

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 4 October 1984

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chairman:
Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:
The Hon. Ted Chapman
The Hon. Peter Duncan
Mr R.J. Gregory
Mr G.M. Gunn
Mr K.C. Hamilton
Mr I.P. Lewis

The Committee met at 11 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: I have been advised of some changes to the Committee: the Committee today consists of the members for Alexandra, Eyre, and Mallee, and the members for Florey, Elizabeth, and Albert Park. I recognise the member for Alexandra as the lead Speaker for the Opposition, and the member for Albert Park as the lead speaker for the Government. I intend to allow the lead speaker for the Opposition to make opening remarks, which should not take more than 10 minutes. Then, the Minister also will be given the opportunity to make some opening remarks, and he will be allocated the same time. All questions will be directed to the Minister, not to his officers, but his officers may be requested by the Minister to answer questions or to supplement the answers.

All questions will relate to the vote, and they will not be of a general policy nature. I do not want any second reading speeches or grievance debates. We are here to get information from the Minister, and there is no need for the long speeches that have been made by some members. I am also pleased to report that there has been an agreement on the allocation of times. Agriculture has been allocated 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., and the Minister and the lead speaker for the Opposition have a programme on the other times.

At all times the quorum will be four. If there are less than four in the Committee, the Committee will be suspended until such time as a quorum is formed. I will allow three questions from the Opposition, to be followed by three questions from the Government, and they will alternate from side to side. If one member does not take his three questions, he will be counted as having his allocation of questions and it will revert back to the opposite side.

Agriculture, \$33 776 000

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Forests and Minister of Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J.C. McColl, Director-General, Department of Agriculture.
Mr D.E. Mitchell, Deputy Director-General (Resources).
Dr J.C. Radcliffe, Director, Policy and Planning.
Mr K.W. Gent, Finance Officer.
Mr J.E. Bromell, Principal Vertebrate Pests Control Officer.
Mr B. Handscombe, Principal Rural Assistance Officer.

Mr R.R. Hogarth, Chief, International Division.

Mr C. Heysen, Senior Projects Officer, International Division.

THE CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I appreciate that the Committee has accepted the proposed time table for today's activities, as presented by the Opposition. I do not intend to make a preliminary statement.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Minister wish to make a statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, Mr Chairman. I would like with your approval, to suggest to the Committee that it might be helpful to our deliberations if I gave a short statement introducing the Agriculture portfolio Estimates, which are about to be reviewed.

Overall, the Department of Agriculture has again maintained its budgetary position in real terms compared to previous years. This year's recurrent State allocation of \$33.8 million is an increase of about \$3.3 million on 1983-84 actual expenditure. The estimated total funds to be spent in the 1984-85 financial year is \$58.7 million, which includes \$24.9 million from the Commonwealth Government and rural industry sources.

There has been a rise in the level of funding for the joint Commonwealth/State BTEC programme to cover the increased costs incurred as a result of increasing freight rebate assistance measures. This has been offset by a reduction in expenditure due to completion of natural disaster relief assistance schemes.

The Estimates have been prepared in an effort to maintain a high level of State funds to agriculture. The budget and goals provided in the programme performance budgeting papers have been developed from the Department's corporate plan 1984-87. The structure of the corporate plan is also based on the PPB format, so that the short and long term goals developed from any review conducted on the principal agricultural industries can be translated into PPB terms. The PPB papers include all external funding within programmes making it difficult to compare the programme estimates with the line estimates.

Following an intensive assessment and reappraisal of the Department's allocation of resources over the years which resulted in, among other things, the Department's corporate plan, we have been able to ensure that funds have been directed to key areas. Funds have been provided for eight new positions in four of the Department's regions to further strengthen our field services. These include a senior district officer to be appointed to the Nuriootpa district office; a senior agricultural engineer to strengthen services in farm mechanisation; a horticultural marketing officer and a technical officer (livestock), all for central region; an agronomist for the South-East region; a pastoral adviser for the northern region; and a research agronomist (new crops) and an extension agronomist will be located in the Murraylands region.

In addition to these new positions, replacement appointments will be expedited in central region for a horticultural adviser, a technical officer and an agronomist who will be appointed to Nuriootpa. A replacement research officer (irrigation) will be appointed at Loxton in the Murraylands region, and a replacement seeds officer will be appointed to the South-East region. Provision has also been made in the Department for two new positions in the Plant Services Division of a technical officer and an ornamental horticultural officer. The appointment of a technical officer will assist in research now being carried out to control Portuguese millipedes. The ornamental horticultural officer will have particular responsibilities for servicing the nursery and cut-flower industries. A new plant pathologist will be appointed

to allow an officer to provide plant protection services from the Clare district office.

Within the Veterinary Sciences Division, a position of clinical veterinary pathologist has been created along with a diagnostic services manager to strengthen the efficiency of diagnostic services provided to the rural community. It is proposed that the Rural Assistance Branch will acquire a new accounting officer and a computing systems officer will work initially with the branch to develop more efficient and responsive systems for handling loan applications and managing existing loans.

State funding for capital expenditure from Loan funds has increased slightly on last year with \$400 000 allocated compared to \$350 000 in 1983-84. Major areas of benefit from these funds will be: agricultural crop industries programme for increased field crop research; and an agricultural resource management programme for soil conservation research to examine the effect of increasing the intensity of cropping on our farming lands. Furthermore, new computing facilities are to be introduced to district offices that will give the Department the most up-to-date technology available for extension work.

Indeed, micro-computers will be installed in five offices in the early part of the year, and the budget will allow those to be extended by five more offices this financial year. With this brief introduction to the planning and major resource changes occurring in the Department, I will be pleased to answer any questions honourable members may have on the Estimates for 1984-85.

The CHAIRMAN: Before calling on the member for Alexandra, I advise the Committee that the following are today's eight votes in order: Agriculture; Department of Agriculture; Minister of Agriculture and Forests—Miscellaneous; Fisheries; Department of Fisheries; Minister of Fisheries—Miscellaneous; Correctional Services; and Minister of Correctional Services—Miscellaneous. The honourable member for Alexandra.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: About five years ago a working party of departmental officers and other personnel were invited to review the need for, and the effectiveness and efficiency of, the operations of the State's agricultural research centres. It was to advise on the cost effectiveness and scientific merit of using research centres as compared to other sites for the conduct of such investigations, and for other purposes. In August 1983 a report was produced by that working party and circulated publicly accompanied by a letter inviting submissions from members of the public on its contents. In particular, it contained a number of recommendations including closure and relocation of various centres around the State. Can the Minister say what progress the Government has made in relation to those recommendations and, in particular, whether it has finished its implementation exercise and, if it has not, in which areas does it still propose acting?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The facts outlined by the member are basically correct. The Department, with some assistance from the farming community, entered into a long, detailed, and very useful examination of the State's agricultural research centres. I reported to the Committee last year where we were in relation to that particular operation. From memory, the report at that stage had been distributed and there was extensive comment on it throughout the farming community, as one would expect, and within this Committee. I think that the honourable member for Eyre, in particular, had a number of queries about one of the research centres in his electorate that was causing him particular concern, or about which the recommendations of the research group caused him some concern.

I am sure that he was delighted to know that, in the final assessment, the Minnipa Research Centre, the one he had

expressed concern about, was retained in its position, and may well have been strengthened. The basic decisions have been made on all the research centres and what the Government intends to do with them. The exceptions are the Kybybolite Research Centre and the Turretfield Research Centre. With the permission of the Committee and the member for Alexandra, I am happy to go into the details of each of the decisions relating to the research centres.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Could that information be inserted in *Hansard*, otherwise it will delay the Committee's procedures?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I seek leave to have the details relating to the research centres project inserted in *Hansard* without my reading them.

The CHAIRMAN: Any time that the Minister undertakes to get further material in response to a question, that information should be in the hands of the Clerk of the Committee before 19 October.

Leave granted.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH CENTRES

The Government has undertaken to establish a more effective network of agricultural research centres in South Australia. The first stage of implementation is underway.

RESEARCH CENTRE PROJECTS:

- (1) Kingscote Research and Advisory Centre: This centre is being established in place of Parndana Research Centre. It is intended that Parndana Research Centre be sold in May-June 1985, and by this time a building, machinery shed, and a further two houses established in Kingscote. The office building will be a shared facility with National Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Community Welfare.
- (2) Southern Hills Research Centre: The site for a new centre is being sought. A task force has met with the Department of Environment and Planning and E & WS Department to define in what area of the Adelaide Hills such a centre can be established. A 125 ha area of the land of the Northfield Research Centre Dairy will be sold.
- (3) Sims Farm: A total of 109 ha has been transferred to the Education Department, and the remaining 293 ha under the control of the Department of Agriculture will be sold with the Education Department being given the first option. A research facility will be developed for Eyre Region to be able to undertake experimental work on tillage for the soil types commonly found in these areas.
- (4) Winkler Estate: It is intended that Winkler Estate will be sold by March 1984 and the proceeds used to provide a facility for field crop improvement research. The actual facility acquired will depend on the results of the UF & S working party on field crop improvement research.
- (5) Lenswood Research Centre: A task force is currently writing a report on what facilities will be maintained at Lenswood. There will be a reduction of area and manpower at Lenswood early in 1985.
- (6) Kybybolite Research Centre: A decision on the research facilities required for the South-East is still under review. The Ruminant Industry Research Review suggests that a similar carrying capacity to that of Kybybolite and Struan Research Centres is required and that Struan Research Centre be a centre of excellence for sheep meat and beef research in South Australia.
- (7) Turretfield Research Centre: A decision on the future of Turretfield Research Centre is waiting for a decision by the UF & S working party on the organisation of field crop improvement research in South Australia. The Ruminant Industry Research Review has identified

the need for a merino research centre in the mid-North, and suggests that currently Turretfield Research Centre would be the location. The extent to which there is a need to cater for field crop improvement research will depend on the recommendations of the UF & S working party.

FINANCE

The Treasurer has established a deposit account in which the financial transactions of the project can be conducted. This means funds from the sale of properties can be reinvested into new properties without any influence occurring from annual budgetary considerations of the State Government.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: From my observation it has been a goal of the Department to decentralise its activities wherever practical to regional and district centres throughout the State in order to improve department/farmer relations as near to the site of production as possible. I understand that while theoretically, that has been the objective, in recent years there has been some concern expressed at regional and district office level about the degree of administrative authority retained at the Grenfell Centre, and that the authority that is being retained is authority that may reasonably be dispatched to those regional and district offices consistent with the system of decentralisation in other departments. Has the Minister had this express concern drawn to his attention? If so, has he taken any steps to minimise that concern and distribute the real authority that belongs to the field out to the field and, at the same time, reduce the need for some seven job positions in the central office where administration takes place on behalf of the regional centres that may otherwise more reasonably and appropriately be carried out at those regional offices?

I cite one or two examples that have been drawn to my attention. I understand that when an officer is subject to moving from one region of the State to another, the moving of that officer and his family's personal belongings and furniture require three different quotes from carriers before reimbursement can be considered, and that all of that administrative work is done at head office rather than at either the dispatching or the recipient regional level. I further understand that in what is alleged to be a desperate effort to retain the power and authority at the black stump, frustration occurs in the field when a field officer wishes to gain authority for travel in his own region.

In other words, if a field officer is required to travel from his office or centre base to service an area in the field and/or is required to stay overnight, all the accommodation expenses can either be approved first but through head office Adelaide and not the regional office centre or, if those expenses are incurred, it allegedly takes some weeks for reimbursement to come back through this multiplied and very cumbersome system of authority. Is the Minister aware of this level of frustration that is in the field and has apparently been in the field for some time, maybe even dating back to when the previous Government was in office, but certainly it still prevails?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There are a few colourful phrases in the member for Alexandra's question, such as, 'desperation by the central administration in the black stump to retain control'. I hope that the questions can have the hyperbole and the colourful descriptions toned down a bit, or it is going to be a very long day.

Just like the member for Alexandra when he was Minister, I strongly support the Department's programme of decentralisation. The degree of decentralisation that has transpired is appropriate and working efficiently. In regard to specific questions about complaints or concern being addressed to me about the degree of authority of people working in the

regions, the answer is 'No'. Concern has not been expressed to me about the degree of authority of officers working in the regions. My guess is that the degree of responsibility is exactly as it was when the honourable member was the Minister. There have been some refinements to the system, but basically the same system still prevails.

The honourable member also asked me about removal expenses from one location to the other. I confess that I have not particularly bothered myself with removal expenses of individual officers. The Department has over 1 000 officers, who comprise a mobile section of the Public Service, and that is a degree of detail that I have not thought necessary to involve myself in. However, I am advised that reimbursement cheques for removal expenses are usually forwarded within 24 hours. If the member for Alexandra has any evidence to the contrary, I would be delighted to have it investigated by my officers in order to speed up the process. I am advised it takes 24 hours to reimburse officers who have incurred such expenses, and it cannot be done much more quickly than that.

I have received no complaints at all that officers working in the regions have any problems in obtaining authorisation to travel or stay overnight. We have a mobile work force in the Department and, if there were any unnecessary delays in obtaining approval for travel or overnight stays, the system would not work effectively. I have travelled to all the regions and spoken with a vast number of departmental officers. Certainly, this is not one of the issues that has been raised with me. Given the amount of travelling that we do—from memory, about five million miles a year in about 400 vehicles—any cumbersome system authorisation would be contrary to the smooth running of the Department.

This matter has not been brought to my attention but, if the honourable member wants to give me some specific examples of officers requesting authority to travel or stay overnight where that authority has not been forthcoming in a reasonable time, I shall be delighted to take it up with my officers and have the incidents investigated if they have occurred. I rely greatly on the honourable member to advise me of those incidents.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I advise the Committee at this stage, without wishing to prolong proceedings unnecessarily, that I have been advised that there is no authority to provide advance accounting at regional level in South Australia, that all such orders are required to be lodged with head office and that, despite a request for this simple, local and regionalised accounting procedure to occur, the regions are still denied this local authority in what they describe as being in the face of a desperate attempt to retain authority at the black stump.

I do not want the Minister or the Committee to waste a lot of time on this matter. I have raised the matter, as I understand it, based on information from reliable people in the field. It is a real issue. I ask the Minister to make the appropriate inquiries as early as convenient to see whether the matter can be cooled off.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think that warrants a response. I strongly object to my officers being described as having a desperate need to retain authority in the black stump. I think that is totally unnecessary language. It is a reflection on my officers, to which I strongly object. It is very easy to come into Parliament and say that someone has told you certain things. No evidence has been presented to the Committee to show that that is the case. If I was uncharitable I could say that it was a figment of the honourable member's imagination but, of course, I will not say that. Instead, my Finance Officer will outline the financial arrangements that are made between the regions and the central office.

Mr Gent: The honourable member referred to an instance where no advance accounting arrangements were provided, and I think I am aware of the instance in question. It was recently the subject of an investigation by officers of the accounting branch as to whether there was a requirement for a particular region to have a chequing facility to draw advance account cheques at their own discretion. The number of times that officers of the region drew upon that account or an account of that nature was very minimal. Facilities exist at head office at the moment through our accounting arrangements to provide a reimbursement cheque to any officer within 24 hours. An officer usually knows in advance whether he has to travel, and we can make available by the next day a cheque for that officer's accommodation and travel arrangements. It was felt that separate accounts should not be made available to regions.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I understand that in November 1983 the Mount Barker office was opened, initially with a staff of six and now with eight. Staff include a senior district officer, a district agronomist, a vertebrae pest officer, a dairy adviser, a beef cattle adviser, a sheep/wool adviser, an animal health adviser, and a stock inspector. Although application has been made for a clerk assistant full time, the office is still awaiting approval for that appointment. In the meantime, it is understood that someone comes in one day a week from the Lenswood office to assist; otherwise, the typing requirements are forwarded to Adelaide. When completed, the typing is returned to the office by what is considered to be a slow, inefficient method, hence the application for a full-time typist clerk on site. I have no complaints about the procedure or the setting up of the office at Mount Barker. Indeed, I support the principle of having an office in that region. Does the Minister consider the Mount Barker office to be more oriented towards servicing the hobby farm community than the economic farming operations in and around that region? Were any conditions of employment extended to the officers initially appointed to that office with respect to transport facilities in particular? If so, what were the details of those extended extras?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The staffing of the Mount Barker office is the same as in all our offices and regions. There is no doubt that, if I were given a blank cheque by the Government, I could employ very many more officers in many more of our offices, establish new offices, etc., but the reality is that we work very tightly and closely within our budget, as a careful examination of the papers that have been made available to the Committee will demonstrate. We are not a department that, by and large, overspends its budget.

Mr LEWIS: Not like some of them.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not here to answer for any other department: I am here discussing my budget in Agriculture. We work very carefully within that budget, which means that we have to set priorities, and that from time to time we have to make decisions as to the various staffing levels of our offices. It may be that people who use the services of the Mount Barker office would like greater resources, just as people who use our facilities in other areas would also like some additional facilities, but I certainly have not been given an open cheque to staff our facilities as the whim takes me.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I appreciate the comment—

The Hon. Frank Blevins: You will have even more to appreciate in a moment. As regards whether I consider the facility at Mount Barker as being there to service hobby farmers primarily or, as the honourable member expressed it, the economic farming community, the Department of Agriculture is there to service all members of the community, whether they are considered to be hobby farmers or, in the honourable member's phrase, economic farmers; even the

uneconomic farmers get our services, as do general members of the community. All of our officers are available within their expertise to assist anybody who considers that they need our assistance.

I do not know anything about any special conditions of employment for an individual officer. I can find out for the honourable member and have the information incorporated in *Hansard*, or I can ask my officers to enlarge on the answer.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Can we have the latter in relation to the apparent conditions of employment?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My officers state that they do not know the individual conditions of some individual officer, either. We have about 1 060 officers in the Department of Agriculture. Apart from our own, we would not be too aware of the conditions of employment of everybody else. I will have to take that question on notice, find out whether there is anything in it, and have the response incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr GUNN: I note on page 158 a line dealing with the brucellosis and TB eradication scheme. Does the Minister believe that enough consideration has been given to some of the problems that are facing cattle producers in the northern parts of the State in their attempt to restock their properties? I have had some correspondence with the Minister, and a considerable number of complaints from my constituents, who are, to put it mildly, not particularly pleased with some of the difficulties that they have experienced in endeavouring to restock their properties. It has really caused them a great deal of trouble. It appears that, if a little more flexibility was shown, some problems they have experienced could have been overcome.

The Minister would be aware of the extensive fencing programme, the building of yards, and various other things that have taken place, but for these properties to remain effective and viable units they have to get stock back on them as quickly as possible. I do not want to be unduly critical of the people administering this scheme, but sometimes they are not really aware of some of the difficulties, particularly the financial concerns, that people out in the field have.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I appreciate the concerns that have been expressed by the member for Eyre. The honourable member and all members of the community would agree that the BCB programme is very important, not just to the State of South Australia and the cattle producers within South Australia but for all cattle producers within Australia. In the Far North of our State, the area to which the honourable member referred, to get the degree of eradication that is required is a very difficult and complex operation. I am delighted to be able to tell the Committee that that programme is coming close to finishing in the North. By far the overwhelming majority of properties in that area have been declared clean, that is, that the stock on those properties do not suffer from brucellosis or tuberculosis.

A tremendous amount of Government money, both Federal and State, has been put into this programme, as well as very significant amounts from the rural community. From memory, the producers themselves have put in almost \$300 million to this programme. I suppose that in a perfect world it would be possible to get the amount of funds for the programme that obviously the member for Eyre and I would like, but that is not possible.

Again, one of the problems against which we come up daily is that nobody gives us a blank cheque. The degree of funding that is there is appropriate. If the member for Eyre considers that some individual producers are being disadvantaged and that we as a Department are acting in an arbitrary way, I am sure that he would let me know. We have guidelines, and the officers who are engaged in this

programme have to work within them. Whether they as individuals consider that the guidelines are appropriate in all cases is not really the point. The point is that guidelines are there. They have been agreed by State and Federal Government and also with representatives of the producers and have been found to be as far as both the Government and producers are able to go.

I was pleased at the last meeting of Agricultural Council to be involved in establishing a committee consisting of three producers, plus representatives of the Northern Territory, Western Australian and Queensland Governments to look further at the BTEC programme in the North of Australia. That area has very difficult terrain; it is incredibly expensive to build the thousands of kilometres of fences that are required. Very extensive yards are required. It is a very difficult operation, but one which I believe—as I am sure that the member for Eyre believes—is absolutely essential for the meat industry here in Australia.

Mr GUNN: Under the line 'Rural Assistance', can the Minister give any information in relation to whether consideration has been given to amalgamating all the Acts that are now in existence? Also, I should like to ask a question concerning deregulation.

I note from the yellow book that the Minister and the Department administer many Acts, such as the Acts applying to the Vertebrate Pests Authority and the Pest Plants Authority. Will those two authorities be brought together under the one Act of Parliament and, if so, will local councils be given the opportunity to have single member boards?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It would be desirable to amalgamate those two Acts. One of the problems relates to an area that is well known to a certain member of the Committee. The councils at Lameroo and Pinnaroo are somewhat reluctant to form themselves into a single board. I was speaking to the Chairman of the Lameroo council in the past couple of days and, while I appreciate the sincerity of their position, I believe that they are simply wrong—that there is no reasonable case to be made for Lameroo and Pinnaroo to become single member boards, certainly no more case to be made than for many other areas of the State. If the rationale held good for Lameroo and Pinnaroo, it would hold good for other areas, and I believe that that would put the programme back several years.

The amalgamation of those two Acts is proving to be somewhat difficult, but we have not shelved the matter as being too hard. We are still persevering with attempts to get these last few remaining councils into pest plant boards. There is then a strong desire by the Government to amalgamate those two Acts. However, we still have to cross the last hurdle. If one considered the issue as a marathon, one could say that we have just completed 42 kilometres and the last few hundred metres is proving difficult. I hope that the problems will be overcome and that the two Acts can be amalgamated.

Mr GUNN: The argument that there must be dual member boards for councils is difficult to understand. When the Act was proclaimed I was involved on behalf of councils on Eyre Peninsula that did not want to be part of joint boards. I think that if they had their way they would still be single member boards.

Mr LEWIS: No. I have been told several times that they are very happy with the present system. It works wonderfully.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr GUNN: Those councils would believe that they could operate effectively by themselves, especially when one considers the distance involved. However, I will not pursue that matter. Has the Minister received many applications over the past 12 months for funds for rural assistance and farm buildup? What was the rate of approvals?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot say the precise number, but Mr Handscombe could respond.

Mr Handscombe: In 1983-84, 38 loans for farm buildup were approved to the value of \$1.8 million, and the rate of approval was about 60 per cent.

Mr GUNN: What was the main reason for loans not being approved? Was there a trend?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There would be a variety of reasons and Mr Handscombe can elaborate.

Mr Handscombe: Probably the biggest single reason why loans were refused was that the land to be purchased was so expensive that the farmer would be unable to make it pay in the medium term.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Regarding the Mount Barker situation, about which I raised a couple of points and sat through the Minister's long explanation, which was really unrelated to the questions, about how hard up he is and how he cannot do what he would like to do, and, in relation to conditions of appointment of officers, I understand that at least five of the original six staff members (or the present staff of eight) have a Government vehicle to travel from their respective homes to the Mount Barker office. I further understand that four of those people at least live within a relatively short distance of the centre—at Athelstone, Marion, Stirling, and Verdun. It is also my understanding that the condition involving the use of a Government vehicle was extended to these officers in order to locate them in that region: there was some objection to their location at that office.

I also believe that the use of Government vehicles to travel to and from work was extended to those officers albeit that it was associated with their fieldwork as well, but each day and also on weekends they could use those vehicles for six months, during which time they were required to rearrange their circumstances and to find their own transport to and from work. That six-month period has long gone but each and every one of those officers is still travelling from his home to the office on week days and weekends in Government vehicles. That is the picture presented to me. Is the Minister saying that he knows nothing of those additional incentive conditions, and that he says so on behalf of all officers present?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Of course I speak on behalf of all officers present. I am not quite sure what the member for Alexandra is suggesting. The question is directed to me. I made it perfectly clear in answer to a question about the Mount Barker office that I will certainly have the query raised by the honourable member investigated and I will have the results of that investigation incorporated in *Hansard* before 19 October.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I am not quite sure, because of the reorganisation regarding the 'Miscellaneous' lines, which line under the agricultural allocations refers to travel and accommodation expenses of the Minister's own staff.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Point 1 on page 158 shows the salaries and wages of the staff of my office: there is also the line 'Contingencies, administrative expenses, minor equipment and sundries', item 22, \$6.01 million'.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I understand that from time to time officers of a Minister's division are required to travel with the Minister on his multiple duties both intrastate and interstate. Quite obviously, travelling and accommodation expenses of officers accompanying the Minister have to be met, and are met, under the appropriate line. Is the Minister able, either today or before 19 October, to put on record details of expenses incurred for travel and/or accommodation by any officer travelling and staying intrastate or interstate over the period I have mentioned? In so doing, will he identify in broad terms the purpose of such travel by the officer and the destination involved in each case?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will endeavour to get that information for the honourable member. My problem relates to the term 'officers'—who does the honourable member mean?

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Officers in the Minister's division of the department.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That makes it a little easier.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Is the Minister intending to establish a single crop research centre in conjunction with, or in lieu of, service arrangements now available at Roseworthy College and Waite Institute?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Minister is not in a position to say that he is going to establish anything. I was made aware that there was some interest in the rural community in establishing a single crop research institute, so I invited the industry to look at present arrangements for crop research and to report back to me on what they saw as being the benefits and/or deficiencies in the present system of crop research. I am pleased that the industry responded and agreed to form a small committee to investigate this matter on my behalf. I expect a response from that small working party in the first quarter in the new year.

The area involved is very complex. There are a number of institutions involved, some with a long tradition of engaging in crop research, so I would have to be convinced of any benefits of attempting to bring all those various institutions or research facilities in relation to cereal crops and field crops from those institutions into a single operation. I think that the present system works well. Before I can comment on whether or not it can be improved upon, I must await the outcome of the inquiry that the industry is engaged in relating to this whole area.

