

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Wednesday 2 July 2008
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Ms M.G. Thompson

Members:

Mrs R.K. Geraghty
Mr M.R. Goldsworthy
Mr M. Pengilly
Mr T. Piccolo
Mr I.H. Venning
Hon. P.L. White

The committee met at 11:00

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES, \$153,487,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND
RESOURCES, \$5,054,000

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, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

Mr S. Archer, Executive Director, Corporate, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

Mr J. Hanlon, Executive Director, Community and Local Government Relations, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

Mr T. Brumfield, Director, Finance and Business Services, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

Mr M. Williams, Manager, Budget Strategy, Finance and Business Services, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

Ms J. Gascoigne, Director, Local Government Grants and Communities, Office for State/Local Government Relations, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

Mr M. Petrovski, Director, Office for State/Local Government Relations, Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

The CHAIR: I am sure members are all aware that the estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. However, I find that people are not aware of all the conditions of estimates, so I will go through them. The committee will determine an approximate time for consideration of proposed payments to facilitate the changeover of departmental advisers. Have the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition agreed on a timetable?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes.

Mr PENGILLY: Yes.

The CHAIR: 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 18 July.

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 *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 the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. I also advise that, for the purposes of the committees, television coverage will be allowed for filming from both the northern and the southern galleries.

I declare the proposed payment open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, Appendix C, and Portfolio Statement, Volume 2, part 5. Does the minister have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, thank you. The Office for State/Local Government Relations is a small unit, responsible for providing policy and other advice to 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 framework 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.

I will briefly outline a number of key projects and activities that have been progressed in 2007-08, which are priorities for further action in the coming financial year. They address key policy objectives, which I am pursuing in the state/local government relations portfolio in the areas of:

- representation and governance;
- accountability;
- consultation and community engagement; and
- operational support to local government.

Following the completion of the local government elections in 2006, I commissioned (in conjunction with the President of the Local Government Association) an independent and comprehensive post-elections review. The review began in April 2007 and delivered a report to me earlier this year. This was an extensive and thorough exercise that included a wide-ranging and active public consultation process around the state. The review received 340 submissions to its issues papers and leaflet and dozens more to its interim report. The review's final report released in March 2008 has 27 recommendations for actions to:

- increase voter turnout;
- improve local government representation; and
- improve the election processes.

The local government sector is considering these recommendations, and I am expecting to receive a formal response from the Local Government Association shortly.

A very significant project over the last financial year has been the review of the governance framework for the outback areas of South Australia. The Office for State/Local Government Relations and the Outback Areas Community Development Trust jointly managed this review. Input into the review was sought from outback residents, community organisations, relevant agencies and other key stakeholders.

As we know, massive challenges and changes are being faced by outback communities, and it is clear to me that we must provide an improved governance framework for these communities for the future to allow them to meet these emerging pressures and opportunities. The

Outback Governance Review Report has been very carefully considered, and recently the government approved my proposal for the development of new legislation to provide for future governance arrangements for outback areas through a new Outback Areas Community Development Trust Act. A draft bill is being prepared as the basis for further public consultation with interested parties.

As I have emphasised since I became minister, councils must be fully accountable to their communities. I intend to ensure that local government as a sphere of government strives to meet the highest public sector standards of transparency and accountability. The government has moved to ensure that community is given a direct voice in annual business planning cycles of councils with the introduction of mandatory consultation policy provisions in the Local Government Act. The Office for State/Local Government Relations is currently considering options that would further strengthen the current local government audit and accountability framework.

Improvements to other provisions related to accountability are also to be considered, such as those concerning requirements for prudential management, public consultation, procedures for internal review of council decisions and council members' access to council information. All this builds on the significant legislative improvement relating to financial management made over the last two years which have introduced new requirements for long-term financial and asset management planning, adoption of model financial statements for external reporting by councils and measures to strengthen the framework and independence of council audits.

During the last financial year, two excellent resource guides for councils have been produced. The aim was to highlight the importance of proper public consultation and community engagement in local government—again, matters that, as minister, I have emphasised and encouraged. These resources have been very well received by local government community stakeholders and state agencies, and involved a community engagement showcase which highlighted leading practice examples of community engagement and also a community engagement hand book which was released early this year and which aims to provide councils with a model framework to adapt it to local circumstances.

Over the last financial year, the Office for State/Local Government Relations has provided support and guidance to councils across a number of areas and will continue in the coming year. Some of these activities included:

- assistance and support to councils which have experienced natural disasters through the Local Government Disaster Fund;
- establishment within the Office of a Governance Unit to work with council governance and financial practitioners to promote better governance practices and processes;
- support for a study undertaken by the Kangaroo Island Council to review the council's role and future capacity and opportunities for greater collaboration and resource sharing between government entities on the island;
- practical advisory support to some individual councils on matters such as asset management planning, governance and financial management issues;
- preparation by the office of a resource document for councils on community land revocation; and
- employment through the Outback Areas Trust of a municipal development officer at Andamooka to help manage at the local level the significant changes taking place, particularly relating to planning and development matters in that town.

To move the broad relationship between the state government and local government, two major agreements have recently been finalised. Yesterday I announced that the state government has committed to a new long-term funding agreement with the Local Government Association for community wastewater management systems; and on 4 June this year the Premier and President of the Local Government Association signed the State Local Government Sector Agreement on Climate Change—only the second of these sector agreements to be signed in Australia.

This agreement will be crucial as we tackle the huge challenge we face as a local government and a community. The minister's State/Local Government Forum continues to strengthen working relationships between state and local government through a cooperative approach to strategic issues. It has driven major work in addressing some longstanding problems, including:

- affordable housing;
- the Wangary bushfire coronial report;
- women in local government, and
- planning and development.

I believe that there will be many new opportunities for working collaboratively with the Rudd government for the benefit of South Australian communities, including in the area of local government infrastructure and services. The strong emphasis on infrastructure by the federal government is very welcome. Effective planning and investment by the commonwealth government will enhance progress being made by state and local government in this state. We welcome the confirmation of continued federal funding for local roads, including the supplementary funding for South Australia. The new initiatives by the federal government to establish Infrastructure Australia and to create a regional and local community infrastructure fund are good news. Other initiatives in areas such as urban development, climate change, water and the environment also have many potential benefits for our state. I look forward to working with local government in this state to make the most of these opportunities for our community.

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

Mr PENGILLY: Yes, I will. I thank the minister for her comments. I also pass on my thanks to the government officers who provide me with information during the year if I need to garner some, so I thank them for that and their constructive relationship. The minister spoke about developing a constructive relationship with the local government sector. That, indeed, is a worthy work ethic, and we all have to do that regardless of where we come from. My strong view is that local government is treated with too much disrespect: it does not get the respect it deserves and it is not recognised as having a place in the world that is as important as it is. Having served some 17 years in local government, I am very cognisant of that fact.

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: No, I am not biased. I look forward to seeing what comes out of the review of the local government elections. I think for too long local government elections have been the plaything of the state and have been manipulated around dates to the suit the state, which gets back to my earlier comment about respect. Moving the local government elections to suit the desires of the state is inappropriate, and I think it is unfortunate. I note with interest the some 27 recommendations that came out of that review, and will wait to see what comes out of it.

The major issue for local government in South Australia is that of funding. It is unsatisfactorily funded and has been for a long time, by governments of all persuasions, I might add. That needs to be remedied and it is a challenge that needs to be met. Quite simply, the state cannot continue to load up the local government sector with more and more demands, put more and more things on it and pass more and more legislation, and those of us who work in this place are guilty of that. It is fine to pass on the additional legislation and the additional demands, but no funding goes with it. I think that is a sad indictment on the relationship between the state and local government, and it is something that needs fixing.

I also raise the issues that are presented to local government in this state at the moment: the operational costs of the local government sector doing business. Like everyone else, councils are faced with huge increases in fuel, and, obviously, interest rates and things like that affect them. However, particularly for regional rural councils which have vast tracts of roads that need to be maintained, graded and looked after, and the cost of fuel is appalling. I know, from talking to some of those councils, that it has been a nightmare for them to work through factoring in the fuel costs for their budgets for the next 12 months.

They are no different from the rest of us who have to use fuel, but they have set costs, set areas of roads that need work and set projects, and it just eats more and more into the amount of money that they have to use. I know that that is something that they are grappling with, which goes back to the issue which I raised just prior to that—funding for local government. It is simply nowhere near good enough, and it has gone on for far too long.

Under the Rann Labor government, we have had the additional impost on local government of the NRM levy, and I know it agreed to that at the time, but I believe it was a mistake. I think what has happened is a mistake, in that local government is collecting it, because the general ratepayer sees the EPA levy on top of that, and the NRM levy, and they see that as being collected and going into council coffers. It was a big mistake by councils to agree to that, and I am

as guilty as anyone, I have to say. We thought we were doing the right thing at the time, in a former life.

What we need to see in relation to the local government sector is much more action and good policy coming out of the state government to get on with the job. I note that, in her opening remarks, the minister has made some comments about various policy areas. I refer to people in local government, I do not differentiate between men and women, because, quite frankly, the community elect who they want, and that transpires at the ballot box, they put in those people who they think are the most appropriate. As much as we can attempt to manipulate it to be either more women than men or more men than women, in the end the ratepayers of each individual council make that decision.

In concluding my remarks, I go back to the issue of funding and respect, and I hope that this Rann Labor government will look at the whole funding mechanism for local government and give it a better deal. It needs to be done in tandem. I think the general community are getting sick of seeing COAG meetings where everyone is standing around the table smiling, shaking hands and signing off on things but nothing is happening. So, that is a challenge for the future. Water, by far, is the overwhelming concern for Australia and, more particularly, South Australia, and local government has to play its part in that.

Madam Chair, will the omnibus questions be incorporated for the whole department or do you want me to read them out at the end of the session today?

The CHAIR: Minister?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy for them to be incorporated. The honourable member does not need to read them out.

The CHAIR: There is no provision for that, you will have to read them out.

Mr PENGILLY: Yesterday in Estimates Committee B the whole department—

The CHAIR: It can be done for the whole department but they have to be read out once.

Mr PENGILLY: Fine. I will read them out at the conclusion.

The CHAIR: Otherwise they are not on the record and there is no facility for incorporation in *Hansard*. I guess you really do want them?

Mr PENGILLY: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: Given there is no facility for incorporation in *Hansard*, they will have to be read out once.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Do you want to read them out now?

Mr PENGILLY: I am happy to read them out now. The questions are as follows:

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 cost 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 2007-08 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant and contractor, cost, work undertaken and method of appointment?

3. For each department or agency reporting to the minister how many surplus employees there will be at 30 June 2008, and for each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the employee and the Total Employment Cost (TEC) of the employee?

4. In financial year 2006-07 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister what underspending on projects and programs was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2007-08?

5. For all departments and agencies reporting to the minister what is the estimated level of under expenditure for 2007-08 and has cabinet already approved any carryover expenditure into 2008-09? 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 sub-category the total

number of employees with a total employment cost of \$200,000 or more per employee, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister as at 30 June 2008; and

- (ii) Between 30 June 2007 and 30 June 2008, 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 2006-07 and 2007-08 will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on all grants administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the grant recipient, the amount 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, will the minister list the total amounts spent to date on each project.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Finniss. We will go to questions now.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27: Summary Income Statement. The total income lines together total the net cost of providing services. Minister, it would appear from the Summary Income Statement that the estimated expenditure for 2007-08 is some \$183,000 over budget. Can the minister explain this figure to us, along with the \$96,000 in unbudgeted income?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to refer the detail of that question to Geoff Knight, the Chief Executive of PIRSA. However, before doing so, it is probably appropriate to respond to some of the comments the member for Finniss made in his opening statement, particularly in relation to the funding of local government here in South Australia.

I think it is worth pointing out that in the 2003-04 budget papers for the first time a specific section on local government finances was provided, and this provided information on overall financial performance and position of local government in this state and information on the financial transfers from state to local government. This information has been published in the budget papers each year since then, and it was an important initiative of this government. It contributes to improved understanding of local government finances and to transparent state/local government arrangements. I think it is important to note that under the previous Liberal government this information was not collected or published. So, it was not possible to say from the budget papers of that time what level of state funding was going to local government in this state.

But let me just point out the transfers that have been recorded since we came into government. For the 2002-03 financial year, \$67.852 million; 2003-04, \$81.863 million; 2004-05, \$89.505 million; 2005-06, \$97.869 million; 2006-07, \$90.590 million; 2007-08, \$102.295 million. We expect this year to again have a funding round in excess of \$100 million going to local government. In total since we came to government from 2002-03 to 2007-08 that is \$529,974 million. As the member for Finniss would know, that is on top of the major source of funding for local government from the federal government.

We have made major long-term agreements with local governments in key areas in this state. In February 2006, the stormwater management agreement was reached between government and the Local Government Association, and this commits the government to providing \$4 million per year, indexed for 30 years. It provides certainty for forward planning and infrastructure works and will be of immense benefit to our community.

As I have said, I have recently reached agreement with the Local Government Association on a nine-year funding program for community wastewater management systems. State funding of \$3.368 million will be provided this year, but in total it is around \$35 million funding program. It is a very significant injection of funds for critical infrastructure in communities, particularly in regional areas, so I would imagine the member for Finniss would welcome that. I will now hand over to Mr Knight.

Mr PENGILLY: Thank God for the GST.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Sorry?

Mr PENGILLY: Thank God for the GST is what I said.

The CHAIR: Perhaps the member might like to refer to some earlier *Hansard*.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thought that was the information you wanted, and it is information you should be welcoming, particularly the community wastewater management funding.

Mr PENGILLY: Absolutely, minister; I am delighted to hear of those amounts. I said, 'Thank God for the GST,' which the Rann Labor government did not want, but it has provided all that income so that it can put money into local government.

The CHAIR: Order! That is completely inaccurate. Perhaps you ought to refer to some earlier *Hansard*. Minister, you indicated that you were going to refer to Mr Knight. Is that still the case?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes.

Mr KNIGHT: As the member indicated, expenditure in 2007-08 was \$183,000 higher than budgeted and, in part, that was offset by additional unbudgeted revenue of \$96,000. Neither of those items was outside the total resources available to the portfolio. In 2007-08, we allocated additional funds from within the portfolio to high priority projects, some of which the minister touched on in her opening statement. The most important of those was \$140,000 for investigations into priority infrastructure in outback areas and the other principal one was expenditure for the review of local government elections. Neither of those was originally factored into the 2007-08 budget, but both were funded from within the total PIRSA portfolio in 2007-08.

The offset in the revenue side of the budget was principally accounted for in agreements with the LGA to contribute to those two areas. On the local government elections, the LGA contributed \$50,000 as its share of that joint review, and it also contributed \$18,000 to the citizens engagement project, which meant that in net terms we spent something like \$87,000 more than budgeted but those additional funds were provided from elsewhere within the PIRSA portfolio. We did not go over budget in a Treasury sense of the word.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, Program 6: State/Local Government Relations. This refers to the Minister's State/Local Government Forum and a new schedule of priorities for 2007-08. I have reviewed that schedule agreement and I would particularly like to know about the statement:

State and Local Government will work together to understand the impact of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda on Local Government.

