

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 26 September 1985

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. P.B. Arnold

Mr S.G. Evans

Mr D.M. Ferguson

Mr R.J. Gregory

Mr T.R. Groom

Mr I.P. Lewis

The Committee met at 11 am.

The CHAIRMAN: I intend to enable the lead speaker for the Opposition, the Hon. Mr Arnold, to make a statement of not more than 15 minutes—shorter if possible—and allow the Minister that same privilege before the start of questioning. I recognise the member for Chaffey as the lead speaker for the Opposition. Would the member for Chaffey like to make a statement?

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: With a department as small as the Fisheries Department, the normal investigation and details of the lines are not as important as they may be in some of the larger departments, such as the E&WS Department, where we are talking about a fairly massive budget.

It is probably much easier, in the case of a department the size of Fisheries, to keep a close eye on what is happening, where moneys are being expended and so forth. I am probably therefore more concerned about the actual management of the resource in South Australia—the conflicting interest the Government has in considering how we can best reach, to the benefit of all concerned, the optimum use of that resource while at the same time not depleting it. We are all conscious of another conflict in interest—trying to satisfy the needs of the professional fishing industry, and at the same time recognising the rights of the recreational fishermen and the input that the recreational interests have in the overall economy of the State, having regard to the numbers involved in the boating industry and employment in that area.

The area of aquiculture is of particular interest to my colleague, the member for Mallee. One area of concern and interest not given great attention is whether or not we are making the most effective use of the funds being expended in relation to the policing and inspecting role the department has. I have not been able to clearly identify in the budget documents what is the total cost of the inspectorial responsibility of the department. The concern is probably highlighted in an approach that was made to the member for Heysen in relation to an incident on 8 September. On that occasion an amateur fisherman, fishing with nets and with the appropriate licences, down in the Coorong, expressed great concern about the cost involved in the inspection that took place in relation to him. Apparently, at 11.30 a.m. a helicopter appeared overhead and hovered in the area for a considerable time until a boat appeared. Four men approached and inspected the nets by pulling them up with grappling hooks, which damaged the nets, which were then left in a heap. The inspectors were from the Fisheries Department and found nothing wrong. The inspection took half an hour. The boat used was a twin engine, aluminium boat. At the end of half an hour the helicopter disappeared.

This person was not concerned about being inspected; he was concerned about the overall cost of a helicopter, boat and four men, if this is the normal procedure used for inspecting recreational and professional fishermen.

Is the cost not prohibitive; is there not a better means by which we can keep a check on what is happening? I realise that there are instances when a helicopter has to be used, but the operating costs are enormously high. I would be interested in the Minister's view about whether there is a means by which we can keep a more effective check on what amateur and professional fishermen are doing other than by what would appear to be a massively expensive approach.

The CHAIRMAN: I believe that the member for Chaffey has misinterpreted my suggestion. I said that he could make a statement before questioning and that the Minister would also be given an opportunity to make a statement.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: I will put that question on notice.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That question will be answered shortly. I would like to highlight a number of aspects of the budget for the Department of Fisheries for the 1985-86 financial year. Last year the Government provided \$61 000 for the department to commence a marine environmental study in Upper Spencer Gulf. A further \$144 000 has been provided in this year's budget to continue with the study, which is to provide baseline data on the environmentally sensitive ecosystem in that area. This study is part of an overall program to ensure that the State's fisheries are protected in the face of significant industry and resource development.

Funding of \$20 000 has also been provided to enable the computerisation of the commercial fisheries licensing system. This project is expected to be completed in July-August 1986 and will enable improved delivery of service to the State's commercial fishermen. It will also complement the existing catch and effort system that was computerised two years ago. In the past two years a concentrated effort has been made in providing the department with adequate facilities to conduct research. The first of these initiatives was the construction of the 20 metre marine research vessel, *Ngerin*. The vessel was launched in July 1985 and will shortly commence its first operational cruises.

Under the Department of Housing and Construction, Other Government Buildings, the budget has provision for the construction of the first stage of a marine research laboratory at West Beach at a total estimated cost of \$1.9 million. In this financial year about \$450 000 will be spent, with the construction of the first stage commencing in January 1986 for commissioning in December 1986. These facilities will provide a permanent and adequate base for research to service all the State's aquatic resources for many years to come. In addition, \$173 981 has been attracted through the Community Employment Program to establish an aquiculture research station at Noarlunga to investigate and research the aquiculture potential of a number of marine and freshwater species. In the conduct of these programs, the department will continue to work in close consultation with industry and the data will be utilised to develop harvesting strategies, which will optimise use of our fisheries resource.

In taking the above measures, the Government recognises the continuing importance of the fishing industry to this State. In terms of value of landed commercial catch, the industry is worth about \$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.

Fisheries, \$4 515 000

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Labour, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Correctional Services and Minister Assisting the Treasurer.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R.A. Stevens, Director of Fisheries.
Mr R.K. Lewis, Research Manager.
Mr D.W. Huxley, Accountant.
Mr R.J. Green, Administration Manager.
Mr G.V. Rohan, Fisheries Manager.

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

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Can the Minister say what is the all up cost of the inspectorial staff and, in regard to the use of helicopters, are they proving to be the ultimate answer, especially considering the high cost per hour?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am advised that the total law enforcement cost for the period 1985-86 under question is \$1 411 000. These figures exclude payroll, superannuation and capital costs. They are the figures that I have at present. If more costs emerge I shall be happy to give them to the Committee. The helicopter charter cost this year was \$158 000. The all up cost of policing our regulations is about 10 per cent of the department's total budget. This is a vexed question. Undoubtedly, it is an expensive operation, but the queries I get about it as Minister are that there ought to be more inspectors, more policing, and that the resources require a high degree of protection. In a perfect world we would be able to do that.

South Australia has about 2 500 kilometres of coastline, about 290 000 amateur fishermen and about 2 500 commercial fishermen. Bearing in mind the 2 500 kilometres of coastline—leaving aside inland fisheries—one can see the magnitude of the task before the department's policing branch. In regard to the specific example given, I am not able to say whether it was a case of over policing or whether it could have been done more cheaply.

I shall be happy to give a couple of examples of what we do from time to time. We coordinate an operation in a given area involving helicopter surveillance. The helicopter is linked by radio to the patrol vessels. It makes us far more efficient, rather than operating on the water and trying to seek out the boats and determine what they are doing. The helicopter points it out and the patrol boats and the inspectors can move quickly from one spot to another and ensure that fishing regulations are being complied with.

The overwhelming majority of recreational and commercial fishermen in South Australia welcome seeing fisheries inspectors. As I say, the biggest complaint that we get is that someone saw someone else landing a catch of under-sized whiting at a boat ramp—where was the fisheries inspector. I suppose it is something like whenever one wants a policeman there is never one around; but we certainly do our best.

We have had one good exercise (and perhaps more) using the helicopter in the South-East in relation to the rock lobster industry. I have received repeated complaints from rock lobster fishermen that some other fishermen within the fishery were not playing the game and were overpotting. We mounted a very effective operation in the South-East and detected some offences. We used the helicopter and

patrol boats early in the morning: as the dawn was rising, so was the helicopter, and the fishing inspectors were moving out.

During the operation we caught three rock lobster fishermen overpotting (using more than the permitted number of pots), and one person fishing in a closed area. I repeat: the costs are high and we wish that we had the resources to do even more, and I believe that that would be welcomed by the fishing fraternity. I think we have the balance about right, given our resources. I think that most fishermen are aware that at any time there is the likelihood that they will be asked by an inspector to justify what they are doing and what they have in their nets and boats. As I have said, it is not regarded as a major problem; however, if we could do more, we certainly would.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: In the Minister's opening remarks, reference was made to the new research station and its construction and development. It has been put to me by members of the fishing industry that it is debatable whether or not the proposed site (and I know that land has been purchased for the construction of this facility) is suitable, because it could be considered a polluted area in the sense that it is in a built-up area of the coastline. Will the sewage treatment works and the resultant effluent affect the type of work to be undertaken by the station?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The concerns expressed by the honourable member have been considered, and there has been quite extensive monitoring of the water in the area over the past five years. The water has been found to be totally suitable for the style of operation that will be established at West Beach. The site was chosen for a variety of reasons. There was a suggestion that perhaps the station should be established at Port Lincoln. I considered that suggestion but on balance the reasons for establishing it at West Beach were quite overwhelming.

The station will be established at West Beach because the laboratory should be accessible to other organisations involved in fishery research in South Australia, for example, the universities, other Government departments, and the Institute of Technology; and by establishing the laboratory in Adelaide there will be no cost incurred in the relocation of staff, as all research staff and technical assistants are currently based in Adelaide. The location of the laboratory at Port Lincoln, for example, would involve the relocation of up to 35 staff at considerable expense, estimated to be between \$3 million and \$3.5 million.

The question of location at Port Lincoln was considered to be negative in the aspect that the laboratory itself has to be serviced by specialist technicians and supply firms, many of which are not available in Port Lincoln. Its establishment in Adelaide will enable very close supervision and the rapid provision of advice to the Government to take place. While understanding the concerns of the honourable member about water quality, I point out that that has been monitored extensively over a number of years and it is found in all ways suitable. The location at West Beach has been found suitable from the point of view of the Department of Fisheries, the Government and also the Public Works Standing Committee.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: The area which has certainly received the most publicity in recent times has been the St Vincent Gulf, not only in relation to the prawn fishing industry and the varying points of view that have been expressed in relation to the problems that it is experiencing, but also concerning the abalone industry and the concern that has been highlighted quite extensively in the last month or two in relation to the ecological deterioration in the Aldinga area, particularly as far as the reef is concerned. Quite obviously the department has been conscious of the concerns that have been expressed recently and over a

number of years. What is the Government doing to satisfy the concerns that have been expressed? I noted from the detailed response that was given to the question asked by the Hon. Peter Dunn in relation to the catch of abalone, that it had built up to its maximum in about 1976 or 1978, when it reached 20-odd tonnes production, and has now fallen away dramatically again. I noted the answers given by the department and the reasons it believed that this has occurred. A lot of people are involved in the industry and perhaps in the scuba diving field who do not necessarily agree with the point of view expressed by the department.

Is the department going to further investigate it or is the Government prepared to consider bringing in a totally independent body or expertise to consider this problem without any previous involvement in this fishery? A totally independent approach or examination of the whole of St Vincent Gulf could well be in the interests of South Australia.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not perfectly clear whether the honourable member wants me to deal specifically with the Aldinga aquatic reserve.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: The three aspects, if we could. The problems associated with the prawn industry, the abalone industry and the aquatic reserve as it relates to Aldinga reef.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The prawn industry in St Vincent Gulf has been something of a problem for certainly as long as I have been in Parliament—over the last 10 years. There have been various claims made by individuals in that fishery and statements predicting the total collapse of the fishery, doom and everybody being wiped out, with the St Vincent Gulf being a desert, and other such statements.

There is also the involvement in Investigator Strait when it was totally under the control of the Commonwealth. There was the problem there of the number of prawn trawlers that should be involved in that area. Again, there is the question of whether those two areas—Investigator Strait and St Vincent Gulf—are one fishery or two separate fisheries. I am sure that anybody who has taken an interest in the area over the past decade or so would know that debate has been intense, divisive and ongoing. I am not at all confident that we will ever hear the end of that debate.

All that I can say as Minister—and I know that previous Ministers of both political persuasions have addressed the concerns of certain fishermen in that area with a great deal of diligence—is that statements that are made from time to time are overstatements. All Ministers and Governments, under varying Directors of Fisheries—or when agriculture and fisheries were the one department, under the Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries—have tried to cooperate to the best of our ability with those few fishermen who express and overstate, in our opinion, the problems in St Vincent Gulf. That is not to say that there are no problems in that prawn fishery: of course there are. There are problems in every fishery in the world: the fisheries area is particularly difficult. It is very easy in a farming situation, for example, to visually check how many stock are on the property and how the vegetation is reacting to that degree of grazing and harvesting of the stock, but it is extraordinarily difficult to do that under water.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: There are no fences under the water.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is right. It takes a great deal of monitoring of the resources and research work to find out approximately what is happening. I do not believe that it is possible to find out precisely what is happening in an open sea or gulf-type situation, but the Department of Fisheries has built up over the years a team of first-class researchers, who are acknowledged throughout Australia to be the best in Australia and who are also considered internationally as very fine researchers, particularly in the area of prawns.

The managed fisheries in South Australia, especially in the gulfs, Investigator Strait and the West Coast, are very good examples of how to manage prawn fisheries. The cooperation that we have had from some of the fishermen has been less than we would have liked, which is not the case in Spencer Gulf, Investigator Strait and the West Coast: the cooperation with our fisheries managers from those areas has been total, particularly in the area of prawns. I cannot say the same for St Vincent Gulf: for some reason that I have not been able to work out—and none of my predecessors of both political persuasions have been able to work it out—some fishermen in St Vincent Gulf regrettably do not feel that the management policies that work so well in the other three prawn fisheries will work so well in St Vincent Gulf.

I sat down and talked with them on quite a few occasions. Still, after all those discussions, I am not sure why they see that the management plans that are proposed by the Department of Fisheries apply to everywhere else but not to them. I confess that I am at a loss. The style of management that we have is very highly developed: it is classic fisheries management, very effective, and it returns, if one looks at our annual report, considerable benefits to the prawn fishermen in those three other prawn fisheries.

The Department of Fisheries is still trying to gain the cooperation from the St Vincent Gulf prawn fishermen. I believe that we are having some success—not as much as I would like—with certain individuals. I can only hope that all the prawn fishermen in St Vincent Gulf come to see, what would be the evidence of their own eyes if they looked at the other prawn fisheries, that our prawn fisheries management is first class.

We are short of data because of the lack of cooperation from the St Vincent Gulf prawn fishermen, but we now have a program with some of them to collect that data. I am very confident that the fruits of that research and cooperation from some of those fishermen will pay off in the future and that the St Vincent Gulf prawn fishery will become, as a result of cooperation and the management plans that we have, as profitable and as well managed as are those in Investigator Strait, the West Coast and Spencer Gulf.

The abalone industry in St Vincent Gulf is also a very difficult area. We have very good biologists working in the area with a great deal of cooperation from the Abalone Divers Association. I cannot speak too highly of the cooperation that we have had from that organisation: it is a very responsible group of people who have a huge—I would argue too much, but that is another argument—investment in the abalone industry, and they cooperate completely with the Department of Fisheries in this region.

One will always get an individual—and fishermen are very individual and interesting people, as I am sure that the honourable member, the member for Alexandra and possibly the member for Mallee would know—who believes that he is the only one who is right and that everybody else in the industry is wrong. That is what makes the life of a Minister of Fisheries so interesting.

Surveys have taken place in the area mentioned by the member for Chaffey. One very recent survey on which I can give the honourable member some information took place between 11 and 14 September this year, with the assistance of Mr A. Vermeulen, who is a abalone diver. Areas were surveyed and abalone collected from the Stansbury, Port Julia and Troubridge Point regions. Few abalone were found, and samples of abalone and razor fish were collected and preserved for analysis. No diseased abalone were found. The honourable member would recall that there has been some suggestion that there were diseased abalone

in the area: that certainly has not shown up on the surveys that we have been able to do to date.

At the completion of the survey the samples were sent to analytical laboratories for analysis of a wide range of parameters, including nutrients, heavy metals, hydrocarbons and pesticides. Although incomplete, the results to date indicate no concern for heavy metals and hydrocarbons and preliminary analysis indicates no concern for pesticides. If the honourable member wishes more information on this particular area, I can have my research manager, Mr Rob Lewis, expand on that.

The Aldinga Aquatic Reserve has been highlighted over the past few weeks. One or two people have made statements, which we have investigated—not just by ourselves, but we involve the industry and other Government departments to see just what the picture is. Following concerns expressed by Mr John Mate, chairman of the Scuba Divers Association of South Australia, as to the effects of storm-water discharge from three drains adjacent to the Aldinga Reef Aquatic Reserve, the Department of Fisheries chaired a meeting on 17 September 1985 of relevant organisations to discuss these concerns. Representatives of the district council at Willunga, E&WS Department, South Australian Health Commission, Scuba Divers Association, Local Residents Association, pollution management branch of the Department of Environment and Planning, and the Department of Fisheries attended.

This meeting aimed to seriously address Mr Mate's concerns and attempt to place them in perspective and context. Following very detailed discussions by all present, there was general consensus that the data did not support the concern that discharges from the drains were deleteriously affecting the Aldinga Aquatic Reserve and that the impact on the drains was minor. It was recognised that large sediment loads were being deposited from other drainage systems along the metropolitan coastline, and that this would warrant further consideration.

The general consensus was that there was no justification to remove the drains. Mr Mate, and other representatives of the Scuba Divers Association, held the dissenting view. Following an invitation by Mr Mate, the research manager of the Department of Fisheries, Mr R.K. Lewis, attended a meeting of the Scuba Divers Association of South Australia on Thursday 19 September 1985. At this meeting Mr Mate reiterated his, and the association's concerns.

The department once again indicated that it has responsibility for the maintenance and protection of the marine habitat and does not take this responsibility lightly. As the area is an aquatic reserve, the department would prefer that the drains did not enter the sea at this point. The Aldinga Aquatic Reserve has been declared for recreational, educational and life history purposes. The report of reduced visibility and increased sedimentation in the area is not unique to the Aldinga reef region. The same situation occurs at other areas along the coast.

The volume of discharge from the drains is not great when compared to other discharge points; therefore, it is not possible—as is being demanded by Mr Mate—to categorically state that the drains are responsible for the reported degradation. All other organisations and persons who have considered the available data, except Mr Mate and some of his association, consider that the drains are not a major impactor, and there is little guarantee that moving them would solve any problem.

It is also necessary to examine the implication of Mr Mate's interim proposal to relocate the discharge points at the northern and southern drains to the central location. There has been no consideration of the receiving area being large enough to accept increased volumes of water; there has been no consideration of possible environmental deg-

radation of the land-based dune and vegetation system at the discharge points; there has been no consideration of the possible effect of increased bacteria loads into the land-based discharge area.

At the meeting on 19 September 1985 the association did not support a proposal to seek an independent assessment of the Aldinga reef region by the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Queensland, and indicated that the association should support the proposed further work to be carried out by the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Environment and Planning. This work involves aerial tracking of sediment flumes prior, during and after periods of storm activity and rainfall and an assessment of the relative impact of the drains versus other discharges through the determination of catchment areas, surface runoff coefficients and sediment loads. It was further agreed that the department would prepare a program incorporating association divers to monitor changes in the offshore reef region.

On 23 September 1985 the South Australian Marine Environment Advisory Committee held its monthly meeting. SAMEAC is a body which advises the Government on matters relating to the protection and maintenance of the marine environment and comprises representatives of the University of Adelaide, Flinders University, South Australian Department of Environment and Planning, South Australian Department of Marine and Harbors, South Australian E&WS Department, South Australian Health Commission and South Australian Department of Fisheries.

The concerns and controversy surrounding the Aldinga reef and the possible impact of the drain discharges was discussed in detail at the meeting. The meeting agreed at Mr Mate's insistence that the drains should be moved as they were major contributors to sediment loads on the reef, and were significantly degrading the reef and not warranted.

In response to the suggestion that perhaps an outside body should have a look at this, I think there is more than enough expertise in this area of marine science here in South Australia. I know the member for Chaffey would not want to cast any slurs or aspersions on the degree of expertise that is available in this State, and I am sure that was not his intention when he mentioned an external inquiry into this area. I believe there is more than enough expertise here in South Australia to take care of these types of problems.

I will spell out the degree of research personnel that is available here in South Australia: there is a substantial and competent body of marine scientists, which can more than adequately carry out the studies that the honourable member would like done. These scientists are found in the various Government departments, including the Fisheries, E&WS, and Environment and Planning, as well as the Electricity Trust of South Australia, The two South Australian universities, the South Australian Museum and a number of private consulting firms. Researchers in these organisations cover such varied disciplines as marine biology, oceanography, sedimentology and a vast range of related and specialised fields.

In addition, in recent years the Government has provided substantial facilities for the conduct of marine research in South Australia. These facilities include the provision of an ocean going marine research vessel, and substantial computer facilities for the Department of Fisheries to store, handle and analyse a substantial data basis, which the research station of the department collects. Construction of stage 1 of a marine research laboratory, has been approved and is expected to commence in December of this year and be completed in October of next year.

Mr FERGUSON: I am particularly interested in the Henley Beach and Grange area in relation to the Department of Fisheries. Have the artificial reefs, especially the one

about half a mile out from the Grange jetty, been successful? At what intervals are they monitored? When will there be another report on these artificial reefs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand the honourable member's interest. I believe that the artificial reef initiative is a very exciting concept and something of which the department is very proud, for two reasons. First, artificial reefs improve the underwater habitat and encourage fish to collect in the area to feed and, hopefully, to go forth and multiply, coming back to be caught by the honourable member's constituents. We are doing our very best in that area.

It is a very active program, and it does not apply only to waters in the honourable member's district but also to St Vincent Gulf and Spencer Gulf. The second reason why we are particularly proud of what we are doing in this area is that, through the CEP scheme, we have been able to employ a significant number of people to create these reefs, and I extend an invitation to anyone who wants to see how they are created to go to the Department of Fisheries depot at North Haven. The process is quite remarkable. I am advised that the system we have come up with, called the tetrahedron rubber tyre habitat, is unique in the world and has created interest in the rest of Australia and internationally.

Besides creating the rubber tyre habitat, we have sunk redundant barges and a redundant dredge which act as reefs. From time to time we have also sunk the occasional dredge inadvertently, but that was before my time. There is a program of monitoring, the purpose of which is to determine the effectiveness of artificial reefs. That program has commenced and will be conducted over the next three years. We study the population and standing crop estimates of fish species and fish behaviour in relation to habitat placement. We attempt to determine whether recruitment of target fish species occurs, for example, snapper and whiting. We tag fish to determine growth and migration and we observe accretion or degradation of sand at the artificial reef site. We attempt to determine whether the artificial habitat has an adverse effect on the surrounding flora and fauna. We record flora and fauna found in association with the artificial reef habitats and we attempt to determine the number of habitats required for optimum enhancement.

In addition, nearby natural reefs, if any, and sandy areas are compared with the artificial reef area to determine the effectiveness of artificial reefs. The data from this exercise will be used to provide information for the establishment of future artificial reefs in South Australia. Results to date have been encouraging and have indicated that the artificial reefs placed by the department are successful, with 26 fish species totalling 5 000 fish being recorded so far. I am not quite sure how the fish were counted. Mr Lewis, the Research Manager, may be able to expand in that regard.

I can also give the honourable member a list of the flora and fauna found in association with the Grange artificial reef during monitoring surveys. This is a very extensive list and I could not pronounce any of the names, but I will make the list available to the honourable member who may be able to recognise some of these species. Mr Rob Lewis may be able to expand on the type of fish, the numbers of fish and how monitoring occurs.

Mr R.K. Lewis: In our survey techniques we use fish sensors. There are a number of techniques. First, over given periods of time people with the appropriate skills swim certain distances identifying fish and counting the number of fish within a certain range, say, 10 metres or 20 metres on either side. Underwater movie equipment is mounted on trawl gear. Sleds are pulled across the ocean floor; we count fish from the movie. Thirdly, for a given period, say, 30 minutes or one hour, a diver stays in one location and records the number of species that go by. It is not as simple as it sounds, because we must take into account a number

of factors, including tidal state and the time of day, as fish feed at different times. More than one person is involved. There are multiple counting techniques. Quite often, people who are not involved in the program are also present as a control, and that may occur once every three or four months.

Mr FERGUSON: Where will the next lot of artificial reefs be placed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That depends to a great extent on funding. We hope to win CEP funds from the Minister of Labour. If funding is available, the State Government has approved the Department of Fisheries being a sponsor for the placing of artificial reefs in the Iron Triangle area. The Government has agreed to that proposition but, unfortunately, the federal CEP secretariat has deferred it. However, the project is by no means dead: we are still hunting for funds from the federal CEP secretariat to place reefs in the Iron Triangle waters.

Mr FERGUSON: Since the regulations preventing netting anywhere near jetties were introduced, particularly near the Henley and Grange jetties (and, incidentally, I thoroughly approve of that), has the number of fish caught from the jetties been monitored? Has this action increased the catch from the jetties?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not as *au fait* with that location as the member. However, my Research Manager, Mr Lewis, has all these details and will be pleased to advise the member of the number of fish caught at Henley and Grange.