Mr HAMILTON: I see that there is a proposed allocation of \$200 000 to the Overseas Project Division. Also, on page 13 of the programme performance papers South Australia is said to be expert in dryland farming. It is pointed out there is potential to expand and transfer this technology and to export opportunities arising from it to overseas countries. Can the Minister elaborate on what specific areas the Government is considering in relation to this matter, and what specific areas of potential the Government is directing its aims at?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The International Division of the Department engages in overseas projects, consultancies, and so on. I believe that these are to the benefit of the State of South Australia and, in particular to the benefit of rural industries and industries associated with rural industries, and it is a very important part of what we do within the Department. There are a number of projects being addressed at the moment that I would be happy to give the honourable member much detail about. However, I am in the hands of the Committee and the member in relation to this matter.

I will give the member the headings of some of the programmes in which we are engaged and, if he wishes any further detail about any programme, I will be delighted to expand on that programme for him. We have a programme in Algeria, one that would be well known to most members as it has had a considerable amount of publicity. It is an integrated agro-pastoral project at Ksar Chellala. We also have an agro-pastoral development project at Erbil in Northern Iraq. Again, this is a very successful project and is recognised in Iraq as being just that.

We also have a project in Jordan, the Jordan/Australia Dryland Farming Project. This is being carried out by Sagric International for the Australian Development Assistance Bureau. The principal aim of the project is to demonstrate the advantages that result from the introduction of legume forage crops in lieu of the fallow phase of the traditional cereal/fallow rotation. If the honourable member has a par-

ticular interest in that operation I will be happy to assist him with a great deal more detail.

They are some of our major projects. We also have some minor projects and consultancies that we conducted in 1983-84. In the Yemen Arab Republic there is an agricultural development pre-feasibility study for which Sagric International was retained, working with private enterprise, to wit, William Jackett and Son of Port Adelaide, acting on behalf of the Yemeni company. The study, which relates to the Tihama (coastal plain) in general, indicated that there were a number of irrigated crop and livestock options that could successfully be adapted to the area. The Yemeni client subsequently asked Sagric International to undertake a feasibility study and project design for a livestock feedlotting and irrigated fodder venture.

In Morocco, Sagric International provided the services of a pasture research officer to the German Agency for Technical Co-operation for a four-week assignment in connection with its work to improve fodder production.

In Kuwait we have been involved in the planning for the Kuwait Palms Cultivation Company. A mission to plan an ornamental horticulture facility took place in August-September 1983 and was a follow on from a nursery pre-feasibility study carried out in February 1983. We understand that the client intends to implement the project when a suitable site is obtained. We have registered our interest in involvement with the implementation of the venture.

Further afield, we are involved in the provision of a pasture agronomist to China. In February last year Sagric International entered into an agreement with the Australian Agricultural Consulting and Management Company of Adelaide to provide the services of a pasture agronomist for two years. The agronomist is located in Yunnan Province in China where he works on pasture and livestock development which AACM is carrying out for the Australian Development Assistance Bureau.

In Saudi Arabia we are involved in some farm planning for Horwood Bagshaw Limited and during the year Sagric International was retained by that firm to carry out further farm design and feasibility studies for irrigated wheat farming on properties with which the company is involved in that country.

When I was discussing Jordan, I forgot to mention that in June 1983 we responded to a request from the Jordan Co-operative Organisation to tender for the supply of agricultural equipment needed to establish a farm machinery station at Irbid in the north of the country. We were successful in gaining part of the order and in December 1983 we shipped equipment sourced from South Australian manufacturers with an overall value of \$85 000.

It is important that the Committee be made aware that we are also involved through Sagric International in some very important marketing initiatives. Sagric International has undertaken a major marketing effort in the past year. Our objectives have been to win projects in any field of rural development or agriculture throughout the Middle East or North Africa or, if conditions suit, elsewhere. Such projects must be commercially viable for Sagric International and beneficial for South Australia.

In North Africa we have mounted a major project design mission for a forestry project in Algeria. We have also expressed interest to the Algerians in follow-up projects springing from the Ksar Chellala project. We have been invited to undertake a project design mission for a cereal and livestock production improvement programme in one of Morocco's more important agricultural regions.

In the Middle East we have concentrated on renewal of our projects in Iraq and Jordan. Prospects for renewal of both these endeavours seem good. We have investigated the significant agricultural developments taking place in Pakistan

and have submitted a number of proposals to clients, mainly from the private sector. We believe we have good prospects in several cases and have won a small contract for a livestock related project in Pakistan. In the Yemen Arab Republic we have submitted a proposal to a major company for a farm development. In Kuwait we have submitted prequalification documents for involvement in the development of a national agricultural plan. In Saudi Arabia we have supported South Australian companies in joint venture enterprises in agricultural development. Several minor initiatives have also been taken in the Gulf States, and I will not go into all of them.

Honourable members would appreciate that Sagric International is a very vigorous and viable organisation and its work overseas reflects greatly on the dryland farming expertise that has been built up in this State. I believe that we are pre-eminent in Australia in dryland farming and it is a credit to our system of dryland farming that our technology is welcomed overseas and, provided finance is available, we are only too pleased to engage in the transfer of that technology to our friends and neighbours throughout the world.

Mr HAMILTON: Many of our rural constituents would be interested in the information provided by the Minister. Will the Minister outline the overall financial benefits that have accrued to South Australia over the past couple of years? If he does not have that information, perhaps he can provide it to the Committee in due course. When the Minister was speaking about nursery complexes and pre-feasibility studies, did they incorporate Australian flora? A number of people have asked me what avenues are open for exporting native flora. If so, will the Minister advise me of the proper channels and what the Department of Agriculture feels in relation to this?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, we endeavour to sell native plants/forest products to these overseas countries. We believe that particularly in the Middle East and North Africa there is a very substantial market for these products. Obviously, we are in competition with many other regions that feel they have the same degree of expertise as we do. I introduce Mr Heysen to the Committee, who would be pleased to respond more specifically to the honourable member. I expect that, when the Committee is dealing with the Department of Woods and Forests, that question could be raised again. In that portfolio we also do a significant degree of work in attempting to have our native flora incorporated into overseas projects.

Mr Heysen: The study of nursery activities in Kuwait was a pre-feasibility study and Kuwaiti authorities are now considering its future. One of its specific aims was to design a local nursery production that would be based partly on Australian supplied flora and Australian consultancy services. That would be done in conjunction with private enterprise from South Australia.

Mr HAMILTON: What varieties will be included?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can get for insertion in the report information for the honourable member in regard to specific varieties of Australian native plants. Neither Mr Heysen nor I are horticulturists and I doubt that we could even pronounce the names of Australian natives other than names such as 'gum' and 'eucalyptus'.

Mr HAMILTON: Can the Minister provide details of the financial benefits flowing to South Australia in terms of dry farming?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is difficult to quantify those benefits, but we will certainly attempt to get that information or identify how much seed has been sent from South Australia. It is difficult to quantify in precise dollars the benefits to this State, but they are considerable. Much South Australian expertise and material is involved in these overseas

projects. We will attempt to provide as much detail as we can before 19 October.

Mr HAMILTON: I see that \$174 000 was the actual payment in regard to fruit fly eradication, yet there is no proposed allocation. I suppose the Department cannot know how much will be required, but I would have expected that some allocation would be made for 1984-85 in the case of an outbreak. Can the Minister elaborate on the success of the fruit fly eradication scheme in the past financial year and say how many cases of fruit fly were reported in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No allocation for fruit fly is made because traditionally if an outbreak occurs we get funds without any problem to deal with it. We could allow \$500 000 and not use it. It seems a pointless exercise when there is no difficulty in obtaining funds for fruit fly eradication when an outbreak occurs. We maintain a significant preventive effort in various ways throughout the year. As members would be aware, we have a continuous fruit fly road block operating at Yamba, near Renmark, and summer only operations at Oodlawirra and Pinnaroo. We are concerned that Victoria and New South Wales ceased all road block operations in May 1983. Positive interceptions increased in the 1983-84 summer, giving rise to some concern. There were fewer than 10 positive interceptions in the previous years to 77 in this period: Yamba 50, Pinnaroo four, and Oodlawirra 23. We assume that these were due mainly to three factors: the closure of Eastern States road blocks, especially at Euston, a higher than normal Queensland fruit fly activity in the Eastern States, and a policy of even closer examination of seized fruit. I have some additional information for the Committee.

Two separate outbreaks of Queensland fruit fly have been reported in commercial fruit growing areas of Sunraysia. This eliminates Sunraysia from New Zealand export and South Australian markets in 1984-85. That emphasises the absolute necessity of maintaining the status of South Australia as a fruit fly free State as much as we are able because our interstate and overseas markets would be significantly affected if we did not maintain that position.

Mr HAMILTON: Has the Minister taken up the matter of fruit fly stations with his Ministerial colleagues in the Eastern States to ensure that checking stations are manned in the next season or financial year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That will not occur. Governments in those States have taken a conscious decision not to do that. To some extent they are relying on South Australia, which has the better position of the States and, inasmuch as we do not have fruit fly endemic in South Australia—in many of the other States it is already endemic and for those States it is already too late—it merely emphasises even more the necessity of maintaining the level of vigilance that we have in our attempt to keep this State fruit fly free.

Mr Blacker: Can the Minister explain why two new lines have been created through the amalgamation of two other lines? The Animal Health Division and the Animal Industry Division have been amalgamated to create the Animal Services Division and the Land Use and Protection Division and the Plant Industry Division have been amalgamated to create the Plant Services Division. Is there any significance in that amalgamation? Does it allow the departmental allocation of funds of a disproportionate basis compared to that which has occurred previously?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I did not catch the full import of the honourable member's question I will ask Dr Radcliffe, who was not distracted, to respond.

Dr Radcliffe: The question concerned the significance of a new line Animal Services Division as opposed to the previous lines of Animal Industry Division and Animal Health. During the year we have had a review of the central

operations of the Department to see whether there were opportunities to ultimately get additional resources that could be put out into the regions to improve our front line services in the Department. As a result, we are getting an increase in the number of appointments in the regions, some of which the Minister alluded to in his opening remarks. In this instance it has been agreed that we should amalgamate the Animal Health Division and the Animal Industry Division and also the Veterinary Sciences Division to generate a single Animal Services Division. The results of those amalgamations are shown in the line estimates as a restructuring. In the same way there is a Plant Services Division and you will see that the previous Plant Industry Division is not shown in the coming year, nor is the Land Use and Protection Division, those two divisions having been amalgamated into a single Plant Services Division, with the intention of producing more effective services with less overall resource costs.

Mr Blacker: How many applications have been received for rural industry assistance as a result of the vegetation clearance regulations? If there have been a number, how many have been approved? I notice that the Government has indicated that this facility is available to those affected by vegetation clearance regulations.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There have been two applications to the Department for assistance. Neither of the applications met the criteria that permitted the applications to proceed.

Mr Blacker: I notice that last year an amount of \$700 000 was allocated under the 'Meat inspection' line but that only \$530 691 was spent. This year a further \$600 000 is proposed. Does that represent any real significance other than seasonal fluctuations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Not that I am aware of.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I refer to the restructuring of departmental divisions, as raised by the member for Flinders. Does the Minister acknowledge that during the annual UF&S conference his officers, Mitchell and Harvey, who were guests of the organisation, indicated that the Department was considered to be top heavy at the black stump and that a real effort had been made to redistribute its resources to, using Dr Radcliffe's term, present a more effective force at the front line. In so doing, has emphasis been shifted from attention to animal resources to agronomy?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member is asserting that two of my officers made these statements at a UF&S conference.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I said 'indicated'. They implied that they acknowledged that fact.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That gets even further away. I will certainly have discussions with the officers. With absolutely no disrespect at all to the member for Alexandra, I cannot enter into a debate on claims—not even statements, but only things alluded to—in relation to my officers without, in fairness, discussing it with them.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Do you agree that the objective is to try to shift out to the front line any surplus that is accruing or has accrued within central office?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I was coming to that. In general, I attempt to use agricultural resources in the most efficient manner. At times that requires us to take a position where we must look at competing interests which, I think, is a very healthy approach. The Department of Agriculture is a constantly evolving department, as are all departments I am sure. We are not static. As I have said, we are evolving. From time to time it may be that the emphasis appears to shift from one area to another. The honourable member suggested that the emphasis was moving from animal industries to agronomy.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: That is the direction in which you appear to be going. That was the question.

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The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is not necessarily the direction in which we are going. I am saying that we will use our resources in the most appropriate manner, as we see it at the time. I think we are tremendously successful in the way we use our resources and the way in which the rural community is aware of that use. If at any given time there appears to be a shift from one area to another, I remind the Committee that we are in a constantly evolving situation and I do not expect that to change.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I appreciate the platitudes with which the Minister responds to my question. The question is on the record and I would appreciate, following consideration and reading of the details, if somewhere along the line the Minister could respond about the direction in which the Department appears to be going. There is no criticism; it was simply a matter of ascertaining the position.

Without seeking a great explanation about the philosophy behind movement within the Department, why has the Minister reduced funding to the advisory board of agriculture this year? According to a report in the *Stock Journal* last week that reduction has caused the Advisory Board to meet quarterly during the coming financial period rather than every two months. In answering the question the Minister might indicate the occasions on which he has addressed the Board at its previous two-monthly meetings and the nature of the directions that he has given it to undertake since becoming Minister.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There has been a restructuring of a number of organisations with which the Department is involved, including Rural Youth, the Women's Advisory Bureau and the Advisory Board of Agriculture. I think that was done in a very positive way. There is also a new body, of which the honourable member may be aware, known as the Rural Advisory Council. Two delegates each from Rural Youth, the Women's Advisory Bureau and the Advisory Board of Agriculture comprise that new body. There has been a reallocation of funds. My information is that funding has been considerably increased from \$45 000 last year to \$55 000 this year, partly to accommodate the new Rural Advisory Council.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Additional money has gone to the Advisory Board of Agriculture. Does that mean that last week's report in the *Stock Journal* is incorrect?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a total allocation to the organisations with which we have some financial connection, that is, Rural Youth, the Women's Advisory Bureau, the Advisory Board of Agriculture, and the new Rural Advisory Council. As I have said, I am advised that funding has been increased from \$45 000 to \$55 000. I understand that members of those bodies have appreciated the slight restructuring that has taken place, plus the addition of a new body, and they feel that it has been very worth while.

I speak with the Advisory Board of Agriculture whenever I can. I attend its meetings when it is possible for me to do so. I find it a very useful sounding board for me as Minister and I know that the members appreciate it when I am able to get to their meetings. They take full advantage of it by questioning me closely to find out information as to what I think on various issues. In turn, I question them and ask them what they think on various issues. I get the minutes of their meetings, which I read with a great deal of interest.

I have a very good relationship with all those bodies. I am particularly proud of establishing a Rural Advisory Council, which consists of two members from each of those bodies. When that body finds its feet—it is only very new—it will be a very useful addition to advise the Minister from a broad section of the rural community on matters of mutual interest.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: The Minister may have missed the latter part of my question, which was: what is

the nature of the requests made of the Advisory Board of Agriculture to investigate and advise on?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have asked the Advisory Board to advise me on a number of matters. Drought policies was one. I will have a list compiled for the honourable member and have it incorporated in *Hansard*. I find a great deal of benefit in attending the Advisory Board of Agriculture meetings and discussing with its members in a face to face situation the various problems that the rural community is having, as they see them, and we have a very full and useful exchange of views at those meetings.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I feel a little embarrassed, Mr Chairman. I know that the Minister introduced his officers earlier, and I failed to acknowledge their presence particularly that of Jim McColl, who I see is visiting South Australia again, I omitted altogether to acknowledge those people.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Alexandra has just made a remark that I consider to be totally unnecessary. If he wants to make half smart remarks he can address them to me, because I am certainly capable of making even better ones back. Remarks made to public servants, which can be taken to be offensive, are certainly offensive to me. Of course, the officer will not say whether they are offensive to him, and that is as it should be. If the member for Alexandra wants to conduct the Committee in that vein, I suggest that he keeps his remarks to me and I will deal with those remarks very effectively.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: On the matter of overseas projects, as raised by the member for Albert Park earlier, the Minister in response indicated his support for the benefits to South Australia derived from the State's relationship with the Middle East countries. Does the Minister support that annual trade that we enjoy between this State and the Middle East, that of live sheep trade in particular? Does he acknowledge without reservation the benefits for this State, and does he support that trade continuing? In doing so, will he also indicate to the Committee whether he has any request from the Saudi Arabian Australian Live Stock Company in particular to assist in establishing a marshalling yard complex here in this State, where I understand that it has already purchased land? If he has had any request for assistance in the establishment of that complex, can he outline to the Committee the nature of the request by that identified company?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The live sheep trade is significant to South Australia. It is also a very contentious trade amongst the various parties as to its benefits to Australia. Some, particularly from the meat industry union, would argue the disadvantages of sending stock overseas on the hoof rather than stock which has been slaughtered within Australia. The export markets, as the member for Alexandra would know, are primarily the concern of the Federal Government, and the Federal Minister for Primary Industry has a committee at the moment reviewing the live sheep export trade. I do not know the exact composition of the committee, but it consists of people who are interested in that trade. I certainly would not wish to interfere in the operations of the Federal Minister for Primary Industry. I have not been invited to, and therefore I do not intend to make any more comment.

There are certainly pluses in the live sheep trade. There is no doubt about that, but some would see some very significant minuses in the loss of these sheep compared with their going through our abattoirs. Everyone would know—and I am sure that we will discuss it later this afternoon—the problems that the abattoirs (the ones that we have left) have in attracting stock for slaughter. Some would see the live sheep export trade as creating that problem to some extent.

As regards the Saudi Livestock Company, the answer is, 'Yes, I have been approached by that company.' It is a private organisation and I have no authority from it to discuss its business in the Committee. I understood that we are here to discuss the appropriation that is before us. In general terms, the problems that the company raised with me were problems that do not come within my portfolio areas but within the portfolio of another Minister, and they will be dealt with by that Minister.

Mr HAMILTON: This question was addressed before, but I will ask a variation of it. Can the Minister indicate what stage has been reached in the implementation of the review of research centres?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A considerable amount of material will be incorporated in *Hansard* that details precisely where we are up to with that. I know that the member for Albert Park has a very significant interest in this area. If there is any specific research centre about which he would like information now I would be happy to provide it, but it will be in *Hansard* prior to 19 October.

Mr HAMILTON: What steps have been taken to find a solution to the millipede problem in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Albert Park for his question. This problem affects many people in South Australia in a very unpleasant way. I wish that I could tell the Committee that the Department of Agriculture has come up with a solution to the problem, but unfortunately that is not the case. I can inform the honourable member of some of the measures that have been taken to date and give him some hope for the future. I understand that the District of Albert Park is not affected at present; my information is that it is primarily in the Hills and the eastern suburbs that the problem occurs. However, the problem is moving through the metropolitan area, and, while the member for Albert Park and his constituents may be free of that problem at present, it is possible that it will flow through even to the beachside suburbs.

As I have advised the Parliament previously, there was a joint project between the CSIRO and the Department of Agriculture on the biological control of black Portuguese millipedes. That project terminated on 31 December 1983, and the total cost over 3½ years to the department (not to the CSIRO) was \$102 174. The main conclusion from the project was that the parasitic fly which is specific to millipedes and endemic to Portugal was the most promising biocontrol agent for the millipede in South Australia. The results of that project have shown that, if there is to be any significant effect on the millipedes, it will be through a biological control agent. While the Department of Agriculture can give a great deal of information and assistance on how individual householders can attempt to cope with the problem on their property, and while it can give advice to local councils, the overall solution will be through a biological control agent.

The Department made \$6 800 available to Dr Baker (who was involved in the original project) to visit Portugal for a month commencing in mid August 1984. The purpose of the visit was to collect parasitised millipedes for the introduction of the fly into South Australia. Dr Baker was assisted by a technician in Portugal. The salaries of Dr Baker and the technician are paid by the CSIRO but their travel and accommodation costs were met by the South Australian Government through the Department of Agriculture.

Dr Baker dispatched several thousand millipedes from Portugal prior to his return to Adelaide on 9 September 1984. The level of parasitism in millipedes in Portugal was quite low, unfortunately. Preliminary observations of the imported material indicate that there are some parasites in the shipment, but whether they will emerge in sufficient numbers to start a breeding colony will not be known for

several weeks. The parasitised millipedes will be kept under quarantine conditions at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute until the parasitic flies emerge as adults. The emerging parasitic flies will be transferred to quarantine facilities that are to be erected by January 1985 at our Northfield research laboratories. The flies will be reared and subjected to host specificity tests as required by the quarantine authorities. When the quarantine requirements have been fulfilled, arrangements will be made for the flies to be released into the field. Technical staff will be provided by the Department of Agriculture to rear and test the parasitic flies in quarantine prior to release.

The Committee can be assured that whatever can be done in this area is being done. There is no question of a shortage of funds holding up vital research projects. If funds alone could solve this problem, I can assure the Committee that the problem would have been solved but, in developing a biological control agent as appears to be the most satisfactory solution, work must be carried out in the laboratories by the scientists and technicians. They are well advanced and I hope that over the next few years a safe biological control agent will be available to control this rather horrible pest, which I understand started in Australia somewhere in the region of Port Lincoln. I note that the member for Flinders is within the hearing of the Committee; I mean no disrespect at all, but I wonder whether quite casually the member for Flinders can advise us how the problem started in Port Lincoln and came to invade the rest of the metropolitan area.

Mr HAMILTON: Can the Minister advise what has happened with the departmental report *Future Directions and Extension*, and how far has implementation of the recommendations progressed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, I thank the member for Albert Park for his question. In November 1983 the executive of the Department of Agriculture received the report to which the honourable member referred, *Future Directions and Extension*, which was prepared by the then Chief Extension Officer, Mr J.H. Richardson, in consultation with an extension policy steering committee chaired by the Director-General of Agriculture. The report was released for public comment, copies being distributed widely to intrastate and interstate departments and agencies, producer organisations, agricultural business, and so on. Comments have been collated and incorporated where appropriate into an updated document. On 28 and 29 March 1984 the Department's board of management accepted 23 recommendations and referred several to appropriate bodies for further development and resubmission. The accepted recommendations were endorsed by me on 18 July 1984.

The implementation of the accepted recommendations will be managed by the Director responsible for the extension function in the Department. A summary of the accepted recommendations is available, as follows. The Extension Management Committee has been disbanded and the Extension Policy and Planning Committee, the EPPC, has been established instead. The EPPC has a greater level of representation and executive support to assist in the implementation of the recommendations and to develop policy and priorities. This committee met for the first time on 5 July this year.

A new position of Principal Officer, Extension Policy, has now been established by the transfer of an experienced extension manager from a regional position. Amongst his responsibilities this officer will act as the executive officer for the EPPC. The accepted recommendations relating to the planning of extension programmes and the assessment of extension needs are being developed by subcommittees of the Extension Policy and Planning Committee into guideline documents prior to implementation. The methods of

staff training and extension skills and methodology are being reviewed in liaison with the Department's staff training and development committee with the objective of providing expanding and relevant training in this discipline. The honourable member will be aware that I, as the Minister, the Government and senior officers (indeed all officers) of the Department consider our extension services to be of the utmost importance in the Department's work.

Without a significant and effective extension branch and extension officers a great deal of the work that we do in agriculture would not be utilised to its fullest extent. I think that it is interesting, if one reads the rural press and listens to various debates that occur about agriculture, to see the dramatic changes that are occurring within extension services. The Department will certainly monitor these changes carefully. One particular innovation that is rapidly being introduced throughout rural industry in Australia is Videotex, whereby farmers in remote areas will have access through their television sets and computers to the most up-to-the-minute information on various items that interest them.

Mr HAMILTON: Like the programme on *Countrywide*?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Exactly. There have been good demonstrations in the media in general in relation to this matter. The Department will certainly monitor these changes. It is certainly not in the business of rushing into them and does not have the financial capacity to do so, anyway. I suppose that it is using up some of the more financial States, for example Victoria where Videotex is moving into the extension services in a significant way. We will pick their brains, but knowing the Victorian Department of Agriculture and the Minister very well, I am sure that they will not object to that at all.

When we feel that it is appropriate to move into these areas, if it becomes appropriate, we will certainly do so. I believe that to go overboard with technology in the extension area at this stage is not appropriate. Perhaps to some extent I am a little old fashioned because I like to have real live extension officers in the field talking to farmers where possible on farmers' properties and going through some of the problems that farmers have. It may well be that the cost of that will in future years become prohibitive and that a much more effective service can be given using available technology. That is yet to be proved, but it may well be the case. If that is clearly demonstrated, then obviously the South Australian Government and the South Australian Department of Agriculture will move into those areas at the appropriate time.

Mr GUNN: I have a number of questions on certain matters because I know that the expertise of members opposite is rather limited. Does the Minister's Department intend to give evidence to the Senate Committee currently investigating the live sheep trade? It is my understanding that that committee was set up following a number of quite irresponsible and outrageous statements being made by animal liberationists and other groups in the community. I have heard some quite scurrilous and untruthful remarks from these groups and seen displays they have put on in Rundle Mall from time to time in relation to the exercises that take place relating to the proper management of sheep. If the Minister has not given this matter consideration, will his officers be made available to give evidence to that committee supporting this trade, because it is absolutely essential to the grazing industry in this State and is one way in which people can get reasonable value for sheep that are not normally used in the meat industry. The average housewife certainly would not want to purchase five year old wethers across the table in the butcher shop.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not aware of any Senate Committee investigating the live sheep trade as such. There is a Senate Select Committee considering animal welfare in

general. It is possible that as part of that committee they are considering the live sheep trade. I understand that the State Government submitted a paper to that Senate Select Committee, I believe called 'Animal Welfare'. Certainly, the Department of Agriculture had an input into that submission. In view of the remarks made by the member for Eyre when he commenced his question, I can give him a great deal more information regarding the Government's position in relation to this area. However, so as not to unduly delay the proceedings of the Committee, if he requires any more information he can write to me.