I am sure we would all like to know the impact of the increase in meetings of public servants across Australia in the name of COAG. I have two questions in this area: first, will the minister outline for us the impact on local government of the COAG reform agenda and its costs; secondly, what COAG support processes is the Office for State/Local Government Relations involved in and what is the level of resources involved?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The Office for State/Local Government Relations is represented in the housing forum in relation to issues that impact on local government and the infrastructure forum, so it is working through those COAG working parties on those particular issues. But the Local Government Minister's Forum has been working on a number of issues in relation to a collaborative approach between state government and local government, and I outlined a number of those very briefly in my opening statement.

Certainly, one of those issues has been looking at the Wangary bushfire coronial recommendations and how they impact on local government, ensuring that the voice of local government is heard in the preparation of the state government's response to that. As to climate change, local government here is taking quite a strong lead in addressing issues of climate change. Very recently, we had a forum in relation to climate change and, as I said, the Premier signed an agreement with them. I think the member briefly referred to women in local government and suggested that people do not really mind who is elected as long as the person does the job. That is not the view that the forum has taken. We think that women should be encouraged and have an equal voice in local government, so there is a new agenda item in relation to improving women's participation in local government, and the Local Government Association here is leading a group looking at that information.

Mr Venning interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The member for Schubert does not think that is important.

Mr VENNING: Surely electors have a say in who they have.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: If we do not encourage women to put their hand up—I know that in your party you have a really bad record of supporting—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You have an incredibly bad record.

Mr PENGILLY: Chair, if the minister wants to wind the opposition up, the opposition will retort. You know that as well as I do.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It won't be long before she is the only one you've got in the house.

Mr PENGILLY: Just so the minister knows: my mother was the first woman elected to local government on Kangaroo Island, and I supported her. So, there you go.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: What I am saying is that it is really important. A 26 per cent participation of women in local government is an appalling statistic. Local government managers accept that; they are doing work to promote women. The LGA accepts that. So, we are working on these issues to get greater participation of women. There have to be reasons why they are not standing or why they are not feeling comfortable, why they are not putting their hands up for election. We need to address that. In fact, when they stand, women are elected but there is clearly a problem within local government about women taking that next step and putting their hand up. So, I think that is fairly—

Mr PENGILLY: Just look at the leadership of the government on the front bench. There aren't too many women there.

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Finniss is being extraordinarily disorderly. The use of the minister's first name was a very—

Mr PENGILLY: I did not use the minister's first name.

The CHAIR: You did.

Mr PENGILLY: I did not.

The CHAIR: Check the *Hansard*. You did. That was a very disorderly transgression, and I ask—

Mr PENGILLY: I did not.

The CHAIR: You did. I ask the member for Finniss to—

Mr PENGILLY: I will check the *Hansard*, Madam Chair, but I am sure I did not mention the minister's first name.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I know they are very touchy about the numbers of women participating.

Mr PENGILLY: Come on. Get on with it.

The CHAIR: Order! We will have everyone being silent for a while because I think the member for Finniss is not totally focused, when he does not remember what he said like that. Please just—

Mr PENGILLY: I can assure you I am, chair.

The CHAIR: We will wait to see the evidence thereof.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I know it is a touchy subject and one that opens up some wounds for them. In relation to—

Mr PENGILLY: That is ridiculous. What about the three stooges who sit opposite us?

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: Not you. I am not referring to you three.

Members interjecting:

Mr PENGILLY: Well, Madam Chair, if we are going to sit here and have a debate over that, I would rather move on and get the questions answered. I can see absolutely no point in the

minister winding us up, and us winding her up in return. I would rather get on and ask the questions. The whole business of whether they elect men, women—or something in between—to local, state or federal government is totally irrelevant to me. They elect people. That's who people elect, they elect people.

The CHAIR: Minister, do you have any further comments?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: For the benefit of the committee, I will ask Mr Hanlon to provide some additional detail about his activity in the COAG working groups.

Mr HANLON: I represent the office of local government and the minister's office in relation to two COAG committees: one on infrastructure and one on housing. In relation to its relevance to local government, I am sure that you are aware that the commonwealth has in its infrastructure committee talked about major significant federal projects. We have attempted to link a number of local government projects to the overall program.

Examples of how we have gone about doing that are seen in major infrastructure surrounding freight movement, roads and significant rail movements throughout the commonwealth. We have certainly used the information that we have gathered from local government through the commonwealth grants program in relation to its needs for freight movement, especially in rural South Australia. We have put that into the program for the overall infrastructure program presented by the state to the commonwealth through the COAG program.

We have also done exactly the same thing with water, and we have used our waste management water systems to also provide feedback into the overall infrastructure program. Obviously, we are seeking to obtain significant commonwealth support and funding for our infrastructure programs for the state. Hopefully, at that point, we can also lever that for local government funding.

We have done the same thing for regional broadband and communication services as well. As you know, and as I said before, a lot of this is commonwealth or federal-funded programs which are about significant increases in the overall ability of the commonwealth to respond to these matters. Our responsibility has been to try to link local government into that.

We have done exactly the same thing in housing. As you would be aware, a number of joint programs are being conducted between local government and various state government agencies around affordable housing. We have again tried to link that into the programs for COAG, the commonwealth and also for urban renewal programs for local housing programs by some significant changes to the planning system, which includes the reduction of red tape. That information is also being fed into the COAG system to try to lever additional federal funding into the state, which again we expect to be of great significance to local government and the funding arrangements for that in a joint program with the state.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27, Program 6: State/Local Government Relations, summary income statement, employee benefits and expenses. Minister, the budgeted amount for employee benefits and costs is \$2,944,000 for 2008-09, \$67,000 more than the estimated amount for 2007-08 of \$2,877,000 (which is \$40,000 more than actually budgeted for in 2007-08). Can the minister please advise why there has been such a jump in employee salaries, benefits and costs since the 2007-08 budget? Can she please advise how many FTE employees are covered by this figure, and how much annual leave and long service has been accrued? If the minister does not know all of that, I am happy for her to take it on notice.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to take some of that detailed information in relation to leave etc. on notice. I understand that the majority of those increases are simply enterprise bargaining increases. The number of people in the office is 22.3.

Mr PICCOLO: My question to the minister relates to issues of importance in my electorate concerning community land revocation processes, and I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. The management of community land is an important role of local government. Can the minister advise what is being done to assist councils in this area?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The member for Light is right. With his experience in local government, he understands the important role that councils play in managing our community land, that is, land owned by local government in the state, which is often parks, sporting clubs, works depots, libraries and other council buildings, used for a wide range of purposes. Often this land comes to the notice of the public when a council decides to revoke its status of community land in order to sell it or use it for another purpose.

The Local Government Act outlines a process that councils must follow in order to revoke the status of a piece of land as community land. If a council wishes to revoke that community status, it must first formally resolve to do so at a meeting of the council. The act then requires the council to consult with the affected community before putting a proposal to me as the minister.

My role is then to review the council proposal and the process that follows. If I am satisfied that the proposal is sound, and that the council has undertaken the right steps, I provide approval for the council to revoke the land's classification as community land. This last step is then done by the council.

Since becoming Minister for State/Local Government Relations, I have been keen to ensure that councils not only abide by the requirements of the act when undertaking this process but also make a real effort to engage the community in making decisions. The act requires councils, at a minimum, to place newspaper advertisements outlining the proposal and allow 21 days for responses; however, I feel strongly that this is not adequate consultation often, particularly when dealing with land that has been a park, open space, or used for another community purpose. Too often, local residents complain upon the sale of the land that it is the first they have heard of the decision.

I have strongly encouraged councils to take extra steps with their community consultation on revocation land proposals. Councils can write to residents who live close to the piece of land in question, organise a public meeting to discuss the proposal, and invite concerned residents to attend a council meeting at which the proposal will then be decided. Most importantly, I urge councils to make an extra effort to hear and respond to any concerns raised by their residents. To their credit, many councils now undertake a very thorough consultation process. However, I feel that there is still room for improvement in this often very sensitive area. To this end, I have sent all councils a resource document developed by the Office for State/Local Government Relations to assist them through the process.

Many councils, particularly small ones, have trouble preparing applications that meet the requirements needed for my approval. This resource, entitled 'Revoking Community Land Classification: A Resource for South Australian Councils', outlines clearly and explains the process that councils must follow under the act to ensure that they can meet these requirements effectively in their application. Too often, much time is lost with the Office for State/Local Government Relations having to go back to councils to further clarify issues, or there have been times when I have had to say to a council that I cannot give my approval because the consultation was either insufficient, too long ago, or was not properly advised.

The resource focuses councils' attention on considering the best way to truly engage their community when formulating and pursuing a proposal. As my parliamentary colleague would know from his own experience, ensuring the community understands and supports the decisions before they are made can prevent considerable ill will in the future.

Ms BREUER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. What is the state government doing to improve community wastewater management systems infrastructure for rural and regional communities in South Australia?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: For the benefit of the member for Giles, I am happy to expand on my reference to the funding agreement that I signed only yesterday with the Local Government Association in relation to our community wastewater management systems (CWMS, formerly known as STEDS), which are common effluent management systems that have been installed by about 45 councils in regional and outer metropolitan areas in South Australia. These are areas not serviced by SA Water sewerage systems, and they total approximately 10 per cent of all public wastewater management services in South Australia.

CWMS are installed mostly in rural and regional areas. They are an efficient technology for addressing public and environmental health needs in wastewater treatment. We have provided a subsidy for local government in this regard since 1972 in order to encourage equity between these systems and those who use and pay for SA Water country sewerage systems. The Local Government Association manages the distribution of this subsidy.

State government funding is provided to subsidise the cost of providing new community wastewater management schemes, and it will be provided to councils on a scheme-by-scheme basis. In accordance with the state government's CWMS policy (endorsed by cabinet in December 2005), the subsidy amount is equal to the shortfall between the revenue that can be raised from users of the scheme through the application of SA Water's country sewerage rates and the cost of

providing the CWMS service over the life of the scheme, which is about 50 years. It is intended to provide equity between the users of CWMS and the users of SA Water sewerage systems.

The CWMS policy has made explicit that any future funding agreement with the Local Government Association will be based on an assumption that councils applying for funding to subsidise the installation of new systems will apply charges equivalent to SA Water country sewerage charges for the life of the scheme. In June 2006, the Local Government Association, with the support and assistance of the state government, applied for \$100 million in commonwealth funding to upgrade 107 schemes to re-use capacity. I lobbied the commonwealth ministers quite heavily because they originally rejected that application, but eventually the then minister for environment and water resources, Malcolm Turnbull, announced \$20 million funding for CWMS in South Australia.

Commonwealth funding will bring approximately 59 existing schemes in 31 councils up to re-use capacity, thereby improving the environmental and health standards for their communities. It was my intention that, once commonwealth funding for CWMS was known, I would be in a position to enter into a long-term funding agreement with the Local Government Association. In August 2007, the Local Government Association wrote to me proposing terms for a long-term funding agreement. The association has estimated that, based on the 2007-08 state government allocation of \$3.286 million, it will take around nine years to install all the required schemes.

I am pleased to be able to confirm again that we have now committed to this long-term funding agreement, which will provide funding to subsidise the cost of constructing new community wastewater management schemes in South Australia: \$3.368 million this year indexed up to the expiry of the agreement in 2017; approximately \$35 million provided by the state government to ensure rural and regional communities have access to effective public wastewater treatment systems that meet crucial public and environmental health requirements and deliver vital recycled water for aquaculture and industrial purposes.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28. What assistance has been provided to local government through the Local Government Disaster Fund in 2007-08?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Obviously the member for Taylor is aware of disasters that have occurred in her electorate and how important this particular fund has been in restoring a range of council infrastructure. 2007 was a challenge for local government when it came to disasters. The Local Government Disaster Fund was established in 1990 to mitigate the impact on local government authorities of the damage caused by natural disasters or other major, uninsurable events. Councils can apply to the Disaster Fund Management Committee for assistance if the financial impact to the council of a particular event is 5 per cent or more of a council's annual rate revenue; that is, it constitutes a disaster for that council.

In January and again in October storms hit councils in the Central North, on Eyre Peninsula and one south of Adelaide, and fire ravaged Kangaroo Island in December. In each of these cases councils applied to the Local Government Disaster Fund for assistance. Nine councils—Flinders Ranges; Port Pirie; Kimba, Mount Remarkable, Peterborough, Yankalilla, Orroroo Carrieton, Goyder and Northern Areas Council—shared in receiving financial assistance totalling \$5.2 million.

Funding was provided in advance to the Flinders Ranges and Orroroo Carrieton councils to respond immediately to the flood damage that they sustained. And I announced advanced financial assistance, totalling \$450,000, which comprised \$400,000 for Flinders Ranges and \$50,000 for Orroroo. I also provided interim funding of \$250,000 to the Kangaroo Island Council following the bushfire. The interim advanced payments were made to assist each council take immediate steps to address infrastructure repairs and to provide for safe road networks in anticipation of a final claim being made.

Once the full extent of the damage is known and a final claim made, the overall assessment of the claim takes into account any immediate assistance provided. With the exception of the final claim for Kangaroo Island, which is scheduled for consideration at the next meeting of the Disaster Fund Management Committee, all claims are now resolved for processing payment.

The initial budget allocation for 2007-08 for the Local Government Disaster Fund was \$1.2 million, but due to the nature and extent of the assistance required, an additional \$5 million in funding was allocated by the government. The estimated result for 2007-08 is \$6.2 million, comprising \$6.15 million in funding to councils, \$40,000 for the administration costs of the fund, and \$18,000 for engineering assessments of claims and advice to councils.

In addition to the disaster fund moneys, severe storm damage was experienced in Pinnaroo (part of the Southern Mallee District Council). The damage was less than 5 per cent of its rate revenue, however it was a significant event for that small council and \$70,000 was made available by the Treasurer to the Southern Mallee District Council.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28 and to the program: Performance Information, Performance Commentary. I note that State/Local Government Relations has supported the formation of a working group and women in local government, both as elected and senior management positions. Minister, in what form was the support given, and, if financial support was provided, at what cost and was it under the budget line of supplies and services; and can you inform the committee when information of a substantial nature will be forthcoming from the working party?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The one that the Local Government Association is heading up from the forum?

Mr PENGILLY: Yes.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Jane Gascoigne (Director of Local Government Grants and Regional Communities) is working on that committee that has been established or endorsed by the minister for the State/Local Government Relations Forum, so the cost to the office is her time, input and expertise in looking at a range of issues that have been identified by that committee that need consideration. Also, I was pleased this year at the Local Government Managers Association (SA) awards, to sponsor an award for a council considered to be excellent in advancing the status of women in local government. That is not only in relation to elected members but, in fact, women in the administration of local councils.

Again, there is a massive shortfall in the participation of women at the higher levels of local government. Only two chief executive officers out of 68 here in South Australia are women (I believe they are Walkerville and Kangaroo Island councils). I am very keen at that operational level also to support women in local government, so I provided that award. I was delighted that Onkaparinga council won it, because it has a very strong history of supporting women. I am advised that we are providing \$10,000 in support of that working party, which is the total amount to run the forum, and that is shared 50:50 between the office and local government.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 4.11, intergovernmental finances, 'State government'. Paragraph 3 states:

In January 2007, amendments to the Local Government Act 1999 were brought into effect. Amending provisions aimed at improving the accountability of councils as well as strengthening their financial governance, asset management, rating practices and auditing arrangements. The changes included the requirements for councils to:

- adopt a consistent and improved reporting format covering annual financial statements.