Mr R.K. Lewis: No specific monitoring has been undertaken in the form of surveys of anglers from those jetties. In the last year we have undertaken a similar exercise in the Port Broughton region where, again, there are some closed areas, and we have been doing specific monitoring of catch rates by both jetty anglers and boat anglers, to ascertain how many fish are taken. The answer to the question about whether catch rates have increased for anglers from jetties following the prohibition of netting is that they have increased because the jetty anglers have been given access to a greater proportion of the resource. The resources remain stable and static but, because part of the sector of the fishery has been removed from the area, the whole resource in that area has been allocated to jetty anglers.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Returning to the response that the Minister gave about the department and the expertise in the department to carry out whatever investigations are needed, there is certainly no reflection on the department or its officers. We have both been around the circuit long enough to know that, whether it is a Government department or private industry, one can get too close to the scene: in other words, one cannot see the forest for the trees, if one has been closely involved with something over a long period and if there are certain directions in which one has gone.

As to my suggestion to bring in someone from outside, it would be to look at the situation from a totally different point of view. I liken it to our system of Parliament where members in the House of Assembly believe that they have all the answers and they might question the need for the Legislative Council, but it is an accepted system and in some instances the Council comes up with a new slant on a matter. If that was not the case, there would be no need for consultants, yet Governments use consultants all the time.

Much concern has been expressed about the effects of run-off into St Vincent Gulf. It is not a high energy area along our coast. The waters are somewhat confined to the gulf. We have significant run-offs now that would not have occurred in past years. With one million people living on the peninsula it has to have some effect on what is a fragile environment. For what it is worth, whether it be a totally independent person coming from outside to work in con-

junction with the department or independently, I believe there is value in that sort of approach.

Therefore, I suggest to the Government that it would allay the fears of a number of people in South Australia if that was done. It is no reflection on this Government, the previous Government or any other Government. The problem that exists has not been created by any of us or the department but there appears to be a problem that has to be resolved, and resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. I suggest that there could be benefits in an outside point of view being injected into this question.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I respect the point that the member is making. However, we need to keep the issue in some kind of perspective. There is no doubt that increasing urbanisation—it has had an effect since the day South Australia was settled by Europeans—will have a deleterious effect on the environment. By his very nature man, if he discharges things into the sea, will have an effect on the ecology. The question is: how much effect? Certainly, in this area (based on capable and expert advice) I point out that the effect is minimal. The area about which we are talking compared with the gulf is small.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: I am talking in broader terms.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Sure. The amount of matter created by so-called civilised people living on the edge of the gulf is not at this stage, I am advised, any cause for concern. There is some detrimental effect; there has to be, merely by man's living at the edge of the sea; an effect which the gulf would prefer not to have. To put it in perspective, it is minor. If we had heavy industry discharging pollutants into the gulf, the effect would be much greater and the concerns that people have would obviously be higher. That is why monitoring is occurring in the upper Spencer Gulf, where we have an area that is very fragile; much heavy industry in the area discharges into the top of the gulf. There is not a great flow of water in and out: what one puts in stays around for a long time.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: The gulf is encircled by highly productive agricultural lands and some of the chemicals used in agriculture are fairly toxic.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Indeed. What I am saying is that, given the size of the problem and the huge amount of expertise available in South Australia to monitor and cope with the problem, it is not as if it is a problem of huge proportions warranting our bringing in people from outside from more specialised disciplines that we do not have here. People here are more than competent to analyse the problem and deal with it, and they do so without any vested interest, other than the interest of the gulf. The department and universities, if they found anything of concern, would quickly draw it to the attention of not just the Government but the public. There is no question of the Government's saying that here is a major problem and it will close its eyes to it. Certainly, that is not the case. All the people who have the expertise to monitor this discharge are here; they are encouraged to do so; and they are free to publish their results.

Further, as to the member's suggestion about bringing in someone from outside, the Scuba Divers Federation does not support that and says there is more than enough expertise here to deal with problems of that magnitude. The gentleman concerned, Mr Mate, does not agree, and that is up to him; it is his personal opinion. However, his federation does not agree with the proposal he made.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: The federation does not believe there is a problem?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is not the case. The federation believes that the work being done on monitoring is ample. It agrees with and, in fact, it will be involved in the monitoring program. We want scuba divers themselves to be involved in the program. In fact, they are delighted to

be involved with the Department of Fisheries, other Government departments and the universities.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: I refer to licensing and I direct the Minister's attention to the possibility of using modern technology to simplify the identification of a licence holder and the purpose for which a licence is issued. Has the department considered using this technology? I refer to a laminated plastic card known as a 'smart card', which contains chips of information smaller than the size of the wrong end of a match. The card can be read by a machine to produce facsimile reproductions of photographs on a video display unit, as well as the name and signature of the individual to whom it belongs. None of the information can be seen on the card with the naked eye. The information is proof positive of a person's identity and, therefore, would prevent abuses that occur where some people use licences belonging to other people.

That abuse occurs right across the board not only in the fishing industry but in relation to drivers licences, bankcard, medicare, and so on. Has the department considered using smart card technology and, if not, why not? If it has considered using this technology, has it been rejected, or will the department continue to investigate its introduction? Such a card would be immediately compatible with every other kind of licence held by a citizen and it could be used for personal reasons, such as banking.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer to the honourable member's question is 'No'; we have not looked at the smart card. One reason is that it is not really necessary. There is not a significant problem (if at all) with people in the fishing industry using licences belonging to other people. However, we do have a problem with people selling fish without a licence.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: There is a problem in establishing their identity.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Not at all. I do not think that we have had a single case of not being able to establish the identity of someone who was doing something illegal. What we do in fisheries must be placed in perspective. We issue licences and we are updating computer facilities. As I mentioned in my opening statement, we have allocated \$20 000 for that purpose. That will give us an improved licensing service, and we will be better able to utilise the licensing system and retrieve information. We are talking about a few thousand fishermen—not millions—who perhaps once a year may be asked to produce their licences when they are renewed. The system we use is supported by some fairly minor computerised facilities, and that is all we need. We do not need a 'Gee whizz system' to carry out our tasks. We cannot see any point in going overboard with technology simply because it is available.

We do not necessarily need to see what a person who has been allocated, say, a prawn licence looks like. That does not matter. There is no question in fisheries about someone using another person's licence illegally and being caught if he was carrying a card displaying a photograph. The card described by the honourable member would solve a lot of problems but not in relation to fisheries, because the problem does not exist in this industry. It would simply be a case of technology for the sake of technology.

What we do is store licence information in a computer, retrieve the information and delete certain of it or add to it as required. That is really all we need. The most important thing in relation to fishing licences is that the fishermen know the conditions attached to the licences. We give them that information in printed form. We require nothing more technologically sophisticated than that. It is not really an area that requires any major expansion in technology.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: I refer to the West Beach research facility. Will it have research facilities for freshwater fisheries

and species which can be produced in aquiculture situations, for salt-water species in mariculture situations, and for species which can use water from common effluent sources in provincial towns and/or sewage from the metropolitan area, whether partly or wholly digested? I am aware of the extent to which all three resources are used overseas as mediums in which both vertebrates and crustaceans can be raised. I would not advocate the use of effluent for the production of crustaceans which are likely to be consumed raw, because that is hardly in the interest of public health. Even though that happens overseas, I do not think I would advocate that practice here.

Notwithstanding that, it would be possible—indeed, on my reckoning it would be very profitable—to use effluent for the production of bait fish for that market. I recognise that the centre will be conducting research on the fishery in which fishermen hunt in the way that has been done traditionally in this State and the way that most of our income is derived at the present time. I recognise that that sort of research will be conducted at the centre, but I am interested in the additional research in relation to aquiculture in the three categories that I have mentioned.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the honourable member for his question and comments. In the three years that I have been attending the Estimates Committees as Minister of Fisheries the honourable member has made some very interesting contributions and has asked for information particularly in relation to aquiculture. I am pleased that we have been able to follow through and provide that information, if not immediately, very quickly.

The honourable member also deserves praise because he has prompted us to do certain things in the area of aquiculture. His suggestions have been taken up and acted upon by myself and the department. I am developing a greater appreciation for the area of aquiculture. I think it is an area that has really taken off overseas, but to a much lesser extent here in Australia, and that is a pity. For a layman such as I, the potential appears to be enormous. I am not technically minded, of course, and would not know whether what appears to be potentially a very useful area to explore and expand our fisheries resource is practicable.

Again, I thank the honourable member for the interest and the prompting that he has given us and for the suggestions which we have already taken up and advised him on. The specific questions he asked are certainly outside my area of technical competence and I would ask Rob Lewis, our research manager, who will have responsibility for the marine research facility at West Beach, to respond to some of the points that the honourable member made.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The research facility next to Marineland will have much of the capabilities that the honourable member outlined. It will have seawater, mains water and distilled water at three different temperatures coming into the facility in a running seawater system where we will be able to provide large 600 litre aquariums to hold animals for such studies as outlined. This water will be heated. It will also be cooled, and there will also be water coming out ambient. So, we will be able to mix them to get any given temperature we require and any salinity that we require. That water will be filtered and sterilised.

We have not had provision to tap effluent water into the system; in fact, we would not want effluent water coming into the system. Some work on the aquiculture enterprises outlined will be done in that laboratory. As mentioned previously, this will be complemented by the CEP fund aquiculture research station at Noarlunga which is aimed primarily at providing a marine and fresh water hatchery for a number of species and 16 outgrowing ponds in which we can do further research on the growth rates and optimum

stocking rates and feeding rates, etc., of a large number of species.

Mr I.P. Lewis: What about carp and crab—a bait fishery?

Mr R.K. Lewis: We have not considered a bait fishery from effluent.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is quite a bit to see at the operation that we have at Noarlunga in aquiculture, and I invite members of the Committee—specifically the member for Mallee—to accept our invitation to be taken and shown that aquiculture facility.

Mr I.P. Lewis: I was interested in the answer given through the Minister by Mr Lewis about the non-use of common effluent. It seems to me that the close proximity to the Patawalonga treatment works might make it possible for officers of the department not to use tanks within the research facility but simply to wander over to the Patawalonga and arrange for some tanks there to do some trials. Just 12 months ago, when I was in the People's Republic of China, I saw where growth rates obtained, using absolutely no cost input at all as a food source other than simple sewage, were phenomenal. I would not use the fish in the way in which they were used in those places that I saw but certainly, since the resource cost would be only in the capital facilities to construct the ponds in the first instance, there would be no food cost whatever and the concentrated material obtained from the preliminary screenings in sewage treatment works such as we have here make excellent food for bait fish to be used in other fisheries such as the cray fishery.

I would be prepared to bet that the cost with which such fish could be obtained would be well below the cost that we presently pay for bait fish imported from New Zealand. We therefore might just have a substantial industry on our doorstep and under our nose which we have never contemplated developing but which could act as an import substitution industry, saving quite a considerable sum of the cost of imports and indeed making those bait fish available more regularly to the cray fishery and other fisheries that use bait fish. Would the Minister consider making available the few thousand dollars that would be involved, plus a CEP grant type approach to financing the research wages involved, to enable an investigation of the use of that material for that purpose?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will certainly ask the Department of Fisheries to give it some consideration. I cannot pretend that I would ask it to put that at the top of its list of priorities for research. The Department of Fisheries is a small, very tight, well run and efficient department with a high degree of expertise. Its total budget is \$4.7 million. We would not want to divert scarce resources for the proposal that the honourable member made away from areas where we would have more of an immediate return to our commercial fishermen. So, it is certainly something that, as the modern jargon says, we will take on board and consider, but I wonder how our lakes and Coorong fishermen, who earn a livelihood out of catching European carp for the bait market, would react, if it was feasible to having this very cheap substitution for what at the moment they get their living from. We will certainly give it some consideration, but I am not sure that the lakes and Coorong fishermen in the electorate of the member for Mallee will be too pleased. I will leave it to the honourable member to take it up with his constituents and see what they think of the idea.

Mr I.P. Lewis: I reassure the Minister that the Coorong and lake fishermen, where they derive that part of their income from bait fishing, would not suffer any substantial reduction in income for the simple reason that we are presently net importers of bait. We need more than we can get. Secondly, they would also find that members of their

family who like fishing around for their income could become farmers of fish on the common effluent obtained from towns like Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend or anywhere else, either along the river or elsewhere in South Australia, and thereby enable us to be self-sufficient in bait.

It would also provide us with an industry on which we could base a pet food cannery and an industry using other species that are not commercial in any sense, like daphnia, for food production to be fed to commercial fish, which humans could consume. So, one would be once removed, and if it were not used for humans it could be certainly used as fish meal in stock feed.

Presently, there is a difficulty in obtaining those animal protein concentrates for stockfeed purposes. Even as a State, we have to import them: we do not export. We import most of our pet food. That section of the pet food market, preferred by cats to contain fish, could certainly be supplied from those sources here in South Australia. I have no doubt that if we were to develop that technology it would smartly be utilised in other States, but what is wrong with being first, especially when it would require so little? The CEP program might provide us with the funds for the salaries of the biologists who would be needed to investigate species that we could use from the range already at our disposal.

Having said all that, and without wishing to embarrass the Minister—which is not my purpose for saying it; it is merely to encourage the further development of that kind of thing—I wonder whether in recognition of it he would mind looking a little more closely at that possibility.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I said, I will ask the department to look at it. I certainly would not ask it to divert any substantial resources away from what we are doing at the moment. The best advice that we can get, and the conclusions that our people have come to from aquiculture, is that, given the high capital costs of constructing aquiculture operations and reasonably high labour costs here in Australia compared with overseas where our competitors are involved in aquiculture—for example, in South East Asia, where prawns and shrimps are extensively produced through that system—we consider that we should concentrate on the high value fish: we get in prawns, for example, somewhere around \$10 a kilo or maybe more at times, whereas bait fish is about 50 cents a kilo.

It would have to be extraordinarily cheap to produce it in the way that the honourable member mentioned for it to be a replacement for either local non-aquiculture produced bait or some of the imported stuff. Fifty cents a kilo is all that it costs now, and one cannot get much cheaper than that. I will ask the department to look at it and, as always after these Estimates Committees when Mr Lewis excites the imagination of my officers, the department will follow through the things that he suggests and get back to him with a considered and well thought out response to ideas that need further consideration and further development. The department will do that for him and be very interested and pleased to do so.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: Turning to another species, but still within the ambit of the research line, I am aware that the two commercial abalone species—black lip and green lip—are presently being exploited in South Australia in a managed fishery and that there is a great deal of cooperation between the abalone fishermen and research officers in the department in the various programs that are being undertaken in monitoring the position.

However, as a scuba diver myself, I have noticed in recent times that not only is the species becoming more popular with other amateur divers—both snorkellers and scuba divers, as species they cannot catch—but there is less of it around. I have read the explanation, for instance, as to why there is a reduced population on the western shoreline of

St Vincent Gulf: the higher temperatures in recent years over and above those that were experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

How long does it take from the time a nymph settles to the time that it reaches commercial size and then maximum size in each of the presently exploited commercial species, and what is happening—if it is known—to the existing populations? Are we harvesting them at less than the maximum sustainable yield across their range or at greater than the maximum sustainable yield in parts of their range and not in other parts? Is there some other endemic reason for the apparent reduction in really old, large abalone that I have noticed over the past six years?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That question again requires a technical response. My knowledge of nymphs is limited, so my research manager, Bob Lewis, will respond in detail.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The age at which an animal reaches the legal minimum length varies throughout the State, depending on the growth rate, which depends on the environmental conditions, but basically it is five or six years. In answer to the question as to the yield point at which we are exploiting this fishery, last year, following a substantial review of all the biological and research data, we implemented changes to make sure that we were exploiting the abalone stocks at, not the maximum sustainable yield, but the optimum yield. The maximum sustainable yield is the point at which the maximum weight of fish can come out of the fishery, taking into account the loss in weight due to mortality compared with the increase in rate due to growth. However, with the abalone, which is a sedentary species that forms distinct substocks, a number of other factors need to be taken into account. The major one is the reproductive potential: what percentage of eggs is produced? Following that review, including all those parameters, we implemented an increase in the size on the West Coast and a decrease in size in the South-East area of the State, which reflects the change in the environmental conditions and subsequent change in growth conditions of the animals.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: Is the species in number, naturally occurring around the coastline in various places, being depleted below what it was, or am I imagining things where I have been diving, from the West Coast through to the Lower South-East?

Mr R.K. Lewis: No, the stocks are not being depleted. In any fishery, particularly, say, the abalone fishery, where we have an efficient commercial sector and a very efficient recreational sector, one tends to remove the larger sized animals. People fish down to the legal size and, as the animals each year step over the legal size with increments in growth, they are taken. That was evident in the highly fished areas that showed up in the review of the abalone fisheries; hence the reason for increasing the legal size on the West Coast.

Mr FERGUSON: The marine research station at West Beach is extremely close to my electorate and brings in the tourism market in the western suburbs. Has there been any cooperation with the West Beach Trust to allow the general public to come in and have a look at the new research station and perhaps provide tours for the tourists in that area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, this has been considered. When the question of a research station was first raised about two and a half years ago there was quite extensive debate as to the possible location of this facility. For many reasons, it was decided to locate it in that region, one reason being that we also wanted it to be an educational facility for the general population—for example, tours for school-children, an opportunity for people to be able to observe the work being done there, and to have displays and quite

extensive visual presentations. Obviously, that particular area was ideally suited.

The West Beach Trust has been particularly helpful to us, in supporting the project from the start, and pay tribute and give recognition to the assistance we have received from the Chairman, the Hon. G.T. Virgo. In turn, I think he would agree that we have helped him to relocate a golf course and that it has been a mutually rewarding relationship.

Mr FERGUSON: There appears to be an increase in the number of small boats fishing on the blue line just out from West Beach and Henley Beach; has there been any monitoring of the numbers? Has there been an increase in numbers and, if so, what is that increase? Has the department decided whether there would be an optimum number of fishermen?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We do not do any monitoring of boats and the location of boats. We would have to be guided by the Department of Marine and Harbours and take their figures regarding the various areas. I would be very surprised if there were not more boats nowadays, but the Department of Fisheries does not monitor the number of them.

Mr FERGUSON: In recent years there has been a lot of talk about industrial development on Torrens Island—the shifting of container depots and so on—which would mean a loss of mangrove swamps; has it ever been put to your department what the possible loss of fish stocks would be because of the depletion of the mangrove swamps in that area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It has not been put to the department but we could take a hypothetical situation and fill in the mangroves and give you a rough idea of what would occur to the fish population of that region, if that happened. However, there has been no suggestion of that happening.

Mr Stevens: There is no doubt that the industrialisation along the Port River and the Torrens Island Power Station itself has had some effect on the marine environment of the Port River. However, fish stocks in that area seem to be fairly resilient and anyone who has gone down to the ramps at North Arm and put their lines in to catch fish will note that large quantities of juvenile whiting are being caught and because there is no size limit applying to fish taken from jetties, they are not committing any sin. It is obvious that there are good quantities of juvenile whiting still occurring in the North Arm area adjacent to Torrens Island.

However, the mangrove area in Barkers Inlet/St. Kilda area is an important area to the gulf ecosystem generally and the department actively monitors that area to see what that impact is. Any industrial development, such as any changing of lines by ETSA, is always referred to the department for comment. Almost without exception, the State authorities involved in doing any building or construction in that area have always taken account of the department's concerns and tried to comply with them.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: In answer to my last question about abalone, Mr Lewis inadvertently omitted to let the Ctee know how many years it takes for abalone to grow from their recruited stage, after they settled out, to harvest size, and then to full size.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Lewis will reply.

Mr R.K. Lewis: I did say that it takes five to six years for a fish to reach a legal minimum length, that is, a harvestable size. Their larval life is about four to six weeks and after five to six years they have reached a legal size. A geriatric abalone is from seven to nine years old.

Mr I.P. LEWIS: What is the policy for fisheries licences in relation to the rivers and lakes? Can the Minister or his

officers give an answer against the background of whether there are increasing or decreasing numbers of native species being taken commercially, and I refer to cod, callop, and the exotic species, carp? Has there been any change in the population of those species that has been observed through any mechanism over the past decade and is that information influencing policy decisions in relation to commercial exploitation of any of those species in the lakes and the Murray River?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As a general statement, I would say that, as far as this Government is concerned (and I know that the previous Government was of the same view), it is standard procedure in fisheries management to identify maximum sustainable yields or maximum sustainable economic yields. We work on that basis in all our managed fisheries. If there was any question of a species being under excessive pressure, obviously we would modify the conditions of licences accordingly. Mr Lewis will expand in regard to changes in the species of fish that are available in the region to which the honourable member referred.

Mr R.K. Lewis: The number of carp in the Murray River system exploded in the early 1970s following their introduction, but the number rapidly declined and stabilised at a much lower level, and it will probably remain there. We will never get rid of carp from the river system. When many species of animal are introduced into a new niche, they over produce and the numbers then decline to a stable level. That is one of the major components in fisheries, mainly in the bait fishery. The data available indicates that stocks of callop, or golden perch, are stable, although there are natural fluctuations from year to year. However, long-term trends appear to be the same. There is some evidence that the number of Murray cod has declined over the past 50 or 60 years due to reclamation of backwaters, but in recent years catches have remained fairly stable.

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

Works and Services—Department of Fisheries, \$750 000—
Examination declared completed.

Minister of Fisheries, Miscellaneous, \$130 000—Exami-
nation declared completed.

[Sitting suspended from 12.56 to 2 p.m.]

Labour, \$43 962 000

Chairman:
Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:
Mr D.M. Ferguson
The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy
Mr R.J. Gregory
Mr T.R. Groom
Mr G.M. Gunn
Mr G.A. Ingerson

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Labour, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Correctional Services and Minister Assisting the Treasurer.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr H.R. Bachman, Director.
Mr P.R. Bentley, Deputy Director.
Mr B.J. Bartlett, Chief Administration Officer.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Kavel wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: I have a number of matters in this area which are of concern. In the brief time that we will be able to explore them, because of the wide range of responsibilities of the Minister, I suppose we will only deal with one or two. One area I want to explore is workers compensation, and industrial and occupational health and safety. Once we have had a talk about those we will see how much time is left.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you wish to make a statement on policy?

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: No, we have a range of policies.

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

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, I appreciate the opportunity to make a statement. The issues of employment and unemployment, especially of young people, are of major importance. The creation, earlier this year, of two new portfolios of the Minister of Employment and Minister of Youth Affairs is a recognition of the priority the Government believes these issues have.

Notwithstanding this significant and important change in Ministeries, the administrative arrangements have not been altered. Existing programs under the control of the Minister of Labour will continue to be administered by the Minister of Labour in the Department of Labour. New initiatives announced in this budget will, on questions of policy and administration, be the responsibility of the Minister of Employment. Administrative and financial responsibilities for these new initiatives will be carried out in the Department of Labour.

Similarly, whilst the Minister of Youth Affairs has total policy responsibility for youth affairs through the Youth Bureau and International Year of Youth, the administrative arrangements are unchanged, residing in the Department of Labour. Having regard to the above, I have direct responsibility for the following initiatives in the Department of Labour:

Adult Unemployed Support
Community Employment Program
State Government Employment
Home Assistance Scheme
Group Apprenticeship Scheme
Self Employment Ventures Scheme
CITY

Bridging the Gap

Briefly, these initiatives, as expanded, are to assist in alleviating what is an unacceptable level of unemployment. The adult unemployed support initiative for which \$350 000 has been proposed will be administered by two additional officers. Last year the State Government provided \$2 million for Government departments and statutory authorities to participate in the Community Employment Program. This amount included provision for grants under the Home Assistance Scheme for which we have proposed \$900 000 as a separate item. This year the Commonwealth has reduced its contribution to South Australia under the CEP from \$31.392 million to \$22.707 million, a reduction of \$8.685

million. This has caused the State to reconsider its position and it is not therefore proposed to have a separate State fund from which departments or State authorities could obtain funds to participate with new projects in the program. However, the State has offset this reduction in its proposal for employment and employee incentives by proposing to increase its expenditure by \$2.897 million. In addition, industrial and commercial training is to be increased by approximately \$1 million.

It is proposed that the Self Employment Ventures Scheme be considerably expanded by providing for three additional staff and in the budget proposing an increase of approximately \$280 000 for additional loans and grants. I am pleased to say that the national launch of a Commonwealth New Enterprise Incentive Scheme took place in Adelaide. This scheme enabled our successful self employment ventures applicants to receive payment from the Commonwealth in the first year of their new business venture.