Mr GUNN: I turn now to a matter raised by the member for Albert Park, that is, the research centres on Eyre Peninsula. I am pleased that the Minister agreed to maintain the existing operation at Minnipa. A number of schools in my District and some in the District of the member for Flinders have written to me about Sims Farm. Has the Department of Agriculture transferred that farm to the Education Department and, if not, is it intending to do so? It is my view that this land could be put to good use by the Education Department. I have not been to the Cleve Area School for a while, but in the past it has been involved with some very good projects and I believe that that property could be a useful adjunct to proper agricultural studies in that area, servicing not only the Eyre Peninsula but other parts of the State.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The position in relation to Sims Farm is that the Department has stated quite clearly it does not require that farm and has offered it to the Education Department, which is at the moment assessing whether or not it requires that property for rural education purposes in South Australia.

Mr GUNN: Will the Department be making the farm available at a most reasonable price to the Education Department? I am aware that the Education Department has \$700 million to spend this year and probably has more money available to it than the Department of Agriculture. However, I would not like to see this opportunity lost purely because of internal haggling over price between departments. Will the Minister give an assurance that the operation at Minnipa will continue on the same basis that it has in the past?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To answer the last question first, I cannot give an assurance that Minnipa will continue on the same basis as in the past. We are constantly evolving and what I hope for Minnipa is that it goes from strength to strength, but maybe in a changing form from time to time. With regard to Sims Farm, the Department of Agriculture is certainly not greedy and would not attempt to put an inflated price on that farm. However, I point out that the money that comes from the sale of that farm will assist research operations in agriculture for the benefit of all rural industry in South Australia. Although education has a role to play, I am the Minister of Agriculture attempting to assist rural industries.

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

Membership:

Mr Plunkett substituted for Mr Gregory.

Mr LEWIS: Particularly in relation to the Murray Mallee, but also generally, how many hectares of cleared land is arable for cultivation in South Australia, to the nearest, say, 10 000 hectares?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To respond generally, a lot. If the honourable member needs a precise figure, I will make my best endeavours to find out and have the figure incorporated into *Hansard*.

Mr LEWIS: On a State-wide and region by region percentage basis, how many hectares of land has been lost to production as a result of salination which the Department believes is directly attributable to native vegetation being cleared?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have this matter examined and see if a response can be found to the question. On first hearing the question my impression is that it would take a tremendous amount of departmental resources to come up with any kind of accurate answer. I foreshadow to the member for Mallee that it may not be possible within reasonable cost to come up with an answer to a question as broad as that.

Mr LEWIS: That is an interesting answer. The Minister is being sincere; he has never sought to mislead me in the past, and has told me things I did not want to hear. I want to pursue that line in a supplementary fashion. Why did the Minister not insist that the Chairman of the new committee that will be set up by a Bill presently before the House is a member from the Soil Conservation Branch of the Department?

Mr HAMILTON: On a point of order. Does this question come under 'Miscellaneous—Soil Conservation'.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order. The question comes under the funding lines and is in order.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would like the honourable member to give further information specifically concerning the committee he is referring to.

Mr LEWIS: My question refers to the Soil Conservation Act and rearranging the structure of the Board. The person who can be appointed as Chairman does not even have to come from the Department of Agriculture; that is the person who will be known as the Soil Conservator in future.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I clearly stated to the Council when the recent amendments to the Soil Conservation Act were debated that the position of Soil Conservator—not the Chairman of some new body—would in all probability come from my Department. The Act is administered by my Department. It is not the Government's policy to name specific officers in Acts of Parliament or where they shall come from. It is entirely the Government's prerogative to appoint officers to various positions where the Government sees fit. As I explained to the Council when the Bill was going through, I have no doubt that the person who is appointed as the Soil Conservator will be from the Department of Agriculture.

Mr LEWIS: The Minister's confidence about where the Soil Conservator will come from and, indeed, about where the Soil Conservation Branch will be located on a departmental basis is not shared by other people presently in the employ of Government and members from organisations like the South Australian Nature Conservation Society and the South Australian Environmental Council. Those bodies are clear in their minds that the Soil Conservator will come from the Department of Environment and Planning and that the Soil Conservation Branch will be transferred to that Department under the administration of the Minister's colleague, the Hon. Dr Hoggood.

I am surprised that the Minister is not aware of that because my recent correspondence emphatically states that that is so. Even though the Minister may believe, like I, that it will cost a considerable sum to come up with the figures on the extent to which native vegetation clearance has resulted in salination and other soil degradation characteristics, there are people from the Department of Environment and Planning and the organisations I mentioned who firmly believe and publicly state that they know the extent to which this soil degradation has taken place. Their public assertions lead one to believe that they have access to information not available to me or the Minister.

I am astonished that the news of these events and attitudes has not come to the attention of the Minister. Perhaps it is because those people do not want the Department or the Minister to know what they have in mind in the way of an ambush for the Department—and I do not mean the bacon tree. It is a pity that such information, if it is scientifically valid, has not been shared by those people with the Department. I wonder then whether the Minister can give an unqualified assurance to the Committee that what he just said will, in fact, be the case, namely, that the Soil Conservator will come from the Department of Agriculture and that the Soil Conservation Branch will remain in the Department of Agriculture.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not responsible for the comments and thoughts of other people as outlined by the member for Mallee. If that is their opinion they are entitled to it, and it is not for me to comment on their opinion. It is all very interesting, but I cannot see that it is terribly relevant. The honourable member seeks an unqualified assurance, but I can only repeat what I stated earlier: this Government reserves the right to appoint officers to particular positions and it will retain that right. As to the Soil Conservation Branch, to the best of my knowledge there is no intention at this stage to remove that branch to some other Government department. However, if in its wisdom the Government decided that there was a more appropriate location for the branch or any other branch, the Government reserves the right to make such changes. There is nothing novel or sinister about that.

Governments constantly change officers, locations of functions, portfolios: they create new portfolios and amalgamate others. There is nothing strange or different and the Government has that right and will retain it.

Mr LEWIS: I am astonished that the Minister states that there is nothing novel or sinister about the Government's inclination to relocate any division, branch or part of a department, particularly the Soil Conservation Branch of the Department of Agriculture. I see that as being both novel and sinister. It is novel because I have no faith in the competence of the officers to whom I have spoken in the Department of Environment and Planning and their ability to make the kinds of judgment and assessment required to determine whether it is in the interests of soil conservation or not that native vegetation should be cleared from a piece of land and, more particularly, whether particular land management practices are likely to lead to an increase or decrease in soil erosion.

They have some enormous blind spots in their thinking and are grossly ignorant. An illustration of that, for the benefit of the Committee and the Minister, is the example I gave to the House in a debate in the past 12 months about a constituent who was required to retain a substantial area of native vegetation around what was alleged to be the biggest quandong tree in creation. Several hectares around this alleged quandong tree were involved and, to cut a long story short, when the tree was finally and independently identified by the Botanical Gardens and the university it turned out to be a sandalwood tree—not even remotely related to a quandong tree.

The Minister claims that there is nothing sinister in transferring the Soil Conservation Branch to the care and control of such idiots. I see that as being very sinister. I also see it as very novel to even contemplate that transfer. The people who are presently engaged in the Branch and who exercise its statutory responsibilities are specifically trained and have years of experience to back them up. They have years of experience gained in the field and in a wide range of situations that ensures that their judgment is much better than that of someone fresh out of university or agricultural college—from whatever course. To say that it is not novel

to shift that Branch and restaff it with people of a completely different ilk with no experience whatever is to misuse the English language, to put a different kind of construction on it. I ask the Minister to reconsider the position that he has just taken because most of rural South Australia and I would view seriously any decision to shift the branch from the Agriculture Department and appoint someone as Soil Conservator who had no prior experience or involvement with the branch and its operations in the Department of Agriculture.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is nothing for me to reconsider. The member for Mallee should reconsider his approach to the Committee. The member for Mallee made an allegation and repeated that allegation that I had stated in my previous answer that there was an intention to shift the Soil Conservation Branch from the Department of Agriculture. That is completely incorrect. As the member for Mallee is intelligent enough to have heard precisely what I said, he has made a deliberate attempt to misconstrue the position. I could get an argument on that I know, but I am a charitable person. It does the honourable member no credit at all to misrepresent my reply in that way. I repeat for his benefit that the Government reserves the right to appoint any officer it wishes to any appointment. It reserves that right; it has that right; and it will retain that right to put any branch or section of any department under any other department or Minister as the Government believes appropriate. That right has been held by Governments since Governments began. I assume that position will remain in perpetuity, irrespective of the deliberate misrepresentations of the member for Mallee.

Mr HAMILTON: Can the Minister advise the Committee what soil conservation programmes will be implemented in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am happy to do that and I congratulate the member for Albert Park on his question.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: On a point of order, Mr Chairman, already as a result of previous proceedings 17 separate projects have been included in the record. Perhaps in view of the time the Minister would be willing to have the details of his reply about the projects inserted in this report as earlier arranged.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am just as willing to supply the Committee and the honourable member with a substantial amount of information directly or it can be inserted in the record without my reading it. It is up to the member for Albert Park.

Mr HAMILTON: I do not want all the programmes, but more precise detail. Does the Minister have any other information?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To short circuit the matter I will give the honourable member some general information about the soil conservation programme and the Department's involvement. Five technical officers were appointed to assist with the implementation of an expanded soil conservation programme in March 1982. Expenditure in 1983-84 was \$141 000 excluding the salaries of the five T.O.'s. The programme became fully operational in 1982-83 when substantial progress was made on four group catchment projects, a dune stabilisation scheme in the Murray Mallee, and an arid lands revegetation project. Fencing materials were purchased for a joint project with the District Council of Mannum. Three projects, Mannum Reserve, Upper Wakefield and Beachport have been completed allowing a start to be made on new projects at Koolunga, Kybunga, Gilbert River and Hut River.

The co-operation of community groups such as soil conservation boards, district councils and local farmers is essential to the success of the projects. Expenditure in 1983-84 was \$230 000 including \$141 000 on projects and \$89 000

on the salaries of the five technical officers. The programme was State funded in 1981-82 and 1982-83 when the Commonwealth withdrew from direct involvement in a national soil conservation programme, but included an additional \$280 000 in the general revenue grant to the State, and moneys were made available from this source.

Subsequently, the Commonwealth introduced the national soil conservation programme in February 1984 with an allocation of \$63 600 for South Australia which included the salaries of two technical officers. The allocation for 1984-85 for South Australia was \$396 000 which includes the salaries of three additional technical officers, three research officers and a co-ordinator/training officer.

Mr HAMILTON: What efforts are being made to co-ordinate field crop research in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A substantial amount of information was given to another member of the Committee in relation to this matter. To encapsulate that information, I suppose it is appropriate for me to sum up the present position. South Australia has four institutions involved in field crop improvement research, namely Waite Agricultural Research Institute, Roseworthy Agricultural College, Department of Agriculture, and the Chemistry Division, Department of Services and Supply. The South Australian Government, the Wheat Industry Research Committee and the Barley Industry Research Committee financially support the salaries and operating of all the wheat and barley breeding programmes in South Australia. A review of field crop improvement research published in 1981 suggested that rationalisation of these activities into one organisation would improve field crop research.

After approaches from the UF & S Grain Section, I invited the UF & S to form a working party to prepare advice, for my consideration, on the better integration of the State's field crop breeding research. The working party was asked to provide the advantages and disadvantages that may be expected from any recommended changes. It was also asked to consult with the four organisations involved in field crop improvement research. I notified the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, the Department of Agriculture, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Lands and I had established the working party and requested their support.

The membership of the working party is Chairman of the Grain Section of UF & S (Mr A.R. Inglis, Chairman), Chairman of the S.A. Wheat Industry Research Committee (Mr E.D. Buckley), Chairman of the S.A. Barley Research Committee (Mr C.J. Rowe), immediate past Chairman of the UF & S Grain Section (Mr A.B. Eichner) and the Secretary UF & S Grain Section (Mr N. Fisher, Secretary). Members of the working party have visited the Wheat Breeding Institute, Toowoomba, Queensland and Horsham, Victoria. These locations are centres of field crop improvement research for the respective State Departments responsible for agriculture. The working party has met with the organisations in South Australia involved in field crop improvement research in early September. It is expected that their report will be finished in February/March 1985.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: In view of the time and the earlier expressed desire to raise questions about Samcor's operation before the Committee rises, I will mention several headings, which I ask the Minister to note, with a view to providing written answers. In relation to the dairy industry, I would like information on the Government's view whether within the South Australian dairy industry a quota allocation will be necessary, as is apparently being considered at least in the Eastern States. If so, what is the anticipated time period for the restriction on production? In relation to the egg industry, will the Minister provide information on his Government's proposals, if any, to change the structure of the orderly marketing system applicable to South Australia's

egg industry, or indicate whether the Government will in any other way interfere with or propose changes to the production, packaging and marketing of eggs in South Australia in the foreseeable future.

In relation to fruit and vegetable marketing, will the Minister indicate his Government's commitment, if any, or intention to assist the fruit and vegetable marketing industry, which is currently merchandising its products through premises on East Terrace, in the proposal to relocate that marketing operation and, if so, to what extent does the Government propose to assist the industry in that direction? In relation to land tenure, will the Minister report within the required time on his Government's policy on freeholding of perpetual lease and miscellaneous lease lands? Can the Minister give the Committee an undertaking that he will support the Commonwealth plant variety rights legislation, as supported by the past two (if not more) Australian Agricultural Council determinations?

Finally, will the Minister give the Committee an indication whether he has reconsidered an answer he gave to a question that I lodged in the House on 27 July 1983, appearing as a Question on Notice of 4 August 1983 and answered on 30 August. The question was as follows:

Is there any intention to extend loan funding within the RIA criteria to enable the assistance to young farmers seeking to enter farming pursuits?

At that time the Minister replied:

Current planning does not include any new initiatives to assist young people into farming.

I point out to the Minister that in Queensland there is a young farmers establishment scheme; and in Victoria there is a young farmers council and through a rural financial commission young people are assisted into the practice of farming. In Tasmania there is a young farmers establishment finance scheme, which actively assists young people into the practice of farming. In conclusion, I point out to the Minister that several pieces of our current rural industry assistance legislation extend financial assistance to primary producers in South Australia who are defined under the respective pieces of legislation as farmers.

Farmers are persons who derive the major part of their incomes from that practice. So, by definition, anyone seeking to be a farmer is automatically excluded from any form of assistance in order to enter the practice or to become established in it. The question on that latter subject, in summary, is: has the Government reconsidered its attitude toward seeking to include new initiatives in the rural industry assistance field in order to help young people?

I am prompted to raise that question at this time because I understand that if it is not already on the Notice Paper of the House it is likely to be shortly: that the existing Agricultural Graduates Land Settlement Act, 1922-1971, which is currently inactive, is subject to repeal. That may be under the portfolio of the one of the Minister's colleagues, such as the Minister of Lands or the Premier, but I gather that it is the only Act through which any form of assistance could possibly be extended to an agricultural graduate and that there is no assistance measure under South Australian Statute to assist a young person, albeit with graduate and/or practical experience, to enter the land.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The question apparently was asked in August of last year, over a year ago, and I have answered numerous questions since then. In fairness to the Committee, the best thing that I can do is to go back to *Hansard*, examine the question and my answer at that time and see whether I have anything further to add to that.

As regards plant variety rights, which was the only other question that the honourable member wanted a response to in this Committee, he was incorrect in saying that the Agricultural Council in its last two meetings had declared

its support for plant variety rights. That is certainly not the case. The last two meetings of Agricultural Council pointed out clearly that the Federal Government's policy was that there should be a further review before plant variety rights were introduced into Australia, if they ought to be at all.

Given that that is the policy of the Federal Government, which has responsibility in this area, my contribution at Agricultural Council, as a suggestion to the Federal Government, was that perhaps the issue could be split into two. It seemed to me that, if the inquiry could deal first with horticulture, in particular, rather than do the whole range of the plant variety question, perhaps that would expedite some of the problems that the horticultural industries perceive themselves to have, with the unavailability of plant variety rights in Australia. I also see the horticultural areas—in particular, the ornamental horticultural areas—as not being as contentious or the question of plant variety rights as not being as contentious within the community as it is in other areas, particularly in cereal crops.

Many representations have been made to me by farmers on the question of plant variety rights, and certainly in the area of cereals there is no consensus among farmers at all. A large number of farmers have said to me that they do not believe that it is appropriate to have plant variety rights in those cereal areas. I understand that the honourable member asked that the rest of the questions be taken on notice and that some response be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr LEWIS: My question relates to the present Government's policy—the Ministerial office policy—toward the retention of the Soil Conservation Division within the Department of Agriculture and the retention as consultative advisory organs in that programme of the regional boards. Will the Minister give an assurance that he will not abolish those regional boards in this coming financial year (1984-85) or in the following financial year? If he intends to abolish them how much notice will he give of that intention?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am at a complete and utter loss to know what the member for Mallee is on about. He seems to adopt the approach of putting to the Committee some horrible scare and then asking, 'Will the Minister give an assurance that if he is going to inflict such an atrocity on the community he will give it notice of it?' That is an awfully strange way of trying to get information relating to the papers that are before us.

I can only refer the member for Mallee to my previous answers on, I assume, similar questions. I am not terribly sure, but I assume that somewhere within those questions was a similar one to that which the honourable member just asked. If that is not the case, the honourable member has only himself to blame for not making his questions clear and for not sticking to a question rather than going on these flights of fancy. I have no intention of abolishing soil advisory boards. This is something that the honourable member dreams up in order to get a headline or whatever. I am really at a loss and find it extraordinarily difficult to answer those types of questions.

Mr LEWIS: The earlier questions were about the Soil Conservation Branch in the Department of Agriculture and the proposal that has been relayed to me is that it is the Government's intention to transfer it. This question that I have just asked the Minister was about the regional soil conservation boards. For instance, we have one in the Mallee. The people who sit on it help the Department and the Branch of the Department distribute funds that are provided by the Commonwealth in the main for soil conservation work. An intemperate comment may have been made to me; nonetheless, it was made in very deliberate and determined terms when one of the conversations in which I was engaged referred to the future of soil conservation. I was told that cockies boards were out and that we had to take

a serious look at the kinds of things that have been uncovered by Professor Schwerdtfeger, who said back in 1977 that Eyre Peninsula would be a desert within three to five years.

The Hon. Ted Chapman interjecting:

Mr LEWIS: I am not misquoting him, I am simply telling the Committee and the Minister, for his benefit, how this information came to my attention.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: From Professor Schwerdtfeger?

Mr LEWIS: No, not from Professor Schwerdtfeger. He was quoted as being the authority who had given the Government the advice on which it was acting: to remove the soil conservation boards and programmes of soil conservation from within the Department of Agriculture and place them within the Department of Planning and Environment, and not to appoint the soil conservator from that Branch within the Department of Agriculture but from the personnel within the Department of Planning and Environment.

These people, who were attacking me in this conversation, were justifying and validating their claims for the necessity for this action by reference amongst other things to Professor Peter Schwerdtfeger's research and assertions about the spread of desertification in South Australian farmlands and the spread of salination of South Australian farmland soils, which was a direct result of the removal of native vegetation.

They asserted to me that they knew the exact extent to which that salination and desertification had taken place and the extent to which soils that had previously been suitable for agriculture had been destroyed. It was asserted that the regional boards, like the board in the Mallee, set up by the member for Alexandra when he was Minister of Agriculture, are to be abolished because they consist of cockies who do not know what they are talking about and who merely do things that serve their vested interests. All these assertions caused me alarm and made me very angry, though I did not remonstrate with too much vehemence with the people to whom I was speaking. I have also had correspondence about this matter, and the most recent letter arrived on my desk today. It comes from none other than the former President of the Nature Conservation Society, Dr Andrew Black, who asserts that he has the information.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Where did this information come from?

Mr LEWIS: The honourable member wants to know where the information came from. They speak with confidence and they have the ear of officers of the Department of Environment and Planning. I am concerned, and people in my district will be concerned if the actions that they assert will take place come to fruition.

The Hon. Ted Chapman interjecting:

Mr LEWIS: I have done that in the past to my peril, only to find that the Government has indeed acted in the way in which it was pointed out to me it intended to act. The first step in all this was the introduction of the Bill that is presently before the Parliament to restructure—

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: It is disappointing that the Minister did not clean it up when he had the opportunity.

Mr LEWIS: He could have laid the matter to rest, but he did not do that. I sincerely believe that some clandestine, sinister and novel approach is being taken. I explained to the Minister that I asked him about the regional boards, but he chose to lump that together with the remarks he had made earlier. He will not give an assurance in that regard. These rumours will be spread further afield if for no other reason than that we have sought assurances but have been unable to get them today. The Minister could scotch those rumours here and now by simply giving the assurances I have sought. Be it on his head, not on mine.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My guess is that the member for Mallee sleeps at night with the light on, because he seems to take great delight in frightening himself. He weaves

this absurd farrago of rumour, nonsense and imagination, and expects me to give a sensible response. If the member for Mallee was in any way aware of what is happening in the soil conservation area he would know that the Federal Government (and I do not want to bring politics into the Committee—I know that you, Mr Chairman, would not permit it) is the first Federal Government to allocate substantial funds for soil conservation. That is something that the previous Federal Government never did. I would have thought that one who claims some interest in this area would be aware of that and of the way in which these funds are disbursed through district boards.

Mr LEWIS: And they are to be abolished.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Is it not likely that, rather than being abolished, these boards will have an expanded role? That seems to me to be quite logical and it only requires a little common sense to understand. I could argue that all that has happened for the past 15 minutes is that we have wasted the Committee's time in weaving this web of nonsense. The member for Mallee now expects me to respond in a rational way. He makes it extraordinarily difficult for me to respond to questions—if there was a question—that come from 15 minutes of rambling, from which one can make no sense whatsoever. To conclude, hopefully, on this area, I point out that the Federal Government has expanded funds considerably, and I am delighted about that.

Mr LEWIS: Who will administer it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The role of the various boards will, if anything, be expanded. We have already put out a list of 17 projects that we intend to commence in this area, and I can only say that, if we were given more money we could do more work. The Federal Government has done a tremendous job. The farmers who are dealing directly with the problems on their properties work with the Department in a superb way. I have investigated the Wakefield River scheme in detail; the people who are involved are absolutely first class.

I commend the member for Mallee to go and see the Wakefield River scheme, or any other scheme he likes. He will see the way in which the Department, the farmers, local government and the Federal Government through its provision of funds are playing. It is a credit to all concerned. To bring up this fantasy that in some way we are pulling out of the area or giving the matter to someone else really does the member for Mallee no credit whatsoever. Furthermore, I believe that it wastes the Committee's time.

Mr LEWIS: I will leave that matter, regrettably without the assurances I sought, and turn my attention to the position that has been created in recent times regarding the ornamental horticulturist. I seek information about two or three aspects. Will any funds for this position be provided by the industry and, if so, how much will be provided?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The answer is 'No'.

Mr LEWIS: Does the Minister believe that the business of ornamental horticulture in nurseries and cut flower production could be substantially expanded in Australia in general but in South Australia in particular in meeting what appears to be a substantial overseas demand for those products?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

Mr LEWIS: Does the Minister have any information about research and/or extension information relating to the commercial use of native plants, that is, species indigenous to Australia or South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The commercial use of native plants is quite extensive for ornamentals, in landscaping, and for timber production. The uses are many and varied. I am quite sure that the member for Mallee knows them all already; however, if he does not I will have a long list

of uses for Australian plants incorporated in *Hansard* prior to 19 October.

Mr LEWIS: Does the Minister hold any view that it is aesthetically or intrinsically inappropriate to use native plants for commercial purposes because they happen to be natives of Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot understand the question. I think I am quite safe in answering 'No'. If I find the answer should have been 'Yes' I will correct it.

Mr LEWIS: If the Minister does not know, and he does not find any reason why we should not use native plants in commercial situations as either cut flowers or to be grown to give people gratification, satisfaction, pleasure or whatever one likes, then he shares my view. Does the Minister hold the same view with regard to native animals such as Cherax destructor, the yabby, or for that matter kangaroos? Does he see anything intrinsically or aesthetically wrong, or inappropriate, with the commercialisation of native animals?

The CHAIRMAN: I do not see that as a question that should be directed to the Minister of Agriculture?

Mr LEWIS: I ask this question because it is the Minister of Agriculture's portfolio responsibility, as I understand, for research into crops and animals which directly enhances production from South Australian agricultural sources. I see no reason why commercial use of Australian native animals cannot be incorporated in a programme of commercial production. I merely seek information about the Minister's attitude to this, in the first instance.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Does the honourable member mean that we should exploit koala bears and wombats and that he has no objection to that and is asking do I? Is that what he is getting at?

The CHAIRMAN: The honourable member should explain his question a little more.

Mr LEWIS: That is the gist of it. Has the Minister any hangups about using native species of animals for commercial production programmes in agricultural circumstances?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure how this question relates to any expenditure before us in the programme performance budget papers, or the line estimates. If the honourable member wishes to enter into a bit of philosophical debate or to conceptualise about native animals I am happy to enter into that debate, as fruitless as I think it will be. Certainly if, for example, it was suggested that koala bears were edible or capable of being trained to perform tasks on production lines, or something like that, then I would have severe reservations about that. I am sure that the majority of Australians would have similar reservations. I am surprised that the honourable member does not have those reservations. I suppose kangaroos are a native species that is being exploited extensively both for meat and for skins. That is acceptable to the Australian people and is quite a thriving industry. They are really the only two native animals I can think of, although there are wombats and goannas.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that this debate is not going to become any greater farce than it already is.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Hear, hear!

The CHAIRMAN: I hope that the member's questions will be asked in the proper manner so that the Minister can reply.

Mr LEWIS: I take exception to that comment, Mr Chairman. I believe that sheep came from wild animals in the first instance several thousand years ago and were domesticated by man, as did the hen, duck, dairy cow, pig and cattle used for beef. If no attempt is made to find animals and species more appropriate to the environment in which we are producing these products for the needs of human beings, then how the hell do we ever make advances and improvements, which is the question I say your remark

begs, although I will not ask it of you, Sir, out of respect for your position.

I put to the Minister that at present any attempt people engaged in the hunting of native animals are making to have those animals farmed in the same way that we originally hunted goats, oxen and buffalo instead of farming sheep, goats and beef animals, is being thwarted by a bunch of fools who do not seem to understand that for the survival of human kind, food and fibre are essential. The most effective and efficient way we can produce them from the resources at our disposal should be the object of every moral, scientifically committed, and educated person.