What is the cut-off date for councils with respect to the above dot point? What assistance is being provided by the government to make sure that all councils are able to improve the reporting of annual financials? What is the approximate cost to councils, depending on their size, for implementing the new scheme? Are all councils happy to comply, or is the cost simply too great for some of the smaller councils?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In January last year, the local government general variation regulations and the local government finance management variation regulations came into operation. The changes to the regulations, together with the commencement in January 2007 of earlier amendments to the Local Government Act, are aimed at improving the accountability of councils as well as strengthening their financial governance, asset management, financial reporting and auditing arrangements.

There is no doubt that, during this period of change, some councils felt some angst about it, but the Office for State/Local Government Relations has been working very diligently to support councils here in South Australia in this transition period. The changes to the act required councils to develop and adopt long-term financial plans for at least 10 years. These are just commonsense initiatives. When one looks at the size of some of the budgets of councils here in South Australia, the fact that some of them had nothing more than a 12-month plan is inconceivable. They are required to have adopted their first long-term plan by 30 November this year.

This is about ensuring their sustainability. As the member well knows, the Local Government Association undertook a financial sustainability inquiry and found that many councils in South Australia were considered not to be financially sustainable, and part of that was the way in

which they were planning and managing their budgets. So, local government understood that it needed to move forward on that issue.

Councils need to have adopted their first infrastructure and asset management plan by 30 November this year. Again, it is just really good business practice and common sense. In doing so, councils have understood how they need to budget for depreciation of their assets. Many of them are saying that they have large assets with no funds put aside to maintain them.

Model financial statements was an issue here in South Australia, and I know that the LGA has been working collaboratively with the Office for State/Local Government Relations with respect to that matter. In fact, at ministerial councils, where the states were arguing very strongly with the former Liberal federal government about increased funding for local government, it was accepted that, until councils had their financial statements in place and standardised and also the way in which they managed their finances and planning (to paraphrase from the South Australian Local Government Association report into sustainability), no government, federal or state, would pour more money into the local government sector here without councils first getting their house in order. That would just be handing over money and seeing no great improvement. So, it was really important for local government to get these things in place.

I was really pleased that nationwide the states accepted the model financial statements developed in South Australia. Also, there are changes to auditing arrangements, as I am sure the honourable member is aware, and that is about increased transparency and confidence in the processes undertaken by local councils in auditing their accounts. For the management of all these programs, the local government itself has put in in excess of \$250,000. The Office for State/Local Government Relations has been supporting this, and we have some very skilled people to assist councils with their implementation. Councils are, I know, at various stages of implementation, but we are doing what we can to support them through this.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to the same budget line and the minister's statement. The minister mentioned the report into sustainability of councils and noted correctly that many councils appeared to be unsustainable. Given this information and the fact that councils are going through this, does the minister intend to bring about the amalgamation of some councils to provide a stronger financial unit?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Is that a recommendation the honourable member is putting to me?

Mr PENGILLY: No, it is a question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Let me put on the record that, for some time, amalgamations have been on the political agenda of the Liberal Party. I remember when I first became a minister my first three questions, I think from the member for Kavel, were about the amalgamation of councils. We saw a massive amalgamation of councils here in South Australia under the former Liberal government. I think that took place in about—

Mr PENGILLY: A point of order, Madam Chair. I asked the minister whether the Rann Labor government intended amalgamating some councils, not a history—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr PENGILLY: Quite frankly—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr PENGILLY: —it is past history.

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Finnis is aware that, when the chair calls for order, he is required to cease. The honourable member's point of order does not include debate, which his endeavoured point of order did. Minister, proceed with your answer.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you. As I said, a massive number of councils were amalgamated by the former Liberal government in 1998.

Mr PENGILLY: Voluntarily.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It did not feel very voluntary to a lot of them, let me tell the honourable member. Despite that, the Rann Labor government has a policy of no forced amalgamations of councils in South Australia. I have reiterated that position on numerous occasions to councils with which I have met. What I have stressed with those councils, however, is that if they and their communities think that benefits can be gained by amalgamating and that they

have the support of their communities and they can display that, we will look at it. What I have asked them to do, however, is to stop thinking within the strictures of their own boundaries, and to think about how they can deliver for their communities on a regional basis.

We have seen a number of councils across the state initiate and take on board what I have said in relation to working together. I know that councils in the electorate of the member for Finnis are doing exactly that. The councils of Alexandrina, Victor Harbor, Yankalilla and Kangaroo Island are working very collaboratively to share resources, programs and skills to deliver on a more cost-effective basis for their community. However, I understand that in many rural and regional areas a council that one might consider to be financially unsustainable can be the heart of that community; and if you did amalgamate it with a range of other communities you would break down the social connect of that community.

I can give a perfect of example of that. I have visited most councils in South Australia. I think there is only one council I have not visited in the last two years. I was particularly impressed when I visited Wudinna council in, I think, March. In the very centre—

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, it is Wudinna council; it has changed its name. That council is in the middle of a drought-ravaged area. It does not have the benefit of having a nice coastline like some of the Eyre Peninsula councils. Here is a farming community experiencing the worst drought on record. We have a council that has made a conscious decision when it speaks about its community to speak only in positive terms. That council sat down and looked at what its community needs and how it can deliver on that. For example, it has identified a range of skills it needs to service its community. It has attracted its very own locally-trained doctor.

The council courted him for a couple of years. He has moved to Wudinna with his wife who, I understand, is a surgically-trained nurse. The council has brought those skills to the town. Here in the city you cannot get a doctor for love nor money, but Wudinna council has managed to attract a doctor to its town. It called for a register of interest, for example, of people who wanted a block of land for \$1. The council worked out who and what it wanted to come into its town, and it has attracted those things. If we amalgamated a small, innovative council, such as Wudinna council, with another council, the distance would simply make it incredibly difficult to maintain that strength of spirit and the vision it has for its community.

Mr VENNING: I refer to the same line and same questioning, in relation to council boundaries. The minister may be aware that there is some movement from some of the councils about modifying the boundaries, and certainly the member for Light is aware of this. Is there any movement, as far as the minister's office is concerned, in relation to facilitating this process? We know that the act states that 20 signatures can actually start a process. Is the minister's office, or the association, promoting this at all?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Promoting councils changing their boundaries?

Mr VENNING: I am pushing it quite strongly, as is the member for Light, because the boundaries of the Barossa Council and the Light Regional Council, I believe, without being too controversial, do need to be modified. It is a matter of allowing the process to happen, but, knowing the politics involved, it is difficult.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As the system is currently, my understanding is that if there is an application to change the boundary and one council objects—John will correct me if I am wrong—then it does not go through. There have not been a number of boundary changes in recent years, and councils have raised the issue with me and stated that it is simply because they have found the process to be a difficult one to navigate. I know that even some residents have looked to have boundary changes occur and, again, have found it a difficult process.

I think it is a process that we perhaps need to look at because I think you are right, I think there are some communities that would benefit. Even with tiny commonsense changes, councils have stated that it is too difficult a process to go through. So, I think it is something we need to cast our eye over and see if we cannot make it a much more manageable system, without overriding the wishes of other communities.

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, in relation to financial assistance. The minister would be aware that some years ago the federal parliament's Hawker committee looked at cost shifting, and there has been a lot of discussion about cost-shifting allegations. Will the minister advise the committee as to what financial assistance the state government is providing to local government, so as to dispel some of the myths?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Light for his question. It is a great opportunity to set the record straight and present some statistics on state government funding to local government, in relation to the assertions we hear that there is cost shifting onto local government. I mentioned earlier that the budget papers show that the transfers from state government to local government this year will be approximately \$100 million, so it is a significant amount of money that we are transferring over to local government.

If you look at the period from 2002-03 to 2006-07, local government operating revenue increased by 17.4 per cent (in real terms). Local government operating expenses increased by only 12.5 per cent over the same period; that is, local government operating revenue increased by more than its operating expenses. There can be no sustained argument that the state government has systematically cost-shifted onto local government during this period. I will outline some of the significant allocations in this year's budget:

- \$32 million in council rate concessions for pensioners and self-funded retirees;
- \$16.8 million for public library services;
- over \$3 million for community wastewater management systems;
- over \$5 million through the Home and Community Care program;
- a grant of \$2 million to the City of Port Adelaide Enfield for The Parks Community Centre; and
- \$4.2 million for stormwater management and flood mitigation.

In some areas there is a cost shift to the state government, where the benefit is enjoyed by local government, and that is where the cost has gone the other way, for example, changes to the emergency services arrangements and natural resource management funding in recent years.

For regional development boards, the Minister for Regional Development has recently announced a new funding agreement for the state's 13 regional development boards. The state government will be providing \$18 million and local government \$5 million over the next five years. From 2008-09, the state government funding will be indexed annually.

In 2007-08, South Australian councils received around \$121 million in federal financial assistance grants, and \$45 million from the commonwealth in specific purpose payments, mainly for roads.

I think that gives a fairly good overview of the major amounts going to local government, but there are also major grants through arts, through planning and a whole range of areas that I have not outlined in detail today, where funding is going from the state government to support local government here in South Australia.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28: Program performance information, performance commentary. Paragraph 3 states:

Developed in collaboration with the local government sector, a community engagement showcase and handbook for use by councils across South Australia.

What was the cost of developing the showcase and handbook for councils; what markers have been set to show such a handbook and showcase are being used by councils; and what is the expected outcome of using the showcase and handbook?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: For the handbook on community engagement, I understand the Office for State/Local Government Relations contributed something like \$32,500 to the two stages of the project. What was the second part of your question?

Mr PENGILLY: The second part was: what markers have been set to show that such a handbook and showcase are being used by councils and, thirdly, what is the expected outcome?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The showcase is really a project that was led by the Local Government Association. What I would like to see is a greater level of consultation by councils with their communities. I imagine those markers will be shown up in the surveys undertaken by councils themselves. We have done this to help support councils. The newspapers are constantly full of articles about this issue, and I am sure the member receives letters on a regular basis from people who are unhappy one way or another about the decisions their local council make, particularly the land revocation process, where people are not aware council might be changing the use of a

particular piece of land or facility. People want to be involved in those processes and, if you take people along with you, they will embrace change.

Again, on a visit to Onkaparinga council, I had the opportunity to speak with the council in some depth about its community engagement processes. In fact, that council devised a table of particular issues fitting into a range of consultation processes that may need to take place, according to the complexity of the particular issue. One that the council highlighted was the redesign of a town square, where one of the residents came to the council with a suggested plan. The council said that it was not what it would have done, but the council involved and engaged with the community. Changes were made to the design, but it ended up that, rather than being a bun fight, the community got the Town Square they wanted, they were happy with the council, and all of the works were done. I understand that the program is so good that many of our state agencies have adopted the program as well.

Mr PENGILLY: Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28: Program performance information, Performance Commentary, paragraph 4. Paragraph 4 states that the community land revocation resource has been developed. Minister, what is the cost of developing this resource, how much land is currently held by councils under the title of community land, and why do councils need such a resource? I understand that the second part of the question (that is, how much land is currently held by councils) is a difficult one: it would be by title; I would not expect the area.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I do not know that I can get you the answer to your second question, that is: how much land is held by councils?

Mr PENGILLY: Perhaps how many titles? I am happy for you to take that question on notice.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Even so, I think that would be a massive task.

Mr PENGILLY: I am sure each council has that information.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am told that that is information that councils would have to provide to us, so we would be putting an enormous burden on the councils. Unless this is a critical piece of information you require, I would prefer not to go down that path. However, I can tell you that this particular project was done in-house with very minimal cost, and I understand it cost us about \$380 to produce the CDs for them. I can give you information about community land revocation proposals if you are interested in that.

Mr PENGILLY: Yes, please.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The total land revocation proposals dealt with in 2005-06 was 47, and none of those was refused; in 2006-07, 38 were approved, and two were refused; in July 2007, 23 were approved, and one was refused. For your information, the three that have been refused are as follows: Light Regional Council relied on very outdated community feedback, so its proposal was refused; Mallala, where, again, the consultation process was inadequate and there was a failure to consult with native title claimants; and Tea Tree Gully council, where the council relied on outdated advice from SAPOL in relation to the closing of a pedestrian access.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget 3, page 4.9: Intergovernmental Finances, Table 4.4: Local government balance sheet, Liabilities. Liabilities for trade and other payables in 2002-03 was \$102 million; and in 2006-07, liabilities for trade and other payables totalled \$217 million. Can the minister explain why there was such a dramatic increase over four budgets, and can she advise the estimated amount for the 2007-08 liabilities?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We will take that question on notice if you are happy for that to happen.

Mr PENGILLY: Yes.

Ms BREUER: My question relates to outback areas. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.9. We have all heard about the mining exploration boom that is occurring in the Outback, but what about the people and what about the way things are managed? Can the minister advise what is being done to support the people who live in the Outback?

The CHAIR: I am confident there must be some aspect of that broad question that is the responsibility of the minister, and that is what she will respond to.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, I am sure that the member for Giles is referring to the Outback Areas Community Development Trust which is responsible for a large portion of South Australia.

The CHAIR: Just about any minister could answer the question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As the member for Giles knows and acknowledges, the Outback in South Australia is facing many challenges and many opportunities, and it is about ensuring that the small towns in the Outback are able to manage these changes. They are the biggest changes, I think, the outback areas have ever seen, so it is vital that we ensure that resident communities have sufficient governance structures in place to manage themselves whilst maintaining that strong and unique spirit of the Outback.

I did a tour of the state's Far North in 2007 with members of the Local Government Grants Commission and the Outback Areas Community Development Trust and, as a result of that, I commissioned the report into the outback areas trust and undertook a governance review. The aim of that was to look at how the trust currently operates and how services are provided to communities in places such as Andamooka, Yunta, Copley, Marla and Leigh Creek. I think it was appropriate given that the trust is now in its 30th year as a statutory authority, and certainly the trust was very keen for this to happen.

In the Outback, we see that most of these communities are completely reliant on volunteers to attend to local development and municipal responsibilities—those things that are generally the responsibility of councils in these outback towns have been managed in the main by volunteers. We are seeing in those towns that either they are struggling because many people have left and moved to other regions as a result of the mining boom or they are struggling because there has been such an influx of people into the community.

We undertook this review with the Outback Areas Community Development Trust, and input into the review was sought from all outback residents, community organisations, relevant agencies and other key stakeholders about matters including the unique needs of these communities and the role and responsibility of community organisations. The results of that community feedback were incorporated into a report that included recommendations on future governance options in the Outback. There has been a very clear expression of support by the communities through the consultation process for updated governance arrangements for the trust. I am very keen to ensure that we have the very best framework that provides support for these communities that still allows them to have some control over their own destiny, that they do not feel as if someone is coming in and taking them over.

Issues raised, for example, included that there are no planning regulations in Andamooka, so people were coming in putting two and three houses on one block, as long as the house complied with the building code; inappropriate businesses establishing next to perhaps a children's centre or the school; so, there was no proper planning. In some towns, issues were raised in relation to the removal of rubbish. People were saying it is just unfair to expect members of a progress association to be chastising their neighbours and yet they want their towns to develop appropriately. So, we have gone through this review, and I hope to bring a bill to the house in the near future, but we will have a draft bill very soon to go out for further public consultation.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28, Program 6: State/Local Government Relations. I refer specifically to the reference to whole-of-government policy as it affects local government. Can the minister advise the committee what the current government policy is in relation to local government elections? Is the government's policy still for compulsory voting or voluntary voting?

