

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 19 September 1989

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chairman:

The Hon. T.M. McRae

Members:

The Hon. R.K. Abbott
 Mr D.S. Baker
 Mr G.A. Ingerson
 Mr J.K.G. Oswald
 Mr. D.J. Robertson
 Mr P.B. Tyler

The Committee met at 11 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: The procedure will be relatively informal. I will notify changes to composition of the Committee if and when they occur. If the Minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be in a form suitable for insertion in *Hansard* and two copies must be submitted no later than Friday 6 October to the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

I propose to allow the Minister and the lead speaker for the Opposition to make an opening statement if they so desire.

I will adopt a flexible approach in giving the call for asking questions, but on the basis of about three questions per member, alternating sides, and allowing for supplementary and follow-on questions also. Subject to the convenience of the Committee, members who are outside the Committee but who desire to ask a question will be permitted to do so once the line of questioning on an item has been exhausted by the Committee. An indication in advance to the Chairman will be necessary. Questions must be based on the lines of expenditure as revealed in the Estimates of Payments. However, reference may be made to other documents, for example, Program Estimates, the Auditor-General's Report, etc.

Transport, \$22 777 000

Works and Services, Department of Transport, \$240 000

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Transport.

Departmental Advisers:

Dr D. Scafton, Director-General, Department of Transport.

Mr J. Bettcher, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr J. Hutchinson, Registrar of Motor Vehicles.

Mr P. Cleal, Acting Director, Road Safety Division.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditures open for examination and ask whether the Minister wishes to make an opening statement.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: On this occasion, I think it is necessary to make an opening statement because of the very significant changes that have occurred in this portfolio over the past few months, some of which are reflected in the presentation of the budget for 1989-90.

As of 1 July 1989 the Motor Registration Division was transferred from the Department of Transport to the Highways Department. The budget for MRD is included in the Highways Department lines on page 106, but questions on MRD can be dealt with under discussion of the Department of Transport, and the line cleared later under Highways.

The \$19.4 million proposed for MRD under Program 9 includes more than the \$13.8 million entry under Program 8 on page 102. Program 9 on page 103 must be added, together with salaries for internal audit and personnel branch staff previously included under intra-agency support on page 103, and licence testing and review previously included under Program 3, Road Safety, on page 101.

Earlier this month changes were also made in the Road Safety and Highways areas. The former Road Safety Division of the Department of Transport has been transferred to the Highways Department, which has been abolished and integrated into a new Department of Road Transport, to recognise the broader range of activities and responsibilities in the roads area. As the Road Safety budget is included in Department of Transport, I propose that we deal with it under those lines.

Some internal changes have also been made to programs in both Transport and Highways; these can be dealt with in response to questions. Matters relating to the *Island Seaway*, previously Program 7 of the Highways Department (page 105), are now the responsibility of the Minister of Marine. The Miscellaneous line on page 109 is a one-off payment relating to the *Island Seaway*.

As a result of the changes we have made to the transport portfolio, the Department of Transport has been abolished and a new smaller office of Transport Policy and Planning has been formed from the staff remaining after the majority have been transferred into the Department of Road Transport. The changes obviously impact on many of the staff who will assist me today. The Director-General of Transport reverts to his former role as head of a small policy advisory unit as CEO of the Office of Transport Policy and Planning, and the Highways Commissioner will head the Department of Road Transport. Other senior officers and support staff have also been affected by the changes but will be available to the Committee to report on programs and assist me on specific questions relating to their responsibilities, regardless of any relocation within the portfolio.

If it meets with the Committee's approval, I propose to deal with the transport portfolio in the order it appears in the budget papers and using the organisational titles therein, namely, Department of Transport—pages 100 to 130, and page 208; Highways Department—pages 103 to 106, and page 208; and State Transport Authority—pages 107 and 108, and page 209.

The 1989-90 budget for the Department of Transport has undergone a substantive change in format. To eliminate artificial and subjective allocations and consolidate certain programs and subprograms, some of the smaller programs and subprograms have been incorporated into other programs; for instance, 'Air Transport Planning', 'Planning and Coordination of Land Transport', and 'Provision of Public Transport Services' have been incorporated into the new program 'Planning and Coordination of Transport'. The 'Revenue Collection Service for other Government Agencies' program and subprogram 'Driver Assessment' have been incorporated into the program 'Administration and Enforcement of State Taxation Legislation'.