I therefore specifically refer to the campaign at present to destroy any prospect of ever farming macropods, kangaroos and similar species. Therefore, attention should be paid to that matter. My questions to the Minister were to find out whether or not he has a prejudice against that concept and, if a prejudice does exist, on what scientific basis it was based and, if he has no prejudice against it, whether he is prepared to give consideration to programmes that will enable us to use species of animals that are adapted to our natural environment and will, inevitably, do less damage to that environment if farmed. That is the reason for the question and, indeed, that is the question.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The issues raised by the member for Mallee are very interesting. However, I cannot see how they relate to the line before us.

Mr LEWIS: How can you look at sheep and cattle if you are not going to look at other alternatives?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not a scientist, but advice available to me about cost benefit analysis is that there is more chance of raising productivity by spending money in areas other than on native animals, for example, the work we do on the domesticated animals. To start a programme from scratch on kangaroos, koala bears or wombats would not, I am advised, be of any benefit. The same amount of money spent on research into livestock or in agronomy areas would result in a better return for the research dollar spent. I suppose if the question had been rather than somewhat loosely phrased and had been 'Do we get value from the present research we do into crops and livestock, and why don't we do it in the areas of Australian native animals?' then I could certainly have responded to that question with great ease.

Mr LEWIS: I received a note concerning the use of native plants as horticultural plants and ornamentals or whatever—whether quandongs for fruit, I am not sure. This year I came across a proposal to bring in protected flora legislation. A letter from the Minister for Environment and Planning states:

Thank you for your letter of 24 July concerning additions to the protected flora legislation. The meeting on 16 July, to which you refer, was held to allow organisations, which are likely to be affected by changes to the legislation, to discuss the proposals on a confidential basis. I believe this matter and the discussions which took place should still remain confidential, as the proposals have yet to be presented to Cabinet. I can assure you, however, that the views of those people who were present at the meeting are being taken into consideration.

In other words, 'What are your objections to all this? Now that we have consulted you, you can go to hell. When we bring the legislation in we will be able to say that we consulted you and that we did not agree with what you said.' The letter continues:

At this stage, I think it would be fair of me to say that there have been no major objections in principle to the proposals as they are currently drafted.

The initiating letter went to some of my constituents, one engaged in brush cutting and another in plant hybridisation and nursery work (both along the same lines and invited to the same meeting) and they said the meeting was a little bit

one sided, sort of clandestine, and that they could not understand what everyone was getting at. The letter written to my constituent states:

The proposals at this stage affect not only South Australian plants, but also nominated plants from other States which enter into horticultural trade either as cut flowers, rooted plants or dried flower arrangements. In view of your association with . . . industry, I would be pleased if either you, or a nominee, could attend a meeting to discuss these proposals on 16 July . . .

The rest of the letter does not really matter. Does the Department of Environment and Planning intend to bring in legislation which will mean that the ornamental horticulturists' position where it relates to the development of an industry based on native plants is a waste of money and that people presently engaged in the production of native plants and their products for commercial gain will find that the industry is to be outlawed in the same way as the Government outlawed a good many other things we all took for granted and assumed would be outside the pale if they were outlawed? Is the Minister aware of proposals to bring in additions to the protected flora legislation? What ambit does it have in relation to people engaged in using native plants? The Minister has said that he has no hangups about using those plants for commercial purposes. Why does his colleague stick his beak into it and make a mess of it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The issue to which the honourable member refers is one that is properly in the province, as he has stated, of the Minister for Environment and Planning. Either the member for Mallee or one of his colleagues should have addressed that question to the Minister for Environment and Planning during these Estimates Committees. Concerning the question of whether people would be wasting money going into the propagation of native plants, the short answer is 'No'. It is a thriving industry and will continue to thrive and prosper. Yesterday I had the pleasure of opening the October Market for the horticultural industry in South Australia. I was tremendously impressed with the range and expertise that were available, not just for native plants but exotic plants. I also had the pleasure of introducing Gail Barth, who is the new horticultural advisor in the Department—a person with a tremendous record of scholarship and practice of horticulture, who will be a tremendous asset to the ornamental horticulture industries in this State. She received a very warm reception at that function.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I object to the Minister procrastinating on this. He has already explained that the matter belongs to a portfolio that has nothing to do with him and has now proceeded to waste the time of the Committee unduly. I ask you, Mr Chairman, to rule that enough is enough.

The CHAIRMAN: I will not do that. I think that the original question had nothing to do with the Minister. It was worked around to the Minister and I will allow the Minister to answer it in his own style.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: We have an undertaking—

The CHAIRMAN: We had an undertaking for quite some time. I do not think that this Committee can now keep to that undertaking. The undertaking was that this section of the Committee would finish at 3.15, and the way it is going it will be 4.15.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: We have matters relating to Samcor that have already been signalled to the Minister and he undertook to take questions on that. We are mucking around like a bunch of kids. I ask the Minister to clip off his answer.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister can reply in the fashion that suits him.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is certainly not my wish to delay the Committee. I am not sure whether the questions

were asked in a manner designed to get a line in a country newspaper or something. The end of the explanation of the question contained a question relevant to my portfolio; whether people who went into ornamental horticulture of native species were wasting their money. Rather than wasting money those people will be investing their money very wisely. This Government has made resources available that have not been made available by any previous Government to the ornamental horticulture industry. So, if the member for Mallee has some constituents who are fearful of investing in the ornamental horticulture industry I assure him that he can lay those fears to rest because additional resources are being provided by this Government to assist and promote that industry.

Advisers:

Mr G.J. Inns, Chairman, Samcor.

Mr Ian Will, Manager, Administration and Finance.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Will the Minister provide the Committee with the sheep and cattle livestock numbers that were processed at Samcor, Gepps Cross, in the years 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, and also the respective manning levels employed at that premise during those years? I sought this information through the Parliamentary Library and its research officers have failed to obtain it from the Department or the Samcor management. They have reported to me accordingly. I have written to the Minister recently and I hope that he has received that correspondence signalling my desire to have that information available today.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The information is available and involves extensive tables. Rather than delaying the Committee now, I will have that information provided before 19 October for insertion in the record.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I thank the Minister for that undertaking, but I would appreciate having the information incorporated in the record and made available as soon as possible, particularly because of the long drawn out and somewhat frustrating delays that occurred as a result of officers legitimately seeking that public material. In regard to Samcor, can the Minister say why there has been a substantial turnaround in the trading in 1983-84 to a large deficit, when in the previous two years an identified trading profit obtained?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The position is simple and is simply explained. There has been a substantial drop in the number of stock available for slaughter throughout Australia. My information is that, out of just over 100 export abattoirs in Australia, in the past couple of years 47 have closed. There is just an unavailability of stock. The explanation is as simple as that. We are having a good season this year as we did last year throughout Australia and farmers have been restocking their properties after, in some areas, four years of drought. Stock has just not been made available for slaughter. That is not peculiar to Samcor at Gepps Cross. Private abattoirs in South Australia are also in deep financial trouble.

They did manage to keep a significant throughput during the drought as farmers quitted much of their stock. There is no mystery. It is not something that is related to management. We do not have the ability—no abattoir operator has the ability—to go out into rural areas and drag stock in. We are at the mercy of farmers' individual management decisions to retain stock or send them to market for slaughter. The numbers simply are not there and, as long as that occurs, while stock numbers are down and the national herd and flock are being rebuilt after many years of drought, abattoirs will continue to fail throughout Australia. I read yesterday that the second largest abattoir in New South Wales closed last week.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I look forward to obtaining the figures to demonstrate the point that the Minister has made. I know of no argument against the lessening in stock numbers at abattoirs generally, but I would like the Minister to explain why, as a result of the shortfall in livestock that he so extensively explained in his previous answer, the work force has not been adjusted in accordance with the throughput at Gepps Cross.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The work force at Gepps Cross is adjusted according to the awards and agreements that we have for the award workers, members of the AMIEU, and that is a relatively simple procedure. For white collar workers—PSA members—and trades people at Gepps Cross it is not such a simple procedure. This is because of an agreement made by the previous Tonkin Government.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: It worked well for two years.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It worked while you had high stock numbers, but it has not worked too well since. In the area of salaried staff the numbers have been reduced significantly through transfers to other Government departments. I shall be happy to have those figures incorporated in the report as to the fluctuations in staff levels at Gepps Cross.

[Sitting suspended from 3.15 to 3.30 p.m.]

Membership:

The Hon. Peter Duncan substituted for Mr Plunkett.

Mr Blacker: I refer to the live sheep issue, and I know that a question on this matter was asked this morning. How many head of live stock left South Australia? I would like a graph depicting the figures for the past five years. What is the ratio of frozen mutton that went into those same countries? I understand that most of the processed meat contracts for the Middle East countries involved a package deal, with a certain number of live sheep being supplied as well as a certain tonnage of frozen meat.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will examine the question and endeavour to provide the statistics for the honourable member.

Mr Blacker: I note that last year \$970 000 was proposed for the Port Lincoln Samcor and that \$1.294 million was spent; a further amount of \$300 000 is proposed this year. How much of the \$1.294 million related to operational costs, and how much was directly associated with the closing down of the works and associated termination payments? The Minister may not have those figures with him, but I would appreciate it if they could be provided in writing later.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will endeavour to obtain that information for the honourable member.

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

Works and Services—Department of Agriculture,
\$1 165 000—Examination declared completed

Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests, Miscellaneous, \$6 226 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. W.E. Chapman

The Hon. Peter Duncan

Mr R.J. Gregory
 Mr G.M. Gunn
 Mr K.C. Hamilton
 Mr I.P. Lewis

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Forests and Minister of Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr P.M. South, Director, Woods and Forests Department.
 Dr C.B. Larsen, Acting Assistant Director, Support Services.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Chairman, I will make a brief opening statement. In addition to presenting the programme estimates for the financial year 1984-85, I would like to make some comments on the circumstances surrounding their formulation to assist the Committee in its consideration of the trends disclosed therein. The Department recorded a profit of \$10.484 million before abnormal items in 1983-84 compared with \$4.195 million the previous year. The outcome was largely a result of an exceptional volume of log sales from the salvage operation combined with an improved market as a result of an up-turn in demand led by a recovery in the building industry in Australia. Because of the higher level of demand for processed timber products, it was necessary to introduce a quota system to all market areas to ensure reasonable lead times for established clients. The Department was able to run down stocks which had built up over the previous year. Sales volume exceeded the previous year by 22 per cent. Sales levels of timber products in 1984-85 are anticipated to be 5 per cent lower than the 'boom' levels achieved in 1983-84 providing there is not a major disruption to the Australian market because of low priced North American imports.

Because of the Ash Wednesday 1983 fires the availability of log for departmental sawmills is limited. In order to maintain supply the emphasis in 1984-85 will be to improve productivity by longer production runs and by mechanisation of some areas. To this end a new high speed moulder is being installed in the Mount Gambier mill and should become operational in November 1984. The reorganisation of the Mount Gambier dry mill, including the purchase and installation of the new moulder, is expected to cost \$1.75 million. The emphasis of the Department will be on the development and utilisation of small diameter log until the forest resource, through increased plantings and careful management, is able to provide the same quantity of high quality log available prior to the Ash Wednesday 1983 fires.

Much has been said in relation to the effect of the Ash Wednesday 1983 fires on the operation of the Woods and Forests Department. It will be many years before the Department is in a similar situation in relation to wood resource as it was prior to the fires. The emphasis has changed from maintaining a sustainable wood resource to that of replacing that part of the resource which was lost. During the calendar year 1984, more than 2 400 hectares have been planted, including 1 600 hectares of re-established plantation in the Ash Wednesday 1983 fire area. This is the first year of a 10-year replanting programme and it is planned to maintain total establishment levels of not less than 2 000 hectares per annum. In order to meet future sawmill requirements in sawlog sizes, a programme of early spacing in selected stands of unthinned four to eight year old pine plantations of high site quality has commenced. The Com-

munity Employment Programme has been utilised to provide the initial workforce and 55 people are currently doing this work. The cost in 1984-85 will be approximately \$600 000 of which \$400 000 will be met by the Commonwealth Government. Non-commercial thinnings in older stands is also being done and is expected to cost \$200 000.

Salvage operations continued during 1983-84, and a total volume exceeding 1 000 000 cubic metres was placed in storage. The value of log at cost into storage exceeded \$12 million. This log could be expected to realise over \$40 million in the market. In the latter part of 1983-84 a volume of 67 000 cubic metres of log was recovered from storage to supplement the volume cut from forests to ensure continuity of supply to mills. During 1984-85 about 40 per cent of the logs supplied to mills will be salvaged log recovered from water storage.

During salvage operation all logging contractors were fully engaged in removing fire damaged trees to water storage sites and mills. Now that this operation is complete there is a surplus of contractors in the industry. During 1983-84 the Department purchased equipment and employed personnel from two logging firms as a first step in a rationalisation programme of the logging industry.

Mention was made earlier of the Commonwealth Employment Programme which has enabled 55 people to be employed on plantation thinning programmes. A further 59 people will be employed for part of 1984-85 on tree planting projects in conjunction with the 'Greening of Australia' scheme and various other recreation development programmes. Expenditure is expected to be \$980 000, of which \$710 000 will be provided by the Commonwealth Government and \$180 000 by the State Government. As there are no payments by the Department of recurrent or capital nature contained in the line estimates, I will be happy to take members' questions on the programme estimates.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: My first question involves the \$11 million loan that the Commonwealth extended to South Australia immediately following the 1982 bushfire. Whilst I appreciate the comments made in the Minister's opening remarks, I seek to have him identify the terms of repayment applicable to that extension of Commonwealth funds if repayment of the funds is required at all.

Mr South: The \$11 million loan from the Commonwealth Government was on the terms of interest-free repayment in three years.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Supplementary to that question, how does the Government see its capacity to meet that commitment and its operational expenditure and, at the same time, proceed with its programme of replanting the area that was burned during that aforementioned bushfire?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government does not see any problem in meeting all those commitments, with one big proviso: that the market for our products maintains its buoyancy.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I raised that question and the supplementary question on behalf and on the request of the member for Mount Gambier (Hon. Harold Allison), who is otherwise involved in Parliamentary duty today. On my own behalf I ask my second question, relating to a subject that has been about us for a long time, in the form of a request from local government in South Australia, particularly in those regions of the State where the Woods and Forests Department has large investments. In particular, it relates to a request from local government to have Woods and Forests Department lands ratable. What is the Minister's attitude towards that proposal?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Any change to the present position (where certain Government land, both State and Commonwealth, is not ratable by local government) would be a

decision for the entire Cabinet. I am not in a position to speculate on what may or may not be discussed by Cabinet and, obviously following from that, what may or may not be decided by Cabinet. I do not think that the Estimates Committee is the appropriate place for that kind of speculation by the Minister. I am not suggesting that it is not an appropriate place for the members of the Committee to raise it, but I do not believe that it is appropriate for a Minister to respond to speculation about what the Government may or may not do.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: The question was raised with me when I was Minister of Forests in a committee forum of this kind. I found no difficulty in stating a position on behalf of the portfolio area that I represented at the time. I recognise that, while the subject may come as an overall policy matter for Cabinet to determine at a later date, in the meantime it is directly related to the finances of the Woods and Forests Department. A request has been made of the Department and of Ministers over a number of years to consider it. My question was directed to the Minister on that aspect, not on what he or his Government may do in relation to Commonwealth or State owned lands in the future. It was a request specifically as to whether or not Woods and Forests Department lands may be subject to rates in those council areas where the Department is involved and where councils have made direct representations to the Minister's office and to his Director on that subject.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not suggesting that it is in any way improper for the question to be raised by the member for Alexandra, but the present position is, as the honourable member knows, that the State Government does not pay rates on property that it owns. If that was to change in relation to the Woods and Forests Department or any other branch of Government, that would be a Government decision. I am not in a position to speculate on Government decisions.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: That is not the question. The question is whether you support Woods and Forests Department lands being subject to local government rates or not.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can only repeat that the present position is that the land owned by the Woods and Forests Department is not ratable. If that position was to change it would be after extensive Cabinet discussions. I would be bound, properly, by those decisions. I have no intention of taking up hypothetical questions or speculating on what Cabinet may or may not do at some time in the future.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: When will the replanting programme on the area that was burned in the 1982 bushfire be completed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is 'many years', but I ask the Director, Peter South, to expand on that answer.

Mr South: There are two considerations: one is how far out of a normal age sequence are we prepared to move. The closer we are to it, the better is the end result. However, the practical consideration is how many seedlings can we raise, and how long is each season suitable for final site preparation and for actual planting. We are aiming, as was mentioned in the Minister's introductory remarks, at a maximum period of 10 years, replanting 2 000 a year. In the first year we planted 2 500 trees and, given good seasons, we hope to accelerate that rate. We may be able to finish replanting in seven to eight years without moving too far outside the normal age sequence of re-establishment.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: There have been a number of complaints lately from forestry regions in this State about the employment of people outside the districts. I put a Question on Notice to the Minister on 24 July 1984, and

the brief reply indicated that the Department was conscious of the subject matter of the question and that it endeavoured to maximise its use of regional resources whilst endeavouring to maintain a balance of skills and experience. Have representations been made to the Minister, either through the trade union movement or directly? I ask that because, since directing that question to the Minister in July, I have had further representations on the subject.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Not to my knowledge. No representations have been made to me.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: For a number of years leading up to the financial year 1980-81 the Department was showing a credit balance, given its absorbed capital investment in forests over an extensive period. That favourable trading balance reached the point where in 1980-81 there was a trading profit of \$9 million. I acknowledge the points made by the Minister in his opening remarks when he referred to the impact and the quite devastating effect on the forestry industry of the Ash Wednesday bushfire. On the basis of the information available and anticipating a fair share of the timber market in South Australia, when does the Minister expect the Department to trade profitably? In which year will the Department show an annual trading profit?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Probably the best way in which I can answer that question is to refer to my opening statement, in which I indicated that, before abnormal items, the profit for the Department was \$10 484 million for 1983-84, which would be close to the largest profit ever made by the Department. That compares to \$4.195 million in the previous year. I am not sure whether the member for Alexandra requires further information.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Is that 1983-84 financial position the true trading profit for the year or does it incorporate returns from the sale of capital items?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand that that is the profit for the year. I am not quite sure what the honourable member means when he refers to the sale of capital items. Some capital items of a minor nature might have been sold, but I cannot think of any major capital items which were sold and which impacted on the situation. The Director will elaborate.

Mr South: I guess that one could say, in relation to that level of profit, that more logs were harvested and sold because of the bushfire on 16 February 1983. Through 1983 and into 1984 we were harvesting flat out, so there was an abnormal sale of logs. That would be the only factor. At that stage the market had recovered, and the market really determines our ability to make a profit, unless there are abnormal circumstances, such as bushfires or additional expenses.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Some of that production would not ordinarily be for sale and therefore the Department is eating into its capital or future log resources in order to achieve that profit. Having got over the financial hump of 1983-84, from now on and without the big turnover of logs, in which year does the Minister anticipate a return to a profit situation in the Department?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If we put aside the bushfires—and that is difficult to do as they occurred and they are now inexorably linked to our sales—there is no doubt that this year, as in most years, the Department would have returned a profit to the State. Considerable stocks of sawn timber were available to the Department, and I am quite sure that, with the upturn in the housing industry and the economy in general over the past couple of years, the Department would obviously have been in profit. It would be an extremely difficult and, I would argue, useless exercise to try to guess what that profit might have been had the bushfires not occurred. The fact is that the bushfires did

occur and the logs are available. We could equally speculate on the possible profit or loss had there not been an upturn in the housing industry or any other hypothetical situation.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: With respect, I suggest that the Minister try to arrive at a position on the subject I raised, because he may need it against a growing lobby for rates to be paid to local government on Woods and Forests Department land.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have the matter examined to see whether I can add anything further or whether I can learn anything from the question.

Mr LEWIS: The yellow book (page 45) refers to 'Resource variations between the years 1983-84 and 1984-85'. A sum of \$5.1 million is mentioned in connection with the manufacture of sawmill products, and it is stated that increased receipts are expected due to improvement in product mix and price variations. Last year no such comment was made about market research into the product mix.

There was no comment made as to its appropriateness and relevance or about any concern as to whether it was needing analysis other than the comment that following programmes were expected to contribute to the majority of increases in receipts due to a planned improvement in sales volume, proposed price variations and improved product mix. How do we get this improved product mix? Can the Minister say what market research the Department does to determine what its product mix ought to be, and how much the market research costs? There is no question that decisions have contributed in the fashion suggested to improved profits. It is not possible for me to determine that from the information written here and that is why I have asked this question.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The improvement of \$1.5 million to which the honourable member refers is, as stated, due to an improvement in the product mix and price variations. I suppose 'price variations' is something of a euphemism for 'increased prices'. In the recent past our products, due to the downturn in the economy, have not been sold at a margin we could reasonably expect. That is not the case at the moment. The Woods and Forests Department does not set the market price and is not a market leader in pricing. It is not an expensive company, if one wants to put it that way.

If the general market price for products is reasonably buoyant because of demand then, obviously, the Woods and Forests Department, and the taxpayer, eventually benefit from that buoyancy. There is nothing unusual in that, that is the case in all commercial operations which, essentially, the Woods and Forests Department is. As regards the amount of market research done by the Department, I ask the Director, Mr South, to give the Committee any information he may have about what market research takes place.

Mr South: Essentially, market research is ongoing through the Radiata Pine Association of Australia contacts. This is a promotional body with a technical arm. Our whole marketing branch is expected to carry out market research in its normal duties. We have one officer whose title is 'Market Development Manager' who is catered for under lines that the honourable member is seeking information about. The other factor involved in product mix changes is imported timber. CER, the New Zealand people, and more latterly the North Americans—for a different reason—have chosen to put fairly large volumes of timber into our standard construction market.

Mr LEWIS: They are giving us a hard time.

Mr South: Not at the moment because there is room in the market. However, looking ahead we see—and this is what our market development manager works on—that we should be aiming for other than standard production for

part of our production, such as the engineering and that sort of thing, that are of a high value.

Mr LEWIS: I would be pleased if I could be supplied with figures relating to the amount of funds spent by the Department in any explicit way on research, if that is not an unreasonable request. I do not want to expose the Department's internal commercial strategies to its competitors in the market, although I do not think this question will do any damage. I have a reason for seeking this information.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will endeavour to get that information from the honourable member. I know that the Opposition has always behaved impeccably in relation to information of a commercially sensitive nature and it has been made available in confidence to the Opposition. They have always respected that confidence. If after finding this information it is deemed to be commercially sensitive it will still be given to the honourable member and I know that he will respect the confidentiality of that material.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: On page 47 of the programme estimates there are two references under 'Programme Title' which have me wondering. The first is item 5 which is 'Provision of softwood to the wood' and item No. 7 titled 'Provision of hardwood to the wood'. What do those two references mean?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If the honourable member continues reading to the next line he will see that it reads 'Provision of softwood to the wood processing industry'. It could not all be fitted into the same line. Likewise, line 7 actually runs into line 8, as one can see that there are no figures until one gets to the end of 'The provision of hardwood to the wood processing industry'.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: In view of the devastating bushfires in recent years and spot fires that have occurred in and around the Adelaide Hills in particular, has the Minister given consideration to withdrawing Woods and Forests Department activities progressively from the near metropolitan region of the Adelaide Hills and, if so, will he inform the Committee of his thoughts on this matter? If he has not, will he do so and give consideration to the Department's withdrawing its activities from those properties presently held by the Government immediately adjacent to national parks and regions of the hills that are subject to closer settlement and housing development?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is 'Yes', it has been considered. However, no decision has been taken. As to whether we ought to withdraw from the near metropolitan area or not it is certainly a fair enough question and one exercising the minds of people both in the Department and the Government. However, it is not something to which we give a very high priority.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: In giving the matter further consideration, will the Minister acknowledge that the Woods and Forests Department's property holdings and involvement in growing and processing in the near metropolitan area have been quite uneconomic for the Department over many years and on current and near future indications are likely to continue to be uneconomic in the regions from Williamstown in the north to Kuitpo in the south? The benefits of withdrawal by the Woods and Forests Department from the immediate Adelaide Hills region seem quite apparent.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The operations of the Department in the near metropolitan areas are obviously not as profitable as in some other areas. As the member for Alexandra knows, one of the problems is the steepness of some of the land, which creates additional costs. This land is not as profitable as some of the flatter land. Overall, the operation is not as profitable as our operations elsewhere in the State. Nevertheless, the Government has a forest there and it is a Government asset. Obviously, we would like the forests to

be more profitable. In particular, the flatter land in the near metropolitan area returns a reasonable profit to the State. The honourable member is quite correct in relation to steep country; there is not the degree of profit that we are able to obtain from better land.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Will the Minister consider ceasing future new softwood variety plantings in the near metropolitan region? If there is a need to replant in areas recently burnt or in areas prepared for new planting, will the Minister consider planting those sites with hardwood varieties, in the high rainfall districts I mentioned? More especially, will the Minister consider planting varieties that are not as vulnerable to fire and are, therefore, less dangerous to both rural and residential neighbours, a situation that will continue to occur with any further planting of radiata pine?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: One of the problems we have is that there are significant industries reliant on the supply of softwoods. We would not want to do anything to put existing industries in jeopardy. The operations of the Woods and Forests Department have been established for so long and the probability is that they will continue as long as industries rely on them for product. I concede, as I did in my earlier answer, that it is certainly not as profitable an operation as the Department would get elsewhere. Still, it brings in very reasonable profits.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Highly dangerous, if not frightening, to those who have to live around them.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not convinced that if the pine forests disappear tomorrow it will significantly lessen the fire risk. Native vegetation in those areas seems to burn very quickly.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: That regenerates and forests do not.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member said that it was frightening for people around them, implying in his question that the radiata pine burnt more easily than the native vegetation. I do not accept that as fact. The fact that native vegetation regenerates where as radiata pine does not is irrelevant to the honourable member's fears of people who live around our forests.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: With respect, native vegetation can be burnt in a controlled fashion during safe periods to make the whole area safe. If one starts a fire in pine it turns its toes up and it is no good to anyone.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Woods and Forests Department has a very significant, expensive and worthwhile fire control programme within its plantations. Despite cool burns or burning off at appropriate times, if there was a fire as happened in February 1983, almost irrespective of precautions that have been taken, it will burn softwood, native or exotic vegetation. A fire of that magnitude is no respecter of what the fuel is, whether radiata pine or Australian native vegetation.