The CHAIR: Did the member refer to that point exactly?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: At the very top of the page, Madam Chair, halfway through the second line where it states, 'whole of government policy and legislative frameworks as they affect Local Government'. So, it would be government policy—

The CHAIR: Nevertheless, this is drawing an extremely long bow. The minister may wish to comment but she is certainly, under estimates rules, not obliged to comment.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: It is in the budget paper, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: It is a policy question, member for Kavel, as well you know, I hope.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: A point of order, Madam Chair: it talks about government policy in the budget paper and the question specifically relates to government policy.

The CHAIR: Order! Please do not debate with the chair. Just because it talks about policy—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! Just because a word is mentioned does not mean that the question is valid. The question is about expenditure, not policy. Policy questions may be asked at any time in the House of Assembly. Minister, do you wish to comment?

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Madam Chair, the budget paper specifically relates to policy.

The CHAIR: Order! I have indicated that it is the implementation of policy, not what policy is, that is the subject of estimates.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: If members on my left would show some manners—I have invited the minister to comment if she wishes. I have pointed out to the committee that this is a question suitable for the House of Assembly, not estimates. Minister, do you wish to comment?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is most unlike the member for Kavel to be so rude and aggressive. I usually find him to be quite a charming fellow. It is just so uncharacteristic to have him yelling at you.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: I wasn't yelling at you.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Sorry, you were yelling, and it is most uncharacteristic of you. Never mind, I am happy to answer his question. We have a State Strategic Plan target—and I think I have answered this question for the member for Kavel on numerous occasions, and I will repeat what I have said in the past. My aim is to achieve for local government 50 per cent participation in council elections. That is the South Australian Strategic Plan target. That is what we are working towards.

After legislation was introduced, bringing in a four-year term for local government here in South Australia, the government committed to having a review of the election process after the 2006 election. As I have said, we did that, and a number of submissions were placed into the review's final report. We wanted to assess the conduct of the election, the promotion of the election, what got people out to vote or why they did not vote, so that we had something to help us drive towards this 50 per cent participation target.

There are recommendations in that elections review about how we might increase voter turnout and improve representation in local government, and that is right across the board. They have been upset about women, but they might be upset about involving other people from ethnic backgrounds, as well as indigenous people, to ensure that we have representation on local government from those sections of our community to improve the election process.

Those 27 recommendations are currently with the Local Government Association, and we are awaiting its response to that. We have a considered report that has been put to us, and we will look at that. From memory, I do not think that the report recommended compulsory voting for the next local council elections. We need to consider a range of strategies outlined in that report to ensure that local government is not only a legitimate form of government—an elected form of government—but also that it is truly representative of the communities that it aims to represent.

Mr GOLDSWORTHY: Going on from that response: minister, is the State Strategic Plan at odds with the current Labor government policy on local government voting?

The CHAIR: Again, I think that all members are aware that that question is not orderly, but I invite the minister to comment if she wishes.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think I have answered the question about where the government is going in relation to local government elections.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27: Summary income statement, grants and subsidies. Can the minister explain why state local government was allocated \$70,000 again this year for grants and subsidies? In real terms, this is less than last year's allocation as it has not allowed for CPI. Can the minister explain to whom these grants and subsidies are given and why there is such a large difference from the actual figure in 2006-07 of \$307,000?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The \$70,000 in the 2008-09 budget is the regular amount that we give to councils for their European wasps control program. In 2006-07, the \$307,000 actually included payments to councils for flood damage, the Eyre Peninsula bushfire and the contribution to the Kangaroo Island Council for the Kangaroo Island study. A range of those issues were included in that funding, and some of that was then returned in the income that came back from the disaster fund. It was money we laid out initially to help councils that were experiencing difficulty as a result of the disaster, and it came back into our budget through the disaster fund.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.27: Summary income statement, net cost of providing services. The net cost of providing services under State/Local Government Relations in the budget has been reduced by \$9,000 for 2008-09 over 2007-08. The cost of employee benefits and costs has risen by \$67,000. Supplies and services is down \$161,000 compared to 2007-08, and total income is down by \$85,000 compared to 2007-08. Can the minister explain why it seems that less money is being put into State/Local Government Relations but staff costs and benefits is increasing? What supplies and services are being cut to make the saving of \$161,000?

Mr KNIGHT: The member may recall an earlier answer I gave to a question in relation to reconciliation between the 2007-08 estimated result and the 2007-08 budget. The relevant comparison is the 2008-09 and 2007-08 budgets. The estimated result has a number of one-off expenditures that were allocated within the portfolio for high priority initiatives in 2007-08 that were not included in the original budget. The most important of those were, first, \$140,000 spent on reviewing infrastructure requirements in outback areas and, secondly, the local government elections. These were one-off expenditures in 2007-08 in the estimated result that were not in the 2007-08 budget, and they are not ongoing. Hence, the reduction in the net cost is purely due to the fact that they appear in the 2007-08 budget but not in the 2008-09 budget, and they will not appear in future years either.

In terms of trying to get a sense of movement over time, the relevant comparison is the 2008-09 and the 2007-08 budgets, and the increase is about the rate of inflation. The increase in employee costs and benefits, I think, is between 2.8 and 2.9, which is around 3.5 per cent, which is about the rate at which employee costs are growing. In terms of the reduction in total income from \$96,000 to only \$11,000 in the budget estimates, it again relates to the fact that in 2007-08 the LGA contributed two sums of money to programs that were agreed to be done on a shared cost basis, one of which was the elections review, which was a fifty-fifty arrangement. Again, the 2007-08 estimated result has a couple of one-offs in it—\$50,000 for the elections review and \$18,000 for the Citizens Engagement Project. Both figures are part of the \$73,000 in the line entitled 'Other' and, of course, they do not appear in the 2008-09 budget. It is not actually a cut; it is just the fact that funding was provided for particular priorities in 2007-08.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 5.28: Performance Commentary, model of finance statements for local government. Paragraph 4 of the performance commentary states:

Updated, in collaboration with the local government sector, the set of Model Financial Statements for Local Government. The Model Financial Statements and notes are consistent with Australian Accounting Standards and incorporate the best practice of other local government jurisdictions in Australia.

Is South Australia the last state to incorporate this best practice, and at what cost was this to the Local Government Association and the local council sector?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: South Australia was, in fact, the first state to seriously look at how it was managing its finances. To its credit, the Local Government Association in South Australia was the first to implement a review into how its own councils were managing themselves. We led the nation in relation to that, and it has now been adopted across the nation. Local government in South Australia set the standard, and the model financial statements prepared for the ministerial council for planning and local government ministers have been adopted nationally.

Mr PENGILLY: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Volume 2, page 4.8, table 4.3: Local government operating statement. The explanation states:

In real terms, operating revenue for local government increased by 17.4 per cent over the four-year period from 2002-03 to 2007-08. Total operating expenses increased in real terms by 12.5 per cent over the same period.

Can the minister detail the main reasons for these increases both in operating revenue and operating expenses?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You are asking me about the financial figures of local government itself, so it is the composite of the 68 councils. We can take that on notice, but I do not know that we are going to be able to satisfy you with an answer about that.

Mr PENGILLY: I have no further questions, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare consideration of the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Resources and the Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Resources completed.

[Sitting suspended from 12:54 to 14:00]

Membership:

Ms Chapman substituted for Mr Pengilly.

Mrs Redmond substituted for Mr Goldsworthy.

Mrs Penfold substituted for Mr Venning.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, \$95,378,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, \$55,673,000

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 J. Maguire, Chief Executive, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Ms D. Contala, Executive Director, Corporate and Business Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Ms S. Pitcher, Director, Office for Women.

Mr A. Swanson, Director, Strategic and Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr S. Forrest, Executive Director, Social Justice, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr D. Mazzone, Acting Director, Office of the Chief Executive, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr T. Anastasiou, Manager, Portfolio Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular, pages 2.14 to 2.19 and Appendix C, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, part 4. Does the minister wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, thank you. Since becoming Minister for the Status of Women, I have taken a two-pronged approach in relation to women here in South Australia: encouraging leadership and participation and the safety of women. It is obviously important for any woman to reach her full potential and that she be safe. We have worked hard to ensure that women and children here in South Australia can have confidence, with the introduction of our new rape and sexual assault laws, which is the largest overhaul of those laws in 30 years, and court processes that do not further traumatise and victimise victims.

We want to be at the forefront of encouraging women's leadership—we think that is incredibly important—and we want to ensure that this applies for all South Australian women no matter their location, ethnicity or background. We want to ensure that the contribution of women in

South Australia is honoured and valued. These principles are at the core of this portfolio, and I am pleased to present to this committee some progress that we have made over the last year.

We have been proactive in the appointment of women to boards and committees, as required in the South Australian Strategic Plan. The Office for Women has lead responsibility for ensuring that more women are able to make a contribution as leaders and key decision makers in the South Australian community—and, obviously, in some of those Strategic Plan targets the government has little direct influence on that. Nevertheless, it is part of our overall target for our community.

The Premier's Women's Directory continues to expand, with over 500 women from across South Australia registering their interest in the state's boards and committees, and we continue to make progress towards those targets.

As of June 2008, women made up 44.34 per cent of members of our state government boards and committees and 34.34 per cent of chairs of state government boards and committees. The Office for Women is also working with the Office for State/Local Government Relations in attempting to increase the number of women standing for and participating in local councils. Again, that is not necessarily the sole responsibility of government but something into which we are putting some considerable effort.

This year we will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Women's Information Service. I am pleased that we have secured new premises for the Women's Information Service in a prominent location, Chesser House in Grenfell Street. I think it will give WIS a much higher profile. It will be visible and enable the Women's Information Service to reach out to a far wider range of women in South Australia other than those who are using the internet or telephone, and I am very much looking forward to the opening of those premises.

We have implemented a system of outreach programs from the Women's Information Service while it is still located on North Terrace. We have been successful in ensuring that we make contact in both metropolitan and rural South Australia with isolated women, women from different cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal women, women who are sole parents and women experiencing financial difficulties. We have done this through our hubs in our children's centres.

Throughout June, the Office for Women coordinated a drought reach program. We received some funding through the Department of Primary Industries and Resources and held workshops throughout 20 locations in South Australia. It was an opportunity for women to get together and discuss the issues that are impacting on them and learning about a whole range of measures that are currently provided by the state and federal government in response to the drought.

As I said, we have overhauled rape and sexual assault laws. We have ensured that drink spiking is a crime under the criminal law and we are reviewing the laws in relation to domestic violence, and I think those initiatives have been welcomed generally across the South Australian community. Our Family Safety Framework, which seeks to deal with families at risk of violence, deals with them in a much more strategic, structured and systematic way through agencies sharing information and taking responsibility for supporting families through the system. The trials of the Family Safety Framework have been implemented in three regions: Holden Hill, Port Augusta and Noarlunga. An evaluation is currently being conducted and is due to be completed in the next few months.

The Office for Women will work with partners across the Attorney-General's Department to coordinate a community awareness and education campaign, which will be a comprehensive strategy to ensure that the public is aware of the new criminal justice system reform relating to physical and sexual violence and to promote changes in community attitudes. White Ribbon Day is also an important focus on the anti-violent message. We have been working hard to lift the profile of White Ribbon Day, and I was pleased in 2007 that the Adelaide City Council agreed to hang a large white ribbon from the Adelaide Town Hall. Also, white ribbons were displayed on all our new trams, and we have bigger plans for 2008.

We have also implemented an awareness campaign in relation to drink spiking, particularly aimed at young women reminding them to protect their drinks. This message has been delivered at various events, including Schoolies Week, the 2008 Adelaide Fringe Festival and the University of Adelaide's Orientation Week. We very much appreciate the support of the AHA, hoteliers themselves and the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner, all of which included our material in the Commissioner for Liquor and Gambling's Safe Party Pack, which was also mailed out to all public and private secondary schools in March this year.

I was very pleased just a short while ago to induct 146 inspiring women into South Australia's Women's Honour Roll at a ceremony here at Parliament House. Women from all over South Australia were recognised for their lifetime achievements and, for many, it was the first time they had been publicly acknowledged for their work. It was a worthwhile event and was attended by guests from all sides of politics, and I appreciated their support. At that function I also announced South Australia's Woman of the Year for 2008, Solveiga Greaves. It is worth pointing out that Solveiga is Co-Director at Marra Dreaming, an Aboriginal community organisation located at Salisbury.

Murrangga Kumangka means 'hands working together' in the Kurna language. Solveiga was born in Latvia and came to Australia in 1949. After completing her training in nursing and midwifery in 1967, she elected to work in the Northern Territory at Hermannsburg for six years. She has great affinity with the Aboriginal community through her deep understanding and acknowledgment of issues of dispossession and stolen identity. Her vision of assisting people to become empowered through the provision of appropriate educational programs has very much led to the success of Marra Dreaming within that community.

I intend to announce the 2009 Honour Roll and Woman of the Year on the eve of International Women's Day next year. I now welcome examination of the budget papers.

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, do you have a statement to make?

Ms CHAPMAN: No. I will cover a couple of matters the minister raised in her opening address first. In relation to the spiking of drinks, the campaign that has been undertaken and the change of legislation—

The CHAIR: Will the deputy leader refer the committee to the budget line to start with?

Ms CHAPMAN: There is only one page on women, and I think that has been referred to as page 4.84. You read it out before.

The CHAIR: I did not read page 4.84 before. Would the deputy leader like me to repeat my statement? I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to the Budget Statement, in particular pages 2.14 to 2.19 and Appendix C, and the Portfolio Statement, Volume 1, part 4.

Ms CHAPMAN: I note the error on my part, Madam Chair. Perhaps you omitted to mention that page 4.84 is actually the page on that. Perhaps you would advise the rest of the committee that you have missed that. It is in—

The CHAIR: Order, that is—

Ms CHAPMAN: —Budget Paper 4, Volume 1.

The CHAIR: That statement is not in order. I did not miss it at all.

Ms CHAPMAN: I am sorry. You either said it or you did not say it, Madam Chair; and, having not said it—

The CHAIR: I did not say it.

Ms CHAPMAN: Well—

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Bragg is aware that debate with the chair is out of order. I did not say it and I am not supposed to say it. Perhaps the deputy leader would like to proceed with her question?

Ms CHAPMAN: I will. Page 4.84 is titled 'Women's Policy Office', for the benefit of the committee and the minister, and is the only reference in the Attorney-General's Department to the portfolio aspect of the Women's Policy Office, because it outlines both a commentary and the \$1.708 million that will be spent in relation to this office. Has the office undertaken any assessment as to how many people have been prosecuted for drink spiking since the introduction of this valuable legislation?

The CHAIR: I do not see any reference to that. Minister, do you wish to make a contribution on that?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think that one English tourist was prosecuted. I could not give the honourable member current numbers for that, I am sorry.

Ms CHAPMAN: I am happy for the minister to take that on notice.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, sure.

Ms CHAPMAN: In relation to the Premier's women's council and the funding of that for advice to government and to the Premier, in the last year has the Premier's women's council provided any advice or done any review or assessment in relation to the overcrowding in Housing Trust accommodation for women and children?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I do not have all the reports that the Premier's Council for Women has provided, but it has been involved in a number of areas over the last 12 months, and I can give a brief outline of some of them. The council has played a direct role in relation to the South Australian Strategic Plan. One of the council members is on the SASP audit committee. The current chair, Pat Mickan, is a member of the Community Engagement Board and is active in working with partners within and beyond government on focusing on issues in relation to women.