As I mentioned earlier, I propose that questions on the programs 'Administration and Enforcement of State Taxation Legislation' and 'Industry/Occupational Licensing and/or Regulation' be dealt with in the Department of Transport

session. Major initiatives for 1989-90 incorporated in these programs include the development of photographs on drivers licences; the introduction of random on-road inspections for heavy vehicles; the expansion of the Taxi Service for the Disabled Scheme; and the implementation of the motor registration on-line computer system. Any other changes can be picked up on answers to questions from the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister gave some references to documents, but I will complete them. They are Department of Transport: pages 100-103 in the Estimates of Payments and 250-264 in the Program Estimates; Department of Transport Works and Services: page 208 in the Estimates of Payments and pages 250-264 in the Program Estimates; Highways Department: pages 103-106 in the Estimates of Payments and pages 265-279 in the Program Estimates; Highways Department Works and Services: page 208 in the Estimates of Payments and pages 265-279 in the Program Estimates; and State Transport Authority: pages 107-108 in the Estimates of Payments and pages 280-287 in the Program Estimates.

Mr INGERSON: My question has been put to all the Committees. The Minister may be able to supply the answer today but, if not, we could have the details later. What sick leave was taken over the past financial year and how much of this leave was taken on Mondays and Fridays and days immediately before and after holiday weekends? Secondly, what is the current salary of the Chief Executive Officer, and the salary applying on 30 June 1988 and June 1989, and what allowances does the Chief Executive Officer receive in addition to salary? Thirdly, how many officers are employed at EO and AO level? Further, in relation to inter-agency support items not allocated to programs, will the Minister provide an itemised rundown of spending during the previous financial year and the budgeted spending for this financial year under 'Salaries, Wages and Related Payments' and under 'Administration Expenses, Minor Equipment and Sundry'?

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

Mr INGERSON: I note that 'In collaboration with the State Transport Authority and Highways Department [the Department of Transport] completed a review of future transport and behavioural modelling needs of the agencies [and] commenced development of strategic and detailed level models.' (Program Estimates, page 259.) What came out of that review and what detailed modelling has in fact taken place?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I invite Dr Scrafton, Director-General of Transport, to respond.

Dr Scrafton: There is a wide range of activities relating to modelling and data analysis within the portfolio. It breaks down into three major areas. The Department of Transport handles the travel demand projections for the portfolio as a whole and develops the community-based models to undertake that work. The Highways Department picks up that data and uses data from its own counts to undertake the traffic analysis. The STA uses that generalised data for background material, but again also uses its own boarding counts and, in recent years, they have been improved by the acquisition of the Crouzet ticketing system.

As to the specific question on travel demand projections for metropolitan Adelaide and the development of the suite of computer base models, I can talk to that in further detail. This data produces medium to long-range projections of travel demand for all metropolitan Adelaide to enable the rest of the portfolio to undertake its detailed planning on a consistent basis. The objective is to ensure that we are all

dealing with the same numbers. The current updating is because in 1988 we prepared data for the period 1981 to 2001. Since then the Department of Environment and Planning has prepared its revised population projections for the period 1986 to 2011 and the Office of Employment and Training is presently developing forecasts of employment and employed persons for the years 1986 to 2011. We think that that is particularly important material for us because, in the past, we had to waste our planning on essentially household and person data.

The knowledge of where people are working is just as important as the knowledge of where they live. For instance, in the past it has not been difficult for us to make estimates on the basis of travel to school, which conforms to a very simple, straight-forward and understandable pattern. However, it is difficult to understand the work trips, as they change rapidly, particularly in areas like metropolitan Adelaide, where a particular plant might close down or a function might change. For example, the development of the Port is a good example of a big change that has taken place in the past five years—particularly in the past few months—with the move of the Submarine Corporation to its new headquarters. It has moved those jobs out of Woodville to Outer Harbor.