Mr LEWIS: Electors I represent have suffered as a consequence of a policy recently adopted by the Government in general and the Department in particular concerning the apprentice recruitment programme (page 49 of the yellow book). The Department is a good employer and consistently takes on something over 500 apprentices each year. The Government and Department insist that anyone taking an apprenticeship with the Government has first to complete a TAFE pre-vocational course in a TAFE college. It must become immediately apparent to the Minister that people in isolated rural communities—youngsters when they first leave school from communities like Tintinara, Coonalpyn, Kingston S.E. or Keith—cannot get to TAFE facilities at places like Naracoorte, Mount Gambier and Murray Bridge. It is a chicken and egg question. These people cannot afford a car or get a licence because they do not have any money

to attend a TAFE course on a regular weekly basis to do their pre-vocational training, so they get overlooked. Will the Minister reconsider that policy and waive the provisions of pre-vocational training where the applicant has lived and been educated in a school more than 20 kilometres from a TAFE college?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not concede that what the honourable member says is correct. I do not concede it not because he may be wrong; I genuinely do not know. I will have the matter examined and get back to the honourable member promptly.

Mr LEWIS: I understand that the Department is contemplating maintaining indigenous vegetation in hardwood forests that has pollen or nectar flow suitable for apiarists. Will the Minister consider providing tenured leases at an annual cost—whatever it is worth on the market—to apiarists who want access to these sites for the purpose of building up their bees in strength on pollen or collecting nectar for honey?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is 'Yes', the Government will consider that. I give no reason for expectation to the honourable member that we will necessarily agree with it, but we will consider any suggestion. My information is that that occurs already quite significantly; we do provide 10-year leases for the apiary industry.

Mr LEWIS: Apparently there is some difficulty in certain cases in getting access to areas which belong to the Department and which are still covered with native vegetation. I have not seen the correspondence, but I have been told that. Beekeepers are good at telling things, but not so flash with the pen—I guess that is why they are beekeepers.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If the honourable member can give me further information on difficulties in these areas, I shall be happy to have the policy re-examined.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: For a number of years the Auditor-General in his annual report has informed the South Australian Parliament that the Woods and Forests Department's methods of accountability have been somewhat wanting over that period and, in more recent years, as a result of consistent Auditor-General's remarks, the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament has undertaken quite lengthy investigations into the accountability of the Woods and Forests Department. Does the Minister believe that the Public Accounts Committee is totally satisfied with the methods of accounting and that the financial administration of the Woods and Forests Department is completely under control, justifying and concluding investigations by that committee as they have applied over a number of years?

I raise that question because the Minister may recall that in last year's annual report the Auditor-General referred to a requirement over preparation of input and subsequent processing to ensure reliability and accuracy of information produced. He has reminded us of that 1983 request yet again on page 212 of his 1984 report. Whilst the remarks of the Auditor-General are not viciously critical, as indeed they are about, for example, the CFS, previously under the Minister, along with one or two other departmental activities of the State, there is that message that one may reasonably take from his remarks by virtue of the continued reference to auditing requirements, reliability, accuracy of accounting, etc., in the reference under the heading of Woods and Forests Department.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not here to defend the Auditor-General, but certainly have some reservations about the honourable member and his question referring to the Auditor-General as being viciously critical of various Government departments. I know the gentleman concerned, and he could not really be vicious about anything. However, that aside, the Auditor-General has made some comments over a period about the way in which the Woods and Forests

Department operates its accounting system. As the honourable member stated, the Auditor-General is satisfied that his comments have been noted and alterations made to suit the style of accounting that he feels is appropriate.

I heard the member for Mallee say, during the question being asked by the member for Alexandra, that perhaps the Auditor-General was a little old fashioned in the accounting methods he required. I and the Woods and Forests Department are quite happy with the remarks made by the Auditor-General, who has written to us stating that he is satisfied that the matters arising from the audit were satisfactorily dealt with by the Department. So, we do not see any great problem any longer. I invite Mr Peter South, the Director of Woods and Forests, to add any further information he may have.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Has the Public Accounts Committee given up its inquiry?

Mr South: The question has been covered apart from the Public Accounts Committee query. The Public Accounts Committee never really had any suspicions or criticisms of the way in which the Department spent its money. Its investigations surrounded the collection of data and the monitoring of the Department's entry into automatic data processing. That swing over took somewhat longer than was expected, and therefore the information collection was not travelling smoothly. The PAC closed its case on the Department, and it seems to be going okay.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: In view of the levels of profit that the Woods and Forests Department has been able to raise over a number of years, despite the impact of fires, competition by importers of foreign products dumped on our market, etc., would the Minister consider that the time might be near for allowing the Woods and Forests Department to dissolve in its present form and operate under the canopy of an independent statutory authority?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not wish to appear to be difficult with the honourable member, but the Woods and Forests Department is established as is, and if the nature and structure of the Department was to be altered, that would be a Cabinet decision to which I would have some input and I would be bound to the final outcome. That is quite proper. I do not think that this Committee is the appropriate place for a Minister—

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I think it is a most appropriate place to state your position on a number of these vital subjects, and not—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member has asked the question. I want to hear the answer even if he does not.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: You won't get one out of this Minister.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not think that the Estimates Committee is the appropriate place for Ministers to be speculating about what the Government or a future Government may do. The purpose of the Committee is to examine expenditure. I am in no way critical of the member for Alexandra raising the issue, but I would be critical of myself if I responded in the way in which he obviously invites.

Mr LEWIS: I assure the Department and the Minister that, as someone who grew up in the Hills, I recognise the benefits and value of having softwood plantations in monoculture form in steep country. If they were not there, there would be an enormous weed problem with no way of controlling the bunnies.

They get literally starved out, whether weeds or rabbits when the pines get up, and it is one way of getting something out of otherwise useless country. My question is related to the topic that the member for Alexandra touched on, and

I suppose it is more a hint to the Department. I respect the long-standing arrangement that no information of a confidential nature will be divulged, but can the Minister provide me with a stocktake of logs and sawn timber by type when it was last done and indicate to the Committee whether or not such procedures are capable of being audit checked?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will examine the question and try to get the information for the honourable member.

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

Fisheries, \$3 918 000

Chairman:

Mr G. T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. P.B. Arnold

The Hon. Peter Duncan

Mr R.J. Gregory

Mr K.C. Hamilton

Mr I.P. Lewis

Mr E.J. Meier

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Forests and Minister of Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R.A. Stevens, Director of Fisheries, Department of Fisheries.

Mr R.K. Lewis, Manager, Resources.

Mr G. Rohan, Manager, Fisheries.

Mr D. Huxley, Acting Manager, Administration.

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

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would like to highlight a number of aspects for the Department of Fisheries Budget for the 1984-85 financial year. As announced by the Premier in his Budget speech, \$61 000 has been allocated to the Department to commence a marine environmental study in Upper Spencer Gulf. The purpose of this study is to provide baseline data on the environmentally sensitive ecosystem in that area as part of an overall programme to ensure the State's fisheries are protected in the face of significant industrial and resource development. SANTOS Pty Ltd has since advised that it will contribute an extra \$30 000 towards this project.

In early July the Government finalised the contract for the construction of a 20-metre marine research vessel by Spencer Engineering Pty Ltd of Whyalla. Total cost of this project is \$640 000, comprising \$485 000 direct cost to the Government, with the remainder being provided by way of shipbuilding bounty from the Commonwealth Government. This vessel will provide an ocean-going research capability for South Australia. The Public Buildings Department—Other Government Buildings budget provides for the construction of the first stage of a marine research laboratory at West Beach at a cost of \$1.2 million. It is anticipated that construction will commence on this project in June 1985 for commissioning in February 1986. Together with the research vessel, this facility will provide a permanent and adequate base for research to service all of the State's aquatic resources for many years to come. In conducting these research programmes, the Department will continue to work in close consultation with industry and research

data will be used to develop harvesting strategies that will optimise use of our fisheries resources.

In taking the above measures, the Government is recognising the importance of the fishing industry to the State. In terms of value of landed commercial catch the industry is worth approximately \$60 million; in addition, it provides direct employment to about 2 500 fishermen and significant employment in an indirect manner to people in the processing and servicing industries.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: It can be said that there is general acceptance of the 1982 Fisheries Act and the schemes of management that have been developed to go with it. I suppose the only real area of conflict that has occurred concerns licence fees charged in a couple of fisheries. That aside, in his opening comments the Minister referred to the new research vessel and I seek more detail about the vessel, the equipment it carries, the extent to which it will be used in deeper water research work, whether it will be working in comparatively shallow waters or whether it will be used for oceanographic studies. We have not done much work in that area in the southern part of Australia to date and I would like to know whether the vessel will have the capability of determining detail about what the deeper fisheries might have, and be able to monitor the environmental changes resulting from deep-sea trawling and the like.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I stated in my opening comments, the Government considers the provision of a new research vessel a high priority. There is no doubt that since the accident that occurred to the previous vessel there has been a large hole in the research capability of the Department and that has been a great pity. I agree that to try to develop further fisheries is important and, if a deep-sea trawl fishery could be developed off the South Australian coast, it would certainly provide a boost to our fisheries and to the economy of the State as a whole. In regard to the technical details of the fisheries vessel I will ask Mr Lewis, who is Manager of the Department's Resources Branch, to outline the detailed capabilities and potential of the new vessel.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The new vessel is limited by the amount of funds available. Its length will be 20 metres and it will have greater than 150 gross construction tonnes. This means that it will attract a 25 per cent subsidy from the Commonwealth Government in ship-building bounty.

The vessel itself is equipped with both oceanographic and biological sampling equipment. It will be used in both oceanographic and biological work. Because of the size of the vessel it will not be capable of deep sea trawling. It will work in the gulfs and on the continental shelf but probably not along the edge of the continental shelf other than for oceanographic and biological sampling. This is also in accordance with the wishes of the fishing industry. Over a number of years we have been using commercial vessels in conjunction with research vessels to carry out research on a charter basis, and the industry wishes that this should continue. In fact, any deep sea development work which we plan to do will include the use of chartered commercial vessels in collaboration with a research vessel, which will work on the more biological and scientific programmes. The actual fishing operation, developing techniques, and so on will be done by professional fishermen, because they are far more experienced.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: To what degree will the vessel operate? Will it operate from and in conjunction with the proposed new research station proposals? What is the tie-up between the two assets?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The research programme of the Department will be co-ordinated in all its aspects, both the floating aspect (with the research vessel) and the stationary aspect (in the new research centre). Again, I invite Mr Lewis

to give the Committee more detail on the precise nature of how the two operations will be used to complement one another and improve the utilisation of the limited amount of money available for fishing industry research in this State.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The research vessel will be berthed at Port Adelaide adjacent to our North Arm store. The laboratory will be built at West Beach. Both are complementary to each other. A fishery biologist's role is to understand the population dynamics of fish stocks as well as determining the size of the resource and, therefore, determining the amount of effort in the number of boats and fishermen that can exploit that resource. The on-water capacity is determined by the research vessel and, with the co-operation of the fishing industry, by using commercial vessels. Before that work can be finalised we must work out a number of other parameters, such as the effect of tags on the mortality of animals, the tag shedding rate, and so on. This work cannot be done in an in-field situation; it must be done in a laboratory in a controlled situation.

In the field we look at a multiplicity of interactions, such as temperature and salinity, where we cannot control any of those factors. Under controlled conditions in a laboratory one can alter one parameter at a time and find out which is the most significant on the stock resource. That is why the two of them complement each other. Both sets of data are required to make a true assessment of the stock and its extent.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: In relation to the use of the joint facilities of both the vessel and the research laboratory, to what extent does the Federal Government support become involved? I take it that the vessel will be used extensively in relation to the tuna industry. What support will be forthcoming from the Federal Government?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The only support to date, and the only support we can guarantee, is the Federal Government subsidy on the actual building of the vessel. In relation to the tuna industry, the tuna fishery is entirely a Commonwealth fishery, because it operates in Commonwealth waters. The responsibility for the tuna fishery and for research in that fishery lies with the Commonwealth. The CSIRO is an extensive research organisation which has a capacity to conduct research in the tuna industry. In fact, it does that research now. The CSIRO spends a considerable amount of research money in the tuna industry. We do not see the State Government being involved in that research at all. However, if for any reason the Commonwealth asked us to become involved, we would be pleased to do so within our capabilities.

While the tuna industry operates entirely outside South Australian waters, I point out that Port Lincoln is the centre of the Australian tuna industry and we would certainly do anything to co-operate with the CSIRO or the Federal Government in finding out as much as we can and refining management procedures in that industry. There is a possibility of applications being made to the Commonwealth Fishing Industry Research Trust Account, which is commonly known as FIRTA. There are also other funding agencies. It is similar to the situation in the rural industry: if we can put forward a good enough case as to why a research project should be supported with a FIRTA grant or any other agency grant, of course, we are free to apply and hopefully we will be successful. Already we have research projects going in South Australia where we have been able to obtain this external funding. It is possible that we could put up other projects which involve the research vessel and obtain a FIRTA grant for those projects.

Mr HAMILTON: The latest edition of the *Australian Fisheries* magazine of August 1984 states:

It has recently been documented that ballast water from Japan discharged into Twofold Bay contains living non-indigenous marine animals. There is also evidence from Fullerton Cove, off the Hunter River, NSW, that a small Japanese shrimp-like animal settled in the bay and survived for several months. It seems highly likely that this organism was introduced in the cove from ballast water discharged downstream. There are obvious dangers to commercial fisheries in allowing the free introduction of exotic marine animals. Mollusc fisheries provide many examples; in predation, competition and disease.

The article then lists a number of examples of the problem and the diseases involved. What consultation does the Minister have with the Department of Marine and Harbors in relation to controlling the dumping of this ballast which contains these animals?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The problem has been around for quite a while. Quite obviously there is a danger in water, which is taken aboard ships in overseas ports or in transit, being deposited in Australian waters. There is the possibility of a transfer of plants or animals into Australia, and obviously South Australia would be no exception. The problem has been recognised for some time and I understand that some research is being done in this area. Mr Lewis will provide further details on the problem and in relation to the action being taken to address it.

Mr R.K. Lewis: This problem worries biologists and fisheries people all over Australia. Consequently, they supported an application by the New South Wales Government on behalf of almost all States of Australia to investigate the potential for contamination or introduction of exotic species into Australian waters. That programme is now complete. They presented a report that showed that a number of species are capable of travelling from Japan, where most of the work was done, to Australia. They now have another application to FIRTA to do far more extensive work, which includes looking at the methods of purifying water before it is released as ballast. There are a number of methods. The shipping industry is concerned that some of them are quite expensive. The aim of the next project by the New South Wales Government, but basically supported by all Australian States, is to find out how best to treat this problem.

The CHAIRMAN: We do not have a quorum; so we cannot proceed.

A quorum having been formed:

Mr HAMILTON: On page 102 of the yellow book, in relation to the development and improvement of fish resources, under '1983-84 specific targets/objectives' a number are listed including:

Assessment of commercial feasibility of scallops and mud oysters completed. Assessment of the fishable stocks in Lakes/Coorong area continued. The potential for crab fisheries was investigated with viable fisheries being developed in Coffin Bay and Spencer Gulf.

In relation to that, can the Minister also advise of the tagging processes that have been carried out in the past 12 months and what has been revealed from that tagging exercise?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Across all species?

Mr HAMILTON: Yes.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Albert Park has requested information on the tagging programmes that we have within the Department. They are quite extensive. I will ask Mr Lewis to respond in a moment, but for the interest of the Committee I can advise of an interesting experiment that we did during the previous 12 months in the prawn fishery.

The procedure in the past has been that prawns were tagged in a certain location. When those tags were recovered after the prawns were caught a \$2 fee was paid to the person who caught that prawn with the tag for returning the prawn and the tag to the Department to our researchers, so that

they could measure it, weigh it and note where the animal was released and where it was recaptured. The Government took a decision to change the method of payment inasmuch as we no longer pay \$2 a tag but we ran a lottery. We said that there would be no \$2, but, 'Return your tags to us and we will put them all in a barrel and the Minister on the appropriate evening (which was last Saturday or the Saturday before) will pull one of these tags out of the barrel and there is a \$1 000 first prize.'

The number of tags returned changed dramatically. We used to pick up about 95 per cent of the tags when the prawns were being processed in the factories; that was less than satisfactory. When we introduced this system, it changed around completely so that 95 per cent were retrieved direct from fishermen. It shows that with a little lateral thinking and ingenuity one can do wonderful things.

The member for Chaffey and I were at the function where I drew the prizes. I was delighted that when I drew the first prize the fisherman who had won the \$1 000 immediately donated that prize to the Adelaide Children's Hospital. There is a two for one subsidy; so it cost the Government an extra \$2 000. I am not sure whether we came out ahead or not.

Nevertheless, the important part of this is that the information through our tagging programme is coming back to us. It means that we are able to fine tune the fishery to a remarkable degree. To my knowledge, that Spencer Gulf prawn fishery is certainly the best prawn fishery in Australia, and my information is that it is probably the best in the world. The tagging programmes to which the member for Albert Park referred are a very significant part of that. As there are other tagging programmes, I ask Mr Lewis to outline some of the other tagging programmes that we do within the Fisheries Department.

Mr R.K. Lewis: Tagging is a fundamental tool of any marine or fisheries biologist. Consequently, almost all of our research scientists are involved to some extent in tagging. The Minister has already mentioned prawns which we tag in four prawn fisheries—Spencer Gulf, Investigator Strait, Gulf of St Vincent and the West Coast.

We also have programmes in the rock lobster industry all over South Australia. At present, we are concentrating on southern Yorke Peninsula. We tag numerous fresh water species in the Coorong. We used to tag in the Murray River; we now have finished that programme, but we tag in the lakes and the Coorong at present. We tag numerous marine scale fish—snapper, whiting, garfish—throughout all waters of South Australia. We also have programmes in tagging calamari, which is the in-shore squid. We also have a tagging programme in a new developing fishery in the blue crab and the sand crab fisheries in Coffin Bay.

Most of these programmes take place in all waters of the State. Of particular interest, our tagging work has developed a small industry for South Australia in that until 18 months ago the only tag used in the world was made by Floy, a company in the US. We thought that we could get them cheaper if a printer in Adelaide could produce tags for us. A Mr Hall started developing tags for us and designing new ones. Those tags are now being sold all over the world. No one in Australia buys Floy tags anymore. Numerous inquiries come from other countries for research programmes using Mr Hall's tags, because of the high quality of them.

The results that we get from tagging are numerous, including movement (we know where the tagged animal was put in and where it was found); so we know the time it took to move there and the distance that it moved. The rate at which tags come back tells us the mortality rates—how fast they are dying. We are also able to work out exploitation rates, that is, fishing versus natural mortality. There are other numerous uses for tag data.

Mr HAMILTON: I asked about the success of the programme in the Coorong area and the assessment of the mud oyster and scallop fishery.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is a fair degree of technical information available, and Mr Lewis is competent to give it.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The Coorong programme has been running for 2½ years and we anticipate that it will run for another year or 1½ years. It complements a four or five year programme in the Upper Murray River examining population dynamics (that is, growth rates, movements, and so on) of Murray River fish. We are undertaking similar work in the Coorong, looking at each individual species. We undertake netting and tagging surveys, and we collect basic population dynamics for those fish for input into yield models, which will tell us the size of the resource and thus how many fishermen can fish that resource without doing economic or biological damage.

A number of years ago there was a substantial scallop and mud oyster fishery at Coffin Bay, but because of the effect of dredges in this area stocks collapsed. We carried out a survey to investigate whether the stocks had returned and whether there is potential for a fishery. That work has been completed. Unfortunately, the grounds have not recovered from the effects of the dredges and the stocks have not returned. Therefore, there is no potential at Coffin Bay for an economically viable fishery for mud oysters and scallops.

Mr HAMILTON: I am aware that a number of artificial reefs have been installed, under the Commonwealth Employment Programme, in the sea adjacent to the north-western suburbs. How successful have these artificial reefs been, not only in terms of marine life but also in terms of the work created? What is the future programme for the installation of further artificial reefs adjacent to the north-western suburbs or anywhere else in South Australia? What does the programme entail?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The artificial reef programme has been most successful, but unfortunately it finishes on Friday. I had the pleasure to meet the young people who are putting the reefs together—not far from the District of Albert Park. It is a credit to them that they are building these reefs. The reefs are a world first: the method of construction and the use of materials is a novel and very exciting approach. The reefs have been placed in two locations within the gulf, one of which is public knowledge but the other, at this stage anyway, is not public knowledge (to give us some kind of control for a monitoring programme).

Early indications of the degree of activity by fish around the reef are tremendously encouraging. Dozens of species have been identified. At least eight fish species, totalling 5 000 fish, took up residence at the reef within two weeks of placement, so quite an amazing transformation has taken place. The programme is tremendously successful and certainly influenced the Department to seek further funding under the CEP scheme for the establishment of two additional reefs at Glenelg and Port Noarlunga. Each of the sites is close to an existing boat ramp, and with increased activity by fishermen the placement of artificial habitats will enhance fish stocks and increase the rate of production of important species.

It is very much dependent on CEP funds. The Government is also considering whether Spencer Gulf would be a suitable place for the placement of tyre reefs of that nature or some other form of artificial fishing reef. I do not believe there is any doubt that they would be suitable, but whether we would attract CEP funding to establish the reefs is still being considered. Obviously, there is a great deal of competition for CEP funds, but we believe that this is a very sensible use of CEP funds, because artificial reefs create an ongoing

asset to the State. They also create further employment in relation to the recreational fishing industry growing and developing, and that really is a huge industry. The more fish we can attract to congregate around easily accessible places, the more employment will be generated from recreational fishing in this State.

The honourable member may be interested to know that the Department of Marine and Harbors has been negotiating with the Department of Fisheries to acquire a further redundant dredge (the *South Australian*). That dredge is being prepared for disposal as an artificial reef, and I am sure that it will be very successful. It is to be sited off Hallett Cove towards the end of 1984. There will be an extensive monitoring programme to study the success of artificial reefs and rubber tyres as artificial habitats. That programme has already commenced and will continue for three years.

Mr MEIER: I refer to 'Allocation of resources' on page 95 of the yellow book and, in particular, the determination of the basis of allocation, preparation and implementation of management plans and monitoring of fish harvesting. There is reference in point (2) to the inclusion of tuna on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. As the Minister is well aware, the tuna allocations were announced last week. What influence did South Australia have in relation to the determining of the basis for quota allocations to tuna fishermen?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: South Australia had a great deal of influence in determining the allocation of the quotas. The overall Australian quota was set by the Australian Fisheries Council, of which, as Minister of Fisheries, I am a member. I think it is fair to say that South Australia, being the natural centre of the tuna industry, is very influential with the Australian Fisheries Council when it is talking about tuna. There are many problems in the tuna industry. However, I believe that they are in the process of being addressed in a significant way. There is no doubt that tuna have been over-fished and the biomass is in great danger of extinction.

If the policies that have applied to this fishery in the past continue over the next few years, there will be no tuna industry because there will be no tuna. The problem is not just with over-fishing but with the style of fishing that has taken place. The real problem in this area lies in Western Australia where the industry is based on the taking of very small fish for canning. This is not only damaging to the biomass but a criminal waste of tuna. If one allows tuna to develop to a sufficient size and then uses catching and processing methods acceptable to the Japanese, one can add in the order of six to ten times the value above what one can get for tuna in the can. Therefore, the catching of small fish is very damaging to the fish stocks and it is also an incredible waste of a very useful and valuable resource.

The Australian allocation is based on what the CSIRO thought to be an appropriate level for the catch. This was done in an attempt to stabilise and, if possible, increase tuna stocks. The allocation between South Australia and Western Australia reflects to some extent the historical take by those sectors of the industry. There is no doubt that the very low individual quotas allocated to a number of Western Australian fishermen reflect the fact that they catch only relatively small amounts of tuna. Because of the way the market place is operating now, tuna fishermen in Western Australia are leaving the industry and selling their quotas to tuna fishermen in South Australia. This will further centralise the tuna industry into South Australia. I think that that is desirable from an economic point of view.

It is also desirable for the protection of the resource, because in South Australia we use bigger boats, fish in deeper waters, catch bigger fish and handle and process them very carefully. Our industry is certainly heading in

the direction of supplying the very lucrative Japanese sashimi market, rather than canning small fish, which involves limited profitability and a limited life: if one takes the juvenile fish, eventually there will be no industry. I believe that the industry in South Australia, and the number of boats in the industry, will contract to some degree. Some boats will leave the industry in South Australia. The operators of those boats will take an economic decision to sell their quotas to others in the Port Lincoln area and to get right out of the tuna industry. The tuna industry will certainly centre in South Australia, and to some extent it already has. South Australia has a very influential voice on the Australian Fisheries Council when tuna is under discussion.

Mr MEIER: What role does the Minister see the South Australian Department of Fisheries playing in an appeal mechanism for people who feel they have been hard done by under the allocation formula? The person they must answer to in the first instance is Mr Philip Burns from the Department of Primary Industry in Canberra. Does the Minister see our local Department having an appeal function?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I must emphasise that this is a Commonwealth fishery entirely run and controlled by the Commonwealth. The States do not have any formal rights within this fishery. As I said in answer to the previous question, we do have a deal of influence in this area. I understand that an appeal mechanism is being established and that South Australia will have one representative on the appeals board. In the final analysis it is a Commonwealth Fishery and South Australia just has to live with what the Commonwealth Government decides to do with.

Mr MEIER: I hope that we will be setting up an appeal mechanism. I think that the Minister believes that the small businessman engaged in fishing should be given every opportunity to succeed rather than big companies coming in and taking over the tuna industry, which appears to be the case from comments which have been made to me since last Friday.