It is intended to expand substantially the Group Apprenticeship Scheme from an expenditure of \$155 000 to \$294 000, an increase of \$179 000. In addition, CITY—Community Improvement Through Youth—is going rural with a staff increase of 2.5 full-time equivalents and an extra \$40 000 for grants to youth in rural areas. Whilst all of these initiatives are important, it no way lessens the Government's concern in other areas of the Department of Labour. An additional inspector of industrial safety is being appointed to Port Pirie with all other inspectorates maintaining their existing strength. As the Premier has indicated, the Government is committed to reform in the areas of workers compensation and occupational health and safety. In the former, a discussion paper has been produced and money is to be provided to set up a full-time task force in the Department of Labour to implement the proposed reforms. In relation to occupational health and safety, the Government is committed to rapid improvements. Legislation is planned to establish an Occupational Health and Safety Commission and to improve control for in-plant practices.

One other area of concern which is attended to in this budget is the financial and accounting area, and the budget provides for additional staff in that area. In summary, the budget provides for expenditure in major categories as follows:

	\$
Salaries, wages and related payments	10 236 000
Administration and operating expenses	2 231 000
Accommodation and service costs	1 679 000
Reporting services	585 000
Overseas visits	10 000
Purchase of office machines	55 000
Grants and other specific funds	29 166 000
	\$43 962 000

This is the amount members will find in the details of the Estimates of Payments for the Department of Labour for the year ended 30 June 1986. It will be difficult for members to compare these estimates with those set out in the PPB papers as the latter include all payments including those made under special Acts, the Long Service Leave Building Industry Fund, the Government Insurance Fund, the Silicosis Committee and the CEP project grants.

This appropriation is to be compared with expenditure last year of \$48 784 000. The major reduction causing this decrease being previously mentioned as the Commonwealth Government's contribution under the Community Employment Program. Actual expenditure last year exceeded that voted by approximately \$2.2 million, the bulk of which was

a \$2 million payment by way of loan to the Government Insurance Fund to cater for increased payments for workers compensation from that fund. Finally, I would add that the departmental executive has, in the past 12 months, revised the objectives of the department. The revised objectives are outlined in the PPB papers at page 5.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: I do not know the purpose served by the monologue that the Minister has just regaled us with. I hope that in the minimum time available to us we will get succinct responses from the Minister and his officers so that at least we will give this big portfolio a fair go. With that observation, I will explain my first question. Workers compensation has been on the go for the life of this Government, with the reform package being talked about for a long time.

We were told that agreement had been reached between the working party from the Trades and Labour Council and a combined employers group with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and the metal industries. It was proclaimed in the public press on 24 August that business and unions agreed on Work Cover, in a taxpayers' funded advertisement (a copy of which I have here). It appears that that advertisement was a little premature because last Friday at a meeting the unions did not agree to the agreed package and 20 amendments were required, so the situation is back in the melting pot. I have also taken careful note of the Minister's public statement in recent days and I would be grateful if he would give the Committee an update on where we are, whether the package as announced is agreed or whether further amendment will be undertaken to it. What is the current position?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will outline the present position in relation to workers compensation. However, first, I will respond to the member for Kavel's statement about my alleged monologue. That monologue, as the honourable member so ungraciously described it, I thought was a very succinct and informative overview of the department's operations over the past 12 months. I would have thought that that information would have been welcomed by the Committee. I am a bit disappointed that one member of the Committee did not welcome it. I suspect that, because of the way the Opposition obviously wants to handle this Committee, that opening statement probably contains the most detailed financial information that will be given to the Committee this afternoon, and I think that is a pity. The department has done a great deal of work to provide information for the Committee and the public, and, I think it will be a great pity if that information is not welcomed by the Opposition.

I am happy to outline what has occurred so far and where we are to date in relation to workers compensation. The issue goes back as far as 1978 with the establishment of the tripartite Byrne committee to look at workers compensation. Eventually, that committee reported to the previous Government, which chose not to implement any of the committee's recommendations; instead, it made some amendments to the Workers Compensation Act. I make no criticism of that; I am merely giving the history.

When the present Government came to office at the end of 1982 the whole issue of workers compensation was revived. A conference was organised last year—the New Directions Conference—by the previous Minister of Labour. The conference attracted several internationally known people in the field of workers compensation, and it was very successful. As a result, a negotiating committee was established consisting of, as the honourable member said, representatives from the United Trades and Labor Council and representatives from the employer groups. That committee reached an agreement which was released in the white paper—and I hope every member received a copy.

It was agreed that the negotiators for the employers and the United Trades and Labor Council would return to their respective bodies to receive comments on what the negotiators had agreed. That process is occurring at the moment. Quite naturally, it was certainly not unexpected that some constituent bodies of both the employers group and the employees group would want some refinement of the package. Further negotiations will be conducted by members of the committee. I hope that final agreement will be reached: that the constituent bodies will agree to the package in the next few weeks.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: My understanding from the employers group's comments in the press is that the agreed package was the final draft, and the employers' group has representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and major employers in the metal industries. If I have read the statements correctly, the employer negotiators believed that the agreed package was the final draft and that no further amendment could be made. I thought that what had been agreed by the parties would be accepted. The negotiators for the United Trades and Labor Council thought that what had been agreed would be accepted. However, that has not occurred. There has been a continuing debate within the union movement and the Labor Party, with the member for Hartley throwing a bit of fuel on the fire in relation to common law suits in particular. It appears—certainly to outside observers—that the issue is back in the melting pot and that what had been agreed by the employers and the employees is to be further negotiated. Does the Minister envisage substantial further amendment to the agreed package?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is up to the United Trades and Labor Council and the employers. The Government's position on this issue is very clear: we are facilitators of the change. If the employers and the employee representatives reach a final agreement, the Government will be happy to attempt to legislate to implement that agreement. I think the attitude of the trade unions, as reported in the press, has come about because of the way that they conduct their affairs—in the same way that the Labor Party conducts its affairs, that is, completely in the open.

When the employees' representatives reported back, there were questions and inquiries at an open meeting, which was attended by the press and, obviously, the press highlighted the differences of opinion. I am not sure, but I believe that the employer group did not invite the press to its meeting. I do not know, but I guess that there was quite a bit of vigorous debate in the employers' camp. However, we do not know for sure, because that meeting was held behind closed doors. I make no criticism of that—the employers can conduct their affairs as they wish. We should not get too carried away with reports of differences of opinion within the trade union movement, while not hearing of any differences of opinion among the employers.

Obviously there will be a great deal of debate before a final package is arrived at in relation to an issue as controversial as this. As I said in answer to the honourable member's first question, this issue has been around since 1978, which is almost eight years ago. I hope that the end of the debate is at hand, because I think that eight years is long enough. I think it is sufficient time for everyone to sort out their respective positions. I think the employers and the United Trades and Labor Council are very close to reaching final agreement.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: In view of what the Minister has said, it appears that the advertising campaign embarked on by the Government was premature, if that is not putting too fine a point on it. The advertisements proclaiming agreement between business and unions were withdrawn and the negotiations recommenced. Is the Min-

ister optimistic enough to give a timetable for the introduction of the legislation. Does he believe that he will be able to bring that to Parliament before the upcoming State election?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Regarding the member's comments on the advertisement and his claim that it was premature, that certainly was not the case. The agreement of the negotiators of the package that they would take back to their constituent bodies was exactly that: it was an agreed package. That is indeed what they took back to the various bodies, so I cannot see how it was premature. Regarding the time table, to a great extent the Government is in the hands of others. We can be pretty sure that, no matter what the Government puts up, it will be opposed by the Liberal Party, and that means we will not have a majority in the Legislative Council. This Government is not into empty gestures. When we put legislation into the Parliament, it is with the objective of getting that legislation through. We realise that the main hope that we have of getting the legislation through is to have an agreed package between the employers and the employees. When that comes about (and I hope it is very soon) we will certainly introduce legislation as soon as practicable thereafter. I hope it is within days of the package being agreed. If at some stage it appears that no final agreement will be reached, then the Government will consider that at that time.

Mr FERGUSON: Referring to page 48 of the yellow book, and relating to the 1985-86 specific targets oblique objectives, the forecasting of the most successful pre-vocational courses is discussed. Has this work started, and if so, is the Minister in a situation to tell us which area would be the most successful area for pre-vocational courses for those young people who wish to gain indentures in apprenticeships?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not quite sure what the honourable member means by 'most successful'. Does he mean the largest numbers?

Mr FERGUSON: I think probably numbers is the best way but, if the Minister has any other criteria, I would be interested in hearing that also.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have the exact numbers of people involved in pre-vocational training. I will certainly get that information to the honourable member.

Mr FERGUSON: The other question relates to the forecasting of part-time employment. Accusations have been made by the member for Davenport that the State Government has been backward in trying to introduce permanent part-time employment. Can the Minister tell me whether that is in fact accurate, and what is the situation with permanent part-time employment at the moment?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not quite sure again what is meant by the 'accusation' that the honourable member expressed—that the Government has been backward in implementing permanent part-time employment. I think it was under the Premiership of Don Dunstan that permanent part-time employment was introduced into the public sector in this State. My guess also is it was probably the first in the Commonwealth and I think that goes back as far as 1978, so we certainly have not been backward in doing that for State Government employees. Regarding the private sector, obviously it is up to them to make their own arrangements and apply to the commission if they need variations to their awards to provide for it. We legislate not only for our own employees, but that is our direct area of responsibility and we did that in 1978.

Concerning part-time employment, there is a study being done within the Department of Labour at the moment on part-time employment that the honourable member might find interesting. That study will be completed during this

financial year and, as soon as that study is completed, the results will be made available to anyone who is interested.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: Does the Minister believe that there will be some modification to the proposal to abolish common law within the workers compensation jurisdiction? That seemed to be one of the major objections by at least some of the major unions, and that was the point where the member for Hartley had something to say. As I understand it, that is one area where at least some of the unions—and I think the AWU is one—part company with the agreement which it was purported had been reached by the TLC and those two employer groups. Does the Minister believe that there will be some modification to that aspect of the proposal?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Minister is not prepared to speculate. The response of the UT&LC is the response that the Minister is interested in. It is being handled by the UT&LC and they will come to their final decision in their own way without any assistance from the Minister. I am not prepared to speculate as to what arrangements they may come to amongst themselves first of all and with the employers.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: Is the Minister saying he hands over total responsibility for the area of workers compensation to a group of people not directly answerable to the public, namely, a limited number of representatives from two employer groups plus representatives from the Trades and Labor Council, to reach an agreement which then the Government will adopt? If the Government adopts that stance, there is no consideration given whatsoever to matters which are of fundamental concern, I would have thought, to the tax-paying public of South Australia. One is that the fund pays its way, for instance. I could quite conceive of a situation where the Trades and Labor Council and those employer groups can reach what they think is a solution satisfactory to them but which could be far from satisfactory to the public of South Australia. If, for example, I give that one instance, you have a scheme which down the track is going to lead to further problems. Is the Minister saying that the Government washed its hands of all responsibility for making decisions itself in what it believes should be in the public interest as a whole? If I am to take the logical conclusion as I see it, from what the Minister has said, whatever package the Trades and Labor Council and those employers agree to, the Minister will adopt.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If I can pick the questions out of that, the answer to the first question is 'No'. The Government has not handed over the responsibility for workers compensation to those particular groups. I thought that I had explained that in an earlier question. However, obviously it has not come through clearly enough, for whatever reason, so I will have to go through it again. The position that the Government is in is the Government does not control the Legislative Council.

The Government works on the assumption, after 2½ years experience, that the Opposition will oppose anything that the Government puts up. That is a fair assumption, and any examination of the previous 2½ years will confirm that it is reasonable. Given that the Opposition will oppose whatever we put up, no matter what it is, we have a problem because we do not have the numbers in the Legislative Council. The only way that we can get the numbers is to have a package that is agreed by the employers and the employees, who are the two parties with the principal interest in workers compensation. It has been said that they are the two parties with rights; the others around the fringes who feed off workers compensation have interests but not rights.

Obviously, the Government would not introduce a package that was in any way detrimental to the people of South

Australia. If the broad framework that the Government has endorsed in the white paper shows a very significant decrease in premiums to the employers in this State, it also demonstrates some slight increase in benefits to the employees. The package, or some variation of it, will be of significant benefit to the economy of South Australia, but the reality is that the package could be superb and encrusted with diamonds but the Opposition would oppose it. Given that fact, we have to get as much agreement as we can outside the Parliament in an attempt to persuade Parliament to see the merits of the package.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: I will not enter into a slanging match with the Minister. He overstates the parliamentary scene: he knows perfectly well that the Opposition supports quite a deal of legislation that comes before the Parliament if we think that it is in the best interests of the community. It all appears fairly hazy in terms of the timetable for workers compensation.

I refer to the Auditor-General's Report dealing with this matter, which states that there was an enormous blow-out in workers compensation. The yellow book indicates that there was an enormous blow-out in workers compensation in the Government arena (at about page 47). The figures that I recall were that workers compensation had blown out from a budgeted \$17 million to \$31 million in 12 months, which is an enormous explosion in the cost of workers compensation to the Government (and, therefore, to the taxpayer) in 12 months. Can the Minister explain why that has occurred?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The cost of workers compensation has not just blown out in the public sector, but also in the private sector, very considerably. That is why this Government is attempting to change the system. The basis of the system on which we are working at present was perhaps relevant when it was introduced, but events have overtaken the workers compensation system and it can be done better.

There is a deal of financial information to be given. Claims paid during 1984-85 amounted to approximately \$21 million. An amount of approximately \$11 million was provided to cover anticipated accrued lump sum settlements liable to be paid in 1985-86. This accrued figure was calculated in consultation with the Crown Solicitor. The premium collected for 1984-85 was inadequate and the cash balance in the Government Insurance Fund was exhausted. Consequently, it was necessary to advance \$2 million from other Treasury funds to maintain a credit balance.

The major reasons for the substantial increase in the claims appear to be: first, increases in numbers of new claims from 5 997 in 1983-84 to 6 531 in 1984-85; secondly, a substantial increase in weekly payments as a result of award allowances being included following the revised interpretation of the Workers Compensation Act after consultation with the Crown Solicitor; thirdly, a greater awareness by workers of their entitlements under the Workers Compensation Act. In calculating premiums for 1985-86 it was necessary to recoup the \$2 million to repay the Treasury loan and to endeavour to provide sufficient funds to meet anticipated claims. That explains the movement of finances in relation to workers compensation for Crown employees.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: There is a breakdown on page 142 of the Auditor-General's Report of some of the departments in which the major escalations in workers compensation payments have occurred. One area where there has been an enormous growth in workers compensation payments is the Education Department; if one examines the table on page 142, one sees that payments have gone from \$1.1 million in 1981 steadily each year, with an enormous leap from 1984 to 1985 from \$3.34 million to \$4.9 million. How does one account for that enormous

escalation? It is costing the public \$5 million a year in workers compensation for people in the Education Department. That has enormous budgetary implications for the Government. Indeed, it is mirrored in other departments, but nowhere so dramatically as in that area.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This highlights the problem to which I have been referring of workers compensation as a whole, not just in the Education Department and the public sector; increases of equivalent size have occurred also in the private sector. Employers are quoting to me instances that would make this look pretty small beer, indeed. The Education Department has about 18 000 employees—a very large department. Also, there has been an increasing incidence of stress amongst teachers, leading them to be on workers compensation. One could speculate on the reasons for that, but at this stage it would only be speculation. One of the things that we are doing is that we are computerising all of the workers compensation claims and records; this will allow trends to be identified and earlier preventative or corrective action to be taken. So, before we get to figures of this nature we will have picked up through the computerisation that this trend is occurring and be able to isolate what is causing the increase in that area.

I am sure that most members of the Committee would be aware that we are also adopting progressively a code of general principles for occupational safety and health by all Government departments and statutory authorities. On behalf of the previous Minister of Labour, I launched that campaign. Through that campaign and actions of that nature we hope to reduce the incidence of workers compensation in Government departments.

Permanent heads are being given the responsibility of ensuring that the particular workplace they are administering is safe and that work practices there are safe. As the Committee is aware, a safe workplace dramatically reduces the incidence of workers' compensation. We are also looking at the question of stress, and a committee has been established within the Education Department to address that problem. Stress is not a new phenomenon but it is certainly increasing, and the Education Department, as well as the Government, is looking at it very closely.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: What is the result of the Government's investigation into stress? A deputy headmaster, who said he was not a supporter of my political party, came into the electorate office of one of our members of Parliament to talk about this very question. He said that on his staff three teachers were absent on workers' compensation, and he was concerned because they had all suffered marital breakups and were suffering a lot of stress unrelated to their work. It was a situation that was out of the school's control.

So people are concerned about this, and we should all be concerned that it is costing \$5 million just in that one department for what is obviously a stress-related illness. The chances of physical injury, which we would traditionally associate with workers' compensation, would not be occurring in that field. The community has to pick up the enormous tab for stress when only part of that stress is work-related. When does the committee report?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure but I will find out. The honourable member talks of teachers going off on workers' compensation due to stress, when perhaps the stress was caused by factors outside their employment. The Government, like any other employer, can only go by what the medical profession tells it. If the medical profession issues individuals with certificates saying they are sick for particular reasons, it is very difficult for the Government, or a private employer, to argue with the medical practitioners. Therefore, whatever anecdotal evidence we have that perhaps the injuries or illnesses are not entirely work-related,

there is very little, if anything, that any employer, including the Government, can do in the face of medical evidence to the contrary.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: Medical panels are a part of the work cover proposal with which we do not disagree. I would hate the Minister to persist with that myth that the Opposition never agrees with anything the Government does—the Opposition agrees with a number of propositions in this so-called agreed package, which is not yet agreed. Does the Minister believe that the part of the package which proposes to have an independent medical panel will come to grips with this problem? My view is that it will. It means that, if any question is asked, independent advice can be sought and obtained and a judgment made.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We believe that that is a cornerstone of the package. One of the many problems with the present system is the debate amongst medical practitioners. There is not always the same diagnosis of the same patient from medical practitioners. There must be some finality to the argument, and I believe that we need a medical panel of completely independent doctors who can state that to the best of their knowledge that is the diagnosis, and that is the end of the matter, with no appeal. At some stage there has to be an end to the endless medical argument as well as the endless legal argument. In this area not only the Government but also the private employers are being slugged heavily. I agree with the honourable member that that particular part of the package is essential.

Mr INGERSON: In relation to the statutory authority that is suggested under this work cover, experience suggests that statutory authorities do not perform as efficiently as the private sector; a lot of studies done suggest that there is of the order of about 30 to 40 per cent difference in costings. What special feature does the Minister see that this statutory authority would have that would be different from all previous statutory authorities?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not want to get into an argument with the honourable member about the merits or otherwise of statutory authorities. I am sure, Mr Chairman, that you would have to agree that this is neither the time nor the place for such a debate. However, I would be interested to see the evidence the honourable member has for suggesting the figures of 30 and 40 per cent under-efficiency compared to the private sector. The honourable member would not have made that assertion without some evidence, and I would be very pleased to receive and examine that evidence.

However, there would be an enormous difference with this statutory authority, which would be a tripartite authority consisting of employers, unions and the Government. It would be unique in South Australia—and possibly Australia—other than in the area of workers' compensation. If the honourable member is saying that a group such as that will be inefficient simply because it is a statutory authority, he is really reflecting on the private sector in this State.

The honourable member is saying that employers who would be part of this corporation would not be efficient and would be incapable of running it efficiently. I do not think that for a moment: I believe that in the main employers in this State are very efficient. In this day and age there are not too many employers who are inefficient because, if they are, they have gone. We live in pretty tough times. The fact that employers want this body and want to run it in conjunction with the Trades and Labor Council and the Government clearly demonstrates that employers feel that they can run it efficiently and that it has direct benefits, which the present system of private insurers does not have. I can see no reason at all to contradict that claim.

Membership:

The Hon. Ted Chapman substituted for Mr G.M. Gunn.

Mr INGERSON: While I do not disagree with some of the statements made by the Minister, obviously this is not the time to debate the matter. I point out that only a couple of employer associations agreed to that package. There was not broad sweeping agreement by the private sector that that is necessarily the way to go. It is important that that point be corrected. Do statistics show a significant increase of repetitive strain injury in the public sector? Does evidence show that that injury is the result of faulty equipment, and so on?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I refer first to employer agreement to the workers compensation package. The member for Bragg said that a few employer bodies had agreed, but I point out that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Metal Industry Association of South Australia, the Master Builders Association, and the Retail Traders Association all agreed, and there may be others. I know that the Employers Federation has not yet agreed to the package, but that organisation has not disagreed to or rejected the package. The federation, like some unions, would like to see modifications to the package. That demonstrates that there is a very substantial body of employer opinion in favour of the package rather than just a few agreeing, as the member for Bragg said.

Repetitive strain injury, like stress related injuries that are subject to workers compensation, is not a new phenomenon: it has been around for a long time, mainly in the blue collar area. I am not sure whether blue collar workers are more stoical than white collar workers, but only recently have large numbers of people been complaining of RSI. Computerisation of the workers compensation records in the department will assist to analyse just what is happening about claims for RSI. Our impression (and this would be most people's impression) is that the incidence of RSI is increasing, but it is very difficult to obtain hard facts and figures as to the extent because of the way in which workers compensation records in the public sector are kept—they are 20 years out of date and are not computerised. When the records are computerised, we will be able to determine clearly what has happened, what appears to be happening and the trends and projections for the future. We cannot do that by handling an enormous number of dockets manually—it is just not possible.

Mr INGERSON: Has the inquiry on stress related injuries considered RSI?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The study to which I referred earlier related purely to stress within the Education Department: it has nothing to do with RSI. I am advised that the National Health and Safety Commission has undertaken a very comprehensive study of RSI, and the results are available from the Australian Government Bookshop. If the honourable member has a particular interest in this matter, he may be able to obtain the results of that study.

The causes of RSI appear to be many and varied. At times the injury may be related to stress and in other cases it is related to ergonomics, such as bad seating arrangements (and we have to put up with that here), the inappropriate height of desks and things of that nature. Desks and chairs are made to a certain height, but people's height varies and furniture is not necessarily adaptable to the individual.

I know that Telecom has done substantial work in this area. There was a very good report in the *Australian* a couple of months ago about that work, and I had it investigated by the department to see whether we could use that method in the State Public Service, but on investigation it turned out that, while the work was useful, the results achieved in combating RSI in Telecom had been overstated

in the newspaper report. Even so, the Telecom studies and the actions taken to try to combat RSI are very useful to know. There is a program in Government departments for combating the disease by the usual means, that is, job rotation and the provision of furniture that is more adaptable to the variation in human beings who operate machines. However, we do not have hard data, because we are still in the quill pen days of recording data.

We believe that there has been some amelioration in the incidence of RSI, and certainly our techniques for assisting people to go back to the workforce are improving. People are going back to work part-time and doing very brief stints of keyboard work, gradually building up to their previous level of productivity. It is interesting to see those people who are being rehabilitated in this way. It is very satisfying to see that young women who are initially crippled with RSI are gradually working themselves back into full-time work, but work that is more suited to them.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: My question relates to industrial policy. Between 1979 and 1982 under the Tonkin Government there was no requirement for Public Service employees to be a member of a union or association as a condition of employment. My question is in several parts. Has that policy been changed by the present Government? If so, under what legislation or award is it sustained? Secondly, does the Minister condone the alleged industrial blackmail and/or threat where a member of a union demands membership of a subcontractor on a building site or, in lieu of membership being taken forthwith, the withdrawal of that subcontractor from the site?

I draw to the Minister's attention the details surrounding an incident that occurred on or about 19 September, about a week ago. Prior to 19 and 20 September a plumbing company, CB Plumbers Pty Ltd of 141 Beulah Road, Norwood, was engaged in substantial excavation work on the Lutheran village site near Victor Harbor. It had been involved in work there for some time. However, on the given dates it sought to engage and did engage a local subcontractor with a particular piece of excavation equipment.

That local south coast subcontractor was Mr K.D. Watson of Watson Landscaping and Bobcat Services, who accepted the subcontracting employment. He arrived on the site on the morning of 19 September, unloaded his machinery and equipment and commenced work as the owner/operator. Shortly after he commenced that work a guy called Martin Taatenko or Kaatenko, from the Builders Labourers Union or an associated union arrived on the site and allegedly said to Mr Watson, 'Where is your ticket?' Mr Watson said, 'If you are meaning a union ticket, I have never had one and accordingly I do not have one now' or words to that effect.

It is further alleged that Mr Taatenko or Kaatenko then said to him, 'You either give me \$160 plus another figure now to cover your membership of our union or you pack up your gear and get off the site' or words to that effect. A letter embracing this incident of alleged industrial blackmail has been delivered to me today identifying the parties involved and the dates and details surrounding that incident. I come back to the question. Does the South Australian Minister of Labour condone that sort of threatening activity by union representatives? If he does, on what Act or award does he rely? Whether he does or does not, will the Minister have this issue investigated for the following reason: that on the south coast in the Port Elliot, Victor Harbor, Goolwa, Strathalbyn and Cape Jervis area there is presently pending major development work, not the least being one item involving a \$30 million redevelopment of a hotel site in Victor Harbor.