On the basis of all that material we have prepared revised travel demand projections for the same period, 1986 to 2011, to enable the rest of the portfolio to do its forward planning on the basis of the most recent and consistent data. To enable us to do that we need particular models: we use a suite of computer-based econo-metric and statistical models, and we will refine those at the same time as we get the new data.

Mr INGERSON: Also at page 259 of the Program Estimates it says that we have maintained links with the Smart transit study and automated research programs in Europe. Can the Minister explain what relationship there is and what benefit the Smart transit committee is likely to have for the South Australian commuters, if any?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am perturbed by the phrase 'if any'. There are considerable benefits and again I ask Dr Scrafton to enlighten us about those benefits.

Dr Scrafton: The Smart transit study is an international cooperative effort with its base in Paris. It is heavily dominated by North American, European and Japanese interests. It is important for Australia to be part of international projects of this sort. The reason is that in the past we expected major operating economies to be forthcoming in transport from computer controlled driverless urban transit. Members might recall that in the late 1960s and early 1970s a great surge of research into these new transport technologies occurred. They were to revolutionise the business and change the world: that never happened.

A major reversal, particularly following the fuel crisis of 1973 and the collapse of a handful of companies that drove this research, meant that this great revolution never happened. Nevertheless, there are about 50 of these systems actually operating around the world in the United States, Japan, Germany, Austria, Canada, France and, most recently, in Australia with the monorail in Sydney and similar developments planned for the Queensland east coast. Despite the accumulated experience of that small but growing number of automated systems, there is no comprehensive compilation that gives a potential user the reliable information to say whether or not such a system has any relevance in any community, such as South Australia or Adelaide. We participate in this collaborative study to make sure that our data on these systems is as up to date as anyone else's.

The second part of the question was its relevance to South Australia: why do we do that? Why don't we let the world pass us by and do its own work and pick up the pieces later on? I believe the experience with the O-Bahn demonstrates that is not necessarily the way to go. Although it is unlikely that a Smart transit system of the type described on page 259 is likely to be built soon in South Australia, these systems do represent the leading edge of a wide range of technologies that are actually available. Because components of these technologies—such as ticketing, user information, and so on—do have application in South Australia, it is important to be aware of these developments and trends.

It is also an excellent example of the collaborative work we have done over the years with these people. It has some big payoffs in terms of immediate access to information. It allows us to be called on to present the results of our latest work. A good illustration was that we were invited recently to present the results of the Crouzet work to an international group in Paris. The interesting thing is that nobody from South Australia could go to do that. We simply called up our colleague in Paris; he did the work for us. We sent him the paper; he presented it for us. These direct communication links are worth their weight in gold to us.

Mr INGERSON: In the Program Estimates at page 259 there is a statement that we had identified critical factors affecting the future of transport and transport planning in South Australia. What are those critical factors?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The work done so far was directed by the Cabinet resources and physical development subcommittee. It is a small group formed in mid-1987 to develop a strategic plan of transport for South Australia. The objectives of the study are to assist the State Government to establish a clear direction for the continuing development of transport for South Australia by deriving a framework for Government decisions and ensuring coordination at a strategic level within the transport portfolio.

Strategies have been developed to address the eight key issues identified during the study, and a draft report is now being finalised. When that report is available I will be only too pleased to provide the member for Bragg with a copy. To date, the main issues identified by the study are: taking account of the impacts of transport; planning and operating transport in a State-wide logistical context; developing a management style which is service oriented and responsive; adjusting the balance between supply and demand in metropolitan public transport; implementing an asset management system for the State's transport resources; improving road safety coordination and cooperation; rationalising transport pricing policies in all modes; and changing the organisational culture.

The study team reports to the Cabinet Committee of Resources and Physical Development. Subsequent to gaining Government approval for the various strategies, an implementation philosophy for each strategy will be produced. I think the Committee can see that what is being studied is very comprehensive indeed, and I hope that it covers all the key and strategic issues that transport will face not just in the next five years or so but for the next 20 years.