A tuna fisherman stationed on southern Yorke Peninsula, who runs the boat the *Empris Lady* has had his quota reduced to 224.133 tonnes of tuna. However, to remain viable he must catch 350 to 400 tonnes of fish per annum. I know that the quotas set were based partly on the past three year's catches, those of 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83. In this instance the people involved were having their boat built in the first year when, as the Minister and his officers would know, there were some very high catches in the industry. They were not able to capitalise on those high catches in the first year of the triennium. The boat involved is valued at \$1.2 million but only insured for \$900 000, the main reason being that the insurance is already about \$26 000 and they are prepared to take that bit of a risk.

A sister ship (I will not mention it here but the name is freely available) built a year earlier and insured for \$1.1 million has apparently been recognised as such in ascertaining the quota. The *Empris Lady*, although valued at \$1.2 million, had the insured value of \$900 000 used to obtain a quota. There are a few other matters that the owners of the *Empris Lady* have stated to me, including the fact that if they had to buy up the extra quotas they could not remain viable. Even though they operate from Southern Yorke Peninsula they feel that this vessel is the seventh or eighth largest enterprise in the Port Lincoln fleet, with its 40-odd boats.

If the South Australian Department of Fisheries has had an influence in determining quotas, we should not see some of our fishermen, who are not in the smallest category but also not in the large company category, go to the wall. This Government should, and certainly the Opposition would, do everything possible to help a viable company, be it only a small two-man show, to continue. I recognised, as the Minister said before, that stocks in the tuna industry are

limited and that some new quotas had to be arrived at. Will the Minister comment and say what appeal these people can go through and how much influence the South Australian Department of Fisheries will give to them?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I repeat: this is a Commonwealth fishery. In the last analysis the Commonwealth decides who has what. South Australia does have a very strong voice when speaking on tuna in the Australian Fisheries Council. We were very successful in ensuring that the bulk of the overall Australian quota that was allocated came to South Australia. Of the total Australian quota South Australia got over 66 per cent, Western Australia got 19.5 per cent; New South Wales got 13.35 per cent; and Victoria got .01 per cent. So, by far, we got the largest amount of the quota that was available.

The breakdown of the quota that came to South Australia was for the Commonwealth to determine. It was determined on a formula that was agreed to in conjunction with the industry during industry negotiations with the Tuna Task Force. The formula was established after discussions with the industry. The individual boat of which the member of Goyder spoke is in exactly the same position as is every other boat in Australia; it has been allocated a quota on a formula that has been established. It has not and cannot be disadvantaged or advantaged compared to any other operator.

However, if the operators of the vessel in question feel that the quota has been applied inappropriately, the Commonwealth—not the State as we do not have the say—is establishing an appeals mechanism and South Australia will have a member on that appeals board, when it is established. So, the operator will be able to take his case to appeal, but the appeal will be to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth controls this particular fishery and allocates individual quotas; and the formulas for establishing the quotas were set after very long and detailed discussions with the industry through the Tuna Task Force.

Mr MEIER: The Minister has continually referred to the formula used to ascertain the quota. What is the formula for obtaining a quota for each individual boat? I am not asking the Minister to give the answer cited in the *Australian Fisheries Journal* of August 1984, which stated:

The formula will be based on the last three years of catches from 1 October 1980 to 30 September 1983 together with the current market value of boats and gear and the ratio of 75 to 25. I believe that there is a more specific formula for each individual boat, to which the Minister referred. I find the Minister's answer very disappointing. I would have thought South Australia should do everything in its power to protect and try to help our industry when we see perhaps the seventh largest boat in the industry going to the wall on the current formula. The Minister is saying, 'We cannot do anything; it is a Commonwealth matter.' I will do everything I can. I have already written to a Commonwealth member and I am taking it a lot further than this.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is the member's prerogative to take the matter anywhere he likes. Regarding the individual formula that was established, the honourable member said that he did not want to hear me state the formula as he thought that there was something else. I assure him that there is nothing else. As the honourable member specifically stated that he did not want me to state it here, I am quite happy not to state it. When talking of people going out of business and getting irate over one tuna boat owner, the member for Goyder should firmly keep in his sight one thing: the protection of the resource. If the resource continues to be fished in the way it has, then not just the boat to which he refers—which incidentally is not the seventh largest operator in the fishery by any means—

Mr MEIER: In that group of boats; seventh or eight.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is what the honourable member says. There is no doubt that some boats will have to leave the fishery. The boats that are in the fishery now in both Western Australia and South Australia have decimated it. There has been uncontrolled and unmanaged fishing to a large degree and now those people are paying the price. It is an over capitalised fishery and there is not the resource left, because of the over fishing and the taking of juvenile fish, to support that level of investment. The price has to be paid for the atrocious mismanagement and bad fishing practice that has been followed over the years, and this is being spread equitably over all fishermen.

Mr MEIER: Throw them out of work, in other words.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Is the honourable member suggesting that fishermen should be permitted to take tuna to the stage where the tuna is decimated.

Mr MEIER: I am suggesting that these people should be looked after, especially as they are South Australians.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: At the expense of the fish?

Mr MEIER: At the expense of their livelihood and capital investment, too.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Goyder is suggesting that irrespective of the damage that is done to the fish his constituents should have preferential treatment. This is a Commonwealth fishery. His constituents will be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner by the Commonwealth. If they have any grounds for appeal then I urge them to appeal to the Commonwealth. South Australia will have a person on that appeals board. There is no way that the level of capital expenditure can be maintained and serviced in this industry with the fish that are left. The industry has been over capitalised. The fish have been annihilated by bad management and bad fishing practices and the price is now being paid equitably by everyone left in the fishing industry.

Mr MEIER: The Japanese will have full control in three years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr HAMILTON: Page 110 of the yellow book, under 'Conservation of the Marine Environment', states:

The increasing production of toxic wastes by the community presents a greater threat to fish habitats.

Also on page 108 it details the monitoring of background levels of potential pollutants in oceanic and gulf waters and the number of major fish kills that occurred in South Australia and states:

The number of fish kills reported was significantly less than 1982-83.

I want more information from the Minister in that regard. Will he detail what programmes are carried out, particularly in the West Lakes area of the waterway? Have there been any major problems in the waterway in the past two or three years in terms of pollutants? I am aware that on one occasion fish died as a result of leakage into the river, and this caused a considerable amount of alarm amongst my constituents, not only those on Delfin Island, at West Lakes and Tennyson but also amongst people in the north western suburbs, as they and their children swim in the lake. I am very much concerned about the quality and control of the waterway in and around this increasingly used stretch of water, which will be used more and more in future with rowing and other activities that take place.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The problem to which the honourable member refers is serious. The Government is taking a deal of action to address the problem. Detailed fish-kill investigation procedures have been developed within the Fisheries Department. These procedures outline the actions required of field staff on receipt of reports of large scale fish kills at any location in South Australia. The programme also includes adequate training of all investigatory staff as

well as the methodology of analysis to be carried out. I will ask Mr Lewis to expand on that in a moment. I am pleased to advise the member for Albert Park that during 1983-84 no major fish kills occurred in South Australia. I invite Mr Lewis to expand on the procedures that the Department of Fisheries has instigated to deal with the problem raised by the honourable member.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The fish kill response team was developed as a result of our being unable to give answers as to why large numbers of fish died. We set up a team that could respond in real time. We had to be able to get to the site in South Australia—wherever it was—and take both biological samples of where fish were dying and water samples to look for pollutants or reason for the death. This had to be done while things were still happening, as within, say six hours a tidal change may occur and that body of water will have moved out to sea. There are rigid procedures, including the nomination of a co-ordinator. We have procedures where we take initial information from whoever in the public reports to us. We then make an assessment whether it warrants going out into the field. We send out field staff quickly using the best method available. We take appropriate samples and get them to our laboratories, the Division of Chemistry, the Department of Services and Supply and the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science.

The number of fish kills a year are due to providence, the amount of rain, what is in the drainage system, how much nutrient is in the system before it is flushed out, and so on. One thing that came out of the whole operation was the remarkable number of times that fish kills were due to natural causes rather than man-made causes.

Mr HAMILTON: I also referred to the monitoring of the waterway in West Lakes.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is obviously a sensitive area. Significant problems arise with the creating of artificial waterways such as at West Lakes. The member for Albert Park has been a persistent questioner and urger of the Government to take strict measures to ensure that the waterway at West Lakes is protected from any unhealthy situation, as far as the Government is able. Again, I ask Mr Lewis to detail some of the specific incidents, activities and precautions that we take around West Lakes.

Mr R.K. Lewis: A committee consisting of members of the E & WS Department, the Department of Marine and Harbours and representatives of appropriate councils in the area assesses the state of West Lakes on a continual basis with results from regular surveys conducted by the E & WS Department in that area and in the Port River area.

They take samples of nutrients, heavy metals, phytoplankton (small plants which created problems a couple of years ago) and a number of other samples. They basically report to the committee and any problems are dealt with. If there happens to be a large fish kill in the Port Adelaide or West Lakes area, our team would respond.

Membership:

Mr Plunkett substituted for Mr Hamilton.

Mr LEWIS: I refer to the aquiculture research being done by the Department and to a publication *The Potential of Aquiculture in South Australia*. I concede that it is not a recent publication, but it is probably the most recent authoritative work available on the topic in general. It was published in 1975 after being written between 1971 and 1975. A comment by the author explains how we in Australia probably overlook the real benefits that can be derived from fish farming and aquiculture in particular in fresh water.

I have seen at first hand in recent weeks the enormous quantities of protein which can be produced from bodies of fresh water in China. The book is published by the

Australian Government and written by the Fisheries Division of the Department of Primary Industry. A fellow named McLean did most of the work, and he sets out a table which details how we can simply sit back and accept whatever fish are produced from a body of water, given that the natural propensity of that water will generate food for the aquatic animals therein, including the fish.

I seek leave to have a table from that publication inserted in the record to illustrate the progress from the raw enclosed

body of water situation to a real technological farming exercise in seven phases. The table sets out annual yields of fish at different levels of intensity of aquaculture.

The CHAIRMAN: I seek an assurance that it is a purely statistical table.

Mr LEWIS: I give that assurance.

Leave granted.

ANNUAL YIELDS OF FISH OBTAINED AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INTENSITY OF AQUICULTURE TECHNIQUES

Level of intensity	Type of pond or condition of water	Annual yield	Example or reference
1	farm dams	170 kg/ha	Weatherley, 1959
2	unfertilised ponds	282 kg/ha	Schuster, 1952
3	ponds treated with efficient fertiliser	990 kg/ha	Ling, 1970
4	ponds, sometimes fertilised, but with supplementary feeding	1 570 kg/ha	American catfish
5	as above, with some flow-through of water	3 360 kg/ha	American catfish
6	as in level 4, with fast (20 cusec) water flow	224 280 kg/ha	trout, Japanese yellowtail
7	as in level 4, but with maximum rate of water turn-over. Experimental at present	215 kg/m ³	trout, carp, etc.

Mr LEWIS: The table shows how at the simplest level of intensity in ordinary farm dams one gets only 170 kg/ha. At the fourth level in ponds sometimes fertilised but with supplementary feeding one gets 1 570 kg/ha. At the highest level of enhancement, with a rapid aeration rate and a rapid changeover rate, the yield is 215 kg/m³. At the sixth level (one behind) with a rapid changeover of water one gets 224 280 kg/ha, as compared with a simple farm dam of only 170 kg/ha. I have had the table incorporated in the record to illustrate the difference between putting a few fish into a pond and going about it in the manner that I believe we should follow, that is, the farming technique. Whilst I commend the Department for having published that excellent publication about the use of indigenous species in fresh water aquaculture situations, I want to know from the Minister whether or not further research is being undertaken to make fish farming in water more like agriculture is today.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To use the honourable member's phrase, 'fish farming in water' is something that we have a particular interest in. The honourable member was delighted to know that, as a response to the questions that he raised on exactly this topic in the Estimates Committee last year, the Department produced the book *Freshwater Fish Farming in South Australia* and the honourable member got the first copy. I commend him for his interest in this area which is important and which has much potential in South Australia. Indeed, the honourable member will be pleased to note that again following his question in the Estimates Committee last year a more up-to-date booklet has been prepared. It has the provisional title 'The Potential of Aquaculture in South Australia'.

It has not been published yet. It has been submitted to the Department of State Development for its comment. Again, I commend the member for Mallee for his interest in this area. He has certainly given the Department of Fisheries an added spur. It is something that the Department is always interested in, but after his question that interest was sharpened considerably.

Also for the information of the honourable member and the Committee, we have applied to the Community Employment Programme (CEP) for a grant for the Fresh-water Aquaculture Research Station; so it is getting better and better. The project has been approved for State sponsorship and an application has been prepared for the Federal CEP secretariat. Depending on whether or not the Federal Government smiles on us favourably or not, hopefully we will have an aquaculture research centre. The anticipated cost of that programme at this stage is \$165 000.

Mr LEWIS: The location?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Let us get the money first.

Mr LEWIS: The Minister's answer heartens me. I want to encourage him and officers of the Department in the good direction in which they are going; it is commendable. I am sure that I can attract investment to this State from overseas in the order of six or seven figure sums if I can only convince those people with that money that there is an awareness of the value of fish farming here.

Notwithstanding that he has landed a shot among all my foxes, one is still limping. That relates to the proposal from the member for Hawker (Hon. Ralph Jacobi) in the House of Representatives, who has put up a Bill that has passed or is about to pass both Houses of the Federal Parliament to establish an Institute of Fresh-water Studies. I wonder whether the Minister has attempted to get that Institute established in South Australia and under its umbrella, given that it might be most sensibly located in the Murray-Darling system in the Lower Murray at Wellington, a fishing research station of the kind that he has very sensibly, adequately and recently seen established under his term of office at West Beach?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot answer that with any accuracy. I am not aware of what stage the member for Hawker's Bill has reached in the Federal Parliament if, indeed, it is before the Federal Parliament. I assume that the Minister of Water Resources would have more knowledge of this project than I would, but I can assure the member for Mallee and the Committee that I will have some investigations made of the issue that he has just raised to see what other Ministers who are more directly connected are doing and, if I have any information to bring back to the Committee, it will be done through the medium of *Hansard* prior to 19 October.

Mr LEWIS: How does the Minister feel about the continuing pollution of the waters adjacent to Port MacDonnell at Finger Point with the raw sewage effluent outfall there from Mount Gambier? How does he consider that that might affect the South-East fisheries, particularly the rock lobster fishery?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government, shortly after coming to office, when it found that it was left a legacy of the largest deficit that this State had ever known (I certainly would not bring politics into the Committee, but merely state a fact) had to take a number of very tough decisions in an attempt to get this State on its financial feet.

Unfortunately, one of the decisions that had to be made was to postpone the sewage works at Finger Point. That was a pity, but it has been postponed. I am sure that

eventually it will be built at that location. It was reported to me by fishermen at Port MacDonnell that they were concerned about fishermen taking abalone, in particular, from areas close to the sewage outlet at Finger Point. Acting on the advice of the fishermen, I extended the prohibited fishing zone to a one kilometre circle extending around the outlet pipe.

Information I have received from biologists is that the chances of any pollution of fish around that area are very remote and, further, that the speed at which fish travel and cleanse themselves means that by the time they are outside the one kilometre safety zone they would certainly be clean, if they were contaminated in the first place. There is no evidence of any contamination of fish in the area. That is not to say that the Finger Point sewage treatment works is not desirable: it certainly is desirable, and I am sure that one day it will be built. Apart from the fisheries aspect of the question, more detailed discussion on the reasons why the project was delayed and questions about the stage of the project in the forward planning programme of the Minister of Water Resources should more properly have occurred when the Minister of Water Resources was appearing before the Estimates Committee.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: In December 1983 a group of fishermen in the Port Lincoln region met and discussed their concern over what they described as being exploitation of the fish resource in the Port Lincoln/Louth Bay region. I have received three letters from a constituent in that region who claims that, in response to a circular letter sent to all recreational and professional fishermen in the area, some 66 per cent replied supporting a ban on netting and the provisions of various reserves in and around the region. A petition supporting the ban was drawn up, and some 1 800 signatures were received.

Signatories came from the fishing and tourist industries, the District and City Councils of Port Lincoln, as well as from tourist personalities of the region. I understand that that petition was tabled in the House of Assembly in March or April of this year. Its contents were drawn to the attention of the Minister, who in turn set up a committee to investigate the claims and matters associated with this matter. The committee, which met on 27 September, comprised officers of the Department of Fisheries, people from the tourist industry, professional and recreational fishermen, tourist representatives and local government representatives.

I gather that the meeting determined by a clear majority to support the netting ban. Is the Minister aware of the concern of the people to whom I have referred about the alleged impact of netting in that harbor region and the adjacent environs, and, if he is, is he in a position to indicate whether closure is imminent? If not, why not?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am aware of the issues raised by the member for Alexandra. Some of the statements he made were incorrect in detail.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Does the Minister mean that some of the material that I reported to the Committee received in correspondence is incorrect? That is what the Minister is saying. They are not my statements.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know whether the honourable member is taking responsibility for the statements he read out.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I am simply reporting.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There was a meeting of the Inshore Fisheries Advisory Committee on the 27th which discussed this issue. We are fortunate to have with us the Chairman of the Inshore Fisheries Advisory Committee, Mr Richard Stevens, who is also Director of Fisheries. He would be pleased to give details.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the Committee that there are three votes to be completed in the 2½ minutes before

6 p.m. If they are not completed by then we will resume the Fisheries votes at 7.30 p.m.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: In view of the time, perhaps Mr Stevens need not give us the information now. I would be prepared to provide the Minister with a photocopy of the correspondence so that he can report later.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is acceptable to me.

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

Works and Services—Department of Fisheries, \$930 000—
Examination declared completed.

Minister of Fisheries, Miscellaneous, \$98 000—Examination
declared completed.

[Sitting suspended from 5.59 to 7.30 p.m.]

Correctional Services, \$24 796 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

Mr S.J. Baker
The Hon. Peter Duncan
Mr R.J. Gregory
Mr K.C. Hamilton
Mr J.K.G. Oswald
The Hon. D.C. Wotton

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Forests and Minister of Correctional Services

Departmental Advisers:

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

Mr W.R. Cossey, Director, Support Services.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination. Does the Minister wish to make a statement prior to questions being asked?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, with your approval, Sir and that of the Committee. I think it would be helpful if I were to make a short statement introducing the Correctional Services portfolio estimates which are about to be reviewed. The Budget provides for an increase in the State's allocation to the correctional services area compared with previous years. This year's recurrent State allocation of \$24.8 million is up approximately \$2.5 million on 1983-84 actual expenditure. The estimated total funds, including capital funds, to be expended by the Department of Correctional Services in the 1984-85 financial year are \$37.8 million, which represents an increase of \$8 million or 26 per cent over the 1983-84 financial year.

For the first time, the Department's traditional line estimates have been prepared in programme form, which makes comparisons between 1983-84 expenditure and 1984-85 budgetary allocations somewhat more difficult. However, the budgetary allocation to correctional services reflects the Government's commitment to increasing the resources available, and thereby improving the Department's capacity to meet the objectives outlined in the programme estimates.

The Budget provides for several important initiatives. These include the extension of the community service order programme to all areas of the State at a budgeted cost in 1984-85 of \$500 000. Last financial year the scheme was extended to the Port Adelaide, Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie district offices of the Department. In the financial year, 357 offenders completed a total of 27 239 hours of service. The budget for 1984-85 will allow the extension of the scheme to the Adelaide, Elizabeth, Gilles Plains and Glenelg district offices in the metropolitan area, and to the Mount Gambier, Berri and Port Lincoln district offices in the country. In addition, an office serving both community service orders and normal probation and parole functions will be opened at Ceduna from the 1984-85 allocation.

The expansion of community service orders will require the appointment of 14 full-time equivalent staff. In the probation and parole area, the allocation also provides for an increase of 12 full-time equivalent staff in the Department's district offices at a cost of \$235 000. This is in line with the recommendations of a thorough review by the Public Service Board of district office staffing levels. In the institutional area, the allocation provides for the implementation of the Yatala staffing review and the introduction of unit management. For this purpose, \$120 000 has been allocated, primarily for the employment of correctional industry officers necessary to staff the industries complex.

In recent years, weaknesses in the administrative and management capacity of the Department of Correctional Services have been reported on by external consultants and the Public Service Board. During 1983-84, part year funds were provided for a number of management and administrative positions in the areas of: personnel, staff development, Parole Board support, finance and accounting, stores, planning, and record keeping. Full year funding of \$275 000 is being provided in 1984-85 for the continuance of this effort.

Capital expenditure for 1984-85 will increase by 71 per cent from \$7.6 million to \$13 million. The two major components of this expenditure are \$5.3 million for the Adelaide Remand Centre and \$4.4 million for essential works at Yatala Labour Prison including the new security fence, the upgrading of B Division, tower alterations, and the visiting centre. This is simply the first stage of a major works programme which will extend over the next three or four years.

The budgetary allocation for correctional services reflects the Government's determination to improve the operations of the Department of Correctional Services. Much has already been achieved, and this Budget will allow the continuation of these efforts. With this brief introduction, I am now willing to answer any questions which members may have on the Estimates for 1984-85.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Can the Minister provide figures showing how many prisoners have been released from gaol since the new parole legislation was proclaimed and how many of those released have been sent back to gaol for further sentence? Also, how many are awaiting sentence?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The number of people released on parole since 20 December 1983 is 456. Parolees released since 20 December 1983 who have breached a condition of parole and to whom the Board has noted or sent warning letters is 41. Parolees released since 20 December 1983 who have breached a condition and have been returned to prison by the Board is 14. Parolees released since 20 December 1983 who have been returned to prison for further offences is 32. These statistics were calculated up to and including 11 September 1984 at a Parole Board meeting.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Can the Minister make available (at a later stage if he has not got the information with him now) details of the number of prisoners as at 30 June 1982, 1983 and 1984? Can he also provide the comparative

costs of keeping prisoners in gaol? I would like to know the number of people not convicted but awaiting sentence as at 30 June 1982, 1983 and 1984.

The Hon. F.T. Blevins: We will make those figures available to the Committee through the process of *Hansard* by 19 October.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I understand that the Minister has indicated today that the Mobilong (or Murray Bridge) gaol may now not proceed. The Minister's colleague, the Minister of Public Works, in answer to a question yesterday said that the design review on the Mobilong medium security prison was expected to be completed this month and that services external to the site were expected to be documented by December 1984. He said it was hoped that a joint committee set up by the Department of Correctional Services to report on prison numbers would submit indicators by November 1984. He also said that the Government was then to decide as to the overall prison system, which would include Mobilong.

The Minister of Public Works also said that, despite some comments made in Parliament about the Government having shelved Mobilong, it was still proceeding with the design review of prison services so that, if needed, it could proceed with Mobilong almost immediately, subject to a report from the Public Works Committee.

Will the Minister say who is serving on that joint committee and under what guidelines that committee is working? If the committee was to come up with a recommendation that the Mobilong gaol should be built immediately, and recognising that that gaol was to replace medium security facilities at Yatala, where would the suggested cost of \$12 million come from to construct such a facility?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member was incorrect when he stated that I announced today that Mobilong would not go ahead as originally outlined. I issued a statement several months ago to that effect: there is nothing new in that proposition. The facts outlined by the Minister of Public Works when he was before the Estimates Committee earlier this week are correct, and I agree with him. The problem with Mobilong is that we already have surplus accommodation in the prison system. It appears to the Government to be a waste of public money to build a gaol for which there may be no prisoners, particularly as there is a significant over-capacity in the system already.

There is an imbalance of accommodation for high, medium and low security prisoners in the present system. That problem is being addressed. There is a significant over-capacity or under-utilisation—whichever way one chooses to put it—of low security accommodation. The under-utilisation occurs mainly in the country, and that is pretty obvious, because that is where our low security institutions are located. The facilities at Yatala are being upgraded and will enable us to increase the number of people held there from, I think, the present approximately 125 to about 200, maybe a little over, depending on the final work that is now in progress.

The Northfield Security Hospital will become available to the Department of Correctional Services because the Health Commission is building a new security hospital in the grounds of Hillcrest Hospital. Depending on the final design that we choose with which to utilise that building, the possibility of another 40 beds being made available and the alterations to be made to the present Northfield Security Hospital, it could be used for high or medium security prisoners. So, there will be a capacity in Yatala for another approximately 125 prisoners more than are presently there. It may be that the Northfield Security Hospital is used as an ultra-high security prison to remove a very small number of prisoners from Yatala who require an extra degree of security, but that has not been decided.

The information that I am giving to the Committee will illustrate the over-capacity in the prison system at the moment. It will require some alteration to make it appropriate for the prisoners that we have and for the classification that those prisoners are allocated. It seems to the Government that to be premature, to say the least, to build Mobilong knowing that we may not have any prisoners to put in it.

We can use Government resources in a far better way than building unnecessary prisons. The Minister of Public Works was correct when he stated that the Public Buildings Department could go ahead with Mobilong almost immediately the design work is completed.

The committee, the membership of which I will outline in a moment, is constantly monitoring the numbers and classifications of those prisoners. If at any time it is decided that Mobilong is necessary (maybe even on a smaller scale than proposed), it will be a very quick operation to get Mobilong built. Under those circumstances funds would be allocated by Treasury and would not be a problem.

The site chosen for Mobilong is a location for a prison, and if a prison is built there it will be a first-class facility. Being a green field site, the building programme will be quick, and it will be a relatively easy prison to build. We also envisage it being built in stages, if necessary. The accommodation units are in blocks of 40. Therefore it can be built for 40 inmates 80, 120, or 160, which I think is the maximum capacity. If it is built it may not go ahead on the scale that was first thought, but that depends on prisoner numbers. If the prisoner numbers increase, as they may, we can build a prison fairly quickly. However, if that does not occur I am sure that all members of the Committee would be delighted that State Government resources are not put into inappropriate and unnecessary facilities.

I am sure that every member of the Committee could think of a better way to spend \$12 million than to build an unnecessary prison. The membership of the committee has representatives from the Department of Correctional Services, the Premier's Department, the Attorney-General's Office of Crime Statistics, and Treasury. The committee's terms of reference are to monitor prisoner numbers, the impact of community service orders, parole legislation, and advise us on trends.