That community, in particular, the subcontractors and people with building expertise in that area, is looking for-

ward to potential employment resulting from that development. Indeed, the great majority of those people are not involved in union membership and are concerned about the incident that occurred on the morning of 19 September at the backdoor of that community. They would be even further concerned if such alleged activity by that union or its representatives were to continue.

I have been asked to raise this matter, although it is one that I would not normally be involved in, as the Minister knows. However, as the member for the district I am concerned. Also, I am grateful to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to bring this matter to the Minister's attention.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the honourable member for his question. In regard to preference to unionists, as he would be aware, on returning to Government after the brief interregnum of Liberal Party rule in South Australia we reintroduced the policy of preference to unionists. That provision is still in place today. The reason is that the Labor Government strongly believes that employees should be members of the appropriate union. The reasons to any fair-minded person are clear: the benefits under which persons work—wages, hours and conditions—were won for that person by the appropriate union. If one picks up the benefits, we believe that a person should be a member of the organisation obtaining those benefits. Personally, I have never met a non-unionist willing to forgo the benefits won by the union. People want the benefits but they do not want to contribute to the cost of gaining them.

We make no bones about our preference to unionist clause. All things being equal, we believe the person employed should be a member of a trade union. It is a very simple and clear policy and one that the Labor Party and Labor Governments have had for years. Certainly, it is nothing new. My suspicion is that if I went back through the Estimates Committee reports over the years, the Liberal Party would have raised this question or a variation of it. Indeed, if I took the trouble to go back, the then Minister would have given a similar answer to mine, or some variation of it.

As to the second question, I cannot comment on the individual case: I know nothing of the firms or the contracts concerned. As to the specific question of whether I condone threats: I do not condone threats from anyone. Whether it is in the building industry or in the street, or political threats or anything of that nature, the answer is clearly that I do not. Building employers make their own arrangements with unions. One can walk around most building sites in South Australia and see signs saying 'No ticket, no start'. The employer has clearly decided, for reasons best known to the employer, or whatever, that he prefers everyone on that site to be members of a trade union. I believe employers have the right to take that decision and that really is up to them.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Who nails up the sign?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A member of the union nails it up.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Members of the Opposition see it as something sinister. However, some of the employers about whom I am talking are absolute pillars of the establishment in South Australia, and they choose freely not to have anyone who is not a member of a union on their premises.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Freely?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Absolutely freely. That is their choice. However, there are other employers in the State who take a different tack, and again that is up to them. They can make whatever arrangements they wish with their employees. In principle, we believe that everyone who gains benefit from an award should be a member of a union. We

make no apology for that and, in fact, it is nothing new—it has probably been in the Labor Party platform since the 1890s.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I find it necessary to ask the Minister to answer my question because, frankly, I did not ask about the Government's policy in relation to preference: my question related to what the Government insists on as it applies to the Public Service. My second question was not about employees on building sites but in relation to a subcontractor—the owner/operator of his own machine. Supplementary to my first question, I would like the Minister to identify the law under which union insistence can be applied to a subcontractor. If the Minister cannot clarify that now, will he investigate this area using the details that I have provided and report back to me? I think it is fair that we have an answer in relation to what the Government insists on in its policy for, first, public servants and, secondly, as to the position of subcontractors on a building site.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thought I answered the two questions directly. The first question related to the Government's policy on preference to unionists.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: It had nothing to do with that—it is a matter of whether the Government insists that they shall, not 'may'.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have spelt out the Government's policy: we do not insist that they shall. We have a preference to unionists policy, which means exactly that: that all things being equal, it is preferable that jobs go to those workers who are members of a union. There is no compulsion about that. I hope that clears up the question about policy. If the honourable member wishes further information, I will write to him. The honourable member's second question was whether I condoned alleged threats from building unions, I assume, to subcontractors. I do not condone threats of that type—and I do not condone threats made to anyone. Whether or not a building employer hires subcontractors is up to the employer. However, the ramifications in the industrial relations area could be quite severe, but that is up to the employer. If the employer chooses—

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: It is up to the Government to see that the law is upheld.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If there is any suggestion of the law being broken, the honourable member should take the details to the police, which is the appropriate body to deal with it. If the honourable member is saying that there have been threats—

The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister is endeavouring to reply; please allow him that privilege.

The Hon. Frank Blevins:— and that some criminal act has taken place and the Government or a contractor is not upholding the law, that information should be given to the police. I cannot add anything further. In the interests of industrial peace, I know that many employers insist that everyone on a building site must be a member of a union. That is at the insistence of the employers; and I know of metal factories that insist on the same thing. However, I also know of some that do not insist on that. For example, BHP is a substantial employer that does not insist on all employees being in a union. I know of other substantial employers in the car industry that do insist on it.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: There is no closed shop arrangement down there. Will you investigate it?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure what I am supposed to investigate. If there is any suggestion of threats,

that information should be taken to the police, who will investigate whether there has been any breach of the law.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: I think the Government's plans in relation to occupational safety, health and welfare have been finalised for quite some time. There does not seem to be the public controversy which applied previously, although many people are still not happy with the conclusions of the Matthews committee. Has legislation been drawn up to give effect to the Government's proposals in relation to occupational health?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: Time and again the Government has said that workers compensation and occupational health and rehabilitation are inextricably linked, and I for one would not disagree with that proposition. Does the Government intend to introduce the two pieces of legislation concurrently?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: They may be. If so, it will not be by design. However, we are coming to the end of the parliamentary year and, if the two are introduced, that will occur at about the same time. I take issue with the honourable member and perhaps previous Ministers of Labour. I do not believe that the two are so intertwined that you cannot have one without the other. If there were further delays in relation to workers compensation, for example, I cannot see why we should delay upgrading the law in relation to occupational safety, health and welfare. I do not think that the two are necessarily intertwined, although I know that that has become the conventional wisdom; certainly, I have not been persuaded that that is the case. At the appropriate time I will amend either the Workers Compensation Act or the Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: The question of funding for the package as outlined for workers compensation both here and in Victoria (which South Australia seems to be following fairly closely) indicates that early rehabilitation is an essential part of the program, if the sort of savings anticipated are to be achieved. That has been said time and again by numerous commentators in relation to this area, including Government spokesmen, I believe. Has the Government finalised its approach in relation to occupational safety, health and welfare, or does the Minister believe that further negotiations are required?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The answer to the first question is 'No', and the answer to the second question is 'Yes'.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: What form are the negotiations taking? I have read the report which has been sold as the Government's program. There was one dissenting statement in relation to some aspects of the report. What is the nature of the further negotiations in relation to occupational safety, health and welfare; who is conducting those negotiations and with whom?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The position is that the Matthews report was distributed for comment. Those comments are now in. One of the large parties concerned has only let us know their comments over the last week or 10 days. The Government is now assessing the various comments on the Matthews report and will have legislation drawn up that reflects the Government's view after the consultation process. There will also obviously be some discussion in IRAC so that the employers and the Trades and Labor Council again can have a look at the Government's proposal, but the Government's final position has not yet been arrived at.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: Does the Minister believe that the same sort of criteria that he is applying to his workers compensation package would apply to this question of occupational health, safety and welfare? That is, would he expect the unions and the employers to reach

agreement on a package which the Government would then accept?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Again, we will be attempting to get the maximum amount of consensus around the area. It is an area that really requires it. You can legislate in this area as much as you like, but unless you have some commitment from the various parties to implementing that legislation—whilst it would be an overstatement to say the legislation is a waste of time—the legislation is very much devalued. We will be attempting, as in workers compensation, to get the two principal parties concerned to agree to the maximum amount practicable. I do not expect to get 100 per cent agreement, but I would be looking for 90 odd per cent agreement before I put my final proposition to the Government.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: The Minister knows full well that the report of the working party mirrors almost exactly what has happened in Victoria. In fact, Matthews was from Victoria. What has passed into law in Victoria, from what I can gather from what I have read, is largely mirrored in this report. I also understand that the degree of agreement in Victoria just about mirrors that in South Australia from the employers; they are not happy with some aspects of it—maybe 91 per cent, the Minister mentioned, but the other 9 per cent they may find totally unacceptable. That is the position in Victoria, where it has passed into law. Does the Minister envisage that he will reach a greater degree of acceptance in South Australia? He has backed off this idea that once the unions and the employers agree, then away we go: we can legislate as in the case of workers compensation. We thought a month ago that they had reached agreement, but in fact they had not. The Minister will let them keep going, and when they reach agreement the legislation will see the light of day. That statement has been modified a little in relation to this area. Does the Minister think that he will get this legislation up before the State election?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I did not want to reopen the workers compensation debate again at this stage but, seeing that the honourable member for Kavel has, I will briefly explain the Government's position again. What the Government is endeavouring to do in workers compensation is to get the maximum amount of agreement between the parties because unless we do that, with the known attitude of the Opposition of opposing it, we will not get the legislation through the Parliament. In the case of occupational safety, health and welfare, again we will attempt to get the maximum amount of consensus amongst all the various parties concerned, but principally between the employers and the employees. It is my intention that, if it is at all practicable, that legislation will come before the Parliament certainly before the election and hopefully within the next few weeks.

We will be endeavouring to get the maximum amount of cooperation, because I think that there is a difference between occupational health and safety legislation and workers compensation legislation. Workers compensation legislation in a way is more clearly defined legislation—that is the law: that is what you pay. Occupational health and safety is not quite like that. The legislation states that for breaches of the legislation, the penalties can be so and so, but what you really need is a great deal more goodwill between the parties that you do not necessarily need in workers compensation. It is desirable, but you do not necessarily need it. To have effective occupational health and safety practices, you need the cooperation of both parties. It is not so much a legislative problem—but it is certainly part of it—as an attitudinal problem at the workplace. We will be trying to get the maximum amount of cooperation there. I do not think that it is in any way a question of handing over the respon-

sibility for these areas to employers and employees. It has nothing to do with that. It is trying to get legislation that is effective.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: Does the Minister then believe that the legislation in Victoria will be effective, because it mirrors almost exactly, as I understand it, the recommendations of this report? There is far from any consensus with employers in Victoria in relation to that legislation. The legislation was requested and demanded by the union movement and in due course it passed into law. Does the Minister believe that that legislation will not be successful in view of the fact that employers are most unhappy with it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Unless you press me, Mr Chairman, I really do not want to comment on the Victorian legislation. I know that in these Committees the debates tend to go off the lines a little bit, but I would have thought that debating some Victorian legislation would be a little outside the scope of this Committee.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: It just shows that it is absurd for one Minister to have four such complicated areas of responsibility, as our attempt to try to deal with them all in one day demonstrates. During the year 1984-85, 115 industrial disputes were notified compared with 77 in the previous year. Has the Minister any explanation for that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Not in the time available. I will get back to the honourable member with the details of that as to why we think that has occurred.

[Sitting suspended from 3.30 to 3.47 p.m.]

Membership:

Mr G.M. Gunn substituted for Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy.

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

Works and Services—Department of Labour, \$250 000—
Examination declared completed.

[Sitting suspended from 3.49 to 4 p.m.]

Agriculture, \$36 617 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. Ted Chapman
Mr D.M. Ferguson
Mr R.J. Gregory
Mr T.R. Groom
Mr G.M. Gunn
Mr I.P. Lewis

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Labour, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Correctional Services and Minister Assisting the Treasurer.

Departmental Advisers:

Dr P.R. Harvey, Acting Director-General.
Mr D.E. Mitchell, Deputy Director-General (Resources).
Dr J.C. Radcliffe, Director, Policy and Planning.

Mr K.W. Gent, Finance Officer.

Dr G.H. Simpson, Acting Chief, International Division.

Mr B.J.R. Handscombe, Principal Rural Assistance Officer.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Alexandra wish to make a statement?

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: No.

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

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. An opening statement is very useful because it gives an overview of what the department has been doing for the year.

In general terms the Government has maintained expenditure in the agricultural sector in real terms compared with previous years. This year's recurrent State allocation of \$36.6 million is up approximately \$1.6 million on 1984-85 actual expenditure. The estimated total funds to be expended in the 1985-86 financial year is \$70.5 million, which includes \$28.5 million from Commonwealth Government and rural industry sources, and \$2.3 million for property purchase and development under the Research Centre Redevelopment Program.

Additional funding was required in 1984-85 to meet the cost of plague locusts and fruit fly outbreaks of \$577 000 and \$362 000 respectively. This expenditure was offset, in part, by a reduction in expenditure on the joint Commonwealth—State BTEC program. The proposed allocation for 1985-86 includes superannuation being allocated across sub-programs for the first time and an additional \$339 000 for the appointment of 11.5 full-time equivalent new positions during the 1985-86 financial year. These new positions were approved by Government following the decision to reimburse the operating costs of the Rural Assistance Branch from the South Australian Rural Industry Adjustment and Development Fund. These costs were previously met from the Consolidated Account.

During the year the Government announced changes to the rural assistance legislation and administration, which will result in a boost for agriculture in South Australia. Changes to the current legislation included a review of interest rates on farm assistance loans. Under the amended legislation, State funds will be available for farm lending, rural adjustment and development projects and to expand Department of Agriculture services.

The Act dedicates existing rural assistance funds to South Australian agriculture and a South Australian Rural Adjustment and Development Fund will be established to provide rural assistance. The decision to go ahead with the new Act was not made until full discussions had been held with the United Farmers and Stockowners. A consultative committee, including representatives from industry, Treasury, and the Department of Agriculture, has been established to make recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture on the annual allocation of funds to assistance measures and agricultural projects. The cost of the departmental Rural Assistance Branch will, in future, be financed from the new fund.

However, the Department of Agriculture will receive an allocation from the State Government to finance several new initiatives that will directly benefit farmers. The new initiatives will result in the future appointment of 20 new officers (11.5 to be appointed in 1985-86) to the Department of Agriculture which will mean an increase in services to farmers in some areas.

The new initiatives include, first, a significant expansion in advisory and research services on the Eyre Peninsula and in the northern pastoral areas. New officers will be appointed to the areas of agronomy, soil conservation, farm mechanisation, livestock and a number of other areas.

A second initiative will be a large increase in research and extension activities in agricultural water use and irrigation. The major initiative in this area will see an increase in irrigation and salinity research for the Murray River as well as the appointment of new officers in the South-East and Adelaide Hills.

A third initiative is two new appointments to assist horticultural industries in marketing activities. The new proposals are a very positive step which will be a great benefit to agriculture in South Australia.

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

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Which budget lines in agriculture did you seek State funding for which are not reflected in the budget papers before us?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Gent will be pleased to give the details.

Mr Gent: The honourable member, if I can understand the question, is talking about two areas: first, the funding which we did not receive and which was in the budget expenditure last year for, say, fruit fly and plague locust, has been removed by Treasury in the 1985-86 estimates; secondly, concerning the additional funding that you talk about in our approach to Treasury in 1985-86, we had no funds that were not included in our budget estimates. We virtually received everything that we asked for.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I take it that you are satisfied that in every other area identified in the budget papers, that is, in every agriculture line that is cited, you do not consider that there is justification for any further State funding expenditure? Am I able to assume that from your officer's response to the last question?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member is entitled to assume it, but his assumption would be completely incorrect. In a perfect world, if someone was to give me a blank cheque signed by the taxpayer, as Minister of Agriculture there are many areas, if not all areas of agriculture, that I would happily spend more money on. The Government has to allocate priorities overall and I am delighted with the allocation that the Department of Agriculture has had. It means in real terms that spending is maintained.

We do from time to time make reallocations in our priorities in agriculture, as I am sure that all Government departments do, but to suggest that any Minister is totally happy with his allocation would be incorrect. I do not think that a Minister is born who would not like a little more money, but the Government's overall priorities are established. Agriculture does very well—as well as any other department in its allocation. I am very pleased with what we have. If there was any more, I would happily accept it.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: My question did not talk about what he is happy or not happy with; it did not suggest or imply that he should have as Minister a State blank cheque. The question really was whether the Minister applied for funds that he did not get. The answer given by the officer was that everything he asked for was achieved. Can I assume from that that no requests were made for funds in any of the lines under agriculture that are not reflected in the budget lines? If there were some, I would hope that he would be frank about identifying those—requests for justified additional funds, not the blank cheque. Do any of the lines, in fact, justify additional funding to what is cited in the budget papers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is exactly the same question as the honourable member asked previously, but I have no objection to repeating my answer. The honourable member has gone through a budget process. I am not prepared to divulge to the honourable member what has been dis-

cussed in Cabinet, any more than he would divulge to me what was discussed in Cabinet when he was a member of it. All I can say is that I am very happy with the allocation of State resources that we have been given in agriculture. Again, if anybody were to offer me more, I could use it usefully in practically any area of agriculture. However, agriculture in this State gets a very good deal and, as Minister of Agriculture, I am happy to be able to maintain that good deal.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: There has been some concern amongst South-East dairy farmers about their annual receipts under the augmentation scheme. Contributions are made from the South Australian dairy industry and allocations of varying amounts are directed to the South-East growers. For some time now the South-East growers have been complaining about the level of that allocation. Accompanied by that complaint has been some apparent reluctance, understandably, by the central zone growers to part with any more money.

As the Minister will know, discussions have taken place between the parties over the past few weeks. Precisely, what is the current position? Could the Minister comment on a report received today from the South-East, where on 5SE it was claimed that legislation was in the pipeline to ensure further payments to the South-East growers? That radio broadcast was made by Mr Humphries with the claim of support from the present Government. I do not have the transcript of the 5SE program of today immediately to hand, but the claim was made that legislation is now being prepared. I am unable to find any legislation on the Bill file in either House of this Parliament; I am unable to find any evidence of a Bill being prepared at the Parliamentary Counsel level; and I am unable to find any evidence of a Bill being prepared at departmental level. Could the Minister bring us up to date on the two parts of that question?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The problems of the South-East dairy industry are well known and reasonably well documented. This Government went into the last election with a policy that we would legislate for the augmentation scheme, if it was felt necessary to do so. I have made my position perfectly clear: I hope that it is not necessary to do so. I hope that there will be an agreement between the two parties concerned—that is, the South East and the central region dairy farmers—to the level of payments that ought to be transferred to the South-East from the central region. I am still hopeful (although the hope is dimming somewhat) that some arrangement can be made. If not, the Government has stated quite clearly that it will legislate to give a greater share of the market milk premium to the South-East. In relation to the radio broadcast, I have not heard it, so the answer is 'No'. In all fairness, I would not comment on something I had not heard.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Has the Minister given that licence or permission to Mr Humphries in Mount Gambier to make statements on behalf of the Government in relation to this subject? If so, what was the genre of that licence?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Humphries is a active and capable parliamentary candidate who will make a good member for Mount Gambier. I have discussions with him from time to time on this and other matters that affect the South-East. He has a long standing interest in the area, having been born there, and consults me, and other Ministers, frequently.

If the broadcast concerned stated what I have stated—and I have stated that publicly myself on the ABC and at the annual dinner of the South Australian Dairyfarmers Association, which the honourable member also attended—there is certainly nothing new in it. That was our Party policy in the last election and, if that is what Mr Humphries referred to, I concur with everything he said. Again, I did

not hear the broadcast, so there is no way I can really comment on what he has allegedly said, but if it is in line with Party policy, which I have enunciated time and time again, then he is spot on, as he always is.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: The Minister has talked broadly about legislation being used as a meaningful threat to the industry, if it does not resolve the matter that is before it at the moment. Which Act does he propose to change in order to direct the amount of money considered to be appropriate? Which division would identify the figure that would be involved in that legislation as the amount representing that which is subject to annual transfer?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no threat; it is a statement of Government policy that was made prior to the last election and the policy will be implemented, if it is necessary to do so. The method used to work out the amount that should be transferred is a matter for Cabinet, and Cabinet will make that decision.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Is the Minister saying that the figure will be determined internally, by the Government, and not as a result of discussion with industry groups? I ask that question because, if a figure is determined by consultation as being the appropriate amount for disbursement in the South-East on an annual basis, why would the Minister not accept that that figure be placed before the attention of the two parties and that they be urged to adopt it, thus avoiding the legislative process that was promised or threatened (or whatever word the Minister would like to use) prior to the last election. I am staggered that that undertaking in regard to legislation was made before the last State election, in view of the traumas that have occurred and the fact that it has taken three years to get to the eve of the next election and nothing has been done. I gather that it is due to absolute patience that the Minister and his predecessor have stepped away from that issue in the meantime: hopefully, the industry groups will have fixed it.

If an arbitrary figure is set, would it not be more reasonable to put that figure to the industry groups concerned and request them to adopt it, because the whole exercise and the frustrations surrounding this exercise seem to relate to this figure and its determination.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I agree that the point of dispute in this exercise is that figure. I am well aware of the proposals that have been put forward by the central region dairy farmers and the South-East dairy farmers. As I said, I still hope that some agreement can be reached but, if that is not the case, the Government will examine (and it is examining) the various claims made by the two parties: it will consider them in detail and arrive at a figure in regard to which it will legislate.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: But the Government will not adopt the line that was implied in my last remarks, that is, that if the department or the Government arrives at a figure it will put it to the two parties for adoption of their own volition?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly, when the legislation is introduced into the Parliament, if the two parties say, 'Do not bother legislating; we now agree to the formula which will result in that sum being transferred to the South-East', the Government will consider whether to go on with the legislation.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I return to the first subject: has the legislation been prepared or is it being prepared and at what level?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The legislation will be prepared when the Government requests Parliamentary Counsel to prepare it. It will be done at the level of Parliamentary Counsel, who, I understand, prepares all legislation.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: But it is not in the pipeline at present?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It depends on what one calls 'in the pipeline'.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Perhaps I could be more direct.

The CHAIRMAN: If the honourable member asked questions properly, he might get answers.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: That is a good question in itself. I asked whether the legislation had been prepared and, if not, whether it was in the process of being prepared and, if so, at what level—at departmental level, at Parliamentary Counsel level or here in the Parliament. I take it from a search of the records (as I explained previously) that it is not before the Parliament; I gather that it is not before Parliamentary Counsel; and I can find no evidence of its being within the realms of the department. We are here to ask the Minister about the real position.

The CHAIRMAN: This Committee is dealing with the estimates, and I am a little confused as to what line the honourable member's questions relate.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: There are budget lines relating directly to the dairy industry division of the department and some of the expenditure incurred by that department relates to the preparation of legislation. I am asking whether the line relating to the dairy industry division is in part or substantially ascribed to the proposal surrounding this very delicate issue of the augmentation of the milk fund from SADA to SEDA.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I understand the position, the member of Alexandra has been on a fishing expedition to Parliamentary Counsel and the department trying to find out where this proposal is.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: It was stated today on a radio program that it was already here.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot be held responsible for what is said on a radio program. All I can say is that, if Mr Humphries stated on a radio program that the Government would legislate in relation to an augmentation scheme, he was absolutely correct—if necessary, we will legislate. That decision was taken prior to the last election and the position has been stated on numerous occasions. So I suppose that the decision to legislate has been in the pipeline since before the 1982 election. If the honourable member wants to know what bit of paper it is written on, I am afraid that he will just have to wait and see.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: With due respect, I point out that the comments made on the radio broadcast to which I referred related not to the effect of the legislation but to the legislation and its preparation. I have sought to ascertain what stage the preparation is at. I have asked direct questions, but so far the Minister has been unable to confirm that the legislation has been prepared except to say continually that in accordance with an undertaking made prior to the last State election if necessary it will be prepared.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The argument seems to be a little repetitive.

Mr FERGUSON: It is slightly circular.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. I really cannot comment about what the honourable member heard on a radio program this morning in the South-East as I did not hear that broadcast. All I can say is that Mr Humphries is a person of complete integrity and I am quite certain that he would have outlined Labor Party policy, with which, of course, I concur completely. The legislation will be introduced into the Parliament if it is clear that there will be no agreement. I have made that statement publicly on numerous occasions and, if Mr Humphries is repeating that statement, he is absolutely correct. I have made that statement in the company of the member for Alexandra and representatives of both the South Australian Dairyfarmers Association and the South-East Dairymen's Association.

Mr GUNN: Will the Minister say whether the Department of Agriculture will be in a position to provide funds this financial year for the E & WS Department to cart stockwater west of Ceduna? I do not know whether the Minister is aware (but I am sure his officers are aware) that there has been only six inches of rain in that area of the State and the tanks will be empty very shortly.