Mr ROBERTSON: I will pursue the question of transport studies a little further. The Fielding report is mentioned in the section dealing with specific targets for 1988-89. Will the Minister explain a little further future transport planning options for Adelaide? Will the Minister explain what is in the Fielding report, what has been done, what is about to be done and what the future holds in respect of Fielding's recommendations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am happy to do that. At the outset, I point out that the Fielding report was very welcome. It was a very large report containing, I think, 49 recommendations, the overwhelming majority of which were accepted. A few key recommendations were rejected because we did not believe they were in line with Government policy now or in the foreseeable future. So, the Fielding report was not a directive to the Government at all; it was made up of suggestions, some of which we rejected.

Professor Fielding divided his recommendations into short term and long term, and we should remember his report is an agenda for public transport in the 1990s. It is logical therefore that the recommendations for action in the short term are the ones receiving most attention. A large number of Professor Fielding's recommendations related to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the State Transport Authority. Most of these have been picked up and incorporated into the STA business plan, including those designed to upgrade the marketing function, to analyse the system performance and improve career advancement for employees. Separate studies of labour productivity and simulation of regional areas will commence soon, and the CNG (compressed natural gas) and midi-bus experiments have been supported by grants from the Commonwealth.

The new Office of Transport Policy and Planning has been restructured to implement the Fielding recommendations accepted by the Government, in particular, increased attention to overall transport planning and coordination. Discussions have commenced on a number of specific recommendations, for example, on parking and the tram extension with the City of Adelaide and on local transit needs in a number of outer suburban communities. The expansion of the Access Cab service has already been announced. It is intended to work with the Department of Environment and Planning, local government agencies and suburban centre owners to identify locations which are convenient and appropriate for transit centres and conveyance points for regional transit services. Such centres exist at Tea Tree Plaza and the Salisbury and Noarlunga centres, and the experience gained will be applied to the analysis of other locations.

During this part of the Committee I will be very happy to go into much more detail on any of the Fielding recommendations in which the Committee is interested. As I have said, the Fielding report comprised 49 recommendations, and I am sure that the Committee would not want me to deal with all of them individually. However, I will write to any honourable member who would like a detailed break down of any of those recommendations. That information is available now.

Mr ROBERTSON: In the recent Auditor-General's Report, mention is made of defect notices. It was suggested that the department may have been losing potential revenue by not following up defect notices. What action has been taken to correct that perceived shortcoming—if, indeed, it was a shortcoming—and is there any potential for added revenue if the defect notice process is pursued to the nth degree?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We can do it better. One of the things that concerned me—and I know that it has concerned previous Ministers—is the sheer inconvenience, on a lot of occasions, of having defect notices lifted, particularly in country areas, where it has been a problem. This issue is being given very serious attention at the moment, not the least because I live in the country—not that my vehicle has ever had a defect notice.

I am aware very much of the inconvenience and expense that some people are put to in order to have defect notices lifted. The department has refined the method for the proc-

essing of defect notices received from the Police Department and has instigated a system to prevent the reregistration of vehicles with current defect notices. The owners of these vehicles are advised in writing that the roadworthiness conditions for which a defect notice was issued must be rectified on the vehicle presented for an inspection before reregistration can be considered. A number of owners of defected vehicles do not seek reregistration. The expense involved in bringing the vehicle up to a roadworthy standard is considered not warranted. Therefore, the vehicle is taken completely out of service. That is why not as many defect notices are lifted as are imposed. On occasion, people decide that the expense is not worth it.

As I have said, it is an area that, in my view, lends itself to a great deal more tidying up than has been the case in the past. I am satisfied that the department is doing something significant to deal with the problem that was outlined by the Auditor-General. I do not believe that the Auditor-General suggested, in any case, that it was a major problem but, clearly, there was a discrepancy between the number of defect notices issued and the number that were dealt with by the department and lifted. It was an issue that required attention and it is receiving that attention.

Mr TYLER: Following the successful completion of the Northeast Busway and the spectacular success that that service has had in the north-eastern suburbs, there has been discussion in the media and in my electorate in the southern suburbs, about an O-Bahn busway being built to service the southern metropolitan area.

Mr INGERSON interjecting:

Mr TYLER: Can the Minister say whether his department has any plans for such a service in this rapidly growing area in the south?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Fisher for his question. I know that transport to the south is something that is dear to his heart. I also noted the interjection from the member for Bragg that the O-Bahn was a Liberal Party initiative. The member for Bragg would concede that at all public functions where the O-Bahn has either been launched or re-launched, or where some facet of it has been drawn to the attention of the public the credit that is due to the previous transport Minister, the Hon. Michael Wilson, has been given, and given in full.