Mr HAMILTON: Page 61 of the Auditor-General's Report refers to two issues: first, the cost per prisoner at the Yatala Labour Prison. I can recall facetious comments made by Opposition members that perhaps these prisoners ought to be put up in the Hilton Hotel. Can the Minister elaborate on that? Secondly, the Auditor-General's Report refers to call backs and overtime. Can the Minister advise what is being done to reduce the level of call backs and overtime? I am cognisant of the fact that in any industry a certain amount of overtime is required, particularly where staff numbers may not be sufficient to overcome the problems of workers compensation. Having worked in that field for many years I recognise that a certain percentage of employees would be incorporated in call backs and overtime as a result of the problems associated with workers compensation. Can the Minister elaborate on that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Albert Park for his question, because I was concerned to read in the media, after the release of the Auditor-General's Report, that it would be cheaper to keep prisoners at the Hilton, that the cost of maintaining a prisoner at Yatala had increased by some allegedly huge amount, and that somehow this was to the Government's discredit.

Actually, the reverse is the case. To the Government's credit the actual cost of running Yatala in the financial year addressed by the Auditor-General only increased from \$9.36 million to \$9.82 million. Some simple arithmetic would indicate to the Committee that that is a 4.9 per cent increase,

which is less than the rate of inflation. The Auditor-General's Report also states—and this did not get quite as much publicity as the previous figure—that as at 30 June 1984 the staffing level at Yatala had been reduced by eight compared with the previous year. Had the previous year's prison population been maintained, the cost per prisoner would have increased by about \$1 000. However, the loss of accommodation at Yatala and the general decline in prison numbers (by 145) has resulted in a much lower average population than in the previous year.

Anyone who knows anything about running a prison, and running Yatala in particular, would be aware that it is not feasible to reduce costs by reducing staff significantly. I point out that the capacity at Yatala will be increased to 225 over the next two years. The joint Public Service Board/Department of Correctional Services staffing review at Yatala, which is soon to be implemented, recommends a continuance of current staffing levels. It must also be pointed out that, with the exception of the Northfield prison complex, cost per prisoner at other institutions has not increased significantly.

The prison population in this State has decreased considerably, and that is to the credit of this Government and to the benefit of the community as a whole. One cannot say to the staff at Yatala, 'You only have half the number of prisoners, therefore half the staff have to go.' It does not work that way and it also will not work the other way. In other words, when the number of prisoners at Yatala doubles as a result of the closure of the Adelaide Gaol, the staff at Yatala will not double.

The capacity of an individual prison officer to supervise a number of prisoners is very flexible, but there is a minimum requirement to operate the prison. It is a 24-hour-a-day operation which requires a whole host of prison officers and personnel in various areas: in the operation area, in the accommodation area and in security. Just because there are only 125 prisoners does not mean that the gaol itself has changed or the structure of the gaol has changed. It still has to be kept secure.

I reject completely any criticism of the costs of keeping prisoners at Yatala. I hope that over the next two years when, on paper at least, the cost of keeping a prisoner at Yatala will decrease dramatically, that those uninformed people who criticised us on this occasion will praise us when the same number of prisoner officers are supervising almost double the number of prisoners.

The honourable member also asked about the level of call backs and overtime—something that was also mentioned in the Auditor-General's Report. The Auditor-General's Report states that this matter is being addressed by the Department of Correctional Services.

Some call backs and overtime are inevitable because staffing arrangements do not take into account unforeseen circumstances such as escorts and hospital watches. At Yatala the staffing review has moved away from a fixed or maximum staffing basis to a minimum staffing basis. This will mean, for example, that a unit can operate at a staffing level above a specified minimum, but not at a fixed level without off duty staff having to be called back to work. This is a significant first step. At other institutions managers have, for the first time, been given specific budgetary allocations for overtime and call backs and are being asked to manage within those allocations.

Finally, many call backs result from the absence of staff on workers compensation and the Department has recently appointed a person to work with management and staff of institutions to reduce the incidence of workers compensation in the Department. It has been of concern to the Government, the unions and, obviously, the staff concerned, that the incidence of workers compensation in the past has been

so high. I believe that there will be a not insignificant reduction in the amount of workers compensation occurring at Yatala. When we work as we have in the past at Yatala to a fixed level of manning of the gaol, when unforeseen circumstances arise there is no other way but to bring people back on call backs and overtime.

With the management regime being introduced progressively over the next few months, the whole rationale behind the staffing numbers will change and the unit will have a level of staff that allows for certain operations to be suspended. If staff are away for any reason and if hospital watches, for example, have to be engaged, there will be the capacity within that unit to take up that extra work. It will mean a significant reduction in the amount of overtime incurred at Yatala. What has happened is more in the nature of the way the prison has been run over the years rather than any desire of the employees at Yatala to work these long hours or any desire of management at Yatala to pay overtime and bring back people for the sake of so doing. I assure the Committee that the question is being addressed in a serious and radical way. The arrangements will be to the benefit of prison officers themselves, certainly to the State of South Australia and, last but not least, to the prisoners.

Mr HAMILTON: I agree with what the Minister is saying in terms of call backs for workers. As one who worked shift work for 24½ years, I understand the problems that the staff would experience not only in terms of on-the-job pressures but also the pressures and stresses upon their families. I can recall many years ago, when I first came down from the country, being required to work up to 16 or 18 hour shifts when our award provision was for 10 hours. I found it horrendous and addressed it in a short time. Will the Minister advise why the cost per prisoner at Northfield prison complex increased from \$38 000 to \$48 000?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The explanation is very simple and would not require a great deal of research by members to ascertain it. Those members who chose to attempt to make some political capital out of this would be better served doing some preliminary homework. The Northfield prison complex now incorporates the Women's Rehabilitation Centre and the new cottages that were commissioned in April. The cottages provide accommodation for 40 low security prisoners who have had long sentences but are nearing the end of those sentences.

With the change in parole provisions many of those who would have been eligible to spend time at the cottages have been released. Consequently, it will take a little time for the cottages to become fully occupied. Meanwhile, it has been necessary to provide staffing on the same level as if the complex was fully occupied. As the occupancy increases, the cost per prisoner can be expected to reduce. Essentially, one has a prison complex the same as Yatala, which requires a minimum level of staffing. There are a number of functions that have to be performed, whether you have 40, 60 or even 14 prisoners—there is a minimum level that has to be there for security and other functions in running the prison. As I stated, the fact that the cottages are not fully occupied is a consequence of the change in parole legislation and it will take some time for prisoners who are now in the system to become eligible to take up a position in the cottages.

I stress that the purpose of the cottages is for the final few months of the sentence of long-term prisoners. I believe that the cottages are an exciting and interesting feature of the South Australian prison system. Already many interstate delegations have come to look at that feature of our prison system. I believe the concept is very sound. After many years in prison people get institutionalised and through no fault of their own—other than being in gaol in the first place—most decisions made within the prison are made by

other people than prisoners. That is necessarily the case. Decisions are made by Governments, the Department and the institution management.

After a few years, people lose the ability to cope with the normal decision making processes that people living outside the prison system have. The idea of the cottages is to recreate as best we can an environment that gradually increases the responsibility for decision making on to the prisoners themselves. We attempt to have a normal work pattern at the cottages so that people going out to work take their lunch with them and have only an evening meal cooked for them when they come home. They are responsible within the accommodation for their own personal cleanliness, and some minor cooking, and we try to recreate the environment that very soon these people will encounter when they leave the prison system.

It is not in the interests of a society to keep a person in prison for a number of years and then one morning open the gates on Grand Junction Road and say, 'On your way.' Such a person is not capable after all those years of functioning in the community as ordinary people would. That seems to be a certain way of greatly increasing the possibility of people returning to prison. That happens because they cannot cope with the outside world in those circumstances. The cottages are a first class concept which will be valuable to the prison service in this State and which, when they are fully occupied, will result in the cost per prisoner being reduced remarkably.

Mr HAMILTON: Can the Minister advise what is being done to reduce costs associated with accommodating such a high number of short-term prisoners in the prison system? Why has the number of staff in institutions increased when the number of prisoners has decreased?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The cost of accommodating a high number of very short-term prisoners within our system gives this Government concern, and I am sure has given previous Governments concern. The difference between this and previous Governments is that this Government has decided to do something about it. The facts and figures are startling. A very large percentage of the intake into our prison system are people who have very short sentences; for example, in July, 70 per cent of the intake into the prison system had less than one month to serve. A majority of the intake of prisoners were fine defaulters. This community is really about gaoling the poor.

The Government believes—and we have already demonstrated this through Community Service Orders—that community-based penalties are in many cases preferable for those short-term people. Consequently, in this Budget \$500 000 has been allocated for 1984-85 to extend the Community Service Order programme to all parts of the State. So, with little extra cost, work programmes for fine defaulters can be provided in much the same way as the Department for Community Welfare provides work options for juveniles who default on fines imposed by the Children's Court. We estimate that, if it is possible to get a system of fine defaulters working off their fines in the community, it will again have a significant effect on the prison numbers within this State.

All members of the Committee would agree that to put somebody in gaol for a very short period because of their inability to pay a fine is somewhat counterproductive. Not only does the State not get the fine, but it incurs a very considerable penalty (because of the costs involved) by having to gaol people. That seems to make something of a nonsense of the system.

I am unable to give the Committee any precise figures as to how many fine defaulters could be accommodated in other programmes outside the prison system, but when one takes it that 70 per cent of our intake are short-term prisoners of less than a month and that a majority of those are fine

defaulters, one can see that if there was a sensible alternative to imprisoning fine defaulters the community would benefit tremendously.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I presume that we will have to put up with a whole evening of Dorothy Dix questions. One of the questions that I meant to ask the Minister previously—

Mr Gregory interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I am indicating that the Government will obviously take the rest of the evening to provide answers to questions that have been given to the Government members by the Minister's staff—all Dorothy Dix questions. It makes a farce of the whole thing.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: How many prisoners were there in South Australia at the time that the new parole legislation was proclaimed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have those figures with me, but I will get them for the honourable member and have them inserted in *Hansard* prior to 19 October.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The Opposition was very critical of that legislation when it came into the House. We have been critical since and will continue to criticise that legislation. I find it incredible to have it confirmed that over 450 prisoners have been released in that period as a result of the new parole legislation.

One of the major resource variations indicates that the full year effect of increased costs associated with the revised parole legislation introduced in 1983-84 is \$131 000. In what area have those costs increased?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member stated that he was critical of the new parole legislation when it came through the Parliament.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: We will cite a few of the reasons why.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is the honourable member's point of view, which he is entitled to have and maintain. If it remains his point of view, I would expect the honourable member to tell the Committee that, if a Liberal Government was elected to office, it would alter the present parole provisions and revert to the previous provisions.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I have plenty of time to tell the Minister what a Liberal Government would do.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am delighted to hear that we will—

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: It will be 15 years before they are anywhere near government. That will be plenty of time.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: You will not even be here for the next Liberal Government, which we will have the year after next, if not the next—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Conjecture about when there might be another Liberal Government, if ever, is out of order. We are here to get information. If the member for Murray wants to have the information from the Minister, he will have it in silence.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think there is a misconception that all prisoners who have been released from prison since 20 December have been released only because of the new legislation. However, obviously there is a constant movement out of the prisons, with prisoners being released, and that would have occurred whether or not the new legislation had been in vogue. It would be possible to frame a question to get a more accurate answer, if indeed a more accurate or truly reflective answer, in regard to the new parole legislation is required. But apparently that is not the case. I shall obtain some figures for insertion in *Hansard* indicating how many prisoners left the prison system during the same period in

previous years. That will give an indication of the one-off effect of the new parole legislation, because that is what it is—a one-off effect. Of course that is not the way in which the member for Murray chooses to present the case. Because of the propaganda that was contained in the honourable member's question, I lost track of the question while trying to sort out what was propaganda and what was fact. I would appreciate it if the member for Murray would ask the question again, in isolation.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Can the Minister indicate what the amount of \$131 000 is for? Under 'major resource variations' it is stated that the full year effect of increased costs associated with the revised parole legislation introduced in 1983-84 is \$131 000. I would like to know in what areas those costs have increased.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A variety of areas, involving improved administration, reporting to the Parole Board on time, the quality of those reports, and the requirement to review at some time most of the prisoners who are in the system at the moment. Those are all consequences of the new parole legislation which has resulted in added costs to the community, although I feel that those costs are well justified.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: When are we likely to see before Parliament amendments to the Correctional Services Act? When is the legislation likely to be proclaimed and regulations brought down? I understand that significant amendments are being considered and that two drafts involving fairly significant differences have been prepared. When are we likely to see the proclamation of the legislation and the regulations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government will introduce amendments to the Correctional Services Act as and when it believes that amendments are necessary. The Act will be proclaimed when it is practical to do so. There is still a significant amount to be done on the regulations, as the honourable member would be well aware. When we are in a position to proclaim the Act we will do that.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: That is staggering, when one considers that the legislation was passed in 1982 under the previous Government.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The legislation was passed at the beginning of 1982 under the previous Government, and it is incredible that it has taken more than two years for this Government to make up its mind about what it will do regarding that important legislation. The Minister stated that there is significant work still to be done on the regulations, but a set of regulations was prepared at the change of office, so I find that quite staggering.

When was the new medical facility at the Northfield Security Hospital completed, and how much did it cost? Is that facility operating and, if not, why not, and for what purpose is it being used?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In response to the honourable member's comment, I do not really see why the member for Murray should be staggered that the regulations have taken so long to draft or that the Government is still considering the Correctional Services Act before it proclaims it. There is nothing particularly unusual in that. Under one of my other portfolios it took two years to draft the regulations under an Act passed by the previous Government. Problems arose that were not foreseen when the Bill was passed. There is nothing new or unusual in that: it happens with all Governments.

When a Bill is introduced we hope it is perfect: it may even be passed in the Legislative Council, the members of which are supposed to be all wise, nothing escaping them, but, when it is considered in the fullness of time and in

terms of drafting the regulations, we may find a number of inconsistencies and errors. There is also the question of policy with which the previous Government agreed but with which the present Government may not agree. I believe that my comment took about the same length of time as the comment made by the member for Murray.

The Security Hospital was completed in 1984. The question of cost would more properly be directed to the Minister of Health, because the Department of Correctional Services does not run the hospital at Northfield: it comes under the Health Commission. I am sure that, had members asked the Minister of Health these questions, they would have received an answer. That matter does not come within my portfolio area.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Supplementary to that, will the Minister indicate when the facility was commenced?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It was commenced some time before early 1984.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Obviously that is not the facility to which I referred.

Mr GREGORY: Will the Minister tell the Committee the likely savings that will be made by the Department when the perimeter fence around Yatala Labour Prison has been completed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am surprised that some members of the Committee find the matter of savings in the correctional services area humorous—I certainly do not. The new security fence being built around Yatala is a substantial structure that will make the perimeter of that gaol as secure as the perimeter of any gaol in Australia.

Mr BAKER: Is it going to be electrified?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Mitcham interjects and asks, 'Is it going to be electrified?' I find it appalling that a member of this Parliament jokes about having an electric fence around a prison to contain human beings. Does the member for Mitcham really advocate that if prisoners touch this fence they should be electrocuted? If that is what the honourable member is suggesting, I find that appalling. I do not find the topic of security in prisons one for humour or grotesque brutality. There will be some redeployment of resources at Yatala when the security fence is completed.

The member for Florey—the gaol being firmly in his electorate, for which he is a very conscientious member when, in addition to other duties, looking after prisoners, prison officers and the prison generally—would know of the Yatala staffing plan being implemented at the moment. This introduces a significant change to the way in which Yatala has been staffed in the past. Resources are being redeployed and the new security fence will assist in that operation. It would be difficult to put a dollars and cents figure on how much this will save. Also, security measures will be introduced apart from the fence, but I do not believe it is appropriate for me to detail these measures to the Committee. If any member wants to know privately of those security arrangements, I will be happy to make that information available on a confidential basis.

Mr GREGORY: Will the Minister say how completion of the fence will enable the increased movement of prisoners within the prison thus allowing for a better rehabilitation of the prisoners presently in Yatala?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no doubt that that will occur. An even more secure perimeter than exists at the moment will allow freer movement of prisoners within the Yatala complex. If members have seen Adelaide Gaol and compared it to the potential of Yatala, they will understand how having a significant degree of movement within a prison is very desirable for reducing tension and for treating people in prisons like human beings thereby making the job of prison officers that much easier. It will never be easy,

but this fence will make it that much easier. The problem at Adelaide Gaol is that there is no provision within the existing structure for any significant free movement of prisoners. This creates a number of difficulties for both prisoners and officers in that prison, and it is a most unsatisfactory arrangement.

I think that the best way for anyone to learn the benefits of having a secure perimeter for a prison and freer movement of prisoners is for them to visit both Adelaide Gaol and Yatala Gaol within a short time while the memory of each of those prisons is still fresh in their mind. The contrast between the two institutions is quite stark. The answer to the honourable member's question would be apparent to anyone who saw those two institutions.

Mr GREGORY: Why was support service staffing increased by 21 in the 1983-84 year, and why is a further increase proposed for the 1984-85 year? A number of reports written about the Department—notably the Touche Ross Report—emphasise the importance of upgrading, management and administration generally of the Department. Support services provide a range of services—personnel, staff development, finance, and record keeping—which is directed specifically at improving management. Increases in 1983-84 had a number of components and the most significant was an increase of four in staffing in the Parole Board secretariat. Can the Minister explain why that has happened?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no doubt that over the years—and I am certainly not just talking about the last three or four years, so I do not blame the previous Government for it—there has been a significant problem with the Department of Correctional Services. It has been under-resourced and, to some extent, it has been the poor relation within the Public Service. That has been a great pity and I certainly do not allocate any more blame to the previous Government than I do to Governments prior to 1979.

Correctional services was always at the end of the line when goodies were being handed out by Governments. That is a great pity. There have been a number of reports on the Department of Correctional Services. When anything goes wrong in the prisons suddenly there is a flurry of activity, reports are called for from here and a few resources are allocated there. Everybody hopes that things will die down. Of course, when the publicity dies down and the media moves on to something more current and interesting correctional services is again forgotten.

That is certainly not going to occur with this Government. I do not think that the community of South Australia can afford that kind of management of its prison system. There has to be a fundamental change. Resources have to be allocated in a number of areas, not just when there is an escape or some incident in the prison that hits the news and Ministers try to run for cover by appearing to do something in a hell of a hurry.

This Government has a programme for correctional services. It is very expensive and certainly involves a large increase in the staff that is provided, but it will only at the end of that programme bring the Department of Correctional Services up to the standard of other Government departments. By no means will the programme of this Government take the Department of Correctional Services above standards accepted as normal throughout the Public Service.

I can detail some of the increases in staff that have taken place. I certainly argue that every increase in staff numbers is necessary and I support my argument by the constant calls by members of Parliament (particularly members of the Opposition) for increased staff numbers within our prison system. Certainly, the increase in numbers relating to administrative support staff is explained by inclusion of Parole Board support staff under the support services category: additional typing staff for the operation of the Parole

Board, because there is a much higher work load; a prosecutions officer—again something that was very necessary; a 2.5 increase in allocation to the executive of the Department, a much under-resourced area; in research, an area that was totally neglected, a 1.5 FTE increase; Management Services, again an under-resourced area, 3.5 FTEs; financial services 1.5; and stores and supply 2.

When one looks at the individual increases in a department as under-resourced as the Department of Correctional Services, one will see that the increases are not large. We have not added hundreds of people to the staff; it is just two here, one there, 1½ in research—vitaly necessary and long overdue increases. I would like to put even more resources into the Department of Correctional Services. The Government can guarantee that, at the end of its programme of upgrading the Department, irrespective of whether there are any more incidents or publicity, the South Australian community will have a Department of Correctional Services and prison and parole services that will rank equal to any in Australia; they will be services of which the South Australian community can be justifiably proud.

Mr OSWALD: I listened with interest to the Minister's press conference on television tonight when he attempted to justify the indefinite deferment of the prison at Murray Bridge. In the Minister's earlier answers tonight he attributed the reduced number of prisoners in the prison system to his decision to definitely defer that prison. I thought that the answer was lacking in something. In the scheme of things are we not really on about segregating prisoners? When Yatala was full we were all concerned about low, medium and high security prisoners being mixed together. The aim was to segregate prisoners into compartments and shift them out in groups so that we would not have a situation of low, medium and high security prisoners mixing together. I thought that the overall scheme was to include the medium security prison at Murray Bridge. If we take out that part of the overall scheme, where will the medium security prisoners go from Adelaide Gaol? Will they go to Yatala, or will the Minister put them somewhere else? I do not want an answer in terms of shunting numbers around the prison system. Prisoners should be classified on security, so that one can say that medium security prisoners from gaol A will go to gaol B, and so on. Then we will know the Minister's plan for the dispersal of prisoners now that we do not have the potential of a medium security prison being constructed at Murray Bridge.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I was somewhat disappointed at the member for Morphet's description of my news conference this evening (which I did not see) when he said that I was attempting to justify not going ahead with Mobilong, as if that was a bad decision. We already have about 200 empty beds in the prison system: that is the point I am making. My decision not to build another prison, when there is already an over capacity of accommodation of about 200, should be commended and supported by the Opposition, not criticised. The taxpayers of this State will be delighted if prison numbers are such that we do not have to build a new prison. I am sure that they would prefer us to use those financial resources for hospitals, schools, transport, and in a whole range of other areas.

The Opposition would have been quite justified in criticising this Government if it built another prison when it had 200 empty beds in the prison system as it is. I tried to explain to the Committee (but I am happy to go through it again) that we will use the accommodation that we have in a more efficient manner, and obviously the new remand centre will be built before Adelaide Gaol is closed.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: How are you going to segregate the prisoners?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We will use the spare capacity that we have, for example, in our country institutions for medium security prisoners. We have a significant spare capacity in our country institutions for medium security prisoners. Those places will have to be used and we will also have a significant under-capacity at Yatala because we will not have 250 (or whatever) maximum security prisoners. We will have to use Yatala also for medium security prisoners as we do now. We do not have any low security prisoners at Yatala.

I also stated to the Committee that we will get the Northfield Hospital building, which, depending on how it is redesigned internally, will provide accommodation for another 40, 50, or 60 prisoners. Depending also on how the numbers work over the next 12 months or so, we will prepare our design for altering the Northfield Hospital. Whether we turn it into medium security accommodation or high security accommodation depends on what happens to the prisoner population, which is at present in a state of flux.

Quite frankly, we do not know, and I have said so on several occasions over the past few months. That is why it is being monitored. We will not rush in and spend \$12 million on a prison that the State may not use because it may not have enough prisoners to put in there and when there is already a 200 bed over-capacity in our prisons. Prisoners will be segregated to the best of our ability.

Mr OSWALD: While I am phrasing my question, the Minister may take advice and revise the answer that he gave in relation to there being no low security prisoners at Yatala. Once again I was disappointed. The Minister keeps referring to numbers, and I am a little concerned that he may not see the gravity of having to segregate the different classes of prisoners. I assume that we will now carry on for the time being and have together at Yatala a mix of prisoners which has, I am advised, been the cause of internal security problems for years.

It appears that the situation under this Government and this Minister will not change one iota, and that is an absolute disgrace. I wonder what the Minister's reaction is when he is told (and I saw this in the press only in July) that the Australian Government Workers Association and Mr Vic Smith of that association are happy that Yatala is being developed for maximum security only. There is still some concern about the timing but we have been assured that this is being done as soon as possible. It is quite clear (unless the Minister can explain this in some other way) that the Government is happy now to revert back to the situation that has prevailed for years of throwing high, maximum and medium security prisoners together.

We all know the internal security problems that that causes, and I think that for some time now we could be developing trouble in our prison system. Before I go off that subject, I would like to go on to another one to which the Minister can respond. I refer to segregation, and I give the Minister another opportunity to explain what will happen in the next year or so within the walls of Yatala. Will we have a guarantee of segregation? Will they get the 30-odd hard core prisoners away from the medium security prisoners, or is there a risk that medium security and high security prisoners will actually rub shoulders together in Yatala?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: At the risk of boring the Committee, I will have to go through it again. I explained earlier that Yatala will get the Northfield Security Hospital.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am attempting to answer the member for Morphet.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It may well be—as I have already stated and as *Hansard* will show—that the 30-odd

hard-core prisoners, to whom the member for Morphett referred, may be contained within what is now the Northfield Security Hospital. It certainly has a capacity for that number—in fact, a higher capacity than that. However, whether or not that is done is yet to be determined because, as I have stated, it is not known what is happening with prison numbers. It may well be (and this has been stated by me time and time again tonight, and time and time again over the past few months) that Mobilong will have to be built. That is why the concept and design work is still continuing and will continue. It will be taken to the stage where in the normal process it will go to the Public Works Committee. However, it will not be put to that committee until we are sure that it is needed. The amount of \$12 million of taxpayers' money will not be wasted on a facility that will not be needed when there is an over-capacity of 200 beds. There is significant over-capacity in medium security accommodation in our country institutions and, as I have stated to the Committee, that capacity will be utilised. What happens with Yatala depends on what happens to the structure of the prison population.

If it is thought—and it is certainly one possibility that is being considered—that the Northfield Security Hospital is an appropriate facility for the 30-odd (to use the numbers referred to by the member for Morphett) hard-core prisoners at Yatala, that may well be the decision, and the rest of Yatala (the other 190 spaces) will be used for medium security prisoners or prisoners without the high security classification of the 30-odd prisoners to whom the member for Morphett referred.

All those matters are possibilities but, until the long-term effect of the prison population is known, given the new parole system, a decision will not be made, because a guess-work decision will not be made and the \$12 million will not be spent on the off chance that that facility may be used. We will not do that: we will wait until we are sure of the appropriate accommodation for prisoners in this State. That is a perfectly responsible attitude. If the Liberal Party was in power, it would adopt exactly the same attitude, because no responsible Minister or Government would say, 'We will build a facility that will cost a minimum of \$12 million on the off chance that we might need it.' No Liberal Government would do that; it would say, 'Wait until it is known precisely what accommodation is needed and then spend the money.' It is not something that I feel is unique to this Labor Government: a Liberal Government would do exactly the same.

