greater compliance with regulation trend within the South Australian business community?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I invite the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs to answer that.

Mr BODYCOAT: The difference is explained in part by the reallocation of some responsibilities for the issue of expiation notices. For example, expiation notices which relate to residential tenancies matters will now be issued by the Residential Tenancies Branch which would then account for a reduction in the numbers. As a consequence, the expiation notice numbers have been revised downwards since the outcomes reported for 2005-06. From year to year it may be affected by the level of compliance by members of the community, but I would also say that it is an unpredictable amount, and the amount included in the papers is an estimate only.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.81. Can the minister advise on initiatives to monitor and raise awareness about product safety, particularly in relation to prams and strollers?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Taylor for that question. As she knows, I have been quite concerned about this issue, and it is an important issue because I think people need to be assured that, when they are buying items such as this in which they put their most precious cargo, such items are safe and comply with the

claims that are made about them by the person selling them. Parents essentially want to know that what they buy for their babies will be safe.

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs conducts regular checks on compliance in relation to product safety, and one of its key roles is to inform the public on matters of safety, and issue warnings through the distribution of publications, via radio interviews, press releases and on its website. Importantly, outreach to local areas has been introduced to include visits to shopping centres and our children's centres where staff of the office can speak directly to people.

Members would be aware of the recent tragic accidents involving pushers, and they may also be aware that, following these incidents, I asked the product safety section of consumer affairs to undertake a monitoring program to examine all prams and pushers on sale in South Australia. I wanted to ensure that they were safe and that they complied with the voluntary Australian standard. The product safety audit covered 14 major retailers and suppliers of baby products, and, through them, a variety of different types of prams and strollers were tested. I was advised that traders appeared to be meeting their obligations, as the results of this audit indicated that products that claimed to comply with the voluntary standard did and others had the necessary features to meet the requirements of the standard, which included a five-point baby harness and a foot-operated brake.

In order to promote greater awareness of the safety issues around prams and strollers, a new publication is on display and being handed out at community visits. We are also hoping that retailers will allow these leaflets, as we produce them, to be displayed and distributed at point of sale. After having raised the issue of the importance and urgency of having a consistent mandatory standard for prams and strollers at the Ministerial Council for Consumer Affairs, and alerting the ACCC to my concerns, this matter is being treated with some urgency. The ACCC recently advised that it has given elevated priority to this issue, and it has released a draft regulation impact statement which considers the case for a mandatory standard for prams and strollers. At the conclusion of the public consultation period, it is expected that the commonwealth will proclaim a mandatory Australian safety standard for prams and strollers.

Mr PICCOLO: The minister touched upon one of the issues which is of concern to local members of parliament when they get complaints regarding unlicensed operators. I draw the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.453, which, under the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs, refers to increased detection of unlicensed operators. Can the minister please outline and elaborate further what initial funding has been allocated as part of the 2007-08 budget to facilitate this increased detection?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As the member would know, we have occupational licensing in South Australia to ensure that only appropriately qualified people can contract for or perform regulated work. OCBA conducts checks for unlicensed operators in regulated industries in a variety of ways, from complaints received from customers or competitors to checks of electronic and print media advertisements and other sources. As part of the 2007-08 budget, we have provided OCBA with a funding boost that will provide an additional two full-time equivalent positions to carry out increased investigations.

These investigations will assist in reducing the level of unlicensed trading in key industries to improve consumer

protection. Increased detection of unlicensed operators in regulated industries will reduce unfair competition with ethical businesses. As I said, I think that is a really important issue that needs to be at the forefront when we are talking about regulation that impacts on business. It is about protecting consumers, but is also very much about protecting those people who are doing the right thing out in their communities by running their businesses in a very ethical way.

Improved audit compliance for occupational legislated industries is linked to the State Strategic Plan, *A Framework for Economic Development in South Australia*, with the government carrying out its principal role to create an environment that supports sustainable business investment and activity. The benefit of this funding will help to ensure South Australians are protected from such fraudsters, and provide them with the confidence that they are getting a high standard of workmanship from a qualified and reliable tradesperson. South Australians have the right to feel assured they are hiring responsible and diligent people to undertake work in their homes.