The PCW has held a number of forums throughout the year. One that I attended involved young women, and I think something like 50 to 60 young women attended that. It was quite an inspiration to listen to them about how they saw issues for women in South Australia and how they might progress and what opportunities were afforded to them. Some interesting themes that emerged from that: work/life balance, employment issues, leadership, fertility, health and education, and in that particular forum the young women raised concerns about the impact of caring in relation to their careers, whether they would have children or not, and employment conditions and leadership opportunities that might be available to them if they do, in fact, decide to have children.

The council has obviously been very active in its lobbying around the rape and sexual assault laws and domestic violence law reform. It supported the upgrading of the Gender Indicators Online website, and it has had working parties focusing on women's voices forums, but also Aboriginal women, women in leadership, health, safety and wellbeing, and work/life balance. The Premier's Council for Women cannot be all things to all people. It is a relatively small board and it is strategically identifying what its priorities might be.

Ms CHAPMAN: My third question again relates to the Premier's Council for Women, because we agree that this is a very important board. It was established by the Hon. Diana Laidlaw and it has been maintained by this government. My understanding from the Premier's previous statements is that it meets monthly and that it is to provide advice to government on a range of areas. I did not hear anything to do with housing in relation to the list of forums you identified. How often has the Premier's Council for Women met with the Premier in the last 12 months, and what were the subjects of advice that it gave him?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My recollection—I might be wrong and I will correct it if I am wrong—is that it has met with the Premier on at least two occasions. I know that the chair of the Premier's Council for Women has met with the Premier and provides him with regular written reports. In relation to your specific question, the Premier's Council for Women has been very actively involved in monitoring the process of the Family Safety Framework, and that really encompasses a whole range of agencies, including housing. So, with families that are in a crisis situation where women and children are in danger, we have all those agencies that are relevant to those women and their families working together to ensure that they are appropriately cared for and protected.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you, minister. I take it you are taking on notice the question of the topics that the council has actually advised the Premier on? You said there were a number of reports that had been given to him, but you did not indicate what they were on.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am sure we can provide you with that information.

Ms BREUER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.85, which refers to the Women's Information Service. Will the minister advise what the government has done in response to the needs of women in South Australia's drought-affected communities?

An honourable member interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! You are commenting that there is more than one page. Minister?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: As the member for Giles would know, the drought has caused enormous hardship in rural South Australia and women very much bear the brunt of that. I well recall that, during a community cabinet in Renmark, I held a women's forum. I think it was the first time that women in that region had got together in a room and shared their stories, and not only

shared their stories but learned from each other about the services and supports that were available.

It prompted me to try to initiate some forums around the state in response to this. Many women, particularly migrant women, indicated that their husbands were going off to meetings, learning about the drought and the initiatives that were available, but not necessarily sharing that information with their wives and families. So, we set up these drought reach sessions and they were conducted between May and June in places such as Loxton, Crystal Brook, Whyalla, Wudinna, Burra, Kimba, Kadina, Meningie, Ceduna, Murray Bridge, Streaky Bay, Keith, Pinnaroo, Tumby Bay, Orroroo, Milang, Kingscote, Waikerie, Port Augusta and Renmark.

They were, as I understand it, very well received by the people who came along to them. The CWA was involved, and we had service providers and speakers from the Rural Financial Counsellors, Centrelink, Women in Agriculture and Business, Country Health SA and, of course, the Women's Information Service. They were discussing topics around stress, depression, physical health, relationships, parenting, funding opportunities, leadership programs, further education and much, much more. They took advantage, as I thought they would, of the opportunity to engage one on one with the speakers, allowing them to voice the details of their particular situation and to get advice.

This drought reach program has also promoted the use of the Women's Information Service's toll free number. Again, it is about spreading the word that the service is out there for all South Australian women. We received some good reports back from those who participated, but I think one particular comment encapsulated the feeling, when one woman said:

The most useful thing about today's session was learning where we can access information and where the support services can be found in relation to any issues rural women face.

Another woman said:

Informative speakers took on board discussions raised. A well organised day, and a good chance for women to voice their issues and concerns.

We are committed to ensuring that all women in South Australia, from the APY lands to the state's South-East, have access to information on government and community services and that they have the latest information on issues relevant to women.

Through these drought reach sessions, we will also be establishing Women's Information Service hubs right across rural South Australia, and I expect we will have something like 20 of those hubs established in the next month or so, which I think, again, will be warmly welcomed by those communities, many of which have had no access at all to information about women's services.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: Again, I refer to page 4.84 of Budget Paper 4, Volume 1. Minister, I am pleased that, earlier this year, the government and the parliament passed new laws to do with rape and sexual assault. Can the minister please provide members with information about what you will do, in addition to the new legislation, to make sure that there can be real help in changing community attitudes and behaviour towards sexual assault and rape?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am really pleased that we have been able to allocate over \$850,000 over the next four years to undertake a public awareness campaign about these new laws. We take these matters seriously, and we will be focusing on how the campaign can intervene to change attitudes, which I think is the most important thing: we want to have a situation where the community has zero tolerance towards violence against women and children. We will be working with the legal system, criminal justice personnel, interest groups and the general public to create a level of awareness about the impact of these new laws. I think that is very important as well because we know a lot of changes have occurred in relation to that, specifically in relation to people working directly with victims of rape and sexual assault, particularly children.

We know that community education programs have been successful in the past. We know that it is not the silver bullet, but it certainly has worked to a large extent through education of drink driving and antismoking campaigns; we know they have had an impact. So, we are hoping this will also have a direct impact on people's attitudes and tolerance towards violence against women. It is a good announcement, and I am looking forward to the development of those strategies.

Ms CHAPMAN: I again refer to the Premier's Council for Women, pages 4.84 and 4.85. Minister, when cabinet approved the Country Health Care Plan, which was published a couple of weeks ago, did you, as a member of cabinet, inquire as to whether the Premier's Council for Women, or any of your women's advisory groups within this portfolio, had been consulted on the

plan and, if they had provided advice, what was it, particularly in relation to the abolition of obstetric services at some of the country hospitals? If they did not provide—

The CHAIR: Order! I have heard enough of a question that is totally out of order. The member for Bragg is well aware that cabinet discussions are confidential. Asking a question about what happened in cabinet is not orderly. Does the member wish to reframe the question?

Ms CHAPMAN: I am happy to do that. When you considered, minister, the Country Health Care Plan and your endorsement or otherwise of it, did you ask the Premier's Council for Women or your department to give an assessment on what their view was on the Country Health Care Plan, particularly the—

The CHAIR: Order! The question still has not become orderly. Does the member wish some time to put it into order.

Ms CHAPMAN: I haven't mentioned cabinet, chair. I have asked the minister when she considered her support of—

The CHAIR: Yes, and that relates to which budget paper in which way?

Ms CHAPMAN: The Premier's health council and the advice that they have been giving the minister.

The CHAIR: The Premier's health council?

Ms CHAPMAN: That's right—women's council.

The CHAIR: That was not the question. The minister might like to interpret it that way. Does the minister wish to interpret the question that way?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The Premier's Council for Women for this year has two issues that it will be concentrating on. It will be concentrating on women's economic status and employment, and women's health, safety and wellbeing. The Premier's Council for Women will be involved in the consultation process around health, monitoring the South Australian Women's Health Action Plan. It is involved in that and consulting with the Minister for Health. As I said before, it will be monitoring the progress of the Family Safety Framework and a whole range of other things, but I have certainly engaged with the Minister for Health about the Premier's Council for Women's involvement in consultation over health initiatives.

Ms CHAPMAN: Thank you, minister. I am very pleased to hear that. I look forward to hearing what its recommendation is next year after it has been consulted on the country health plan.

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms CHAPMAN: My next question is at page 4.84 as it relates to the representation of women on government boards and committees. The commentary refers to the current level of representation of women on boards and committees at 43 per cent, with chairs comprising 32 per cent. Do you have that?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes.

Ms CHAPMAN: Can the minister provide a breakdown by portfolio of each portfolio area as to the percentage? I note that last year when I asked this question we found that the worst offenders were the Hon. Kevin Foley at 28.7 per cent and the Hon. Patrick Conlon at 24.44 per cent. Can we have the further list of the percentage for each portfolio?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I would have prepared myself better for this question, if I had thought you were going to ask it because—

Ms CHAPMAN: I ask it every year.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, well, I just thought this year in particular you might not have wanted to go down that particular track when we look at numbers of women in this place—and that is also a target for South Australia's Strategic Plan—and the numbers of women that you have on your side of the house compared to ours and what is likely to occur in the future.

Ms CHAPMAN: A point of order, Madam Chair: the question was in relation to boards and chairs of public administration, not in relation to membership of the parliament.

The CHAIR: The member entered into debate in asking the question, so liberty is given.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am really happy to match our performance against that of the former government. We actually have a target.

Ms CHAPMAN: Don't you want to tell me what Foley's new list is?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The unique thing about our government is—

Ms CHAPMAN: Has Kevin dropped back, has he?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: —we have a target.

Ms CHAPMAN: Or has Patrick failed altogether?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Your lot—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You don't believe in targets and, in fact—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Merit-based. So, you don't have any more than three women—

Ms CHAPMAN: A point of order—

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: —in the Liberal Party that—

The CHAIR: Order, minister! Just wait a moment. The member for Bragg has a point of order.

Ms CHAPMAN: Yes. The question was in relation to the target of women on boards and chairs of boards in government portfolios. The minister might want to try to go off on to other targets—

The CHAIR: Order! Debate is not in order in making a point of order. The deputy leader is well aware of the custom in this committee and in the house that, if a questioner engages in debate in asking a question, liberty is given to the minister to engage in debate in response. The precedent is well established.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to compare our target and our response to that target with that of the Liberal Party—the deputy leader's party—and that of private companies. We have something like 8 per cent of board positions occupied by women in the top 200 companies. Of the seven top 200 companies in South Australia, three are without even one female director. I know she likes targets when they apply to us, but let me just read what the former prime minister said in relation to targets for women: 'In our approach to issues that affect women, we have not sought a flashy symbolism, we have not indulged ourselves in things like quotas, and we have not been'—

Ms CHAPMAN: A point of order: how could references to former prime ministers have anything to do with the portfolio targets of this government whomever the prime minister was?

The CHAIR: The question was about targets—the answer is about targets.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We have three women on the Liberal side of this house in this chamber and we have some vacancies coming up. The member for Stuart is retiring. Who is replacing him? Mr Dan van Holst Pellekaan.

Ms CHAPMAN: It must be really bad this year, is it?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No. In Hartley, Joe Scalzi is being recycled and he beat a woman candidate. In Mount Gambier, Steve Perryman; Frome, Terry Boylan, who beat a woman candidate; Norwood, Stephen Marshall, who beat a woman candidate; Morialta, John Gardner; Mawson, Kym Richardson, who is being recycled; Light, four blokes are contesting Light—I do not know who they are; Newland—

Ms CHAPMAN: Well, you have sacked two ministers—female ministers.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Trish Draper is bobbing her head up. Apparently—

Ms CHAPMAN: Bring back Trish. Bring back Steph Key.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: —everything is better again.

Ms CHAPMAN: Bring back Lea Stevens.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In Flinders—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In Flinders, the member for Flinders is—

Ms CHAPMAN: This is completely irrelevant.

The CHAIR: Order! The deputy leader is making some statements that are entirely out of order and totally inappropriate which should not go without comment. The deputy leader may care to withdraw and apologise. I will give her that opportunity but I am not asking her to.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In Flinders, no-one is yet preselected, but Mark Cant and Peter Treloar have nominated. So, in the safest Liberal seat in the state, it looks as though a male will replace—

Ms CHAPMAN: I am glad you think that we will win the seat. That is great. Bad luck for the National Party.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I note that you are down and nearly out, but one would expect that you could hold the safest Liberal seat in the state.

Ms CHAPMAN: I notice there's no women in your safe seats.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Now we have all these hopefuls lining up for the seat of Mayo. Are any women mentioned on page 6 of *The Advertiser*? Jason Kuchel, Bob Day—oh, that will be interesting—Dave Basham, Matt Doman, Jamie Briggs—

Mr Piccolo interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You heard the radio interview as well. No women. So I am happy to look at our track record in supporting women, compared to yours. I think that when the Liberal Party was in power, women on government boards and committees comprised something like 20 per cent-odd, compared to 44 per cent at the beginning of June this year. So, I do not think that we are doing too badly. We have a target to reach 50 per cent by the end of this year. It is a tough ask. I do not know whether we will get there, but we have a target. We are working towards it and doing our best to get there, which is a whole lot more than what your government ever did or was ever likely to do, or what you are currently doing now in relation to women's leadership in this place.

Ms CHAPMAN: So I take it, minister, that after that tirade I am not going to get the portfolio percentages that I asked for. That was the question. Are you going to take that on notice, or are you not going to give it to us?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, I do not have it here.

Ms CHAPMAN: Are you going to take it on notice?

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

Ms CHAPMAN: On the same target subject—

The CHAIR: Order! Wait until you are called. I will not allow a continual dialogue to occur. I expect some respect for the committee processes and the parliament. The member for Bragg.

Ms CHAPMAN: Minister, this question also relates to this target for government boards and chairs of boards. I think it is mentioned that the government's target is for the end of this year, but on my statement your target is actually to achieve 50 per cent by 2010. That is 18 months away. That has not been achieved in the past two years, and there has been a very modest increase—we would agree—sometimes less than 1 per cent. It is currently at 43 per cent. On that target, you would not reach that until 2020 to 2025. You have already changed the target once in that it was revised to 2008 in the 2007 plan. My question is: are you going to change this target again and, if not, what measures are you going to introduce to facilitate achieving that?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: We were tasked with reaching this target by the end of this year for membership of boards and committees, not chairs of boards and committees. So, it is likely that we will not get to 50 per cent by the end of this year. Like I said, it is a hard ask. But from 2004, we had 33 per cent and to 2008, it is 44 per cent. We have had a substantial increase in the number of women on boards and committees, and we will keep striving towards that target.

Mrs REDMOND: I refer to the same page of the budget paper. Does achieving that target ever mean passing over a more meritorious male candidate for a position?

Ms Breuer interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Exactly. I think the member for Giles has hit the nail on the head.

Mrs REDMOND: The question is: is it ever the case that a more meritorious male candidate is overlooked for a position in order to achieve the target? It is a simple question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: My answer to that would be that, as far as I am aware, no. All positions are considered carefully, although we have the Acts Interpretation (Gender Balance) Amendment Act which requires organisations nominating people for boards and committees to provide male and female nominations when the minister is selecting those people. People are considered very carefully for their qualifications to go on boards and committees. We are doing an enormous amount of work to have women board-ready and to encourage women to go on the Premier's Women's Directory. They do not just automatically go on because they want to; they are very carefully screened and monitored, and we make sure that they are board-ready and qualified before they are listed. In excess of 500 women are currently on the Premier's Women's Directory.

Mrs REDMOND: So, what would happen if an organisation that was asked to put up names for nomination felt that the people best qualified and best suited for that nomination all happened to be male?

The CHAIR: That is a hypothetical question, but the minister may care to provide information.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is a very hypothetical question. In fact, the act requires that non-government entities include women when nominating positions. There are some areas in which it is very difficult to have qualified women; for example, in the emergency services. I know that, with some of those boards and committees, it is very difficult to find women with specific qualifications to serve on those boards. That is why, in some areas, it is quite difficult to reach that target. In other areas, it is an historic thing; organisations are just very used to nominating men and there is an expectation that they will be selected, so they do not go through the process of even trying to identify women. I would expect that, if ministers are given a list only of men as nominations from non-government entities, they will go back to those organisations and say, 'Please have a look again, reconsider, and let me know if you have any suitably qualified women who could be considered for this board or committee.'