Much expense in carting water will be involved. Previously the E&WS Department carted water to the government tanks. Is this likely to take place in the next few weeks? I have been approached by the local branch of the UF&S and other concerned people. As the Minister of Water Resources would not cart water earlier—he can spend about \$4 million on an aquatic centre but cannot provide a reticulated water scheme—perhaps we can have the next best thing through assistance by the E&WS organising contractors to cart water west.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am informed that there would be some problems under the new Rural Assistance Act in doing this. There would have to be a special request made to the Federal Government to get funds. I would prefer to handle such problems through normal carry on loans, which are the core measure used in the department.

I have some sympathy for people on the Far West Coast who have gone through a pretty dry period, although it is not unusual in that area. It is a dry area and people farming generally there are well able to cope with the vagaries of the weather. If they could not, they would not be there because it is difficult country and only the best farmers and farm managers can survive in country like that. I understand that it has not been an unusual year; it is just part of the normal pattern of farming in that district.

If farmers in the district wish to apply to the Rural Assistance Branch for carry on loans the applications will be processed in the normal manner and those farmers meeting the criteria will be assisted, and those farmers who do not will be assisted in another way.

Mr GUNN: I thank the Minister for his answer. I refer to the yellow book and the Acts administered by the Minister—they are many and varied. In view of the Government's comments about deregulation and about getting rid of unnecessary controls, has any work been done on seeing which Acts are no longer required? Has any action been taken to amalgamate boards or committees, including the vertebrate pest and pest plant authorities?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government as a whole has established a committee under the previous Ombudsman (Mr Bakewell) to look at deregulation. The UF&S is a member of that committee. Certainly, I would look carefully at any recommendation from the committee to eliminate or repeal or amalgamate some of the Acts under which we work in agriculture. As to the more specific question of the vertebrate pest and pest plant commissions and whether we would amalgamate them, I would be delighted to amalgamate the operations of those two organisations.

We have one difficulty with the Lameroo and Pinnaroo district councils which, to date, have not agreed to form themselves into a board. That is giving us some difficulty. I understand that as recently as 15 August the Lameroo District Council resolved to enter into negotiations with Pinnaroo District Council with a view to forming a board. Pinnaroo, as we have explained in the last two Estimates Committees, has always stated its willingness to enter into such negotiations. However, Lameroo has always chosen not to. The fact that Lameroo is now apparently entering into negotiations with Pinnaroo will make the amalgamation of those two operations, if they come to some agreement, possible and I would welcome it.

Mr GUNN: I am not sure whether my next question comes under the Minister's portfolio, but I understand that

in the past the department has provided funds to agricultural societies to assist with improvements to show facilities. This year has the Department of Agriculture provided any funds for this purpose? I have been advised that the Quorn show society has been getting money through the Government but it appears that money is in short supply. Can the Minister say whether the department is still involved in this arrangement? If it is, how much money is available?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We continue to subsidise prize moneys paid out by country show societies. This year \$17 000 was paid to country agricultural and horticultural field trial societies, and the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society got \$26 000. We have a considerable input and I hope that that can continue.

Mr LEWIS: The member for Florey will appreciate the significance of my first question. Is the Minister able to give an assurance that he will continue to support that outstanding breeding and training program in South Australia undertaken by the sheepdog breeders in this State where the State titles have been held in recent years at Roseworthy College. Last year prizes were presented by the member for Florey. It involves only a few dollars but it certainly ensures that there is keen competition for that trophy, and it brings people from interstate and benefits other areas of the economy and other portfolios by that expenditure, as well as enabling us to sell dogs all over Australia.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am happy to advise the honourable member that we provide a prize at that event. Certainly, I have no intention of discontinuing that practice.

Mr LEWIS: Turning to a matter relating to the Minister's own responsibilities, wherein he is involved in Agricultural Council, I want to draw to the Committee's attention the problem that presently confronts a number of horticultural industries in South Australia, particularly the berry industry. In Agricultural Council the Minister has the capacity to influence the Federal Government and other States to recognise the necessity for the introduction of plant variety rights legislation where it relates to horticultural crops.

So far this has not happened. Regrettably, the consequence of that inaction on the part of Federal Parliament has been that Australian berry growers, in particular the horticulture, floraculture and silviculture industries, have suffered. They are unable to get high yielding better carrying varieties of fruit and/or flowers that have greater public appeal and wider and more ready market acceptance than their immediate overseas competitors the New Zealanders.

In the berry industry in particular the consequence has been that we have lost our overseas markets to the New Zealanders. The New Zealand fruit has a longer shelf life on arrival and, because that fruit has a high yield for the same cost value of input, it can be produced cheaper than the Australian fruit. Because the New Zealand fruit is high yielding, that reduces the cost of harvesting because there is more fruit per metre of movement by the pickers. Substantial costs are involved, and they have impacted heavily on the Australian berry industry, for strawberry growers in particular.

As a result, Australian strawberry growers adjacent to their own markets are finding it extremely difficult to compete with the New Zealand fruit grown and flown across the Tasman. The explanation is not as simple as saying that the New Zealand labour market is lower per hour in cost than the Australian labour market; it goes much wider and is more serious than that. Has the Minister been aware of this problem? If so, will he use his good offices to urge the Federal Government to introduce plant variety rights for horticultural crops so that we can catch up as quickly as possible?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am aware of the issue of plant variety rights. It is a vexed issue with very good arguments on both sides, particularly in relation to the strength of the argument against, put to me quite extensively in the field crop area by practical farmers and, in fact, by farmers who are members of this Parliament. The arguments are not so strong in the area of horticulture. The Federal Government has investigated this area and, in fact another investigation is being conducted at the moment under Professor Alex Lazenby, who is the Vice-chancellor of the University of Tasmania. During meetings of the Agricultural Council I have asked that, when plant variety rights are being investigated, the less contentious area of horticulture should be investigated first. I believe that, if it is tackled in that way, we are more likely to achieve some resolution of the problem, rather than tackling the issue as a whole and including field crops, because there is a very wide diversion of opinion in that area within the farming community and industry organisations.

Mr LEWIS: I take it that the Minister will encourage the Federal Minister for Agriculture to use haste in introducing legislation for plant variety rights in horticultural crops so that the 4 000-odd people who currently remain employed in the berry industry and their employers can remain in employment and viable and not go down the gurgler, as happened during the late 1940s, during the 1950s and into the early 1960s. During that period the national berry fruit production in this State and in this country was abysmal by comparison to its potential. It was only with the introduction of new technology and the development of completely new technology in irrigation that the industry was able to get back on its feet without assistance from the Government and re-establish itself.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have just stated what I have done. I have asked the Federal Minister that any inquiry conducted gives priority to the horticultural area, because that appears to be the area of least contention. I do not see that I can do more than that. I will be interested to read the results of Professor Lazenby's inquiry and his recommendations.

Mr LEWIS: I turn to the international division line. Can the Minister inform the Committee of the extent to which reimbursement for that outlay of \$204 000 proposed for the coming year is likely to be achieved? Will the Minister provide the Committee with the current programs in which the department's SAGRIC enterprise is engaged to which, presumably, the funds are applied?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will not give all the details but simply the headings and the total contract values. In Jordan there is the Australian dryland farming project phase II, with a total contract value of \$2 064 000, and estimated outgoings for April 1985 to March 1986 of \$641 833. In Indonesia there is the polytechnic education project, with a total contract value of \$11 700 000, and estimated outgoings this year of \$1 750 566. In Tunisia there is the national cadastral survey project, which has a total contract value of \$380 471, and estimated outgoings for 1985-86 of \$350 000. In Pakistan there is the feedlot management contract, with a total contract value of \$543 862, and estimated outgoings for 1985-86 of \$37 126. In Malaysia, there is the bulk handling of paddy rice, with a total contract value of \$343 143, and estimated outgoings for 1985-86 of \$142 687.

Other projects and consultancies conducted in 1984-85 include a pasture agronomist in China, a medic agronomist in Morocco, a land use study in Uruguay, a Jiengxi red soil project in China, and a Daluchistan project identification in Pakistan. I think that gives the honourable member some idea of what is happening in this area. If the honourable member wants more detail about what is occurring in rela-

tion to those projects, I shall be happy to supply that information.

Mr Gent: I can probably address the honourable member's question with regard to the figures shown in the yellow book. Those figures represent only the expenditure and receipts covering the cost of salaries of State seconded officers to the international division of the Department of Agriculture. The six State funded officers and their associated operating costs are responsible for all State service activities associated with South Australia's international agricultural activities. In addition, those officers together with officers and employees of SAGRIC International are responsible for the operation of this State company.

Since 1979 SAGRIC International has secured contracts to South Australia worth in excess of \$30 million, and it has been responsible for the creation of more than 200 man years of direct employment. As SAGRIC International becomes more firmly established, it is planned that State funded officers and associated operating costs will increasingly be borne by the company.

Mr LEWIS: Given that the company is making a profit, where does that profit go? The outgoings are less than the incomings. If that is so, do we find that that goes into general revenue or does the department get it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My understanding is that the profits are held in reserve by the company. It does not go into general revenue and is not paid out to the shareholders unfortunately of whom I am one; the member for Alexandra was one at one stage. It is held in the reserves by the company SAGRIC International.

Mr LEWIS: What is to be its fate?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a matter for the shareholders. I cannot bind the shareholders of this company in the future as to what they will do with it. One can make an assumption and the assumption will be that it will be used to continually market and develop more projects so that more South Australian expertise is sold overseas and more South Australian goods are sold overseas. The company is not meant to be a company that makes millions of dollars (for example, the Department of Woods and Forests) that go into general revenue. If we ever get to that position, that will be very nice, but I think that is a long way down the track. The company is a facilitator to enable South Australian industry to be involved in overseas projects.

Mr LEWIS: There are two or three aspects of that operation that I am concerned about. It is unique and on moral grounds alone justified as an extension of information from this society of man to other societies of man—other countries, other Governments—wherein the consequence is the overall improvement of prosperity and better nutrition for people at large. Acknowledging that point, and notwithstanding that point, I do not think it is good enough to go on pushing nuts into hollow logs for ever or, for that matter, planting nuts out in the nursery and expecting them to grow into bigger and bigger nut trees without there being, as there must be in the private sector, some contribution in return to the source from which the risk money first came. In this instance, that was the State Treasury.

I do not expect, nor accept, that it would be legitimate for any profits made by SAGRIC to simply go into general revenue. Could those profits so obtained not be used to recompense the department and the beneficiaries of the extension services and expertise of the department who have missed out on the skills of those officers during this development phase? They have not been utilised in this State; they have not been here to expand the gross national product or that portion of it which comes from primary industry in South Australia over the last 10 or 15 years—they have been overseas. Now there is some yield being obtained from their services, and I believe that that ought to be applied to

an improvement of the extension services that might otherwise have been made available by those personnel to the rural community in South Australia. Does the Minister agree with that point?

In addition to that, further down the track, I want to see SAGRIC doing more of what it has begun doing in recent times, and that is competing on a fair basis with other providers of professional expertise. I can think of a couple of companies and a number of other consultants, companies like IACM and Farmworld, who are capable of employing the same kind of expertise on a contract basis as the department has seconded to SAGRIC. Presently, SAGRIC has several advantages, one of which is the inside running with the Minister of the day on anything that comes up, but in addition to that it has cost advantages over private enterprise outfits. Is it the Government's intention to enable fairer competition between private sector agricultural consulting companies and SAGRIC in the future? My earlier question concerned the recompense to South Australian agriculture for information forgone while officers of the department were away overseas.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member takes something of a narrow view of benefits to agriculture. I do not think that there is any doubt—in fact, I am surprised that it is even argued—that SAGRIC International has been of considerable benefit generally to agriculture in this State. I reject the rather narrow view that the honourable member holds. When people are engaged, employees of the department are taken on by SAGRIC International, their costs are reimbursed by SAGRIC International. They are charged to the project. It is on a purely commercial basis. The alleged loss of their expertise to South Australian farmers I would argue is minimal or nil. There are good and sufficient specialists within the department to carry out the normal functions of the department, so I just do not accept the honourable member's very narrow view of the benefit to agriculture. When some of these agronomists, for example, return from a spell overseas in certain areas of the world, their interaction with the people in those areas immeasurably broadens and improves that individual, again to the benefit of South Australian agriculture and South Australian farmers.

So, I would not like to think that the only way that you could demonstrate the benefits of SAGRIC International is to look at the balance sheet, although I am very happy for the balance sheet to be examined. It is a very healthy balance sheet. The risk capital to which the honourable member referred that the State put in amounts to \$3. The shareholders' funds are \$3. I think the Deputy Premier, the Premier and I, as the shareholders, or our predecessors as the shareholders contributed \$1 each, and that is the only risk. It may have been the member for Alexandra's \$1.

Mr LEWIS: That trivialises it.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It does not trivialise it at all. The honourable member was talking about capital that had been put in.

Mr LEWIS: Cash up front.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is right. The cash up front was \$3. The working capital that the company has I would argue is a tremendous investment for this State and I would argue also has been returned many times over in the experience given to departmental personnel, in the sale overseas of South Australian produced seeds, for example, and other goods. I am absolutely delighted, as I am sure the previous Minister was, with the operation of SAGRIC International. Everybody in South Australia ought to be, too. Those very few farmers who seem to have a somewhat jaundiced view of SAGRIC International I believe take a very narrow view of what the South Australian Department of Agriculture ought to be involved in.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I put on record my support for the view that SAGRIC International is a worthy arm of the Minister's portfolio and of the Government of this State, but I indicate and will do so in more detail to my colleague later that he has been substantially misled by the Minister when the Minister suggests that the original \$3 registration of the company was the only up-front payment by the Government. Until 1979 it was not the policy of the Government in its interaction with SAGRIC International to necessarily make a profit on its projects generally or on any one of its projects in particular. That policy was adopted for the first time in 1979-82.

I do not know, but I would like to think that a policy of cost recovery on each of the projects entered into has remained under the present Government, but certainly in the early years of SAGRIC International's activities there were substantial cash losses but, in my view, overall State agriculture returns from those various investments. However, I do not want to pursue that subject at great length.

In view of the Minister's several years experience in the position and his long-term awareness of the commitments given to the South-East dairy industry before the 1982 State election by the Labor Party, there is rather an urgent need to get this matter of concern between the two associations cleaned up. Bearing in mind that, according to the agreed program of the Government and the Opposition for the sittings of the Parliament, we have two full weeks of sittings for the balance of this calendar year after this Committee gets up next week, does he believe that the issue can be resolved by the industry, together with the Minister's assistance at next Tuesday's meeting and/or subsequent meetings to avoid this legislation threat? If he does not believe that it can be resolved in that period, can we then assume that he will still have legislation in place and through the two Houses by the end of the session—that is, the session prior to our going to the polls?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I take very mild exception to the member for Alexandra's suggestion that I had misled, if not the Committee, at least the member for Mallee in my previous remarks. I would not like that word to go through unchallenged. Of course, I did nothing of the sort. I am aware of the Parliamentary program and of the coming election. I am happy to repeat the previous two answers that I have given on this issue if the honourable member wishes me to do so.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I do not recall your saying that, if resolution of the subject cannot be achieved within the period embracing the remaining days of sitting of the House, you will introduce legislation this session and anticipate having it through. I do not recall the Minister's going into that issue. If he did, can he reaffirm the position? If it is not resolved in the meantime, does he anticipate having legislation in the House in this session and through—that is, before we go to the polls?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It seems a bit of a pity, but I will have to go through the issue again for the benefit of the honourable member. The Government's position is very clear: we hope that an agreement can be reached between the two parties. If the agreement cannot be reached the Government will introduce legislation into this Parliament. The honourable member also went on to ask for the first time whether we can have that legislation through both Houses before the election. The Government does not have the numbers to guarantee that anything goes through the Legislative Council. I would be very interested, if and when that legislation is introduced, in the attitude of the majority in the Legislative Council. It will certainly make for some interesting debate.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I take it that the Minister does not want to make a commitment in this Committee

as to whether he will introduce legislation in this Parliament before the next election?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Minister has for the third time, and now for the fourth time, given a commitment absolutely that if the two parties concerned do not reach agreement—

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: By when?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: By when the Government is at the position of stating that any further discussion between the two is not likely to reach agreement.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Do you take that position to be this calendar year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I hope that they reach agreement tomorrow.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: So do we, but that is not the question. Do you anticipate that resolution of the subject will be achieved or legislation will be introduced this calendar year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I hope that agreement will be reached this year. If it is clear that agreement will not be reached at any time—this year or next year—legislation will be introduced.

Mr GUNN: Can the Minister advise the Committee whether the wrangle over the sale of the land at Sims Farm, which took a long time to reach any formal satisfactory conclusion, is now completed and that the land will now permanently be made available for agricultural education purposes in that area, or can the Minister bring us up to date on whether there are any further developments in relation to this matter?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There have been no further developments except the one that I am sure that the honourable member is aware of. I cannot state categorically. I cannot bind people into the future that the land will stay with the Department of Agriculture, but it is certainly this Government's intention that it stay under the control of the Department of Agriculture and that a committee of interested persons in the Cleve area will come to some arrangement with the department later this year to use the remaining part of Sims Farm which the Education Department does not already own and which is used by the Cleve Area School for its agriculture studies, and that that committee will come to an agreement with the department to see that the remaining portion of Sims Farm is used generally for the benefit of agricultural education in that region.

Mr GUNN: Will the Minister advise us whether, in the view of his department and his officers, the TB and brucellosis eradication program is on schedule and whether TB and brucellosis will be completely eradicated by the due date? In particular, what stage has the program reached on those cattle stations that are currently administered as part of the Pitjantjatjara lands?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly, as regards South Australia I anticipate that there will be no problem in reaching the target date and that South Australia will be free of and declared free of these diseases at the appropriate time. It is on schedule and we expect the target to be reached.

With regard to Australia as a whole, that is a different thing. There are some very significant problems in the Northern Territory and in the north of Queensland and Western Australia. From memory, the target is 1992 when, hopefully, Australia will be free of the disease. However, having very briefly seen some of the country up there, I am aware of some of the problems they will have in achieving that target. It has been decided by the Agricultural Council that the target date will not be altered and everybody is working with goodwill and intent to reach that date, although it will be difficult in the northern areas.

Mr GUNN: The biological control of salvation jane has attracted a lot of attention—enjoying popularity in some

sections of the State and not others—such as apiarists. Has the program been implemented, where will the insects first be released, and will it cover the whole of the State, in time?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The question is vexed. The South Australian Government has taken a very firm position. Notwithstanding that the apiarists and some pastoralists in the northern area of the State may suffer some economic loss, it will be to the overall benefit of the State for salvation jane to be controlled. I am informed that the best method is the biological control of the plant.

The honourable member would be aware of all the hassles that the CSIRO has gone through in attempting to control salvation jane biologically. Legislation has had to be prepared and I cannot say if it has been introduced or passed federally, but complementary legislation is being prepared to be introduced into this Parliament as soon as possible.

The IAC is also conducting an inquiry at the moment; in fact, two or three weeks ago they met here in Adelaide. On one of the days of the inquiry I met two gentlemen in the lift who said, 'Hello Minister'. They looked like rural gentlemen so I warmly said 'Hello' to them. They then said, 'We're going down to the IAC inquiry on salvation jane'; to which I replied, 'That's good. I think we'll win that one.' They said, 'We are beekeepers.' As they were on the opposite side of the argument, it was very frosty in the lift for the rest of the way down.

I have no technical knowledge of the matter but I am advised by the department that it will be a control and not an eradication and that the control is likely to be more effective in the wetter areas of the State, where the biggest problem exists. It is a real problem in the South-East, and the control will be more effective in those areas rather than in the drier areas of the State, as people with technical knowledge in the Department have advised me.

The cost to agriculture in the State was estimated to be about \$30 million a year, whereas the benefit to the apiarists and to the northern pastoralists was about \$3 million. I would not like to be held to those figures, as they are from memory.

Mr LEWIS: Again, I refer the Minister to the topic of the international division. At no time did I impute that the international division was an unworthy concept from its inception nor that any of its officers, by any degree, were less than competent. They are thoroughly competent and have demonstrated that over the years they have been involved. The Minister misunderstood what I was saying. During the time those officers were out of South Australia, what they might otherwise have been doing in the way of extension could not be done. It simply meant that the additional research and extension work which might have been done and which therefore would have contributed to an improvement in the efficiency of the productivity of agriculture in general, as a consequence of their contribution here, has not been realised.

If the proposition I have just put is not valid, the Minister must look closely at the whole function of extension in agriculture. Which additional officer becomes the marginal number at which the break even point has occurred becomes a legitimate question. If those officers seconded to overseas programs were unnecessary, does he then say that the remaining number were precisely and exactly the number necessary? If he does not say that, then my former proposition—namely, that we could have benefited from their services while they were away, had they been home—is valid. Is there not some catch-up recompense in effort generated and paid for by the profits of SAGRIC that cannot now be realised by the rural community, who have been waiting for a number of research and/or extension programs to get under-way?

It is not that they have been cut out altogether, it is just that the whole process slowed down somewhat as numbers of officers were seconded to the overseas division. If we are to get the practical illustration of the benefits of the new technology we develop in this State proved in the field by the farmers in this State and then made possible to be exported after that, we need to have some brain-power put back in over and above what we have put in already, to ensure that that continuing process of the generation of new ideas and proving up the new technologies out in the paddock can occur. How can cash income best be deployed from SAGRIC for the benefit of the South Australian rural producers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have very little to add to the reply I gave earlier; it is basically the same question and I have the same reply. It is a very narrow view of profit and loss to agriculture by suggesting that, if an extension officer or an agronomist in the department is working overseas on some project, there is in total a loss to agriculture in South Australia. If one takes one part of the equation, then the answer is 'Yes'; however, it would be a very narrow view, because there are compensating benefits to agriculture in South Australia from the international division and from the activities of extension officers, researchers or agronomists or whatever working in the international division.

If we want to be narrow and close the argument we can say, 'Yes, there is a loss.' I believe that the honourable member appreciates that we must look in a much broader way and count the benefits to South Australian agriculture to see whether they offset the losses where an agronomist is missing or is replaced by a less experienced agronomist. It is a profit or loss situation. I would argue that the balance is very good and that the benefits to agriculture, albeit to seed growers in the South-East when, say, there is a gap relating to the presence of an agronomist at Minnipa or somewhere else, outweigh the disadvantages or that they are in some kind of harmony. If we focus on one person being overseas, to close the argument I will say 'Yes'.

I also point out that the funds that have been provided by SAGRIC International, funds that have been earned from overseas project contracts, have been used to recruit and train a number of agronomists. This was seen to be appropriate in view of the contributions to overseas projects by a number of experienced district agronomists, so some of the funds that have been earned by SAGRIC International have been used to train agronomists. In a more direct sense, the farming community and the department have been well recompensed for the fact that from time to time some personnel have been seconded into the international division.

Mr LEWIS: Given that interest rates now being charged on loan funds by the rural assistance division no longer take account of ability to pay and that they simply reflect the market rate, in the main, how long will it be before the Minister and the Government decide to simply abolish the rural assistance branch and guarantee the loans made by, say, the State Bank, since anyone who happens to be other than a welfare case in rural terms cannot obtain money any cheaper through the rural assistance branch than through a bank?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is quite simply incorrect. A considerable number of farmers in this State are enjoying loans from the rural assistance branch at less than the market rate. That is a fact. There is no intention to abolish the rural assistance branch. Mr Handscombe will elaborate on what finance, particularly concessional finance, is available to primary producers in this State, and he may be able to say how many primary producers are receiving concessions.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: With due respect (and I do not want to take a point of order), I recognise the importance of having this sort of material on the record, but as it is of a statistical nature (as outlined by the Minister)—

The CHAIRMAN: I am not sure that it is of a statistical nature.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: That is what the Minister said—he referred to the amount of finance and the number of farmers receiving it.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Minister wants to insert material in *Hansard* and if he assures me that it is of a statistical nature it can be so inserted, but it is up to the Minister to answer as he wishes.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a very good idea. We will produce tables of the number of farmers who are enjoying concessional interest rates and what those rates are, just to disprove the ridiculous statement made by the member for Mallee.