Ms SIMMONS: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.88, which refers to the regulatory regime conducted by the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner. Can the minister advise how barring provisions of the Liquor Licensing Act 1997 work to ensure that outlaw motorcycle gangs are barred from attending licensed premises in South Australia?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The barring provisions of the Liquor Licensing Act have been successfully applied to bar members of outlaw motorcycle gangs from licensed premises in South Australia. I am advised that South Australian police officers have also had considerable success in reducing serious assaults in licensed premises when barring orders have been served on outlaw motorcycle gang members and their associates. A recent example of how these provisions have been applied involves three members of the Hells Angels motorcycle gang who were barred from the HQ nightclub for a period of three months. The licensee issued the barring orders on the basis that the men are members of an outlaw motorcycle gang.

In December 2006 the three members applied for a review of the orders barring them from entering or remaining on the premises of the Newmarket Hotel, known as HQ. An application for review of the barring order filed on behalf of the men on the basis that the fact that the persons barred are members of a motorcycle gang is not a reasonable ground within the meaning of section 125(1)(b) of the Liquor Licensing Act 1997, and given the fact that persons barred have attended the licensed premises previously without incident outweighs any reputation of such motorcycle gang members, to whom the licensee has had regard.

The matter was referred to the Licensing Court of South Australia to hear the review on the grounds that proceedings involved questions of substantial public importance and that the application should in the public interest be heard and determined by the court. The Commissioner of Police and the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner intervened to introduce evidence and make representations on any question before the court. The key issue to be determined was whether or not the barring orders were made on reasonable grounds, having regard to the applicants being members of an outlaw motorcycle gang.

The Licensing Court confirmed the barring orders. The Licensing Court determined that the barring orders issued

under section 125(1)(b) were based on reasonable grounds for two reasons. The licensee's knowledge of the men's previous conduct and behaviour gave rise to a reliable apprehension that there was a danger to patrons and staff from anyone in that group and, therefore, the issuing of the barring orders was prudent and a preventative measure; and the potential danger to patrons and staff gave rise to a duty of care owed by the licensee.

However, in response to recent violent incidents at licensed premises involving bikie gang members it has been acknowledged that there is a need to amend current legislation. To this end the government recently announced that it proposes to provide new powers to the Commissioner of Police to bar persons from licensed premises and, in so doing, rely on criminal intelligence and to make information, including photographic ID, available to licensees. These proposed amendments are a significant step towards ensuring a safer environment not only for the thousands of pub and nightclub patrons but also for staff and licensees who work at these venues.

Mr PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.53, targets and highlights. I note that while the introduction to the parliament was a target for 2006-07, the real estate industry reform bill does not appear as a highlight for 2006-07. However, it does appear as a target for 2007-08. Given the long period of cooperative consultation and review, will the minister advise what steps she will be taking to ensure the passing of this important legislation, complete with the judicious amendments made in upper house?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: What was the sting in the tail of that question? Could you repeat the end of your question?

Mr PISONI: Will the minister advise what steps she will be taking to ensure the passing of this important legislation, complete with the judicious amendments made in the upper house?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Judicious amendments? Let me just tell you that I will be doing my best not to have the so-called judicious amendments passed—the very same amendments to which the member for Unley referred in a radio interview as 'the watered-down version of the real estate reform bill'. I will be doing my very best not to pass those amendments, but to get that very important piece of legislation through, in order to provide the protections for South Australian home buyers and sellers that they deserve.

Mr PISONI: I refer to the same Budget Paper, page 4.79. The business and occupational services branch undertakes surveillance and compliance functions for regulated occupations and activities. Will the minister advise whether the real estate industry will be targeted for additional surveillance and compliance scrutiny over the next 12 months, given her serious concerns voiced in the media about the ethics and business practices of real estate agents? The media release from the minister states, 'Upper house support for real estate barons grab for cash.'

The CHAIR: That does not sound to me like an estimates question. This is something the member can ask in the house at any time. Minister, do you wish to comment?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I can comment on the general thrust of this question. My concern is simply about real estate agents keeping moneys to which that they are not entitled. I do not understand for the life of me—

Mr PISONI: I have a point of order. The question was about compliance functions for regulated occupations and activities. My question was: will the minister advise whether the real estate industry will be targeted for additional

surveillance and compliance scrutiny over the next 12 months?

The CHAIR: I have already indicated that the question is not in order. I am offering the minister an opportunity to provide any information she may wish to provide in order to address the matter, but you are not in a position to demand an answer in any particular way.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: If any information comes our way, if anything is brought to our attention that indicates that people operating in any industry here in South Australia are doing so illegally, then we will pursue that. The issue in relation to real estate agents—and I am steadfast in this position—is that I am determined and committed to ensure that people who put their trust in real estate agents to buy or sell their home have that trust honoured. I do not understand for the life of me why the member for Unley would be supporting real estate agents' pocketing money that truly belongs to people who live in his electorate and all our electorates. Real estate agents have a fiduciary responsibility. They are engaging people when they contract the advertising space for selling houses. They are engaging a third party to provide a service. Their responsibility is to pass on any discounts or rebates that they receive. I know some people have their knickers in a twist over my stand on this issue, but we know that there are people who are pocketing in excess of \$400 000 a year; and they are using that to offset the costs of their operations.