[Sitting suspended from 8.45 to 9 p.m.]

Mr OSWALD: The Minister said that he does not know when he is going to place 30-odd segregated prisoners on their own in a high security unit. I am disappointed to see that part of his forward planning. He stands condemned because he says he does not know what is happening to prison numbers and, therefore, he cannot make these decisions. I thought that Governments of both persuasions favoured the segregation of this small group of hard-core prisoners. The sooner this Government comes to grips with that problem and segregates them the easier it will be for internal discipline within the prison system. I also refer to escort duties. Does the Department of Correctional Services still adhere to a policy of only allowing one escorting officer to escort a medium security prisoner?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I refer to the member for Morphett's comment about the Government not making a decision on where the 30-odd (that was his figure) hard-core prisoners at Yatala will go. I find that a remarkable comment, given that I thought I had explained to the satisfaction of the Committee the reasons why a sensible decision cannot be made at this time. The alteration to the parole system

has put our prison population in a state of flux. It will take some time for a sentencing pattern to be established by the courts, which will be reflected in the prison numbers and the classification status given to those prisoners. No responsible Government would make a decision that would involve the State in huge expense on the limited amount of information that we have at the moment.

Perhaps the Government could get some assistance from the Opposition and particularly from the member for Morphett, who suggested that we have 30-odd hard-core high security prisoners. I thought that the debate tonight was about the building of Mobilong which is designed to be a medium security prison with a maximum capacity of 160 medium security prisoners. If there are only about 30 high security prisoners that are difficult cases, is the member for Morphett suggesting that they be the only inhabitants of Yatala, or is he suggesting that another high security prison be built in this State? I am not sure what the member for Morphett is suggesting. I thought I pointed out with great clarity the problem the Government is having, in this present state of flux, in determining what our prison population will require over the next few years.

Mr OSWALD: Will the Minister go on to the escort duty question?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am happy to go on to the escort duty question. Had the honourable member only asked me a question on escorts I would have been happy to respond accordingly, but he chose to comment about previous questions, which I believe warrants a response.

The question of escorts is very vexed and has been the subject of industrial dispute, extensive debate within the Industrial Commission, the union, the Department, and the Public Service Board. In fact, it is a question which we have not yet finally resolved. The Department's policy is clear: a prisoner will have the level of escort that is appropriate for that prisoner. A prisoner may be assessed by the Department as requiring only one escort, and the Department will ask prison officers to provide a single escort; if the Department judges that a prisoner requires two escorts, there will be two; and if on the rare occasion it is judged that there is a need for a higher security level, a higher security level will be provided.

The union does not agree with this policy and has taken industrial action to reinforce its view, but we do not resile from our policy. We are not in the business of sending people out of our institutions with an inappropriate security level. It is unnecessary, it is expensive and we do not condone it. I will give the Committee an example of some of the problems we face in this area and some of the inconsistencies that come through in the policy adopted by prison officers. At Cadell we had a first time low security prisoner whose offence related to marijuana; it was not an offence against persons or property. He was allowed to play in the Cadell football team and during a game he damaged his leg.

The Waikerie Hospital could not deal with the problem but, if it had, the prisoner would have stayed in the hospital with only periodic supervision. In other words, from time to time, a prison officer would have visited the hospital to check on the prisoner and his progress. However, Waikerie Hospital could not cope with the injury and the prisoner was transferred to Adelaide Gaol, en route to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. However, union policy at the Adelaide Gaol states that, as a result of the industrial dispute, a prisoner cannot leave that gaol without two escorts. It is the same prisoner, the same offence and the same injury, but at Cadell the prisoner would have been subject to non-permanent hospital supervision. However, prison officers at Adelaide Gaol required two escorts. By shuffling people around we managed to have the prisoner transferred to

Northfield Prison complex. The policy at that prison requires only one prison officer escort. The prisoner was finally conveyed to hospital from the Northfield Prison complex with an escort of one prison officer around the clock (that is, three officers on eight-hour shifts). I remind the Committee that it was the same person, the same offence and the community was in the same degree of danger as was the case at Cadell.

The Department believes that there is an appropriate level of security for particular prisoners. Whether it is one, two or more prison officers, that is what we will require. I am pleased to say that we are gradually working through the problem with the union and machinery has been put in place in regard to Adelaide Gaol to alleviate the problem in the main. A similar situation is being developed at Yatala so that prison officers will co-operate in escorting prisoners outside prison at an appropriate level of security.

Very briefly, I will give one more example. Another prisoner is deaf and dumb, and is having some rehabilitation programme outside of Yatala. The prisoner normally goes to his rehabilitation programme escorted only by a female probation officer; no prison officers are required. This is from Yatala and there has never been any objection by prison officers.

The parole officer was not available on a particular day when the prisoner had to go for his programme, and the prison officers at Yatala, who previously had had no objection to the prisoner's going outside the prison with a probation officer only, decided that that prisoner then needed two prison officers. There are additional costs if we give in to those demands. We think the requirement is completely and demonstrably unnecessary. We are grappling with this problem and having a measure of success. I am sure that a satisfactory arrangement will be able to be made with the prison officers.

Mr HAMILTON: Given the previous statements tonight that there are about 200 spare prison beds and the estimated cost for the Mobilong prison is approximately \$12 million, can the Minister ascertain what the average increased cost would be per prisoner in South Australia if that prison were built? It is very important that this question be addressed because we have had criticisms from the Opposition in relation to the average cost per prisoner here in South Australia. On the one hand, the Government is criticised because it will not build Mobilong. The Minister himself says that there are 200 spare beds. I believe that the Opposition wants to eat its cake and have it too.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is obvious that if the number of prisoners remains the same and a further gaol is built, the cost per prisoner will rise astronomically. Already there is some criticism, some of it uninformed, at the cost of keeping prisoners in some of the institutions in South Australia. I ask my officers, particularly Mr Cossey, to indicate whether it is possible on some very rough preliminary figures to estimate what the effects would be if the prison numbers remain the same of building another building and staffing another institution.

Mr Cossey: The cost per prisoner will very much depend on the year by year operating cost of Mobilong. If one were to assume that Mobilong will cost half of the amount that Adelaide Gaol is currently costing us, namely, half of \$5.6 million and were to divide that \$2.8 million (a conservatively low figure) by 600, which is roughly the current number of prisoners in the system, that would amount to extra operating costs per prisoner being about \$5 000 a year. The \$12 million capital cost would incur interest payments of about \$1.25 million to \$1.5 million a year, and on current numbers that would mean an extra \$2 000 per prisoner. The institution costs would be written off over a period of a year, so I suspect that there would be a depreciation cost of about the

same amount. Therefore, we are probably talking about a cost of between \$9 000 or \$10 000 per year per prisoner.

Mr HAMILTON: Over the years I have received a number of inquiries from constituents concerning the classification system in prisons. Although I have tried to do my best to provide that information, my constituents have sometimes not been satisfied. Therefore, I ask whether the Minister can provide me with information on the classification system in prisons. As that information will then be in the *Hansard* record, in future I will be able to refer to it when I receive inquiries about this matter from my constituents.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again I thank the member for Albert Park for his question. In regard to the honourable member's constituents having difficulty in finding out how the classification system works, I would have thought that perhaps the member for Florey's constituents may have had some problems, although it may well be that the member for Albert Park knows his constituents better than I do. I ask the Executive Director of the Department of Correctional Services, Mr John Dawes, to respond to the honourable member's question. Undoubtedly, this is a very vexed and complex area which requires a great deal of knowledge and expertise and much sensitivity in putting the various operating principles into effect.

Mr Dawes: The Department has a procedural document worked out. It is very clearly based on the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and related recommendations. The Department takes into account, in accordance with those rules, the following matters in determining a prisoner's security rating, and therefore his placement in the prison system. Clearly, age is important, as is the length of sentence that the prisoner must serve. The person's conviction and the nature of conviction is taken into account and also whether violence was used against a citizen in the commission of a crime. The matter of prior conviction is also quite important, as is whether or not a previous conviction has resulted from an offence committed within South Australia or elsewhere in Australia, or, importantly, whether it was committed overseas. The largest group of foreign prisoners in Australian prisons are from New Zealand. Family relationships are important: if it is clear that a prisoner has close family contacts and has the support of a family, that is a factor that may result in a prisoner being rated low security perhaps earlier in his prison career, as compared with someone who might be wanted for extradition or deportation back to New Zealand, say, or elsewhere overseas.

The Department also uses a notoriety rating factor that is based on public perception of the seriousness of the crime, and that is developed independently of the Department in the Office of Crime Statistics. We take that into account in determining a person's security rating and placement in the system. The risk to the community is clearly very important. What would happen to the nearby community if a person escaped—

Mr OSWALD: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. While this information is very interesting and it is valuable knowledge for readers of *Hansard*, classification definitions and this discourse have nothing to do with the Budget lines before us. The Opposition has come here this evening to take the opportunity to examine the Budget and to seek information on financial matters. This question has nothing whatsoever to do with the Budget papers before the Committee. I ask that the speaker conclude quickly so that the Opposition can get back to what we are here for—examining the Budget lines.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr Dawes: The final point is a person's behaviour in prison. If a prisoner has behaved satisfactorily and if he has

attempted to derive some value from his prison experience, that is a positive factor in determining his security rating. We have a mechanism that assesses prisoners and encourages them to move to the most appropriate security rating as soon as they are eligible.

Mr HAMILTON: I thank the Minister and his officer for that information, because it was a matter of concern to one of my constituents some weeks ago. That person asked for detailed information in relation to this matter. I was most appreciative of the assistance given to me by the Minister's Department and the Department for Community Welfare. I would have thought that the member for Morphett would be only too happy to have that information incorporated in *Hansard* so that it was available to everyone. It could save a considerable amount of time.

Mr OSWALD: This is filibustering!

Mr HAMILTON: I seek your protection, Mr Chairman. I do not know how busy the member for Morphett is, but I am busy in my office and it would be nice to supply information to a constituent from a file and be free to deal with the next person who is waiting outside the door.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton interjecting:

Mr HAMILTON: I did it many years ago, and the honourable member might recall that I was criticised bitterly by the then Liberal Premier. The honourable member cannot have his cake and eat it too. What is the scope of the current works programme at Yatala Labour Prison?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am tempted to answer the comments made by the member for Albert Park prior to his question, but as time is getting on I will not do that, other than to say that I congratulate the honourable member on asking a question about the classification system. It was certainly a matter that occupied a more interesting part of the 1½ hours of this Committee's time this evening. I believe it was appropriate, because some members of the Committee seem to have something of a fixation about the classification system, for the member for Albert Park to clarify the situation once and for all.

I will respond briefly to the member's question about the Yatala building programme. The visitor centre has an expected finishing date of December 1985 and an estimated total cost between 1984 and 1987 of \$1.25 million; the new security fence has an expected finishing date of December 1984 at a total cost of \$1.42 million; B division upgrade, which basically means sewerage all the cells, has an expected finishing date of December 1986 and a total expected cost of \$4.6 million; alterations to the towers necessary for the new security arrangements are expected to be finished in May 1985 at an estimated total cost of \$490 000.

The list continues: the staff car park has an expected finishing date of April 1985 at an estimated total cost of \$300 000; the exercise yard development within the complex has an expected finishing date of April 1985 at an estimated total cost of \$360 000. The industries complex upgrading has an expected finishing date of June 1985 and an expected total cost of \$350 000; the new administration building has an expected finishing date of April 1987 at an estimated total cost of \$1.25 million; the prisoners' gymnasium has an expected finishing date of June 1987 at an estimated total cost of \$800 000. The conversion of the Northfield Security Hospital to provide prisoner accommodation has an expected completion date of November 1986 at an estimated total cost of \$600 000—I will come back to this in a moment; upgrading of the kitchen has an expected finishing date of June 1987 at an estimated total cost of \$600 000.

Committee members can see that there is an extensive upgrading programme at Yatala. I return to the subject of the conversion of the Northfield Security Hospital to provide prisoner accommodation. I think that the member for Morphett is somewhat confused about what facilities are available

at Yatala. The Northfield Security Hospital holds, on average, 20 prisoners. It is run by the Health Commission and not by the Department of Correctional Services. However, the building is located within Yatala. It holds an average of 20 patients at the moment, but has accommodation for 60.

Mr OSWALD: It is not being used by high security prisoners.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Just a moment! The part not being used is the new infirmary within Yatala. I have already explained to the Committee that the Health Commission is building, with an expected completion date of 1986, a new security hospital in the grounds of Hillcrest which will leave that accommodation of about 50 beds in a secure institution, because it is a security hospital, within the grounds of Yatala that will be available to the Department of Correctional Services.

What we do with that accommodation when we get it has yet to be decided. It may well be that the 30 odd ultra high security prisoners that the member for Morphett is quite properly concerned about could be accommodated there. The whole of Yatala could then revert to being a medium security prison, if we only had about 30 high security prisoners.

Mr OSWALD: That scenario would be acceptable to me.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I hope that has clarified the position of the complex within Yatala. We may well have more high security prisoners than can be accommodated in that complex, which will take about 60: we have allowed \$600 000 to do some alterations. If we have more than 30-odd high security prisoners it may be better that they stay in Yatala and that the 50 or 60, depending on how we redesign the security prison, will be housed within the Yatala complex.

Until we know precisely what figures we will get we cannot make a decision on what we will do with it, besides which we will not have the accommodation until 1986 when the new security hospital is built. So, there is no urgency in making a decision, because we cannot do anything with it. The building is reasonably modern: it was built in the 1970s. I recommend anyone going to see it, because it is a very modern secure institution, as it would have to be for the type of people who are in it. I hope that that has cleared up the matter of additional accommodation within the walls of Yatala.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I note, under 'Strategies', the commissioning of the Yatala Labour Prison industry complex development. First, I want to know when that will be totally functional. I have been led to believe that prisoners have indicated that if they are required to work within that complex they expect to be paid some \$25 a week; if there is no work available they will still expect that pay.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would not like to comment on expectations of prisoners. I have met with prisoners at Yatala on, I think, two or possibly three occasions since I have been Minister. Those meetings have gone very well, there has been a reasonable exchange of views and, for my part, a stating of position and Government policy. I do not know what prisoners' pay expectations are at all, so I really cannot comment on what the honourable member has said.

The target date for opening the complex is 5 November. It will not be walk in, switch on, everything going full bore all in half an hour. It will be a phased opening, but over a relatively short period. We hope that very soon after the opening the complex will be operating.

Prisoners' pay is really a separate question. It is a very difficult and vexed question, because rates of payment to prisoners are extraordinarily low ranging, I think, from \$1.20 to around \$2.10 a day. In a number of cases we do not even pay prisoners the price of a packet of cigarettes a day. That leads to more problems than any savings we

make if we do not give them what in relative terms a substantial increase is worth. I think that at least as a minimum prisoners should be able to buy a packet of cigarettes a day. That does not seem to me to be softening or pampering prisoners. In a well run prison industry complex, and a considerable amount of money can be made by the State to offset some of the costs within the prison—in particular, doing work for other Government departments. Of course, it will be for everyone a learning experience when the industry complex opens, but I think that, given a decent settling down period, the benefits to the State of operating that complex will be quite significant.

Obviously, we will not pay for the prison service through the industries complex, but we will offset a large amount of the operating costs and the complex itself will make a profit. Whether the expectations of the prisoners as relayed to the Hon. Mr Wotton—but certainly not to me—are as high as he says, I do not know. The Government and I are looking at the question of prisoners' pay. It seems unnecessarily low, to the degree that it creates more problems than the few thousand dollars that we save is worth.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: What is current policy in relation to pornography in prisons? On occasions are prisoners permitted to view pornographic videos and films? If so, what are those occasions? If prison officers find pornographic material in prisoners' mail or otherwise, is it confiscated or dealt with in some other way?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no overall departmental policy on pornography in prisons. To a great degree individual prisons reflect the style of operation of the Superintendent in charge. I am loathe to interfere in that. Some institutions are more 'permissive' than others in relation to pornography. That is not unreasonable. The whole debate on pornography in prisons has become somewhat unbalanced. It is nonsense to suggest that 600 or so prisoners in this State are obsessed with obtaining the most explicit of pornography available. Some prisoners would have an interest in pornography, the same as some members of Parliament and some bank managers. I doubt whether the percentages would vary very much. Prisoners very much represent a cross-section of the community in their sexual preferences, as is the case with the other groups I mentioned.

Undoubtedly some prisoners like pornography, as do other groups in the community. I do not see that as a big deal, and I am sure the prisoners do not see it as a big deal. I remember when the member for Victoria (Mr Rodda) was Chief Secretary: there were news items about pornography being delivered to prisons by a visiting newsagent and being made available for prisoners to purchase. That was a five minute wonder and I am sure the newsagent did not sell too many, because when one pays prisoners as little as we do they cannot afford too much pornography; they are more interested in a packet of tobacco. The Department forwarded a draft departmental instruction to the union based on the premise that as much as is practicable the law that applies to the outside community should also apply in the prison system. The response to that was somewhat hysterical in some quarters.

I think that the prisoners have found it hysterical from another point of view. I do not think that they could stop laughing at the fuss that this had caused. I know that there was to be a meeting of institutional heads somewhat later than when that issue arose earlier this year, when this issue among a dozen other issues would be discussed. I cannot remember, but all I can say about the issue is that it is not a matter to which I give any priority at all. If the only problem I had in the prison system in this State was what dirty pictures prisoners could look at, I would not have too many problems at all. There are far more serious problems

to be addressed in the correctional services area than worrying about pornography.

As regards censorship of mail, again this is a difficult area. Mail is censored for security reasons and I think that it was also the policy (and quite correctly) of the previous Government that the censorship of mail was not to pick out dirty words, dirty pictures, see what someone was saying to someone else, or to see whether someone was sending a photograph of someone else that perhaps did not meet the approval of certain individuals. The main basis of mail censorship at the prisons is that it ought to be minimal and it ought to be only for security reasons.

Mr OSWALD: Do you open all letters?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think that all letters are opened. They are not read in the sense that every word is read. The material that is posted to prisoners is checked for its security relevance. For example, if it is a manual on how to sniff vanilla essence to get a high, or something of that nature, and if that was obvious, it would not be let through. I do not think that censoring mail is one of the better jobs in the prisons. I do not think that it is a job that any prison officer (the same as any other human being) would particularly like. It is something that is definitely intrusive and invasive of other people's privacy, but it is necessary on a security basis.

However, what is confiscated at one institution would be permitted at another institution. I think that a problem highlighted by the differences in standards at institutions was that one prisoner I believe bought a magazine in one institution and had it confiscated when he was transferred to another institution. In one institution it was considered quite acceptable—nothing terribly explicit—but in another institution the standards were somewhat different and the attitude of the management was somewhat different and it was confiscated. So, there was some attempt to get uniformity across the system. There still is not uniformity. It is not something that gives me any concern whatsoever. It is not something to which I would address too much time or departmental resources. We have far too many problems. As regards watching pornographic movies, there are no X-rated movies allowed in the prisons.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: At the time of the escape of six prisoners from Yatala in June, you were reported as saying that you would shoot to kill would-be gaol escapees and when questioned as to whether there was an instruction to shoot escapees you replied, 'Quite obviously.' What is the Government policy in regard to this matter?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government policy is very clear, and anyone who kept a tape of the interviews I did on this can go through it and hear me saying precisely what is the Government's policy. If people choose to assist an escapee by shooting at prison officers, those prison officers are armed, and they will shoot back. If it is then a question of someone getting hit and killed, whilst I regret (and I have stated this quite clearly) that person's getting killed, I would point out that anyone who chooses to shoot at armed prison officers while assisting an escape is risking getting killed.

I hope it never happens but if any of my officers were, in keeping the gaol secure, involved in killing another person I would defend them to the utmost. It is an area that I hope I will never be involved in again. I would not tolerate a situation where people, attempting to assist people breaking out of a gaol, fired at the officers; and the officers obviously are going to shoot back. In those circumstances someone may get killed. If that happens, I do not want anyone blaming my officers.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: I am very pleased to have the opportunity of partaking, even at this late hour of the evening and in the dying stages of the Committee's proceedings. I have been very patient in giving the Opposition

members a fair go all day; I have not sought the call. Indeed, no-one—least of all the member for Victoria—would be surprised that I would be keen to take part in this debate.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the honourable member to come to the question.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: I certainly take up the challenge to come to the nub of the question as quickly as possible. It is a matter in which I have had considerable interest over a long period of time, and one which I am sure is of deep and abiding interest to members opposite as well as members of the Government. It concerns the vexed and difficult question of prisoner education. At page 132 of the yellow book it is proposed that in the next 12 months only one education officer will be employed in the prison system. It is very important within the Department of Correctional Services that the difference between education and training be well recognised. Can the Minister say what facilities are available for education of a general nature towards Matriculation at the moment within the system? Is that education available at all institutions or only at the major ones (Yatala, and so on) and what sort of vocational, technical, social and recreational courses are available within the prison system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Elizabeth for his question. There is no doubt that everyone who has had any contact with the matter will realise just how desperately needed are good education facilities within the prison system. I congratulate the Department of Technical and Further Education which conducts the prisoner education services within the Department. It does a first class job in what must be a very difficult but nevertheless challenging area for those officers. I have spoken to several officers from the Department of Technical and Further Education. They run a programme in each of our institutions throughout the State, including the country. There are a variety of programmes available, the most basic and possibly the most important being the programmes that are available for remedial, secondary and tertiary education.

No doubt exists that it is difficult for the vast majority of our prisoners who are there for a short time to take advantage of the programmes that are offered on any long term basis. Some of the problems that the prisoners have with their lack of formal education are, on occasions, quite marked and quite sad. We have a number of prisoners who have difficulty even with basic reading and writing. If they are in prison for long enough, at least some good will come out of their imprisonment if we can improve their skills in such basic functions as reading and writing. Longer term prisoners can go right up to tertiary standard, and that is a tremendous facility. I recently visited Bogga Road Gaol in Queensland, and I was delighted to find that one life prisoner in that gaol went daily to university unescorted.

Mr OSWALD: That raises the question of work release programmes.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Well, ask me one, instead of going on with all this other waffle.

Mr OSWALD: If the questioning comes back to this side, I will, but the Government members are filibustering.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: On a point of order, it is an outrageous slur for members opposite to suggest that somebody who has only had the opportunity of asking one question all day—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The programmes are tremendously important. I hope that as time goes on we can improve the quality of the programmes that are available. I hope that Committee members have seen press releases, as we have engaged people to be involved in prison programmes at a high level. We are developing this very impor-

tant area. If we are to keep somebody in prison for a long time, at least the community has the right to expect that that person will be released back into the community no worse than when he went in and preferably a better citizen, who is better able to provide for himself within the community.

The member for Morphett raised the question of work release programmes. We do not have the capacity currently to release prisoners for work release programmes because all prisoners have to be escorted. I hope that the member for Morphett and the Party to which he belongs will support me in the Parliament when I bring in an amendment—

Mr OSWALD: I am a great advocate for it. Acknowledge it so that I can get it in *Hansard*.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get it in for you. I hope that they will support me in the Parliament when I introduce amendments to give us the ability to release prisoners unescorted on a work release programme. I know that the member for Morphett has long been an advocate for such programmes, and his views are a credit to him. When the amendment goes through the House to give us this provision, I will not hesitate to give the honourable member a special mention as a longstanding advocate and strong supporter—if not an instigator—of the Government's desire to introduce this very worthwhile programme. I always give credit where credit is due.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: Will the Minister tell the Committee the system by which education is made available to prisoners? Presumably, if a person is at the Port Lincoln gaol and wants to study a course, arrangements are made to transfer that prisoner to some institution in Adelaide or Port Augusta. Will the Minister explain the system by which the Department ensures that individual prisoners seeking to benefit themselves from the education programme can participate in it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Department of Technical and Further Education also runs programmes in all our country institutions, so that the availability of programmes is the same whether at Port Lincoln or Adelaide. I stated that earlier in my response to the question and I am surprised that the honourable member was not listening; if he had been listening, he would have found it unnecessary to ask the supplementary question and needlessly take up further time of the Committee.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: I want to ask the Minister a question about the day release scheme or arrangements existing within the prison system. I have received a number of complaints from prisoners alleging a degree of inconsistency in the way in which leave is granted to individual prisoners on the basis of compassion leave and the like. I understand that this is causing considerable disharmony among certain prisoners who are anxious that the arrangements, whatever they may be, for day release should be certain, known and not seen to be handed out in a manner that appears to prisoners to be somewhat irrational. This question is serious for individual prisoners because those prisoners sometimes believe that their marriages might be on the rocks if they are unable to have a day release to ensure that they can relieve emotional tensions by meeting their wives and loved ones.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Don't you think the Minister knows the answer? Is that why you are taking up the rest of the time?

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: There is no doubt that the Minister knows the answer. I am just explaining the question, which I am entitled to do.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Will you perform this well federally? We might as well talk about this for the next five minutes as anything else.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We have two votes to put and another motion to be moved before we can finish.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The problems which have arisen and which have been outlined by the honourable member have largely been eliminated. I was at Yatala last week where the bulk of these problems lie, and I explained the system clearly to the prisoners. It was obvious at that meeting that the prisoners did not agree with the system, and I had to leave them on the basis that we would agree to disagree, because that was the system and that was how it would be. We allow escorted day release on compassionate grounds for anyone. There is also day release for low security prisoners looking for work, and so forth. I will provide a detailed reply to the member for Elizabeth and have it inserted in *Hansard* before 19 October.

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

Minister of Correctional Services, Miscellaneous, \$323 000—
Examination declared completed

Mr HAMILTON: I move:

That the draft report be the report of the Committee.

Motion carried.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I close the Committee I wish to make a couple of remarks. I have been extremely disappointed with the Committee today. During the morning and afternoon sessions one member deliberately attempted to disrupt the Committee. The Committee could have completed its business much earlier than it did if a little reasonableness had been shown. What concerned me most was the discourtesy that was shown by one member of the Committee. I do not mind members of the Committee being discourteous to me, but it is extreme bad taste when they are discourteous to an officer. I hope that that sort of action never happens in the future. I declare the Committee closed.

At 10.1 p.m. the Committee concluded.