Mr GREGORY: Millipedes are an ever increasing problem in Adelaide. What is the latest proposal for millipede control?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This is a vexed question, one with which the department has been wrestling for some time. That was also the case when the member for Alexandra reigned as Minister of Agriculture. We had an arrangement with the CSIRO whereby Dr G.H. Baker, a staff member, recommended that the best method of control of millipedes was a parasitic fly from Portugal. The South Australian Government, via the Department of Agriculture, financed Dr Baker's investigation into this parasitic fly over some time. I believe that we financed a trip to Portugal and another trip to South America to enable Dr Baker to do further research and collect flies at the larvae stage. After many tens of thousands of dollars had been spent and after two or three years, this proved to be unsuccessful, unfortunately, so we have had to take a different tack. We have allocated \$102 000 in this budget.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: They could not get the temperature of the partners right so that they could breed.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I can assure the member for Alexandra that he will have more to complain about if he interjects.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Additional funds of \$102 000 have been allocated to the department for the biological control of Portugese millipedes in South Australia. A senior entomologist will be stationed in Portugal for two years to study the natural history of the parasitic fly and to continue shipments of the fly to Adelaide. This officer will be assisted by a Portugese technical officer. In addition, it is proposed that an entomologist and a technical officer will be employed at the Northfield research laboratories to receive shipments of millipedes and to develop techniques for rearing the flies and parasites. In addition to the biological control research, it is proposed that the Adelaide based staff accelerate the present research on physical, chemical and cultural control in Adelaide suburbs.

In summary, we are allocating considerable sums and employing additional staff to work on the biological control of the pest and to determine techniques to assist householders to keep the pest out of their houses and to do what they can on their property to keep the insect under some kind of control.

We can only hope that eventually we can transfer this parasitic fly from Portugal to South Australia to control the millipedes. It will be carefully done so as not to introduce a biological control agent that turns out to be a bigger pest than the one we are trying to control.

Mr GREGORY: Sightings of European wasps are becoming more frequent. Can the Minister indicate the action the Government is undertaking to reduce their incidence?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The European wasp is another pest that unfortunately has come to South Australia. It is causing problems, particularly in the Adelaide hills. One of the problems we have in controlling this pest, unlike fruit-fly, is that it is not attracted to a certain type of food. With fruit fly we can set traps and attract them to a particular area.

Mr LEWIS: Bait them.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, we can bait them, as the member for Mallee puts it. Unfortunately, we cannot do that with the European wasp, which is basically a scavenger that will eat anywhere; and it will make its nest anywhere, even in the ground. It is a difficult insect to detect. The European wasp is endemic in the Eastern States to such a degree that it is not a practical proposition to keep the wasp out of South Australia. The European wasp is easily transported to this State, and once here it is difficult to eradicate.

We are making funds available through the Local Government Department to local councils to operate control measures in their own areas.

There are one or two ways we can go. In New South Wales until recently it was a State Government responsibility to try to control the European wasp. A large section in the Agriculture Department of New South Wales was engaged full time in trying to control this pest. However, even with the best will in the world and with lots of money it failed dismally.

Earlier this year the New South Wales department gave up and said that it was all too hard, that it could not be done, that it was impossible. Rather than establishing another bureaucracy, we have told local councils that we will help them financially to control their own areas. Instead of the department running around the State trying to find the wasp, individual councils that are ideally located to look after their own districts will have the responsibility of controlling this pest, and finances have been allocated to assist them to do so. There have been suggestions that we should pay a bounty on wasp nests, that if we did that people would be keener to look for them and destroy them for the bounty.

Mr LEWIS: That only encourages the breeding of dingoes—

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. That idea has been rejected by the Government, because we did not want children looking for these pests, which can be dangerous. In Australia there is no history of anyone dying from the sting of a European wasp, although the species has been around for about 25 years. Whilst it has been a nuisance, it is hardly like the killer bee, which makes the headlines around Christmas when there is not much other news about.

The department is producing written information for local councils and individual householders so that they can recognise the wasp and know what action to take. We have also run seminars for pest control officers; also, for officers in the Department for Environment and Planning so that they can recognise them in national parks and know what action to take. Whilst it is not an agricultural pest in the strict sense, it is something that the department has an interest in, and I believe it has discharged its responsibilities efficiently.

Mr GREGORY: I notice in the line estimates that although \$30 000 was allocated for a study on relocating the East End Market only \$8 500 was spent. Provision has been made for a further \$3 000 this year. What is the current position in relation to relocating the East End Market?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: When the Government decided to employ a consultant to undertake a study on the market, there had been various studies previously. It seemed to the Government that the issue was drifting somewhat. We decided to employ a consultant and \$30 000 was allocated.

However, we asked Eric Kime, Chairman of the market authority in New South Wales, to do a study for us.

The New South Wales Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries kindly agreed to allow Mr Kime to do that study at no cost, other than expenses. Of course, we were delighted and we saved funds that we had allocated. That report was released and everyone who had an interest commented on it to me. The final Cabinet decision was relayed to all and sundry and everyone will be aware of that, without my going into it. The position at the moment is that I, or Dr John Radcliffe on my behalf, on accepting proposals from interested parties as to how they would like to assist the Government and the industry in relocating the market to the area in Pooraka that has been widely publicised (not the Samcor paddocks).

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: On 18 September 1985 the Federal Minister for Primary Industry furnished the Opposition with a funding schedule for the National Soil Con-

servation Program for 1985-86. As statistical detail is provided, I seek leave to have that statistical information inserted in *Hansard* without my reading it. It identifies States, their respective allocations and the programs applicable to each.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the honourable member assure me that it is purely statistical information?

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Yes, Mr Chairman.

Leave granted.

National Soil Conservation Program Approved States' Component

	\$
New South Wales	973 000
Victoria	533 000
Queensland	738 000
South Australia	422 000
Western Australia	703 000
Tasmania	186 000
Northern Territory	230 000
ACT	16 500

NEW STATES' COMPONENT PROJECTS FOR 1985-86

NEW SOUTH WALES	\$
1. Gungoondra Gap Catchment Project	9 500
2. Western Rangeland Management Study	68 400
3. Cookamidgera Catchment Project	26 800
4. Coastal Dune Management Study	20 000
	<hr/>
	124 000
VICTORIA	\$
1. Inventory of Soil Conservation Needs	43 000
2. Lucerne Project—Dryland Salinity	35 000
3. Soil Management in Relation to Soil Structure Study	5 000
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	83 000
QUEENSLAND	\$
1. Mackeys Creek Catchment Project	36 300
2. Upper Burdekin Grazing/Erosion Study	38 400
3. Western Downs Land Assessment and Management Study	15 600
4. Kioma-Boogara Catchment Project	25 100
5. Western Mulga Rangeland Erosion Study	34 872
	<hr/>
	150 272
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	\$
1. Regional Workshops for Soil Conservation District Committees	11 250
2. Land Reclamation—North Stirlings	33 200
3. Research Inputs, Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra, Carnarvon	31 100
4. Moora/Three Springs Technical Support	32 160
5. Busselton-Margaret River Land Capability Study	20 800
6. Hose Levels to Agricultural Colleges	2 600
7. Morowa Land Management	34 000
8. Evaluation and Comparison of Broadbased Banks and Spreader Banks	16 000
9. Regeneration of Native Bush/Saline Areas Wickiepin	24 800
10. Shrub Seed Harvester	19 000
11. Optimum Farm Management Practices	22 250
	<hr/>
	247 160
TASMANIA	\$
1. Conservation Cropping of Krasnozems	25 000
2. Guidelines for Road Construction	16 000
3. Channel and Gulf Erosion Control, Flinders Island	5 000
4. Soil Salinity on King Island	9 000
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	55 000
NORTHERN TERRITORY	\$
1. Gulf District—Land System Survey	54 000
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	54 000

NEW NATIONAL COMPONENT PROJECTS FOR 1985-86

Organisation	Project Short Title	Amount \$
Resource Consulting Services University of Sydney Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education	● Economics of Soil Conservation in Tropical Croplands	8 500
	● Stubble Decomposition	6 350
	● Strip Cropping Guidelines	21 964
	● National Soil Conservation Short Course	21 000
University of Tasmania	● School in Soil Management	6 000
	● Landholders Group Course on Conservation	2 260
University of New England	● Soil Productivity Modelling	18 592

Organisation	Project Short Title	Amount \$
CSIRO	● Soil Erosion Risk and Direct Drilling of Wheat	28 000
	● Soil Erosion in the Burdekin Catchment	26 316
	● Farmers' Self-Help Conservation Projects	5 500
	● "The Childers Lesson" TV Film-Video	10 027
Land Management Society of WA	● Soil Management-Productivity and Erosion Susceptibility	39 940
Toowoomba Erosion Awareness Movement with Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education	● NSC Community Awareness Program	34 300
Soil Conservation Service of NSW	● Queensland Conservation Tillage Report	14 000
	● Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection	30 000
Australian Conservation Foundation	● Conservation Volunteer Program	17 700
Peter Wylie, Agricultural Consultant Dalby	● ATCV Community Contact Officer	20 000
Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group		
Greening Australia—Queensland Inc		
Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers		

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: The allocations for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory, and the ACT are provided in the schedule. South Australia is to receive \$422 000 for the current period, but we are the only State in the document that does not provide program details. Why is it that the Commonwealth has not been provided with details of South Australia's soil conservation program for this year when all that material is available to the Commonwealth in relation to the other States?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Commonwealth has been provided with those details, and we have no idea why it was not included in the press release.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Will the Minister follow that up so that public circulation of South Australia's details are available?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I refer to plant research, and I note that there is a substantial allocation for that line in the budget. In view of the falling price of barley and the prospective fall in the price of wheat in the near future, what specific provision has been made by the department for researching alternative grain crops, particularly grain/legume crops which we now learn have not only a ready market but indeed a lucrative market?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will supply that information to the honourable member in writing.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I refer to overseas visits by the Minister. I notice that about \$50 000 was provided and expended last financial year to cover a rather extensive visit by the Minister and presumably his wife and an officer or officers to several countries in the east and the Middle East.

Simply because the figure is substantially higher than the cost of two overseas visits by his predecessor on two separate occasions to an equally extensive number of countries including India, the Middle East, Rome, London and several other Mediterranean countries, will the Minister provide a detailed account of the costs incurred and the expenditure involved in his apparent single but extensive tour during 1984-85, and details of what is proposed by the Minister for the current year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Although the line shows \$52 000, the honourable member is quite incorrect. That expenditure was not for a single trip by the Minister. The breakdown of expenditure for that line in 1984-85 included a trip to Czechoslovakia by Dr P.G. Allen, costing \$1 000; a trip to Singapore by Dr P.D. White, costing \$2 000; a trip to Malaysia by Dr I.R. Lewis, costing \$4 000; a trip to Spain by Dr G. Ryland, costing \$1 000; a trip to Europe by Mr A. Barr, costing \$5 000 (\$3 000 of which was recovered from industry and repaid to consolidated revenue); a trip to Hong Kong for my wife and me and my ministerial assistant, costing \$5 000; and a trip for my wife and me and my ministerial assistant to the Middle East, costing \$34 000.

Mr GREGORY: Can the Minister give details of new positions within the Department of Agriculture for 1985-86?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is quite an extensive list of new positions, and I seek leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the Minister assure the Chair that it is purely statistical?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, Mr Chairman. Leave granted.

New Initiatives—1985-1986

The following new positions were agreed to by Cabinet following the decision to reimburse the operating costs of the Rural Assistance Branch from the new S.A. Rural Industry Adjustment and Development Fund.

Location	Resource Protection—Eyre and Northern Regions	Commencement Date
Minnipa	R.O. Plant Protection SO-2	1.7.85
Lock	District Agronomist SO-2	1.8.85
Streaky Bay	Soil Conservation Officer SO-2	1.10.85
Minnipa	Farm Mechanisation Officer SO-2	1.12.85
Northfield	Clerical Officer CO-1 (3/5 F.T.E.)	1.7.85
Pt Augusta	Livestock Adviser SO-2	1.4.86
Pt Augusta	R.O. Beef SO-2	1.6.86
Pt Augusta	R.O. Sheep SO-1	1.6.86
Northfield	R.O. Weeds SO-1	1.4.86
Pt Augusta	Clerk CO-1 (3/5 F.T.E.)	1.7.85
	Water Resource Management	
Loxton	R.O. Soils SO-1	1.7.85
Loxton	R.O. Salinity SO-2	1.7.85
Loxton	R.O. Crop Agronomy SO-1	1.7.85
Grenfell Centre	Computer Systems Officer CS-2	15.8.85
Loxton	Water Use Adviser SO-1 (Riverland)	1.10.85
Loxton	Water Use Adviser SO-1 (Riverland)	1.10.85
Naracoorte/Keith	Irrigation Agronomist SO-1	1.4.86

Location	Resource Protection—Eyre and Northern Regions	Commencement Date
Plant Services Mt Barker	Water Use Technologist SO-2	1.4.86
	Water Use Adviser SO-1 (Mt Barker) Horticultural Marketing Development	1.4.86
Loxton Adelaide D.O.	Horticultural Marketing Officer SO-1	1.4.86
	Horticultural Marketing Officer SO-1	1.10.85

Mr LEWIS: I refer to payments to the University of Adelaide for cereal breeding. What happened to Roseworthy?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Minister of Education now handles that area.

Mr LEWIS: I am referring to the cereal breeding program.

Dr Radcliffe: There is an annual research grant to Roseworthy Agricultural College, which is under the responsibility of the Minister of Education. A three person committee currently chaired by Miss Di Davidson of AACM reviews research proposals from the college. Two projects are currently being funded as part of the State research grant to Roseworthy College. The major project is for cereal breeding, which is a well conducted project continuing at the same level of funding as has applied in recent years. The other smaller project deals with winemaking.

Mr LEWIS: I take it that the cereal breeding program at Roseworthy is continuing?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Sirex wood wasp, Portuguese millipedes, European earwigs, Argentine ants and possibly others are currently not on the noxious insect list. Has the Minister been asked to identify those varieties on the noxious insect list and, if not, will he consider doing so?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As far as I am aware, we have not received such a request.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Is the Minister prepared to consider doing that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will certainly have the position investigated by the department, and I will take some advice on it.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: The subject has been raised by local government in the Barossa region of late and I understood from material furnished to me that it has been drawn to the attention of the department but obviously not yet to the attention of the Minister. However, I am grateful on behalf of that Barossa region to have the subject investigated, and would be happy to provide the Minister with the material that has been provided to me on it.

My next question relates to funding assistance as specifically requested by a number of fire victims in the southern Adelaide hills. It may not be necessary in this instance for the rural industry assistance officer to shift places, because it is a matter of general policy about which I raise the question in this instance. During the Ash Wednesday two fires, as the Minister would well know, prior to his becoming Minister of Agriculture, there were a large number of primary producers, householders and hobby farmers in the southern hills region who lost their homes and in many instances had quite devastating damage done to their properties. The loss of livestock and fencing was really quite significant.

One of those property owners, a Mr Dunn, a councillor on the Strathalbyn District Council at the moment and previously on the Meadows District Council, took civil action against ETSA and indeed won his case. I gather that at one stage shortly after the judgment was handed down, long after the hearings had concluded, there was some suggestion that ETSA might appeal against the judgment. I am not so sure whether that idea has dissolved or not, but it

appears to be becoming fairly historic. In the meantime, advice has been given that further litigation will proceed based on that precedent of the single case already heard.

In the meantime, a large number of those people do not have a cash flow. Indeed, all of the cash that they have been able to muster has been put towards their own personal insurance where it applied; restocking and the rebuilding of fences, sheds and homes in some cases has exhausted their funding resources. In some cases, requests have been made to various departments of the system for assistance. One of the areas of request that I am aware of involves the lodgment of applications to the Rural Industry Assistance Branch for carry on finance and consolidation of debts. Information from my constituents, most of whom are from that region I have mentioned, indicates that their applications have been unsuccessful because they have frankly failed to meet the criteria under the respective assistance Acts, particularly the Primary Producers, Emergency Assistance Act and the Rural Industry Assistance Act that we have.

I would like the Minister to utilise whatever officers or opportunity may be at his disposal to try and derive some form of carry on assistance for those particular victims, because the interim period (that is, between the time that the fire occurred and the anticipated judgment of their respective cases) could well drift out over a period of years. In the meantime, there is quite serious deterioration of living standards. Indeed, reports of recent time indicate deterioration of mental health within families in that region, and collectively the trauma being experienced by unsuccessful applicants at the Rural Industry Assistance Branch seems to demand some very close and sensitive attention.

It may be that some other welfare division or some other arm of the Government might be utilised in this instance.

I would like the Minister through his Rural Industry Assistance Branch to try and derive some method of helping primary producers or those involved in that practice to obtain their assistance at Agriculture Department level rather than be hived off or directed off to other forms of welfare. From the information that I have received, there is a good deal of trauma prevailing in that southern region—that is, south of Kuitpo and Meadows in particular. I leave that subject with the Minister and make no apologies for raising it at this time, although I do not expect that any specific answer might be given about those cases or the sample of cases that I have outlined. I invite the Minister to comment on that if he wishes to.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would like to respond to it immediately. If the honourable member gives me some specific examples—some names and circumstances—I will certainly have them investigated and see what we can do for the people whose names and circumstances he gives to us.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Perhaps as the invitation has been extended by the Minister, I will mention the Inkster case, which from my discussion with the people in that region would seem to be a fair example of the kind of cases that prevail within that immediate region. The Inkster case details (in the form of the applications and correspondence exchanged between the department and that family)

are on record and I will be very happy to provide the Minister with the added information that we have.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would welcome the additional information that the honourable member may have. When he supplies that to us, I will have that particular case reviewed.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Mr Chairman, I take it that we are going to try and conclude the lines by vote?

The CHAIRMAN: It does not look like it to me. It is up to you. At 6 p.m. we will suspend the sitting until 7.30.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Is the Minister aware of any evidence of dingoes anywhere within the out of bounds area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Personally, I am not.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: Could you make inquiries with the department to determine whether there is any evidence of dingoes being inside the dog fence?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will ask the officers in the department whether they have any knowledge of that.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: If they do, could you give us any information surrounding the steps being taken to remove them or have them destroyed or whatever other processes that seem to be humane or reasonable?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will find out the 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,
\$1 400 000—Examination declared completed.

Minister of Agriculture, Miscellaneous, \$11 343 000—
Examination declared completed.

[Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.]

Correctional Services, \$34 123 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

Mr D.M. Ferguson

Mr R.J. Gregory

Mr T.R. Groom

Mr I.P. Lewis

Mr J.K.G. Oswald

The Hon. D.C. Wotton

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Labour, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Correctional Services and Minister Assisting the Treasurer.

Departmental Advisers:

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

Mr W.A. Pryor, Director, Support Services, Department of Correctional Services.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination. The member for Murray, would you like to make an opening statement?

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The financial year 1984-85 has been one of significant achievement within the Department of Correctional Services. It has been a period of calm within the prison system and of growth in the area of capital works. The Community Service Order scheme has been extended statewide and is proving to be a significant alternative to imprisonment for less serious crimes. A unit management system has been introduced at Yatala Labour Prison and there has been an increase in the number of staff to allow for extended hours out of cells, the commissioning of the industries complex and the development of an operations unit to cater for hospital watches and escorts. A number of new initiatives for prisoner programs have been developed. These include unaccompanied temporary leave for work release and work experience prior to release, and the development of a fully integrated system of programs with the specific aim of facilitating offenders' return to the community.

The last financial year has seen the beginning of a major capital works expansion within the Department of Correctional Services and this will continue through the present financial year. Funds have been approved for a new medium security prison near Murray Bridge which is due to be completed in late 1987. Work has been proceeding rapidly on the development of the Adelaide Remand Centre, which is expected to be commissioned early in 1986. Contracts for the construction of a new security hospital have been let. The provision of these new facilities at Hillcrest Hospital will enable the existing building (the security hospital at Northfield) to be used for additional prisoner accommodation and bring the capacity of Yatala Prison to the original master plan projection of 225.

A new visiting centre at Yatala Labour Prison is to be completed early next year, and work on the Yatala perimeter security fence is due to finish in October this year. Capital works are also taking place on a smaller scale at Cadell Training Centre and Mount Gambier gaol. The cost of overtime and call-backs remained stable during 1984-85 by comparison with 1983-84. The department has managed through an intensive recruitment and training program to staff all institutions to their fullest as of 20 September 1985 and the allocation to institutions for overtime and call-backs has been reduced significantly for the remainder of the 1985-86 financial year.

The Auditor-General's Report for 1984-85 shows that the average annual cost per prisoner, excluding general administration, has increased from \$31 000 to \$35 000. It should be noted that approximately \$2 000 of this increase is from charges outside the department's control, for example, interest debt servicing. The actual increase should therefore be seen as \$2 000, or 6.5 per cent, which is a very favourable figure when inflation is taken into account. Similarly, Yatala's annual cost per prisoner has been distorted by the heavy increase in external indirect costs, and the need to absorb fixed costs on the reduced number of prisoners due to the redevelopment of B division.

The average number of prisoners at Yatala in 1984-85 was 152, compared to 195 in 1983-84. In order to improve the standard of health care in prisons, the Government has allocated \$300 000 for the commissioning of Yatala's prison infirmary in 1985-86 and \$549 000 for upgrading of prison clinical services in all institutions. Both amounts are under the control of the Prison Clinical Services Branch of Hillcrest Hospital Incorporated and the South Australian Health Commission.

The department has addressed itself to the task of correcting some of the problems highlighted in the Public Accounts Committee Report on Prison Officer Overtime and Absenteeism. As I have already mentioned, staff recruitment for filling of vacant positions has been intensified. As well, cost centres have been involved in the formulation of budgets and much improved reports on the level of call-back and overtime worked in the whole institution or, on an individual basis, are to be forwarded to the institutional management on a regular basis.

The high level of workers compensation cases is still a major concern of the department. The efforts of the workers compensation officer have resulted in a number of prison officers returning to duty or being assigned to other positions. Development of programs and initiatives to improve health and safety conditions will continue to be of the highest priority in 1985-86.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Will the Minister provide figures showing how many prisoners have been released from gaol since the new parole legislation was proclaimed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Between 20 December 1983 and 31 August 1985, 721 prisoners were released from gaol.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: How many people involved in management responsibilities in the administration of the Department of Correctional Services have left that department during the past 12 months? What were the reasons for their leaving? How long had each officer been employed by the department?

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

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the Minister that that information to be included must be with *Hansard* by 18 October.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Recently the Minister supplied information indicating that the average number of people on remand between August 1984 and July 1985 was 175. The Minister has referred to the Adelaide Remand Centre, which is to be commissioned in early 1986 and which I understand will house 165 inmates. That information suggests that the new remand centre will not be capable of taking the number of inmates presently on remand.

The Adelaide Gaol, currently used for housing these prisoners on remand, is, as quickly as possible, to be turned into a tourist attraction and closed as a gaol. I strongly support that move. What other plans does the Government have to house the number of people on remand in excess of those who can be housed in the new remand centre? If one looks at figures from previous years, one can see that the number of inmates can be expected to continue to rise.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The number of prisoners on remand this week is 130, which gives a spare capacity in the remand centre of about 30 beds.

Remand figures do go up and down and the effects of various pieces of Government legislation and the policy of the courts can affect them markedly. The honourable member would be aware that a new Bail Act has recently been introduced and, although it is far too early to make categorical statements, it may have had the effect of reducing the number of remandees considerably.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I do not gain a great deal of comfort from knowing that there are only 130 beds in the last figures that were taken. The fact is that for the 12 months the average was 171. There may be a drop; on the other hand, there may not be. What plans does the Government have to house those people outside of the new remand centre, if it continues to be a problem?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We made the decision on the number of beds in the new remand centre on the best available projections that were available to us. We see no difficulty with the number of remandees that we will have in the State when the remand centre is opened.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Does the Minister have any further information about the likely closing time of the Adelaide Gaol, recognising that it would be necessary to have the new Mobilong gaol completed before any move could be taken? Is it expected that on the completion of the Mobilong gaol the Adelaide Gaol will then close, or are there some other problems before that happens?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There are no problems. Once the remand centre is opened, the winding down of Adelaide Gaol will take place with the transfer of remandees to the new remand centre. When Mobilong is finished, which is expected at the end of 1987, the Adelaide Gaol will be closed, as a gaol.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The Minister recently provided, through the House, some information regarding the community service order scheme and has supplied some details in reply to questions that were asked. Is the Minister satisfied that the Judiciary is using the community services order scheme as effectively as it might? If not, has any action been taken by the Minister to discuss this further with members of the Judiciary?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am confident that the Judiciary is using the community service order scheme wisely and well. We should also remember that it has just been made available to the Judiciary State-wide; we have only just extended that scheme throughout the State during the previous financial year. The last office that was opened was at Ceduna. It will take a couple of years before meaningful figures are available as to the effect the community service order scheme may be having on the prison population. I have no reason to question the effectiveness of the way in which the Judiciary is using the community service order scheme; in fact, all the reports I have had are that it is using it wisely and well.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Will the Minister clarify the situation in regard to AIDS within Yatala? There has been some controversy about this matter through the media for some time. There was a stage when the head of the South Australian prison medical services and the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Norman James, was stated in the newspaper as having confirmed that there were four diagnosed AIDS carriers within Yatala, and at the same time the Minister indicated that there were no diagnosed AIDS carriers. What is the present situation, and are there any diagnosed AIDS carriers in Yatala or in any other prison in South Australia at present? If there are, how many? How many cases of hepatitis B have been confirmed in any of the Correctional Services institutions in South Australia at present?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The statement made by the honourable member is completely incorrect. He said that I denied that there were any AIDS carriers in the prison system, and that is completely incorrect. That is plainly wrong; I have never done that. My position has always been and still is that if any individual, whether the honourable member or anyone else, wants to know about the medical condition of any prisoner, he can take up the matter with

the doctor of those prisoners. We in the Department of Correctional Services are not doctors for the prisoners and we would not give out that information, even if we knew. The Health Commission, through the Hillcrest Hospital, runs the prison medical services, and I can only suggest that the honourable member directs his questions on the prison medical services through the Minister responsible, that is, the Minister of Health. In regard to Correctional Services officers, we have a procedure for dealing with prisoners who have various illnesses, and again that procedure is dictated to us by the Health Commission.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Does that mean that the Minister is not prepared to provide the information I have asked for in regard to the number of AIDS carriers or hepatitis B cases?