I point out to the member for Bragg that the Liberal Party talked about it; we did it. That is the difference. Nevertheless, as the member for Fisher said, it is an amazing and startling success and a credit to the foresight of those people who wanted to use the old Modbury corridor for transport when the old MATS plan was finally knocked on the head.

I wish it was as easy to build an O-Bahn to the south as it proved to be building one to Tea Tree Gully. There are a number of reasons why it will prove much more difficult to get the project together. Over a period the cost will be manageable. It would not cost a great deal more than the O-Bahn to Tea Tree Gully in today's dollars: something like \$100 million by the time the project was finished over a period of years—inflation would obviously result in some escalation of that cost. The problems are not particularly financial problems. The question of engineering can also be coped with reasonably well.

To get an O-Bahn from the city to Darlington is not an enormous engineering problem. The engineers can put something together and would be delighted to do so; it is an engineer's dream. The real problem is the degree of grade separation that would be required between here and Darlington. To illustrate this, I have a map of a proposed route for a southern O-Bahn which I will distribute to anyone who is interested. I am sure a number of members of the

Committee will be interested because it affects at least three of the districts represented here on this Committee. I am not suggesting the map be incorporated into *Hansard* because of its complexity; I present it just for interest.

I will give the Committee some information about the problem that immediately jumps out. It is not necessarily a financial or engineering problem but one of how you deal with the degree of grade separation that is required because for an O-Bahn to be of any value it has to have the minimum amount of interference on the route; the minimum amount of places where it has to stop to allow cross traffic to flow through or to allow for people to get on and off the system. We are very fortunate with the northern O-Bahn in that we had the Torrens Valley, which enabled us to get the degree of grade separation that is required so that the O-Bahn has a clear run from the city to Tea Tree Plaza.

To go from the city to Darlington one travels through many built-up areas and it will be extremely difficult to fit an O-Bahn into that without a degree of disruption which the community may or may not accept. It certainly requires a great deal more work. There are about 20 crossings that require some form of grade separation, which can be done in a number of ways: close off all the streets—but there are some major arterial roads involved that cannot be closed off even during peak periods. If one is to say that it is only during peak periods that the southern O-Bahn would run, then it means closing some major arterial roads.

I do not believe that that option would be acceptable so, if roads are not to be closed, one has to go either over them or under them. It is possible that these road junctions would require up to 20 flyovers. I have some reservations as to whether or not people in the south-western suburbs would tolerate that degree of disturbance to their environment. I am sure that it would cause some problems in many suburbs. The map that I have distributed will probably cause some alarm to one or two members present, not least of whom is the member for Morphett. About four flyovers are proposed in the member for Morphett's electorate, in the member for Hanson's electorate, and in some other electorates.

I do not suggest that it is impossible; rather, I suggest that some very major social problems must be overcome before we can undertake that degree of disturbance to those people in the south-western suburbs. This option seems to solve part of the problem for one group of people in Adelaide at the expense of another group. I do not write off the project; it is well worth further study and I hope that the people from the southern areas who put the proposition to me will continue to think about the proposal and contact their local member or me so that we can continue to address the problem.

If we continue to work hard, most problems can be overcome. I stress that the proposal would cause a massive amount of disruption to the individuals in the areas affected. I also believe that everybody in Adelaide would be concerned about the possibility of establishing up to 20 flyovers between the city and Darlington. When a similar degree of disturbance to the inner city was suggested over 20 years ago in the unlamented MATS plan which was proposed by a previous Liberal Government, it was very quickly vetoed by the people of Adelaide, whether or not they were personally affected. They did not see the necessity of virtually handing over Adelaide to freeways or to change significantly the character of Adelaide by becoming a slave to roads or a transport system. I believe that this proposal should be further considered and I do not believe that anybody should understate the degree of disturbance that will occur if an

O-Bahn system similar to that in the north-eastern area is built.