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.85, the expansion of outreach work through the provision of information support to women across South Australia. Can the minister provide further information about this program?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I mentioned briefly the Women's Information Service Outreach Program. It commenced in 2006 and has been expanding ever since. As I said, when I became Minister for the Status of Women, I was very keen for the Office for Women to be seen as a resource for all South Australian women, and for the information service to be out and about where women are living and caring for their families.

We have established a presence in our children's centres for early childhood and parenting. As these centres are established, the Women's Information Service has been establishing hubs. Currently, there are seven operating, including CaFE Enfield, which I think was the first to be up and operating. To see the way that the women in that particular centre embraced it and virtually took it over was quite heartening. We have also expanded to The Parks, Elizabeth Grove, Keithcot Farm, Hackham West, Ocean View at Taperoo and, recently, a new one was opened at Renmark.

We have also established a service in the Kingscote library on Kangaroo Island, again, as result of the community cabinet travelling around South Australia. It is very clear that there was a need on Kangaroo Island and also at the Communities Connected Service Centre at Mount Gambier. These hubs are going very well, and they have given the Women's Information Service an opportunity to interact with a whole range of other programs designed to assist young mums. These include the Talking Realities program in the western suburbs; Mum's the Word at Paralowie Youth Service; and Pathways for Young Mums, facilitated by ParaWest Adult Campus.

These are all vital programs helping women to establish and maintain connections in their community, develop skills in parenting, pursue educational opportunities, and gain some support from childcare professionals and their peers. It is also an opportunity for people to visit and get information in a non-stigmatising environment. People will not think that there is anything untoward or unusual about visiting the local children's centre.

I recently granted \$5,000 for the continuation of the Talking Realities Friday Fund program at The Parks Community Centre. This program promotes the independence of young mothers and provides them with educational and social opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment, and it increases their ability to access services and broaden their knowledge and education.

The outreach programs have been going incredibly well. They have also visited rural and regional areas and linked in with the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs to visit some rural and country regions. They were in Ceduna in February, where they met with other service providers and indigenous organisations. They have visited field days at Lucindale and the Renmark and Loxton Riverland Rural Expos. It is really heartening to see a service which, in my view, was housebound too long in the Roma Mitchell Building actually getting out in our communities and making a connection with women in places where they work and live.

Ms BREUER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.84. Can the minister tell the committee about the work she has led in relation to Aboriginal women in our state? I am particularly interested to hear more about the South Australian Aboriginal Women's Gathering.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I thank the member for Giles for the question; I know she has a great interest in supporting Aboriginal women. This government is committed to improving the lives of all Aboriginal women in our state. To that end, I have been very privileged to support our South Australian Aboriginal Women's Gathering through the Office for Women since becoming minister. This is an important annual event for Aboriginal women who travel from all across South Australia to attend. I must say that it is equally important for me as minister, my ministerial colleagues and departmental heads to hear their views and gain input, and to hear the women's recommendations. It also provides them with a real opportunity to share the experiences and issues within their community, and meet and network with other Aboriginal women.

It is lovely to see women coming from the lands, as they did last time, to meet and interact with young Aboriginal women from some of our country towns and from metropolitan Adelaide, and seeing the great respect they have for each other and the sharing of stories. It was really quite heartening.

The theme of the gathering last year was women and economic status. They have worked through a number of themes such as safety and wellbeing and health issues and leadership. This year it was about their economic status. Delegates heard encouraging sessions from Aboriginal women who have established and managed their own businesses; they heard from Aboriginal participants of the national Indigenous Leadership Programs; they had training and information on resumes from the Aboriginal Employment Program; they heard about the current status of the mining industry and its employment and training opportunities within South Australia; and information regarding indigenous specific programs with the state government such as the Young Indigenous Entrepreneur Program. They also had the opportunity to workshop recommendations based on their theme of economic status.

On the final day I was presented with those recommendations which are currently receiving consideration. We have also implemented a process—and I know they really enjoy it—of departmental heads across government coming along and interacting with the gathering—this year it was chaired by Jerome Maguire. They were able to impart their real concerns to the chief executives and ask them direct questions about Aboriginal programs within their portfolio responsibilities, and how we could be working together more effectively to address the needs of those communities.

In South Australia that women's gathering, I understand, is quite unique and the delegates have the opportunity to elect their representatives to attend the national gathering. I am aware that a number of states grapple with who their representatives should be who attend the national Aboriginal Women's Gathering. In South Australia we have that process and it is very well received, I think, by our indigenous women. It is a great opportunity for them to get together and speak with government about the issues that are impacting on their lives and how we can help them progress.

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, do you wish to ask any further questions?

Ms CHAPMAN: My question is on the same page: Premier's women's council. Minister, the chair of Premier's women's council wrote to Premier Rann on 20 November 2006. The letter stated:

The overall progress of female appointments has only marginally progressed over the last five months from July figures of 41.2 per cent; August, 41.71 per cent; September, 41.71 per cent; October, 41.5 per cent; and November 41.6 per cent. It is also concerning that some ministers have a consistently low ranking in their percentage appointment of women.

I have referred earlier in questions to the—

The CHAIR: Order! Does the deputy leader have a copy of that letter available? It seems that the question is based on a letter rather than a budget line. That, of course, is disorderly; however, I have indicated that if a member is using other information, the minister may comment if a copy of that information is provided to the chair for distribution to the committee, otherwise the question needs to be reframed so that it is based on a budget line.

Ms CHAPMAN: I do not have the letter with me. I have written out what was said in the letter, but I am happy to provide the letter. I undertake to provide a copy of that to the minister. I read it out last year and the chair did not take such an objection.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Is this letter dated November 2006?

Ms CHAPMAN: 2006, correct. It was read out and it is in last year's transcript, so I am re-reading it. It was in reference to the 2006-07 highlights. Now, of course, we have had the highlights of 2007-08 and they include the reference that I made earlier about the 43 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. I note, minister, that you are going to provide us, in due course, with the portfolio percentages to see how each of the ministers is performing, but my question is: in light of the targets not being on sufficient track (unless there is a massive increase and a number of appointments in the next 18 months) to achieve the target on chairs, which is 50 per cent by 2010, is it the intention of the minister to change that target again?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is my intention to do the best we can to reach those targets. As I said, at least we have targets. There are a number of things that we have in place that you did not have in place. One of them I pointed out in the earlier estimates. For example, we report in our budget the money going to local government from the state government. We hear lots of argy-bargy about cost shifting, but we report on that. It has been in our budget papers since 2002-03, something like that. We provide that information. The opposition did not and does not have targets. We will work towards them. There is no point in setting easy targets. For example, if the member wants to see who is achieving in relation to women's leadership, she should have a look across Australia. Some 37 per cent of all Labor parliamentarians in Australia are women and 23 per cent of Liberal parliamentarians are women. That tells the story about who is really committed to ensuring that women are in leadership positions and have opportunities.

The CHAIR: The time agreed for examination of the Minister for the Status of Women has expired. I now call the Minister for Volunteers to the table.

Membership:

Hon. I.F. Evans substituted for Ms Chapman.

Mr Goldsworthy substituted for Mrs Penfold.

Departmental Adviser:

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

Ms D. Contala, Executive Director, Corporate and Business Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr A. Hamilton, Director, Office for Volunteers.

Mr A. Swanson, Director, Strategic and Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr S. Forrest, Executive Director, Social Justice, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr D. Mazzone, Acting Director, Office of the Chief Executive, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr T. Anastasiou, Manager, Portfolio Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

The CHAIR: Does the minister have an opening statement?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes. The Office for Volunteers is very proud of its achievements over the past 12 months, and I will make only a brief statement to highlight some of the key issues in relation to what has been happening in the office in the last 12 months.

There are many innovative programs, strategies and resources that the Office for Volunteers provides to help our community groups to recruit, retain, induct and train their volunteers. Our Advancing the Community Together partnership—the agreement between the voluntary sector and the South Australian parliament—is really the key framework that we work with in the development and support of volunteering in South Australia. We have a Strategic Plan target (another one of those pesky targets) of a 50 per cent participation rate in volunteering. That is a target that we hit four years ahead of time, and it has been revised in the Strategic Plan to ensure that we maintain that high level of volunteering in South Australia.

I will now provide details of some new initiatives that have taken place this year. We launched CorporateConnect, a new corporate volunteering program, only a few months ago. The Premier and I were joined by business leaders who pledged volunteer hours for their employees to help out a range of South Australian community organisations. It is a great initiative that is being run by Heta.

We have the Sustainable Online Community Engagement program, which builds on the community web program that was operating through UniSA. It has now been expanded, and UniSA students are working closely with community organisations to help them create websites and also to plan and manage events, produce promotional material and promote their organisation's services. That is quite a win-win for both the students and those community organisations.

Our Community Voices program is an innovative grants program that involves Flinders University screen studies students, who provide a whole range of products to help our community sector. It provides services for them which, in many instances, those organisations simply could not purchase.

Last year, we announced the initiative of providing seed funding for local councils to set up volunteer resource centres across South Australia, and there will be 13 of them by the end of this financial year. I think that six were successful last year and, hopefully, another seven should be funded this year, if there is enough interest through local councils to take up that offer.

We also had the Living Books event this year, which was part of the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts, where interesting, dynamic and extraordinary South Australians shared their stories as living books. I think that 400 people came along and 'borrowed' those people and had the opportunity to talk to some really unique South Australians.

Our national award winning Volunteer Emergency Recovery Information System has reached its final stages of development, and it will help the State Recovery Office in the Department for Families and Communities to match volunteers with tasks following a major disaster. A trial of VERIS version 2 took place in November 2007, and we anticipate expanding the system to encompass groups that would be able to assist in particular types of recovery efforts. That has been an ongoing project, and I think it was very well received when we had the terrible storms in Renmark not so long ago.

We continue to recognise our volunteers through a number of free events, most particularly the Volunteers Day Concert, which, again, this year was another outstanding success. We also have our State Volunteer Congress (as you know, Madam Chair, because you head our ministerial volunteer advisory group) to which volunteers, volunteer managers and a range of people come along and to whom we must report about where we are going with volunteering in South Australia, in addition to sharing information with the sector. The Office for Volunteers is a very small unit. It has only 8.5 people, but it is very strong, proactive and innovative. We have a very strong and healthy partnership with our volunteer sector here in South Australia.

The CHAIR: Does the member for Davenport wish to make some opening comments?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: No, that is fine, Madam Chair, we might go straight to questions as we have only 20 minutes. Minister, all these questions relate to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.81, which essentially is the only page that details budget criteria for the Office for Volunteers. I am interested in this whole definition of volunteering. The government runs around saying that we have got 50 or 51 per cent of South Australians volunteering. From my reading of it that was based on a survey of 1,500 people a year or so ago. How much volunteering does someone have to do to be counted as a volunteer for the sake of your counting? Is it an hour a month or an hour a year? What criteria have you put around it?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The volunteer survey was conducted in 2006 by Harrison Market Research in conjunction with the ABS, if I recall correctly. It helped us to devise the questions and, from memory, there were 57 questions—a lot of questions. People were asked a lot of questions about their volunteer involvement. What is very apparent is that many people do not consider themselves volunteers. If you ask someone if they volunteer, very often the image that comes into their mind is a lavender lady at the local hospital, or whatever. Recently I went to a function at the University of Adelaide, which has 1,900 volunteers and many more retired professors who go to the university and work for nothing. They do research but do not consider themselves volunteers.

The survey drills down quite significantly to elicit questions from people about what they do and how they do it. The survey indicated that the amount of time volunteers devote to volunteering had increased substantially, but I do not have the details of the questions. I understand why the honourable member would ask the question. It was 58 questions, not 57. When I was in England a few years ago, I talked to people who had organised a compact with their volunteer community. They had a very high rate of volunteering, and their criteria was actually around whether you had given anyone advice over the last month. The bar was set so low that it was nonsensical.

We have attempted not to do that but to understand people volunteering. It encompasses both formal and informal volunteering. It is about people volunteering in organisations—formal volunteering—and people volunteering in terms of helping out their neighbours. So, an informal support. The 51 per cent recognised formal volunteering within organisations.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I want to clarify that. The issue of giving advice for nothing is discounted as not being volunteering?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is my view. That is what they were doing in England. That is not what we did.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: That was your view?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Let me just clarify. People can volunteer giving advice.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: And they would be counted in your survey as volunteering?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Not if you said to me, 'Can you show me where such and such a street is?' That is what I understand was happening in England.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: A tourism volunteer, for instance, in the Rundle Mall?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You could have a tourism volunteer.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: That would count?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That would be a volunteer.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: That advice would count?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That advice would count.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: So, what sort of advice would not count?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: You coming up to me saying, 'Can you tell me what questions I should ask today?'

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: So, political volunteers are not counted?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, we have political volunteers. I am just saying that me giving you advice would not count.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I want to go to a policy the government has adopted in relation to donation of food. The government has announced a new policy of donation of food to volunteer agencies. That was a formal announcement made by the Attorney-General, and it is to help volunteer organisations. I know that the minister does not carry the issue, but it does directly involve a benefit to volunteer organisations. The local restaurant can donate food to the local hospital and have no liability. I am wondering whether, as the Minister for Volunteers, you have advocated that that policy should be broader and go to all donations to volunteer organisations?

Why is it that someone who wishes to donate a push bike to the local family out of their bike shop should be liable for civil liability? Why is it that someone who wants to donate clothes to the local Red Cross should have a civil liability, or why is that someone who wants to donate books

should have a civil liability? I am wondering why, during the development of that policy, all those other volunteer organisations were excluded from the policy?

The CHAIR: Order! I am very surprised that the member for Davenport should ask this question.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Of course you're not.

The CHAIR: I am sure the member for Davenport knows that it is quite disorderly. However, the minister may wish to make some comment.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Point of order, Madam Chair. How is asking the government a question about its policy on volunteers, to the Minister for Volunteers, during the budget estimates not in order?

The CHAIR: The estimates process is about the study of the budget, not the study of government policy. Government policy is subject to scrutiny in the house on a regular basis. The minister may wish to offer some response.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is really a legal issue that the member for Davenport is raising with me. I know, for example, that people donate a whole range of toys to charitable organisations. Is the member telling me that they are then publicly liable if something happens to the person who receives the toy?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I will explain the government's policy to the minister.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No; I understand the policy around food.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: What I am saying is that the government has introduced a policy whereby providers of food that have excess food (à la restaurants) left over at the end of the day can donate it to charities, as long as they are not reckless, and suffer no civil liability. Correct. My question is: why has the government not expanded that policy to all donations to the volunteer sector? I ask the question under page 4.81 where the budget paper states that the role of the Office for Volunteers is to 'identify, prioritise and respond appropriately to the needs of the volunteer community in South Australia and maintain programs that support and promote volunteering'.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: And we do that. What the member is telling me is that, if someone donates goods to a charity, they have a civil liability in relation to that.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Under the Civil Liability Act.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: So, with respect to all those people at Christmas time who donate hundreds and hundreds of toys to charities for distribution, the member is telling me that they have liability in relation to these toys?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Will the minister explain the difference in relation to food? How is it that they have a civil liability for food and not any other product?