The CHAIRMAN: Before the Minister replies, I understood the Minister to say that that question should be directed to the Minister of Health and not to him as Minister of Correctional Services.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: With respect, if the Minister is refusing to give that information, I will go about it in another way. Has the Minister any reason to be concerned at the possibility of prisoners within the system either carrying AIDS or suffering from hepatitis B? I find it staggering that the Minister of Correctional Services, who is, after all, the Minister responsible for those institutions, is not prepared to provide that information but, if he is not prepared to give those statistics, I ask whether he has any concern.

The CHAIRMAN: Before the Minister answers, I would like to say that the honourable member's second question is in order. For ethical reasons, and as the Minister has said, the first question should be directed to the Minister of Health and not to the Minister of Correctional Services. However, I will allow the second question.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The position is as I have stated. The medical care of prisoners is the responsibility of the prison medical service, which is under the administration of the Hillcrest Hospital and reports to the Minister of Health. As Minister of Correctional Services, I have a responsibility to care for prisoners right across the board, those in good health, ill health and so on, purely on the basis of acting on instructions from the Health Commission as to how to deal with a particular prisoner.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I can only repeat what I said previously. I find it staggering that the Minister is not prepared to give that information to this Committee. I recognise the responsibility of the Minister of Health in these matters, but I also recognise the responsibility of the Minister of Correctional Services, (the Minister at the table), in such matters. If the Minister does not know, there is considerable concern within the community about those matters, and I would have thought it appropriate that the Minister would have been able to provide that information to this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister has not refused to give the information. He has said it is not his responsibility. If it is not the Minister's responsibility, I do not believe it is the Committee's responsibility either to endeavour to extract that information.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I guess that is where we beg to differ, because I think the Minister has some responsibility. We recognise that the Northfield Security Hospital infirmary was completed in March 1983 at a capital cost of \$800 000. I understand that it was built to provide secure accommodation for a number of patients. That facility is not yet commissioned. When questions were asked of the Minister of Health—before the Minister tells me that he is

the responsible Minister—the Minister indicated that it is not a high enough priority to be able to provide staff for that facility. Is it of concern to the Minister that that facility is not yet commissioned or being used? What action does he intend to take to ensure that it does reach a stage where it can be used immediately?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The infirmary is run by the prison medical service, which is entirely staffed, financed, administered, operated, etc., by the Health Commission and (through the Health Commission) to the Minister of Health. I am giving a fairly simple explanation to the member for Murray. I cannot understand why he finds it difficult to deal with. I am not sure whether the Minister of Health has appeared before these Estimates Committees. If he has not, then the member for Murray has every opportunity to ask the Minister of Health about staffing arrangements of his offices at the infirmary or any other unit of the health system.

I cannot understand the member for Murray's attitude. It is a very simple concept. There is nothing difficult about it. Those people are recruited, paid for, directed and everything else by the Minister of Health. If the honourable member wants to know anything at all about them, why is it not reasonable for him to ask the Minister of Health? If he were to ask the Minister of Health about prison officers, I am sure he would give a similar answer, but why is he asking me about officers of the Health Commission?

Mr OSWALD: My question relates to cosmetic surgery. I am interested in the Minister's officers, not Health Commission officers. How many inmates from Yatala Labour Prison and Adelaide Gaol have been sent out for cosmetic surgery during the past 12 months? What has been the cost of hospital escorts and hospital watches for those prisoners? How long does a prisoner have to be an inmate to qualify for cosmetic surgery—for example, removal of tattoos, repair of a broken nose, etc?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get those details for the honourable member. However, in the interim I can already indicate that I express some dissatisfaction with the low numbers who go for this surgery, particularly removal of tattoos.

It is something that I would encourage every prisoner who is tattooed and who feels that he would like to get rid of the tattoo to do—in particular, female prisoners. If prisoners believe that their career of crime is behind them and if they were tattooed in a different phase of their life and they want to enter a new one, they will get every encouragement from me to do so. To see the tattoos of some prisoners is quite distressing, especially in the case of the young women. Any encouragement that I can give to have those tattoos removed will be given, on the basis that the fact that they want to have them removed indicates that that is one phase of their life that they have gone through and that they are now entering another. That is to be commended.

Mr OSWALD: I now refer to the Dog Squads. When Correctional Services officers are called on to carry out cell and block searches at Yatala, why does not the department allow (or even insist) on the use of the Dog Squad that is especially trained to sniff out drugs etc., while at Adelaide Gaol the dogs are freely used for this purpose? To illustrate his answer, will the Minister advise the Committee about the number of times and on which dates the dogs have been used within the walls of Yatala in the past 12 months and compare that figure with the number of times and dates on which the dogs have been used within the walls of Adelaide Gaol in the same period?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get that information from the honourable member. In the interim, I want to say that the same prison officers who have given the member those questions have already addressed them to me. I am getting answers for them at the same time. I will certainly give the member his answer directly, rather than doing it through the prison officers who gave the questions to him. There is something of a misunderstanding of the nature and ability of the dogs that we use, particularly in sniffing out drugs.

They are not useful in all situations. I am advised by the handlers of those dogs—one handler in particular, who is a very experienced person—that for them to be effective the area must be totally clear. It is difficult to do that in Yatala. The area must be still preferably for at least 20 minutes to let whatever scents are around settle, and then there are ways of handling the dog in the various areas. Certainly, it is relatively easy to do in some areas of Yatala. The visiting area, when everyone has cleared out, can be left for a while and then the dogs can go through.

One cannot use the dogs in a cell block where lots of people are around and where the air is not still. The dogs are excitable, it is not effective from a sniffing point of view, and it is too dangerous to have dogs where there are people. It is not as simple as people think. Some ill informed people think that one can just walk in with a dog, order a person out of the cell, and run up and down 50 cells like that. It is dangerous and ineffective. I will get the precise figures with some explanations for those figures for the member.

Mr OSWALD: I thank the Minister for undertaking to provide those statistics. However the first part of the question could be answered because it relates to policy, namely, why does the Minister allow or encourage dogs to be used in searches at Adelaide Gaol while actively discouraging the use of dogs at Yatala? We have been advised that the reason is that it upsets the prisoners at Yatala and that a 'peace at any price' policy prevails. Why are dogs used at Adelaide Gaol and not at Yatala?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will ignore the emotive garbage that the member for Morphett espoused in his opening remarks. I point out to the Committee that I am quite happy to supply whatever information we have here. My officers have done a tremendous amount of work in going through the lines and the programs and that information is here. What information we do not have I am also happy to bring back in the allotted time. However, if members want to indulge in colourful language or try to score political points, I am happy to respond in the same vein. I am establishing here that the tone of the Committee, the amount of information that is revealed and the standard will be set by members of the Committee and not by myself.

Adelaide Gaol and Yatala are controlled by managers. If they want dogs in at a certain time in a particular area, and that is appropriate, they can request that that be done. If they do not think that is appropriate or effective, again, it is up to them. I do not intend to take over the day-to-day running of the prisons from the managers. That is why we put them there—they have a responsibility to manage the institutions on behalf of the State, and I have a great deal of confidence in all the managers of all our institutions. If the member for Morphett visited these institutions and discussed with the managers the problems they have, perhaps at the next Estimates Committee he will not be talking about 'peace at any price'.

I suggest that the honourable member go to Yatala tomorrow and ask the prisoners whether there is a policy of peace at any price. I assure the honourable member that for the

past two or three weeks—never mind the past two or three years—prisoners at Yatala would give him a completely different story. In fact, they contact me constantly complaining about continuous pressure on them from management of the institution. I believe they also write endless letters to the Democrats complaining about the pressures put on them by the Department of Correctional Services and the management of the institution. I can only suggest that the honourable member visit the institutions, as he is perfectly entitled to do, so he can find out for himself.

Mr LEWIS: I refer to the line relating to community service officers (page 185 of the Estimates of Payments). How many community service officers are there, and what is their specific role in the Department of Correctional Services?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is one community service officer in each of the 13 district offices of the department. Mr Dawes will provide details of the specific duties.

Mr Dawes: The supervisors are responsible for the direction and performance at work of the offenders on the Saturday work program. Essentially, they are volunteers, and they receive payment at an hourly rate. Their job is to ensure that people placed on the program by the courts do the work that is required of them for the number of hours set by the courts. To date, 831 people have participated in the Community Service Order scheme, contributing nearly 67 000 hours of work for the community of South Australia.

Mr LEWIS: How does the department go about recruiting those officers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We advertise.

Mr LEWIS: What special qualifications, if any, do those community service officers have?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think that the first qualification is a great deal of commonsense. We also like a person to have a history of working with young people—that is always favourably looked on. A number of these officers in the department have previously been in the armed forces and are used to supervising people. We require people with a caring nature, with an understanding of young people, and with a whole lot of commonsense.

Mr LEWIS: I take it that the Minister believes that it is possible to find members of the general public with an innate ability to do a job without necessarily having a piece of paper stipulating that they have done some course or other, and that it is possible to discern through interview and by reference to their previous work history whether they are psychologically suited to being involved in the kind of work required of them. I take the Minister's nod to mean that that is so. I am grateful to the Minister for that, because I believe that that same principle ought to be applied in other departments, making it possible for the Government to obtain inspectorial staff for this sort of work in departments other than the Department of Correctional Services. However, I will debate that matter in the House at a later time.

I want to attempt to discover how effective the Minister and the officers of his department consider the community service order scheme to be. Are they well satisfied with its effectiveness in preventing recidivism, in rehabilitating aberrational behaviour, and in saving taxpayers' money (although that is the least important of all the considerations)?

I think that a human life put to productive use is far more important than the considerations of cost. That is why I have placed them in that order. Could the Minister comment on how that scheme of sentencing and the performance of those sentences is working *vis-a-vis* what used to be and perhaps might otherwise be the case?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is only within the past few months that we have got the scheme operating State wide, so after such a short period it is really difficult to obtain meaningful statistics as to the effectiveness of the scheme. However, as I said earlier, we believe that the scheme is very effective. It has been warmly welcomed by the Judiciary. In fact, in areas where the scheme has recently been implemented, the magistrates in those areas have been urging us to implement the scheme in order to give them an alternative to sending people to prison, which is what the scheme is supposed to be—it is an alternative to prison.

In relation to recidivism, I suppose it depends on the period one considers before saying that a person has not fallen back into a life of crime. If somebody goes through the community service order at 18, does one say after five years of not returning to the prison system that he can be included in the statistics as not being a recidivist, but if a person is 64 when he is again sentenced, can you then say that he is a recidivist? Again, that is extremely difficult, but I assume that there is some way of measuring this, that some models have been constructed. I am sure that it is not the first time that the question has been asked, if not in relation to CSOs, then in relation to recidivism in general. I will certainly discuss that with the department, but again this scheme is in its infancy, so it is really too early to make those kinds of judgments.

Two figures that may be of interest are as follows: at the end of August this year there were 266 male offenders and 25 female offenders on the program. If one assumes that magistrates are using this program as an alternative to prison and if the CSO scheme was not available, then one must assume that the people concerned would have been imprisoned and that another prison would be required; but if only half of them were inmates, again, another prison, not quite so large, would be required, but nevertheless one would still need another prison. As 251 people were on the scheme at 31 August, I assume that the figure does not vary much on any particular day. That would then mean another institution, the capital cost of which could be \$15 million at an average of \$33 000 per prisoner, so the costs are quite staggering. One thing can be stated quite categorically, and that is that the CSO scheme is very cheap as the alternative to prison.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I was rather staggered to find the massive increase in the costs of the Parole Board. In 1981-82 it cost \$46 861; it cost \$141 897 in 1984-85. I would like to know how much of the \$141 897 is actually paid to the members of the board, and I would like a breakdown of the other expenses that make up that sum of almost \$142 000.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get the breakdown for the honourable member. I would not have the breakdown of all the expenses of the Parole Board.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I will return later to more matters relating to the Parole Board. When the new gaol at Mobilong was first announced back in 1983, it was suggested that it would cost \$12 million. The Public Works Standing Committee has now indicated that it may now cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$22 million to \$23 million. How has the increase in cost for that facility come about?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There are a couple of reasons. The first reason is the size of the institution. It was to be a much smaller institution when it was first mooted. I know that the member for Murray has had an interest in the area so he would be aware of the design of the installation. It is basically designed in 40-bed blocks so that we could build in stages of 40, 80, 120 or 160. The original idea was, I think, first of all to build 80 and add on later if that was thought necessary.

It is possible to build four separate blocks. Depending on whether you build one of 40 or 4 of 160, there is a huge difference in the cost. The rate of inflation is another factor. I do not know what difference is involved in terms of dollars in 1983 compared to now or when it is built in 1987, but if we were only building half the institution in 1983—half of what we have now decided to build—that would account for the considerable difference.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Are you suggesting that the first plans that were announced in 1983 were to house 80 prisoners?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It was always planned with the possibility of 160 beds being built there, but it was planned to be built in stages—40, 80, 120, 160. It has now been decided to provide the 160.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The reason that I ask that is that the report in the *Advertiser* of 23 August 1983 states that a 160 prisoner gaol was to be built at Mobilong for \$12 million. I find it staggering that within two years it has gone from \$12 million to \$23 million when it was announced at that time that it would house the same number of prisoners that we are talking about currently.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I find it surprising that the member for Murray finds it staggering. I just explained that the capacity of the prison was 160 beds, to be built in stages of 40 to 80 to 120 to 160, but the capacity within the fence eventually would be 160. We changed our minds on that and instead of staging it in we decided to build the 160 all at once. There is nothing very difficult in that.

If we were building only 40 it would have been a fairly lonely space with only 40 and facilities, but that was what we intended to do. Actually, I think the original decision was 80: two modules rather than the four. I find it very simple to grasp that it is cheaper to build the two modules plus the central facilities as opposed to building the four modules plus the central facilities. Perhaps, Mr Chairman, if I am not explaining that clearly enough so that you can understand it, you would point it out to me.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: It does not need the Chairman to point out anything. We are talking about 160 prisoners being housed, whether in two modules or four and, unless someone was misquoted through the *Advertiser*, back in 1983 we were talking about a prison to house 160 prisoners, which would cost \$12 million. We are now talking about a prison to house 160 prisoners which is costing \$23 million. I still say that it is a staggering increase in two years.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have to go through it again. The perimeter of the prison is capable of holding 160 prisoners. It was to be built, like this desk arrangement here, in four distinct, separate modules. The initial thought for this potential 160 bed prison was that we would move up to that in stages and that we would build two of these accommodation units with 40 prisoners in each, which would add up to 80, and that at some stage in the future, when required, we would build another unit, the third unit, making it 120, and then the fourth unit, which would make it 160. That was the original concept, so that this secure space would eventually hold 160 prisoners—it would be a prison for 160 prisoners in this staged way.

The decision was taken a few months ago not to do it in that staged way, but to build the four units all at once so that it would immediately accommodate 160 prisoners. One of the results of that decision is that we will have to build the four units at once to house the 160 prisoners at once. That is much more expensive than building only the two units inside the space, which would house 80 and not 160. So, it is now four buildings for accommodation rather than two. That is much more expensive to build than the two would be.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Can the Minister indicate how many situations we find in Yatala and Adelaide Gaol at present where prisoners share cells? How many doubling up situations are there in Yatala and how many in Adelaide Gaol?

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

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The Minister does not have that information? I would have thought it would be fairly easy to come by.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: What line are you referring to? What particular program are you following?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

An honourable member: We ask the questions.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If the honourable member wants to play smart he should stick to the book.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There will be no cross fire between the member for Murray and the Minister or the member for Mallee and the Minister. I call on the member for Murray to ask his final question of his three questions.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: When asking my question I was referring to 'Agency Overview' on page 129 of the yellow book. I thought that the Minister would have realised that. Do prisoners have a right to select who they share a cell with?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Where practicable, yes. We see nothing wrong in that. If people feel compatible with other people, rather than antagonistic to other people, we think it is highly desirable that they sort out those arrangements for themselves. That is not to say that we do not have the final say. If we think something is undesirable, we do not permit it. By and large, it is practicable and desirable, certainly.

Mr OSWALD: My questions relate to expense items, which I am told are handed out to prisoners at taxpayers' expense, and personal items allowed to be kept in cells. Will the Minister explain to the Committee the policy decisions behind the following examples reported to me by correctional service officers. First, prisoners demand new tubes of toothpaste, use them once, throw them away and demand another tube. Secondly, new shaving brushes are demanded, used once, then used to paint or clean shoes, and thrown away; then, another brush is asked for.

Thirdly, lights are deliberately left burning all day in cells. Fourthly, clothing with, for example, a fly button missing, will be rejected and a new garment demanded. Fifthly, the upper limit in prison regulations on the value of personal items in cells has been abandoned, and some prisoners now have in excess of \$1 000 worth of personal equipment in their cells. Will the Minister indicate what policy decisions may be behind this, other than the usual one of peace at any cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know what the honourable member means by 'expense items' in the first part of his question.

Mr OSWALD: 'Expense item' is a service term. I used it in the prison context. 'Expense item' is the term used when one gives away tubes of toothpaste, soap, shaving brushes, or similar items to service personnel. I am advised by correctional service officers that the same applies in the prison.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is not a term that is familiar to me or the officers here. If the member for Morphett goes back to his prison officer and obtains an explanation and writes to me in detail precisely what he means by 'service items', then I will be happy to find out for him. In relation to using a tube of toothpaste once, throwing it away and demanding another, I do not think my prison officers are so incompetent as to allow that to go on. The same applies to shaving brushes and whatever other examples the hon-

ourable member gave. I have a great deal of respect for my prison officers and do not believe that they would allow that to continue if someone tried it for very long. I obviously have a high regard for them. There is an upper limit on property of \$200. My guess is that that probably needs amending as it is completely unrealistic.

Mr OSWALD: I assume, from the Minister's response, that it goes on and I trust that the department will do something about it. In the area of prison industries operations (page 136 of the yellow book) one of the objectives for 1985-86 is the establishment of an industries board to plan, monitor and provide general oversight; what is the composition of that board?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The various managers of the institutions get together to try to achieve some order and planning in the various prison industries, which has never happened before. If it did happen before, it is beyond our memories and experience. Prison industry has been a fairly *ad hoc* thing with each institution doing the best it could in the circumstances. Now that we have a more substantial industries operation in the correctional services system, the Correctional Services Department quite properly thought that it would be a good thing to get more order and planning into the whole area and to get the people involved to operate as an industries board. It is a departmental board comprising the various institutional heads.

Mr OSWALD: On the same page there is mention of the implementation of new initiatives at the Port Augusta Gaol to accomplish full prisoner employment. What objectives do you aim to achieve at Port Augusta? How many staff will be required? What sort of budget are you working to?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have to get that information for the member. There is a problem of finding sufficient meaningful work for prisoners in some of our institutions. It is not as easy as it sounds; one can only polish floors or dust prison bars so many times. There are a couple of innovative programs at the Port Augusta Gaol which have been the subject of media attention; the horse and dog programs have been very well received and very useful. I will be able to provide a lot more detail about those particular programs and what resource implications there are.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I refer to the point that the Minister just raised in reply to a question relating to the ruling which states that a prisoner can only have up to a maximum of \$200 worth of equipment in his cell; is that ruling very well policed or is there some flexibility? I ask this because I have been led to believe that there are many cases where prisoners have more than \$200 worth of equipment in their cells.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is a new regulation. I suppose one could describe it as the basic minimum. I would hope that it is exceeded by prisoners very frequently. There are some things that we can take away from prisoners, but they are allowed a basic minimum beyond which we cannot go—I assume that that is \$200; we cannot go below that figure.

We are perfectly at liberty to allow people more than that if we wish, but it is a privilege, not a right. Prisoners have no right to have more than that, but, if we wish, we can permit it. I as Minister would certainly be happy for all prisoners to have more than that because they would have earned the privilege and they would certainly have the wherewithal to buy it. I cannot see anything wrong with that. I think it is perfectly sensible, and I am not quite sure why the honourable member regards it as something about which to comment. My information is that we cannot go below \$200; we cannot take that away from prisoners. They are allowed \$200 as a right. That is my understanding of the regulation.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I do not have the regulations before me, but I understood that one of the new regulations provides that a prisoner cannot have more than \$200 worth of equipment in his cell—that is a maximum. Does the Minister concur?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My understanding of that regulation is that that \$200 is a right that we cannot take away from them. That is a maximum that they can have as a right. Of course, as a privilege we could allow prisoners to have \$200 000 worth of equipment if we wished.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: What is the use of having regulations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is to permit prisoners to have minimum standards under the law and, according to the Parliament, the minimum standard is \$200.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I refer to the doubling up situation in prisons. The Minister informed the Committee that an arrangement could be made between two prisoners to share a cell. If it is known that two prisoners are making arrangements to share a cell and that both are homosexuals, is that condoned under policy?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is certainly not condoned. I do not know how many cells there are in the prisons, but there would be a fair few and we certainly would not have officers standing outside each cell all night, every night peering in.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I take a point of order. I asked, if it is known that prisoners are homosexual, is that practice condoned?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I answered that question. I said, 'No, it was not condoned.'

The CHAIRMAN: I point out to the member for Murray (and I have ruled in this way several times, as former Chairmen under the previous Government ruled) that the Minister will be given the option to answer questions in whatever way he wishes.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: We have gathered that tonight.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not only tonight—the honourable member should not be facetious about these things. Mr Keith Russack ruled in this way, and he was a good Chairman.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: He was an excellent Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes; he laid down this rule and it will not be altered.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I answered the question: I said, 'No, it was not condoned.'

I was interrupted before. It is not physically possible for us to observe the behaviour of all prisoners 24 hours a day. Obviously, it is not practicable for us to have somebody standing outside prison cells looking in every night in case there is some familiarity going on, even if we suspected that there might be. I would not deny the possibility that there might be some excessive friendliness displayed on occasions through the night in cells where prisoners are doubled up, because I simply do not know. Our intention is—and we will achieve it within a reasonable period—to have all single cell accommodation. Obviously, then the activities that interest the member for Murray will not be able to occur.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: One item appearing under 'Agency overview' is the number of offenders imprisoned for fine default. Can the Minister indicate what percentage of prisoners in correctional services institutions are there as a result of fine default?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can get a reasonably accurate figure for the honourable member; it is an interesting question. As the honourable member would know, our main intake is at Adelaide Gaol. The overwhelming majority of people who enter Adelaide Gaol are very short-term prisoners—a couple of thousand, I suppose. From memory,

about 60 or 70 per cent are fine defaulters, so it is a very high percentage of our turnover. However, when one breaks it down to how many are there each night it is perhaps not quite such a significant figure—only about 30. But the turnover of people giving that figure of 30 each night is very high. I will get the answer for the honourable member.

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

Mr OSWALD: Has any costing been done on the statistics of transporting prisoners, their relatives, lawyers, provisions, supplies, the sick and a host of other things between Adelaide and Murray Bridge compared with the transport cost involved in a gaol being built closer to Yatala?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Some public transport costings have been done and I shall be happy to provide them for the honourable member. If he is referring to prison officers, it is likely over a period that we will recruit for Murray Bridge.

Mr LEWIS: People who are willing to live there?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: People who live there now. It is not our intention to have people live at Elizabeth travelling daily to Murray Bridge. Over a period we will gradually recruit from around the area. I understand some people living in the Adelaide Hills are looking to make Murray Bridge their place of work. We will have no problem staffing the institution, based on the information we have within the prison system as it is now, but we will recruit from Murray Bridge itself. Whatever costings we have in this area we will provide for the honourable member.