It is not legitimate. It is not what they are supposed to be doing. It is not ethical practice. I do not know why the member for Unley would be supporting that, and I certainly do not understand why the Hon. Mr Xenophon is supporting that. The public sees him as the consumer advocate standing up for the little people, yet here he is watering down legislation that provides enormous protection for South Australian home buyers and home sellers. He wants to water down the legislation to allow real estate agents to pocket these commissions and rebates. It baffles me.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Unley have a question relating to estimates?

Mr PISONI: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.81 and Consumer Affairs performance indicators. Targets for 2007-08 for consumer products to be inspected for compliance is given at 35 000 compared to 50 000 in 2006-07. Footnote (a) indicates that inspections will now be carried out at a wholesale rather than a retail level to allow more individual products to be inspected. This seems to be a contradiction. Will the minister advise the reasons for this apparent drop in items being inspected?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I invite the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs to respond to the honourable member's question.

Mr BODYCOAT: The variation in those numbers is as explained in the footnote. In part, the inspections are made at the wholesale rather than the retail level. It allows products to be examined before they are distributed to retailers. Rather than trade measurement inspectors and product safety inspectors inspecting products twice (or more times) at a retailer's premises, they can be inspected at the wholesaler's premises. The increased efficiency that that represents is demonstrated in 2006-07 by the large increase in the number of products that were inspected. That increase is not expected to be sustainable, and the 2007-08 figures represent a return to a target like that expressed in 2006-07.

Mr PISONI: I was assuming that it was 50 000 different products, but you are saying it is items?

Mr BODYCOAT: That 50 000 could, in fact, represent several inspections of the same thing at different venues.

Mr PISONI: Obviously, with efficiencies being gained, is the minister able to advise that this indicates a planned reduction in staff performing these inspections?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No.

Mr PISONI: No change in staff?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No.

Mr BODYCOAT: The minister's answer is affected by the possibility that trade measurement would be transferred to the commonwealth by 2010. As a result of decisions made at the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, there is a programmed transfer running from now until 2010 with the intention of transferring the responsibility for both the policy and the administration of trade measurement legislation to the commonwealth. South Australia has some concerns that those transfers may represent a reduction in service to the local community and is therefore watching that project very closely. In terms of what activity is expected and what resources are applied to it in South Australia in the interim, the answer is that there is no planned reduction.

Mr PISONI: While we are on the inspection of goods, I note that, a week or so ago, there was a recall of a Thomas the Tank Engine product because the paint contained lead. How are inspections sparked? What triggers Consumer Affairs to inspect goods?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That recall was very disappointing. I think a lot of those trains were out and about in the community. The recalls are triggered through a variety of mechanisms, as I understand it. In the main, they have been voluntary recalls where the manufacturer has identified a problem with the product. Also, complaints come through to us, as well as the result of inspections that Consumer Affairs officers undertake.

Mr PISONI: What triggers an inspection? Is it customer complaints or is something brought to your attention and, if so, how is it brought to your attention?

Mr BODYCOAT: The matter can be brought to our attention in a number of ways. It can be brought to our attention by our regular monitoring, and that monitoring is increased at times like the Royal Show and just before Easter and Christmas because of the increased risk of products being on the market that are not likely to meet appropriate standards. Matters can be brought to our attention by complaints, in which case if we had sufficient concern about the product we would, in fact, inspect it and then take it up with the distributor or retailer. In some instances, though, they are instigated by the retailers or distributors themselves.

The Thomas the Tank Engine recall is, in fact, an example of that. It was the distributor's own pursuit of a concern it had about the toys which led it to publish the recall. I should point out that, in some cases, those toys were sold sometime ago.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for examination of matters relating to the Minister for Consumer Affairs having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed. Thank you to the minister as the witness and thank you to her advisers.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank my staff, Jerome Maguire, Chief Executive of Justice and the Attorney-General's Department, and my two commissioners, Bill Pryor and Mark Bodycoat. I thank my other advisers for their support and preparation. I also thank members for their questions.

The CHAIR: I now lay on the table a draft report.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

At 4.16 p.m. the committee concluded.