The CHAIR: Order! The minister is not required to explain that all. The minister is endeavouring to be helpful to a disorderly question.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The member knows it is different, and I agree with him. There were lots of organisations—

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Good.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Don't be funny.

The CHAIR: Minister, I suggest you do not engage in conversation with the member.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Stop protecting the minister; she can answer if she wants. It is her discretion.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Why is everybody so cranky today?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: It is the last day of estimates.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: So, you are all being silly. It has never been brought to my attention. Under the member's assertion about people who donate goods to charity, how is it then that the Red Cross operates with the donations it gets? How is it that the Salvation Army operates

in relation to the goods they receive, the donations? They receive them, but what about the people who give the goods to them? The member is talking about giving food to charities. Organisations are always giving items to charitable organisations. I go down to the Entertainment Centre just before Christmas and see the massive toy giveaway for families down there; so we have hundreds of thousands of South Australians who donate to that. The member is asserting that they have a civil liability. I do not know whether that is true, it may well be and I will take advice on that, but it does not seem to hinder people doing it.

We have a volunteer ministerial advisory group that has been established to give the government advice on issues that are impacting on the volunteer sector, and as far as I am aware that is not an issue that has ever been raised through the advisory group, but I am happy to look into it. If it can be established that organisations or people are prohibited from giving donations to charities then I would be keen to know about that.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: They are not prohibited, but there is a disincentive. Another question relates to the Volunteer Support Fund. Last year it was around \$150,000, I think, from memory of my reading of last year's *Hansard*. Is it the same amount this year. Can the minister provide, on notice, a list of allocations?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, it is the same this year as it was last year. I do not know if we have the list here, but we can certainly provide it to you.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: It is \$150,000; is that right?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It is \$150,000, but I think only \$147,000 got distributed last year, so it was just numbers. We do not have the list here, but I am happy to give that to you.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I ask this question on the same line: does it concern the minister at all that the government gave \$200,000 for a public garden outside the new hotel at Port Lincoln, but the Volunteer Support Fund only gets \$150,000? Does the minister think the government has its priorities right?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: That is interesting. I have to say that when we came into government there were a number of things that I was not happy about.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: It is not in order to ask questions of comparison between different portfolios. The minister is here to respond to issues relating to the administration, not the policy, of her portfolio.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I will put the question another way.

The CHAIR: Order! I see that the minister is endeavouring to provide some information and I am sure she will provide what is within her area of responsibility.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Hear, hear!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There were a number of things that I was not happy about in relation to funding coming out of the volunteer portfolio. We would always like to have more money for our volunteer organisations, and I have to say that we get great bang for the buck that we are able to distribute out of our portfolio area, but it is not the only area where the government provides funding for community organisations. There are funds that come out of recreation and sport.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: You cut those by \$7 million, remember?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There are funds that come out of community benefit, out of the Office for Ageing, the Office for Youth, the list goes on and on. I guess there were two that I was most concerned about when we came into government, and I was parliamentary secretary to the Premier at that time. The first concerned the agreements that were issued for volunteer organisations. We have done our very best to simplify those, particularly for small grants, but the fact was that these agreements had a clause in them that prevented volunteer organisations from stating that they had received the money and a clause that stated that if they took the money they were not allowed to criticise the government. Now, the Premier—

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: That clause still exists, doesn't it, minister?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, it should not exist because—

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Can you clarify for me that that clause still exists?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, the Premier gave a direction that that clause should be removed.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Well, can the minister give an undertaking to the committee that it has been removed from all agreements? In the last month, there have been representatives from organisations on radio saying that they would love to comment but they cannot because of that clause.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, it is probably an historical hangover from when you were in government.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: A seven-year hangover; yes, it must be.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It came to my attention, for example, that a request for funding for Apex was put up (and it was quite a substantial amount of money) to assist Apex clubs to attract members. Obviously, a great deal of argy-bargy went on about that, and I know that other service clubs were quite cross about it.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Well, certainly, they expressed their displeasure to me, and there was an original request, I think, for \$30,000 per annum for a period of three years. They wrote to the then minister, which I think was the member for Davenport.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Good try. Yes, they did.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The minister offered them \$25,000 over three years, and that agreement was drafted and then sent off to the minister for education to sign. He refused to sign it, or did not sign it, or whatever, and minister Brokenshire ended up agreeing to that money. But when we came into government, Apex was not able to confirm that it was able to fulfil the obligations of the funding deed. So, that was an issue.

Of particular concern was the money that was paid to Business SA. I have talked very briefly about CorporateConnect. We have provided a very small amount of money (\$60,000, I think) in the final year and the last phase of this agreement after I think Business SA pulled out involvement in the 100-hours project. But I am told that the Office for Volunteers provided Business SA discretionary grants to manage this 100-hours project, that is, \$80,000 in 1999-2001; \$100,000 in 2000-01; \$130,000 in 2001-02; and a final \$80,000 payment. So, \$390,000 went to Business SA. Questions were asked, but I still do not think we have information about whether Business SA received or complied with the requirements of the agreement. Nevertheless, it was—

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: So, you have had seven years to follow up whether Business SA complied and you have not bothered?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Well, that is what you just said.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No; I did not say that at all.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Seven years and you are not sure. What have you been doing for seven years?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: No, I did not say that.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: If you were so concerned about this project—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: You were so concerned, and seven—

The CHAIR: Order, the member for Davenport!

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: They withdrew. So, if you want to worry about where money is going—

The CHAIR: Do members on my right have a question?

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The CHAIR: Smart comments are not appropriate. This is a place where order and decorum and respect should be shown. I am aware that certain people believe that the role of the

chair is to protect the minister, but that belief does not apply to the chair nor to members on my right: that belief is held solely by members on my left. Does the member for Light have a question?

Mr PICCOLO: I do, Madam Chair. I refer the minister to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.82: the Community Voices program. Will the minister please advise the members of this committee about how this program benefits community volunteer organisations by linking them with university students?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I did mention this program very briefly in my opening statement. It is a partnership with the Screen Studies Department at Flinders University, and it assists organisations to have a greater opportunity to promote and market their activities and for them to be able to gather support from the general public and to increase volunteer participation.

Successful applicants are assigned students from the Screen Studies Department to develop concepts to promote and market their organisation. In turn, the students have access to supervised technical skills, development support and course processes within the university to produce material such as DVDs to be used to promote the organisation's visibility in the community.

The Community Voices 2007 program opened late last year, and 10 community groups have been connected with students from the university for the first semester this year. The following groups were recipients of media product development: Community Accommodation and Respite Agency; Drug Arm Australasia; Good Beginnings Australia; Guides SA; Interchange Incorporated; St John's; Technical Aid to the Disabled; the Hutt Community Centre; the Leukaemia Foundation of Australia; and the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia (Adelaide Zoo). We have allocated \$50,000 to this Community Voices program from the Office for Volunteers budget, and it is really delivering on some amazing products.

At a recent volunteer meeting at the zoo, I had the opportunity to see the two products that have been developed for volunteer promotion of the Adelaide Zoo and Monarto. One was a sort of instruction video, and the other product was designed to be a television commercial, and they really are quite inspirational and of a professional standard. I am looking forward to the launch of the rest of these products, because I think those organisations will be well pleased with them.

The CHAIR: I thank the minister and her advisers. I now call the Minister for Consumer Affairs to the table.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr M. Hemmerling, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs.

Mr B. Pryor, Liquor and Gambling Commissioner.

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

Ms D. Contala, Executive Director, Corporate and Business Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr A. Swanson, Director, Strategic and Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

Mr D. Mazzone, Acting Director, Office of the Chief Executive, Attorney-General and Department of Justice.

Mr T. Anastasiou, Manager, Portfolio Financial Services, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Justice.

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

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Yes, Madam Chair. The consumer affairs portfolio takes in both the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs and the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner. It is a privilege to be Minister for Consumer Affairs, and I am committed to protecting and promoting the interests of consumers—particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged—and encouraging and supporting ethical businesses and encouraging responsible attitudes towards the promotion, sale, supply and consumption of liquor. I am committed to helping ensure markets work better for consumers and traders. We have demonstrated our commitment to working with other states by participating and often leading in a number of national initiatives.

Product safety is an area that this government has focused on. It also has become a priority of the Rudd government, and it will become a joint responsibility with the states and the commonwealth. A number of bans or recalls have been imposed on a number of products during the past year, and we will continue to monitor this area. Much work has been done to highlight dangers of lead in toys and other products, and I am certainly hopeful we will see the number of unsafe products entering the country reduced as we work through the new processes. In fact, only a few days ago, I banned a flammable football, and it amazes me that some manufacturers and importers seem to think that we can have products like that in our stores.

I lobbied strongly to have a national standard for prams and strollers, and I am pleased that commenced yesterday. It was terrible to see the tragedies that occurred here in South Australia, and I think everyone's hearts went out to the families involved. This month will see the implementation of reform in the real estate industry, providing much greater transparency for both vendors and buyers alike. I am pleased with the approach of members of the industry, many of whom have already adopted much of what is in the legislation. We have worked to ensure that a whole range of trades can continue to operate lawfully. We have had Consumer Affairs work in collaboration with, as I mentioned earlier, the Office for Women to get out and better inform people. I am very keen for the office to have a strong public face.

This year on World Consumer Rights Day we distributed a publication in *The Advertiser*, and another one more recently has gone out in *The Messenger* newspaper, advising people of things they should be aware of. It was a pocket-sized publication in *The Messenger* so that people can actually pop it in their purse or handbag. The real estate reforms will allow further opportunities for information to go out to vendors and buyers of real estate. We are planning a strong education campaign around that.

We have also progressed a range of issues in relation to the office of liquor and gambling, and the commissioner has been proactive in getting out a range of information in relation to the safe consumption of alcohol. He has been involved in the negotiation and maintenance of accords and management precinct groups to continue to have a positive effect in a range of communities. New accords have been established at the Copper Coast—which includes Moonta, Wallaroo and Kadina—and also in the Barossa. A precinct management group has been established at Kingston, bringing the total number of accord and precinct management groups across the state to around 28.

We have been working hard to reduce red tape in our portfolio area, and a significant portion of this has been our new wine labelling regulations that we expect will deliver something like \$13 million for the wine industry here in South Australia and, more importantly probably, about \$25 million across the nation. So, we are very keen on identifying and reducing unnecessary red tape, but it is also important that we remain a competitive place to do business but one in which best practice applies in relation to consumer protection. I think that work has been conducted throughout the year by both of these agencies, and I welcome the examination of the budget papers.

The CHAIR: Member for Davenport, do you have an opening statement?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: No, I do not have an opening statement.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Yes. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 4.86 and 4.87. In Liquor Regulatory Services, employee expenses are down from \$2.7 million to \$2.4 million approximately. Expenditure on services is down from approximately \$1.5 million to \$1.26 million and the amount of fees, fines and penalties is down from \$1.3 million to \$1.72 million approximately. So, the net cost of these services is down from about \$3 million to \$2.4 million, or roughly \$2.5 million. The target of priority 1 inspections was 1,100 and the estimated results were only 900. Priority 2 inspections last year were 1,242, and this year they have collapsed to an estimated result of 326. The priority 3 inspections target of 300 will actually achieve zero.

The question that was flagged in today's *Advertiser* was: why have liquor regulatory services been run down at a time when the Police Commissioner is out there saying that South Australia—and Adelaide in particular—has a problem with binge drinking and public drunkenness. I am wondering why that has occurred? Why are you allowing that to occur?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: First of all, they have not been run down. Licensed premises throughout our state are inspected on a regular basis. I think it is important to understand the role

of inspectors in the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner. I appreciate having the opportunity to clarify and correct what was in *The Advertiser* today.

OLGC inspectors are responsible for the physical inspection of licensed premises to ensure compliance with the act and the conditions of the licence. Inspectors prepare reports for the licensing authority on new applications and applications which have the potential to impact on the local community.

Enforcement of the act is primarily the role of the police. This has been affirmed in the two reviews of the Liquor Licensing Act. SAPOL has a dedicated Licensing Enforcement Branch, comprising 22 police officers with clerical support. SAPOL also has dedicated drug action sergeants in all local service areas with responsibility for alcohol and drug management issues.

Licensed premises are inspected on a regular basis. The reason we see a drop in the estimated result as opposed to the target is because priority 1 premises are inspected at least once every 12 months, priority 2 premises are inspected every two years, and priority 3 premises—consisting of direct sales licences, producers' licences (without cellar door sales) and wholesale liquor merchants' licences—are inspected less regularly.

Something like 530 additional applications have been lodged with liquor and gambling for consideration this year as a result of the new smoking legislation. So, this was really a one-off hit on the resources of that office. There were some issues in relation to staff there; some people were off on extended sick leave. I think the full-time contingent is generally 10 people but, at some stage, it was down to about 6½. Currently it is 8.6, with 2 on sick leave. They have not been run down at all.

In relation to disciplinary proceedings this year compared to 2002, there has been a 500 per cent increase on disciplinary prosecutions by that office. That is not a cutback: that is the office doing its job, and even that is not an indication. We have a very highly regulated industry but, in the main, it is very keen to do the right thing, and I think that needs to be remembered.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I note your comment about the main role being that of the police. I draw your attention to your own budget papers relating to liquor regulatory services as follows:

...supply and consumption of liquor is conducted in a way that contributes to and does not detract from, the amenity of South Australian community life.

So, the whole debate about the lockdown in the city of Adelaide is about the effect of drunkenness and the consumption of liquor on community life, which I think is a matter for the Commissioner, with due respect.

In the past year, there were shootings at both the Worlds End Hotel and the Colonel Light Tavern in the west end of the CBD. Following these incidents, did these venues receive increased scrutiny from the OLGC?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: In the last 12 months OLGC staff have participated in four joint projects with SAPOL in the CBD—Club 199, where the licensee was found to have drugs and guns on the premises; the Princess Berkeley, which had unapproved directors and shareholders possibly trading when insolvent (there were other issues, one of which is still ongoing); the Basement (now closed), which had problems with the standard of its premises; and The Church entertainment venue, which was investigated about whether positions of authority had been assumed without approval. Disciplinary action in the Licensing Court found that the body corporate was not fit and proper and disqualified it from holding a licence. I do not have any information with me about the two venues you mentioned. I will certainly make inquiries, and I am happy to take that on notice and get the information for you.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I refer to the same section. The government has adopted a policy to give the Police Commissioner the power to ban people from licensed premises. The Police Commissioner is saying that they need this lockdown provision in the City of Adelaide. Why has the government delayed, or chosen not to debate, the legislation given that it was introduced into the parliament four or five months ago, and will now not be debated, if at all, until later in the year? Is the reason that it is subject to a High Court challenge because of the provisions in the legislation that do not allow people access to files on which they are being banned? An article that appeared in *The Independent Weekly* a few weeks ago alleged that. What is the minister doing? She wants to give police more powers. The police are screaming for more powers, but the government does not want to debate its own legislation. Why is that so?

The CHAIR: Is that for this minister or the Minister for Police?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The minister introduced her own legislation in March.

The CHAIR: In that case, it may be something more suitably debated in the house, but I invite the minister to comment.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The legislation is in the house and, no, we have not delayed it as a result of the court challenge.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: So, it has not been a priority for the last four months to bring on the debate?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There was a range of issues that we needed to get through, as the member well knows. We have a very strong focus on the safety of people in South Australia and in addressing issues where the bikies from outlaw motorcycle gangs are posing a threat to patrons in licensed venues, and a whole range of other areas. I had representations from the Tonic Night Club, which was concerned that, whilst licensees have the power to bar people, in many instances they feel quite intimidated doing that. I know that the commissioner had considerable negotiations with the Commissioner for Police, which resulted in the legislation that has been introduced into this house. We will deal with it as quickly as we can.