Mr OSWALD: It has always worried me that by putting a gaol at Murray Bridge we are creating logistic problems. Instead of travelling to Yatala visitors have to travel to Murray Bridge. Does pressure then fall on the department to assist with return transport every time a prisoner wants to see his lawyer, a sick prisoner has to be brought to Adelaide and so forth? This problem of logistics would not exist if the prison was built on land adjacent to Yatala where there is already access to an industry complex and it is easy for everyone to get to.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am advised that public transport to Murray Bridge is good, and there is also a freeway.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! It is difficult to hear at any time without these interruptions.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I take the point that the honourable member makes. One argument against the practicality of building an institution adjacent to Yatala is that it is a highly urbanised area and its acceptability is questionable. My guess is that residents around Yatala would prefer to see Yatala go, never mind another institution being put there.

As a basic premise I agree with the honourable member that, if it were practical to build the institutions in the city or as close as possible to the centre of the city for everyone's convenience, I would be in favour of that.

Mr OSWALD: I refer to page 135 of the yellow book. At a time when the ratio between prisoners and correctional services officers is changing, whereby there are more correctional services officers now per prisoner than there were some years ago, I find in the summary under 'Prisoner security' that the number of full-time equivalents have increased from 314.5 to 415. In what area will those extra 100-odd full-time equivalents be employed.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have some figures that may help and if they do not I will certainly look at the question when it is printed and send out any supplementary information that will assist the honourable member. On the departmental staff level, as at 30 June 1985 the number was 176 greater than as at 30 June 1983. The increase is not solely related to the operation of institutions. In fact,

the actual number of correctional service staff employed in institutions has increased by 110 over that period. The 110 comprised the following: 13 staff for the commissioning of the Greenbush wing at Port Augusta; 17 staff for the commissioning of the Northfield Prison Complex; 33 staff for the introduction of the 38-hour week; 10 staff for the commissioning of the Sir Samuel Way courts complex; 11 staff for the recommissioning of yards 1 and 2 at Adelaide Gaol; 11 staff for the Yatala review, provision of resources for activities, administration and industries; and 16 staff to cover the high incidence of workers compensation.

Other expansion relates to the introduction of Community Service Order schemes and new parole legislation on which 25 people were involved; the strengthening of administrative support in Finance, Management Services, Operations, Community Corrections and Institutions, involving 30 staff; and the introduction of programs, development of a trainee manager scheme, provision of a manager at Adelaide Remand Centre, provision of a public relations facility and other specialist services involving 10 staff. A detailed analysis of expansion between June 1983 and June 1985 I will obtain for the honourable member.

The Adelaide Remand Centre had 103 staff recruited for 1985-86 and provision is made for that. The Adelaide Gaol staffing levels obviously will be reviewed when the Remand Centre is operational. At the changeover period there will be more staff than shortly afterwards as we will be running two institutions.

Mr LEWIS: I take up the topic on which I was asking the Minister questions earlier, namely, community service officers for Community Service Orders. The Minister pointed out, of course, that this program has not been in place very long and, therefore, it is difficult to give any kind of indication in an empirical sense about its effectiveness compared to traditional sentencing measures for people who have been found guilty of these offences that enable the court to sentence them with a Community Service Order. In acknowledgement of that phenomena namely, that it is only new, what attempt is being made to monitor the comparative effectiveness of it, by what means, and using what resources?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: An interim assessment has already been made, and I can probably send the honourable member a copy of the report by the New Zealand Justice Department. We asked a person from that department to do the review, as they have had extensive experience with the system in New Zealand.

That is the initial work that has been done. I cannot remember all the details of the report, but I will forward a copy to the honourable member. Once it has been operating throughout the State for two or three years, we will have some more meaningful figures, at which time we will certainly have the matter reviewed again. I believe that some refinement to the scheme could be made. Earlier this year I looked at the scheme operating in New Zealand. I found that they have had some problems with the scheme, but they have worked their way through some of those problems. So, we are using the experience of others and learning from their mistakes.

Mr LEWIS: In relation to strategies to deal with issues that have been identified, one of the strategies outlined on page 129 of the yellow book is:

Development of offender records and continued development of existing computerised recording systems.

I assume that that would include the overall monitoring of Community Service Orders. I wonder whether it might not be possible to include within that strategy provision for a sociologist to do a delphi sample—that means a random sample—where one does not consult with one person about the views of another, but where one takes the responses

from, say, parole and probation officers in their subjective appraisal of the situation, and the responses from prisoners, those offenders who have been so convicted, at intervals of time after they have completed their sentences, and then makes a comparison of responses using that kind of approach.

I do not know of any professional other than a sociologist who would be suitably trained and equipped to make that kind of assessment. Given that now is the time when we are starting out, when it is an innovation, would it not be wise for us to monitor the system as it evolves, and then provide appropriate resources? This would be preferable to attempting to pick up the threads five or six years down the track.

It would enable us to discover whether or not the system was working successfully. A sociologist would be able to tease out the difference between any changes in mores in the broader community that might explain what is going on from those factors where comparisons between the conventional and the Community Service Orders are involved. Is it thought appropriate to involve a sociologist in that continuing collection of information, that analysis?

For the benefit of the Committee I explain that a sociologist is a person trained in observing not just the behavioural phenomena of the individual but the behavioural phenomena of the individual in social situations where that individual is interacting with, and integrating their life into, groups, however big or small. A psychologist focuses on an individual, whereas a sociologist focuses on the behaviour of groups and individuals within those groups. That is why I have raised the matter of involving a sociologist rather than a psychologist. I believe that a person trained in sociology has a broader spectrum of more appropriate social skills than has a person trained in psychology. Does the department have a sociologist looking at these things? If it does not, will it consider doing so?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is that the department does not have a sociologist looking at these things, but I understand that the New Zealand Justice Department study, to which I referred earlier, undertook an initial appraisal of the community service order scheme, and some of the techniques described by the honourable member were used in that study. We also have on a small personal computer all the statistics relating to the community service order scheme.

I do not think that there is a program for the next assessment of the community service order scheme, but, when it is done, that information will be available in a readily retrievable form. As I understand it, the procedures outlined by the honourable member are fairly standard procedures undertaken by people who make these kind of assessments. I understand that that was the procedure for the first assessment, and I have no reason to believe that that will not be the case in the next assessment. It is a fairly tidy operation which readily lends itself to constant or periodic monitoring.

Mr LEWIS: Are people who are sentenced to community service orders also required to involve themselves in counselling programs to review the reasons for the attitudes that resulted in the behaviour that was seen to be anti-social and finally proclaimed criminal by a court, so that they can more effectively come to terms with whatever experiences they have had in their lives and the attitudes resulting from them which caused that behaviour? Is that kind of counselling undertaken?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Unfortunately, it is not and we see that as a deficiency. About three or four weeks ago I had some discussions with people from the community corrections branch. I asked them what was their highest priority if they could have one wish in this area, and that

was their highest priority: they thought that there ought to be some kind of legislative arrangement whereby people on community service orders could also be involved with a parole officer. In that way, where it is identified that the person who is doing the community service order would benefit from some counselling, either from a probation officer or some other professional, the offender can be directed towards the various individuals and agencies that are available. That is not something that we have at the moment.

Again, we are all learning. Unfortunately, they are seen as quite separate areas—a probation order is one type of punishment, a community service order is another, a fine is another, and imprisonment is yet another. When the scheme was conceived, it was not thought necessary to have community service orders as part of a combination of measures for an offender.

That means that the legislation permits them to be on community service orders and nothing else. Therefore, there is a gap in the services offered to offenders, and we intend to correct that. It was only brought to my attention three or four weeks ago, but it is something that we are addressing. Obviously, it will mean some alteration to the legislation.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The average annual net cost per prisoner at Yatala has increased from \$28 000 in 1982-83 to \$67 000 this year. The average annual net cost per prisoner for Adelaide Gaol has increased from \$19 000 in 1982-83 to \$21 000 this year. I recognise the work that has gone on in relation to the staff situation, but how does the Minister rationalise the two increases?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Very simply: the stability of prison numbers at Adelaide Gaol as opposed to the instability in prison numbers at Yatala. In 1982 Yatala had a maximum number of about 400 prisoners, and the staffing level at that time would not have been significantly different from the staffing level at the moment for 135 prisoners. The design of an institution is dictated by the staff required, not the number of inmates.

As the honourable member is aware, there was a significant destruction of accommodation at Yatala which dramatically reduced the number of inmates overnight. However, there is still the same number of towers to be staffed, and the extent of the prison perimeter remains the same. That is the short answer, but I can provide a more detailed answer with regard to Yatala, because I think Yatala stands out in the Auditor-General's Report. It is a fair enough question which warrants a detailed answer.

The honourable member refers to the dramatic increase in the cost per prisoner from \$50 374 in 1983-84 to \$67 457 in 1984-85—an increase of 34 per cent. In brief, fixed costs and non departmental charges (such as debt servicing costs and maintenance costs), together with the reduced number of prisoners over which the total cost is spread, account for the significant increase. Maintenance costs increased by \$37 000 and debt servicing costs increased by \$743 000, which alone represents an increase of \$5 135 per prisoner (or 10 per cent of the total increase). The balance of \$11,948 is a direct result of the reduced number of prisoners over which the total cost is spread.

In 1983-84, the direct Yatala costs of \$7.9 million were spread over 195 prisoners, while the 1984-85 direct costs of \$7.55 million were spread over 152 prisoners. As many of Yatala's costs could be deemed to be fixed in the short term, irrespective of the prison population, the resulting average cost per prisoner is to a certain extent inflated. If the total direct cost for 1984-85 of \$7.6 million for the Yatala Labour Prison included a provision of \$2 000 per prisoner for variable cost as an average on a prisoner population of 195 (that is last year) and not 152, the average direct cost per prisoner would have been \$39 144 compared

to an average direct cost per prisoner in 1983 of \$40 497. In other words, if comparing like with like, the actual cost per prisoner reduced very slightly in the two periods under examination. But the honourable member is not comparing like with like, because there are very significant differences in the number of prisoners over which he was distributing the fixed costs.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: On the manner of staffing, particularly at Yatala, relating to what the Minister just indicated, there is the same number of staff now but half the number of prisoners compared to the position in 1982-83. There are almost twice as many officers as prisoners, yet just recently a prison officer was bashed. It was suggested by prison officers at that stage that the prison officer who was bashed had a considerable responsibility at that time.

It has also been suggested that there are significant problems at the changeover period, particularly towards the evening. Is this poor management, or is there some specific reason, where there are almost twice as many prison officers compared to prisoners, that a prison officer can be bashed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I appreciate what the honourable member is getting at. The incident to which he referred was a case of a prisoner who king-hit a prison officer out of the blue. That can happen at any time, whether there are three prison officers around or 30. They are dealing with some fairly unstable people on occasions: I have only the highest admiration for the prison officers who are dealing with these people. If someone unstable just walks out and whams someone, there is not a great deal that anyone can do.

Leaving aside the disturbed prisoner who does that from time to time, the period to which the honourable member referred, that is, lock-up, is difficult in the prison system in any prison. That is a time, I am advised by prison officers, when there is always a high degree of activity and movement.

It is a time which, in the very nature of the operation, is not particularly pleasant. Over the past two or three weeks we have reviewed the operations of the lock-up at Yatala and made some very significant changes to the way in which it operates. I spoke to some prison officers shortly after that incident in which the prison officer was hit, and they expressed to me some concerns about procedures at that time. I relayed those concerns to the Department of Correctional Services, which was already aware of them and had taken steps to modify the procedure around that lock-up period at night.

Certainly, it has been very significantly modified. Prisoners are complaining very strongly and bitterly about the modification, because it is a further restriction on the amount of free movement that they have within the accommodation block, but I and the department felt—and I know that prison officers would agree—that that restriction was necessary because it is a time when, by the very nature of prisons and the operation of locking-up prisoners, very strict and careful control has to be maintained over the prisoners.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: If I can relate to that same incident with that prison officer, it has been put to me very strongly—and I know that it was referred to by the media—that on that occasion the alarm system that the prison officer was carrying was not functioning.

There has been some controversy about it. Will the Minister indicate whether the alarm system was faulty and say how often the alarm systems are tested, recognising the necessity for a prison officer to be able to raise the alarm in a situation like that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In that particular incident, where someone suddenly walks in front of you and hits you, one does not have time to be playing around with alarms. One attempts to defend oneself first, and that is what happened.

The report to me was that the alarm was damaged in the scuffle and did not work. However, alarms are tested morning and night. There is a procedure in the prison for testing the alarms.

I know that some prison officers, as soon as they click the alarm on, test it by notifying the control room that they are ringing the control and say that they are going to push the alarm and do that test. I welcome that procedure. Not all prison officers bother, but some do. To suggest that the alarm that that person had on that day was not working is a very serious charge against another officer, because a fellow officer had the responsibility for testing those alarms and has assured the department that those alarms were tested. He is a very responsible officer, and I have no reason to disbelieve him.

I caution the people making those charges to appreciate that they are making accusations against a fellow prison officer, whom there is no reason to suspect has not carried out his duties and tested those alarms. Our information is that the alarm was tested. I have offered to supply the other prison officers—although they already know—with the name of that prison officer and the time when the alarms were tested.

Mr OSWALD: It was put to me, when that particular officer was struck, that he was alone with three prisoners and one prisoner came up behind him and struck him, and that this incident had more to do with the lack of staff in that wing compared to the number of prisoners at lock-up. It concerned me a little when I heard from one officer that there was not enough staff in the wing during lock-up time to prevent this incident happening. Does a staff problem exist?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The incident is being investigated by the police. I do not want to comment any more than necessary about it. In relation to the comments of the member for Murray, on average there are about two officers for every prisoner. This year I attended a conference of prison Ministers and administrators in Hong Kong. They came from all over the Commonwealth, and I asked them about their staff/prisoner ratio. I was not able to find any prison in the world with a higher staff/prisoner ratio at the moment than at Yatala. Maybe there is one somewhere, but no one in the Commonwealth could find it. I do not say that as any criticism of the officers; it is simply because the institution was designed for 400 prisoners and to operate in a certain way. The same number of staff there at present could just about handle 400 prisoners. It would not require any increase in staff to any significant degree. Therefore the figures can be misleading.

Mr OSWALD: From prison records at Yatala Labour Prison, could the Minister provide the number of prison officers who have required medical treatment of some sort after having been struck by inmates, over the past 12 months?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get the information for the honourable member.

Mr OSWALD: Page 147 of the yellow book refers to the reduction of prison labour in stores and canteens. When I was on the Public Accounts Committee some time ago we felt at the time that to reduce the prison labour in the canteens was not the right way to go; we were happy that it be maintained so that a reliable prisoner could be given some responsibility and training in that area. The trend from the staff ever since has been to say that the prisoners cannot be trusted, and to shift the prisoners out and replace them with prison officers. Has this been addressed recently? Could it be a trend to put identified reliable prisoners back there to run the canteen?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The genesis for the idea of replacing prisoners running canteens with correctional services staff was the 1981 Royal Commission. The argument

there was that, whilst there are undoubtedly some very reliable prisoners, who you would be quite happy to have running these facilities, they are vulnerable in a prison system to other prisoners. The Royal Commission recommended that the procedure change and the Department of Correctional Services staff run the canteens. We go along with that, and that is what is occurring.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The advice that the Minister gave me some time ago suggested that approximately \$11 million had been spent at Yatala recently. Can the Minister give any indication of what plans the Government has for further new development as far as Yatala is concerned and if, in fact, it has a plan that would extend through as far as 1990? What is the estimated cost of that plan likely to be?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is a considerable amount of work involved in that, and I will be able to get those figures, as we do have the forward projection figures.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I am particularly interested in the increase in the staffing of head office. The Auditor-General reports that the staff at head office has gone from 52 in 1982-83 to 72 in 1983-84, and up to 97 in 1984-85. We can say it has almost doubled from 1982-83 to 1984-85. Could the classifications of those people who have been employed during that period from 1982-83 to 1984-85 be provided?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. Again, I think it is a very interesting question. I am sure the honourable member would have been aware of the very serious deficiencies in the staffing of the Department of Correctional Services head office when the Government, of which he was a member, inherited a pretty awful prison system.

The problems that the previous Government experienced in the prison system were in the main a legacy of the years of neglect of prisons in this State. The increase in the demands that we now place on Correctional Services in terms of accountability, programs and a better service for the community has been absolutely astronomical, and certainly one of the greatest concerns that I had when I became Minister was the obvious huge gap in the ability of head office to respond to the demands that the Government and the Parliament were placing on it. It is all right for us as parliamentarians and as members of Government to say, 'You shall now do this.' If we do that, we must provide the wherewithal to do it and to do it well. I am particularly pleased that over the past few years, commencing in the term of the previous Government (and I acknowledge the contribution that it made—

Mr LEWIS: You did not at the time.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Obviously, the honourable member does not read my speeches. I acknowledge the contribution of the previous Government, which eventually realised after a couple of rather torrid years that the position just could not be allowed to continue. So we make demands on the Department of Correctional Services to do things better, quite properly, but we have to give the department the tools to do it. That is what we have done. I will obtain a precise breakdown of classifications for the honourable member.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: The Estimates of Payments indicates that the sum relating to payments to prisoners has almost doubled: in 1984-85, \$511 000 was voted and \$624 153 was actually spent. This year \$956 000 is proposed. What is the maximum amount that a prisoner can earn, and which prisoners are earning that maximum amount? What is the average weekly earnings of a prisoner in correctional institutions?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The wide difference relates to expenditure in the period under question. The allocation for payments to prisoners for 1984-85 was based on an anticipated prisoner population of 650. However, the actual

average for 1984-85 was 698, and that accounted for about \$40 000 of the over-expenditure. A new prisoner pay system that incorporated a base pay rate, a performance pay rate and a skills and conditions pay rate was introduced in November 1984. The management of this innovative system has caused some concern, and the department is monitoring prison pay through a revised payments to prisoners return. The expansion for 1985-86 includes a provision for accumulated earnings incorporated in a trust account (\$146 000). I will ask the Director of Support Services to explain that. Basically, we owe money to the prisoners; we do not give them all the pay that they earn, but we keep some and give it to them on release.

That money has been allocated when they go. The Director of Support Services will be able to explain better than I can, but we now total it all and it is put somewhere rather than just taking it from wherever we can find it as it comes due. I suppose it is like insurance: we have made provision for the future rather than having an unfunded scheme. Now it is fully funded. Since I have started dealing with workers compensation I am learning a new jargon.

One of the reasons was payment of an allowance to remand prisoners of \$60 000. The basis for this is that necessities have to be given to prisoners, whether they have any money or not. Human beings have to have some things. If one did not give these things to them, there would be problems (apart from humanitarian considerations) with personal hygiene, etc., which would certainly not be worth the relatively small amounts of money required.

As I mentioned earlier, another reason for the increase was an increased prison population in 1985-86 of 778 compared to 698 in 1984. That has accounted for \$107 000 of the increase. It was sheer volume of numbers: there were a lot more people in the system. The department is currently reviewing payment of an allowance to remand prisoners in accordance with provisions of the Correctional Services Act.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Minister wish Mr Dawes to supplement his remarks concerning prisoners' payments?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It was only on the question of earnings accumulated in trust account—\$146 000.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I would like the Minister to provide the information that I asked for initially: that is the maximum amount now being earned by prisoners within correctional services institutions and what prisoners are doing to earn it. What is the average wage of a prisoner in our correctional services institutions at present?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have most of the information here. The average prison earnings weekly from the weekend of 10 July 1985 to 14 August 1985 (a six week period) were: Yatala Labour Prison, average earnings \$25.40 for sentenced prisoners; Cadell Training Centre, \$27.28; Port Augusta, \$19.99 for remand prisoners and \$22.58 for sentenced prisoners; Port Lincoln, \$12.50 for remand prisoners and \$25.31 for sentenced prisoners; Northfield Prison Complex, \$12.50 for remand prisoners and \$24.71 for sentenced prisoners; and Mount Gambier, \$7.50 for remand prisoners and \$20.78 for sentenced prisoners. Adelaide Gaol has not been taken into consideration because of the time required now to segregate the number of working remand prisoners during this period because their earnings are included in totals provided.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: What about Yatala?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yatala was \$25.40 for sentenced prisoners. We only have sentenced prisoners there. Those figures covered average weekly earnings for prisoners for the period 10 July 1985 to 14 August 1985—six weeks.

Mr LEWIS: What is the highest amount?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The highest was for Cadell Training Centre at \$27.28 a week.

Mr LEWIS: Is that for one prisoner or an average?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is the average prisoner's weekly earnings.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed further, I advise the Committee that we have one vote after this. I ask the Committee to bear that in mind before proceeding further. We have 'Correctional Services' and then 'Minister of Correctional Services, Miscellaneous'.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Although I do not need the information now, in regard to prison industries at Yatala, I seek a list of the activities within the industrial program in which prisoners can partake. Also, can the Minister advise now what happens to the items made by prisoners at Yatala? Are they sold through the prison system or are they sold by relatives of prisoners? What is the situation?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: All the items are used in the prison system or distributed to other Government departments through the Department of Services and Supply. It is strictly an in-house Public Service operation.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the Minister while his officers are with him that the deadline for the provision of replies taken on notice is 18 October.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I seek information about the education program available at Yatala. What is the scope available to prisoners? What subjects are available? What percentage of prisoners at Yatala undertake the education program?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not want to go through an argument we had earlier about my being asked about programs under the authority of another Minister. The Minister of Education is responsible through the Department of Technical and Further Education for prisoner education. Programs are wholly organised, monitored and structured by that department, which is responsible to the Minister of Education. A simple inquiry from the member to the Minister of Education will bring forth all the information required.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Will the Minister determine what percentage of prisoners take part in the education program? I can make some inquiries of the Minister of Education about the type of program, but I would have thought that the Minister's officers could indicate how many prisoners are involved in the education program.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will see whether that information is available in the department.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: What use is made in the prison system of voluntary agencies at present? What is the Government's policy on the use of volunteers? Can the Minister later provide the names of agencies and the correctional services institutions in which they take part?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I shall be happy to do that. A general answer is that we use volunteers extensively in the prison system. They are welcome and do an excellent job. All the various agencies are involved and I will obtain that information for the member.

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

Minister of Correctional Services, Miscellaneous, \$355 000

Chairman:

Mr. G.T. Whitten

Members:

Mr D.M. Ferguson

Mr R.J. Gregory

Mr T.R. Groom

Mr I.P. Lewis

Mr J.K.G. Oswald
The Hon. D.C. Wotton

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Labour, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Correctional Services and Minister Assisting the Treasurer.

Departmental Advisers:

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

Mr W.A. Pryor, Director, Support Services, Department of Correctional Services.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare examination of the vote open for discussion.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: In relation to the Correctional Service Advisory Council. I noticed the other day that some members were up for re-election or for changes to be made and, of course, that is the prerogative of the Minister. Have there been changes in the membership of the council and, if so, which people have been dropped off and who has replaced them?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, there has been one change in the membership of the Correctional Services Advisory Council, and I will let the honourable member have details of that change.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: What use does the Minister make of that council?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I respect its opinion. The members contact me fairly frequently with opinions on legislation or on issues in general. It is a useful body in that regard. It also makes me feel a little more secure in my job to know that there is a body which, whilst being an advisory body to and appointed by the Minister, is quite separate and can form its own views and investigate any area of the prison system that it wishes to investigate; I will certainly facilitate that in any way possible.

It can advise me on programs that it feels should be in the prisons and on deficiencies in legislation. It is, of course, chaired by a QC and there is another lawyer on the council. Whilst it would be an overstatement to say that it was a watchdog body—I do not see it in those terms—I feel more comfortable knowing that a body of individuals, capable and qualified, can oversee and make suggestions about things we are doing in correctional services.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Will the Minister indicate what facilities are now available at Yatala for chaplains? I know that at the time of the riot and fire their facilities were destroyed.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Only the interviewing rooms are available for chaplains and people who wish to see them. As the honourable member stated, there is no chapel, as it was destroyed in the 1983 fire.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: Is it intended to provide any further facilities for chaplains in the redevelopment?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Apparently it is and, when I forward answers on the redevelopment going on until the year 1992, I will include that matter.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON: I understand that the Minister now has the information relating to the costs associated with the Parole Board. If he does not have the time to give that information now, I would appreciate if it could be made available within the next couple of days.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will send that information to the honourable member.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 10 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Tuesday 1 October at 11 a.m.