The CHAIR: I apologise to the member for Davenport. Having heard the minister's explanation, I now recall that it was her legislation. That was not so apparent from the member's introductory comments.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.84. I am interested in the recent trials of the managed taxi ranks. What is the government's strategy for these managed taxi ranks, and how will it improve the safety of people attending entertainment precincts in South Australia?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I have used a managed taxi rank late at night, and found it to be incredibly useful in ensuring that people are in a safe environment and speedily get access to taxis. We have trialled two managed taxi ranks in the West End of the city, and the government recently announced funding to enable their continuation and expansion. We will have additional managed taxi ranks in Adelaide, Glenelg and Port Augusta. The West End managed taxi rank, which is on Hindley Street, has been used by more than 25,000 people, and, on a weekend night, 1,000 people use the one in front of the casino. We have pledged over \$300,000 over the next four years to continue this initiative, and we will be working in partnership with the Taxi Council and the local councils involved—the City of Adelaide, the Glenelg City Council and the Port Augusta City Council.

They will be established in such a way that they actually reflect community needs. We will be working with those councils to identify how best to manage them. They may include, for example, a concierge, a security officer, bold signage (obviously), a well-lit environment, safer waiting areas (particularly for women and anyone else who is feeling unsafe), and security camera monitoring.

The concierge and security guard currently supervise the Hindley Street rank between 11pm and 3am on Fridays and between 11pm and 5am on Saturdays. That area is very well lit and monitored and, as I said, a lot of people use it, particularly during the weekend. This is a small way of addressing those safety issues for people wanting to enjoy the night life in the city, particularly young women. I am very pleased that the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner continues to work in such a productive way with a range of agencies to ensure that we have these facilities made available and to ensure that young women and all people coming into our city can feel safer accessing taxis.

Ms BREUER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.80: Services for the Disadvantaged. Can the minister explain how the marketing and promotional activities of the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs have assisted disadvantaged groups?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs has a number of initiatives in place focusing on the interests of disadvantaged consumers, or those people who have limited financial and consumer skills, including a mixture of both state-based and national projects that we have under way. OCBA, with its interstate counterparts, has developed and is implementing the National Indigenous Consumer Strategy, addressing longstanding indigenous consumer problems in eight key areas: financial management and banking; the sale and purchase of motor vehicles and boats; trading practices in remote communities; housing; arts industry; corporate governance; employment of indigenous staff in consumer affairs and fair trading agencies; and advocacy.

The overall purpose of this strategy is to provide information and ideas that may assist consumer protection agencies to undertake more effective enforcement and compliance activities on matters impacting on indigenous Australians.

OCBA is also a leader in the development of a national campaign to improve consumer financial literacy and skills. There are two elements to this campaign: the inclusion of relevant education materials in school curricula; and the development of targeted learning tools. Our Spend Well Program is an online interactive learning resource for secondary and upper primary school students and has been taken up for adaption for national use in this context—that is a tick for that program. We are also looking to further develop and deploy Spend Well and convert it to language and graphics for use in the APY lands communities.

In consultation with organisations I think I have mentioned before, such as the Office for Women, OCBA has begun to develop a strategy to identify and address consumer needs with a particular focus on women and children. As part of this a suite of publications entitled *Talk About Shopping*, which are simplified versions of the *Smart Consumer Guide*, are being produced for those with low levels of literacy. The publications will be bright and colourful and illustration driven and the version for distribution on the lands will have a translation of important passages and will also include an audio CD with an English version and a Pitjantjatjara version.

Mr PICCOLO: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 4.80 in relation to OCBA dealing with disputes, etc. Can the minister update members on new moves to protect consumers from problems associated with budget airlines?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am sure members recall recently reported incidents of quite some distress of passengers on some of our budget airlines after having been stranded interstate. The number of complaints in relation to these have been increasing and the Victorian Minister for Consumer Affairs asked Consumer Affairs Victoria to undertake an inquiry into complaints against discount airlines operating into and out of Victoria. This was an issue that was discussed most recently at our Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs.

In South Australia OCBA decided to also look at this particular issue. The number of complaints coming into South Australia are relatively small, but we think many complaints perhaps are not registered because people use other services in negotiating their disputes. The most common complaints reported to us related to cancellations; delays and rescheduling; the fare rules; the terms and conditions including transfer of tickets; customer service; and refunds when consumers cancel bookings. I understand that many of these airlines operate on that particular basis and that they tell people these are the conditions when they buy the ticket, but there is, I think, a standard that people have become used to in the operation of airlines, and there are situations where people have become incredibly distressed.

In fact, one story that was relayed was that there was no refund given because one airline did not accept that an old lady dying was a reason not to travel. I do not have the detail of that, but it is one of those stories that was relayed at the ministerial council.

The airlines are regulated by the commonwealth government, and it recently announced that it would review the national aviation policy, including consumer protection issues. As part of this process the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has released an issues paper. The authors of that paper have asked whether existing consumer protections in airline procedures are adequate and have also sought comment as to whether existing airline terms and conditions are reasonable.

From a South Australian perspective, I expect to have three issues addressed: the terms and conditions; whether they handle consumer complaints in an appropriate way; and what actions the airlines are taking to reduce the number of complaints. The ministerial council was asked to endorse the development of a best practice airline and airport customer service charter along the lines of those that currently exist in Europe. At its last meeting in May, in addition, it noted the findings and recommendations of the Victorian investigation into budget airline complaints and consumer issues, supported the development of best practice airline and airport customer service charters, subject to the development of a regulatory impact statement assessment, and requested the commonwealth to consider this issue as part of its review of national aviation policy.

People need to understand that, while cheap flights always seem like an attractive option, different conditions often apply. So, to avoid ruining their plans, people should always check those terms and conditions before they hand over their money. I think it is also important that these airlines have some good complaint-handling procedures in place.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I want to provide the minister with a summary of where her agency is at in relation to consumer affairs, because I cannot work out why there is a logjam on getting decisions made. Let me run through some of the issues in relation to consumer affairs that I have discovered through reading Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 4.77, 4.78, 4.79 and so on.

The acting CEO has been in place, I think, since October (no disrespect to the CEO), but there has been no decision on a permanent CEO. The consumer credit discussion paper was put out in October 2006: no decision. The second-hand vehicles discussion paper was put out in December 2004: no decision; it has disappeared. The Building Work Contractors Act was put out in three parts in 2006: no decision. Under the Recreational Services (Limitation of Liability) Act we have a recreational code for sailplanes and gliders. Submissions were due on 21 August 2007: no decision; not approved. With respect to lacrosse, submissions were due on the safety code under that act on 11 December 2006: no decision; not approved. With respect to the tennis safety code, submissions were due on 11 December 2006: no decision; not approved. A recreational code was—

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There has been no decision, or they have not been approved: one or the other?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Both; there is no decision and they have not yet been approved.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Not yet approved or not approved?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: It has been two years and they are not yet approved. None is them has been approved. Only one has been approved in six years under the act. A recreational code for fun runs has not yet been approved: submissions were due in April 2007. Submissions with respect to rock climbing were due in August 2006: not approved. It seems to me that the office is putting out an enormous number of discussion papers and seeking public submissions, but nothing happens. I am wondering what the minister's explanation is for that.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: There are things happening. I will try to deal with them in the order in which the member has raised them. In relation to the position of Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, it is my understanding that Mr Hemmerling has agreed to continue on for the next two years. I do not know whether that has been finalised yet, but I am expecting him to continue.

Mr MAGUIRE: The contract has not been finalised, but we are busy negotiating at the moment.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Was it publicly advertised?

The CHAIR: Order! Questions will be directed to the minister and advisers will speak only when referred to by the minister.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It was advertised, and selection was carried out through a consultant. However, I think people would agree that Mr Hemmerling brings a range of skills to this position that will benefit the organisation. I am looking forward to working with him over the next two years, provided he signs that contract.

I think the member referred to the legislation in relation to payday lending. That is with parliamentary counsel, and has been for some time. We are very keen to receive that legislation. I am pleased that the federal government seems to be taking an interest in this area as well. I think it would be very beneficial to have national legislation in relation to a number of credit products. Finance and mortgage brokers and the previous federal government showed no interest in that matter whatsoever, and I am delighted that the current federal government is now very keen to pick it up and run with it. It may well take over responsibility for these payday lenders.

However, I have said to OCBA that we are still to proceed with our legislation, because I do not want to be in a position where the federal government decides not to move on it and we do not have the protections that I have announced for South Australians. With respect to the second-hand vehicle dealers legislation, I have had numerous meetings with representatives of the Motor Trade Association, trying to get agreement on some key provisions within the legislation. I have given them time to come back to me with options that they think would work.

That has not necessarily moved in a way that I would like it to, so I more recently sought additional advice from the Attorney-General around some changes we may make to that draft bill. I have received advice and, just in the last couple of weeks, I have sent it back for OCBA to further pursue. So, that one is on the move.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: And the recreational codes?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: The honourable member is right, the Building Work Contractors Act is being done in three stages. I am not quite sure where we were up to with that; but I think we should be close to some recommendations coming through on that. It is an extensive piece of legislation with lots of implications for the industry; and, as the honourable member said, we did stagger the discussion papers in three stages. I would expect to be getting recommendations in relation to that fairly soon. In relation to the Recreation Services (Limitation of Liability) Act, and as the member for Davenport has pointed out, only one code has been approved but a number are in the pipeline.

That legislation was brought into place when there was a critical need in the community in relation to accessing insurance, and I think it is time we had a look at that. The commissioner can confirm that I asked him several weeks ago to convene a round table of interested parties to look at where we might go with this legislation. Whilst I agree that there are those codes in the pipeline, there has been a relative lack of interest by people registering those codes—

The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Absolutely. It is a difficult process, I do not deny that, so I think it is timely that we have a look at that. We are prepared to do that.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I point out that I think it is ridiculous that the four or five codes that are awaiting approval all received government grants of about \$7,500 to write the codes. About \$40,000 worth of government grants are sitting in Consumer Affairs going nowhere. It just goes to show how totally unworkable that is. I appreciate that the minister will look at that. That is excellent. In relation to real estate regulations which the minister has raised—I am sure the minister would be disappointed if I did not raise a question of real estate regulations.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I went to my first house auction on Saturday.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Your first one? So, you brought in a whole new system of real estate laws and you have gone to one auction after you have introduced them?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: Not my first auction: I have not bid on a house before.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Okay. I understand why we are in a mess. The issue in relation to the drafting of the regulations—

Mrs Geraghty interjecting:

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The member for Torrens says that I misunderstand deliberately, for the record. The minister said that she went to her first auction. That is how I heard it.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: It does not matter. Go on.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The draft regulations define a 'prescribed relationship' as a relationship between the agent or sales representative. A person is prescribed as follows:

If the agent or sales representative will or might, to the knowledge of the agent or sales representative, receive a benefit from the other person in connection with a transaction [will or might] dealing or relating to the land of business subsequent to the agent or sales representative successfully negotiating the sale of the land or for the business vendor.

The CHAIR: Order! Can the member for Davenport indicate where this question is going? It is sounding like a question about policy and not about implementation. I am not clear.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Give me a second, Madam Chair, and you will be clear. All I have done is read the regulations so far; and if it is not clear to you it is certainly not clear to the real estate agents.

The CHAIR: I am not commenting on the content of the regulation: I want to know about the question.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Chair, I have only two minutes left, so please stop delaying the committee—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: —otherwise I will not get my question in. That is the regulation. The real estate industry is saying that if this prescribed relationship exists, the agent must obtain an independent evaluation and then seek the commissioner's approval for the transaction to proceed. Real estate agents are saying to me that, if they are the real estate agent selling a house and the

person buying the house says, 'I want you to manage this house as a rental for me after I buy it,' that becomes a prescribed relationship and they have to go through this whole process.

Mr PICCOLO: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Order! There is a point of order.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I am going to write to—there are real estate agents in Gawler who have raised this with me.

Mr PICCOLO: You do that.

The CHAIR: Order! What is your point of order, member for Light?

Mr PICCOLO: That really worries me, member for Davenport! The point of order is that a question has to relate to an actual budget line, and also the implementation of the budget line, and the honourable member is talking about policy implications, as I understood it.

The CHAIR: The member's question clearly is not about the estimate payments. However, I will continue to be generous in allowing the minister to respond to an issue that has been raised so that there is not a vacuum that is then misrepresented in the papers.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I am happy to answer the question.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: This really annoys me, because I think there is a deliberate tactic going on here. I point out to the committee and all those listening that page 4.80 of the budget papers mentions the new real estate legislation. I can ask questions on it. Even when the minister raises it in her opening address—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: —as she did, it opens the door to ask questions on it.

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Davenport, you know perfectly well that—

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I am trying to ask whether that is the intent of the legislation, and listen to the nonsense—

The CHAIR: Order! Do not engage in debate with the chair. I have indicated that I will give the minister the opportunity to make comment. That does not make the question orderly, and it is time some people learnt what an orderly question was. Minister.

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I think it is an important issue that we do need to clarify, so I am happy to take the member's question. Certainly, it is an issue that has been raised by the real estate industry, which has had some concerns around that particular regulation. I think the crux of the matter, as the member said, was 'will' or 'might'. Without doubt, it is absolutely appropriate that if someone is selling your property and they know they are going to get a benefit from it, they need to tell you about it when you sign that sales agency agreement. You need to have confidence in that agent that he is going to do the right thing by you and you need to know if he is going to benefit in relation to that.

The difficulty that has been raised with me is in relation to 'might'. 'Will' has always been there, it is part of the legislation now. I think that section 23 of the legislation makes it illegal for an agent to gain a beneficial interest in a property if they are acting on behalf of someone, and there is a requirement to get ministerial exemption for that, and a number of those occur throughout the year. Following representation from the real estate industry and discussion with the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs, we have removed 'might' from the regulations.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: Minister, do you think that if more money had been allocated—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: —in the budget line on page 4.80—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: —that it would have been better to have the training done on the actual regulations than the draft regulations because—

The CHAIR: Member for Davenport, perhaps you might like to seek the agreement of other members of the committee for an extension of the time?

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: I am happy to move that the time for the examination of this line of Estimates Committee A be extended by five minutes.

The CHAIR: Well, in fact, you cannot do that.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: You just invited me to.

The CHAIR: You would have to do it by—

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: How do I seek the agreement of members if not by motion, Madam Chair?

The CHAIR: —by negotiation. Minister, do you have any comments that you wish to add to round this comment off?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE: I would say that I have continued to meet, and am still meeting with representatives of the real estate industry. The regulations have been sent through the process, and they were changed as a result of the representations put forward by members of the industry. So, we really did need to kick off our education program generally to get people up to speed with what is happening. I am sure that this minor change will be welcomed by the industry. I do not think the industry will be complaining about it. I finish by thanking committee members for their attention today and also my officers for all their hard work in getting our budget papers ready for examination.

The Hon. I.F. EVANS: The opposition would agree with that.

The CHAIR: The time for examination of the proposed payments having expired I declare that consideration of the proposed payments for the Attorney-General's Department and Administered Items for the Attorney-General's Department are completed. I lay before the committee a draft report.

Mr PICCOLO: I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

At 16:19 the committee concluded.