Mr INGERSON: Has a tender been let for the Motor Vehicle Registration Division's registration and licensing system and, if so, what is the name of the company and at what cost has the tender been let? Further, if so, what guarantees are there for the successful completion on time and within budget, and what were the criteria used for the selection?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A similar question has been asked over a number of years. The *Hansard* record of previous Estimates Committees deliberations contains a wealth of information (probably too much) on this subject. The initial decision to adopt this system was taken in good faith. However, we must thank the previous Tonkin Government for taking this initiative, which I think was a very courageous decision because some of the departments involved, particularly the Motor Registration Division of the Department of Transport, had some doubts as to whether the public sector had the expertise to manage such a large operation.

The Government made a decision, which was subsequently endorsed by a Labor Government, but some of the fears expressed by the Motor Registration Division when the initial decision was taken by the Liberal Government have proved to be well founded. In saying that, I do not mean to be critical of the decision, because I believe it should have been taken and, had I been part of a Government then, I would have supported that that decision be taken.

However, it has been very difficult to attract the staff to implement that decision. Staff with this expertise and of this calibre is in very short supply and, therefore, in high demand throughout Australia. The salaries offered by the public sector are exceeded in the private sector. The public sector does not offer sufficiently high salaries to attract and keep the best possible people in some of these specialised areas. That is unfortunate, but that is the way it is.

I will again ask the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to provide more detail on the specific questions asked by the member for Bragg. The Registrar of Motor Vehicles should be well versed on this topic, because different people who have occupied that position have been asked very similar, if not identical, questions over the past three years or so.

Mr Hutchinson: A contract has been signed with Computer Power Group Ltd for \$830 000 plus or minus \$1 000. We used nine criteria and they were as follows: the time for completion of the project; the price; the deliverables proposed (that is, the procedures and methodologies that were to be implemented as part of the project); the control methodology for managing the project; value added in terms of hardware, software and services that would be brought in by the consulting team; the strengths of the team leader whom we considered to be a key person in the key exercise; the qualifications and experience of the remaining team members; an appreciation of our system and what it was we had to achieve; and a series of reference sites, a number of which were visited by a senior officer from the Motor Registration Division and a senior officer from the Highways Department (now the Department of Road Transport) in which extensive discussions were undertaken with people who had utilised some of the proponents we considered and received a valuation firsthand of their performance.

Mr INGERSON: What guarantees are there as to the successful completion on time and within budget?

Mr Hutchinson: The contracts were written in a form that commits the consultant and the Department of Transport to performance, to the budget and to completion. There

are substantial penalties written into the contract for non-performance and, most of all, the other guarantee we have is the proven performance of the contract group we now have working on the project.

Mr INGERSON: Was the tender constructed in such a way as to allow for potential tenderers to submit proposals that would best solve the current MRD problems? In other words, was the tender restricted to using the current equipment, or were tenderers allowed time and access to information to prepare proposals to best solve the MRD's problems in a cost-effective way?

Mr Hutchinson: While we defined the hardware and software installed, we also defined new system requirements in functional terms. All tenderers were not bound merely to make a submission in terms of the existing hardware and software and, in fact, one of those tenderers, who was considered right up to the last minute, involved different software.

Mr INGERSON: As the majority of individuals involved in the previous unsuccessful attempts at developing the system are to a large degree involved in this development, how can the project be guaranteed to finish within time and budget without changes to the consultants' contract, and are there provisions for increases in scope and therefore payments to the selected tenderer? In other words, what is the basis for these additional payments?

Mr Hutchinson: The team of people involved in previous attempts at developing this system is somewhat larger than the team currently working in the Motor Registration Division. It was because that team did not have sufficient background and diversity that the department recruited an expert team of consultants to work alongside them. In itself, the mechanism used gives one reason for confidence. However, if the need arises to negotiate a change—and such provision has been anticipated because a legislative change may be enacted during the course of the project—changes to the contract will be negotiated within the existing framework of costs used for this contract.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: With the proposed development of a basketball stadium in the Beverley district, a lot of concern has been expressed about the effect that increased traffic might have on that area. Since the north-south transport corridor has been removed from the Metropolitan Development Plan, what studies have been undertaken to determine road needs in the western suburbs and, in particular, when is it intended to upgrade or widen William Street, Beverley?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The basketball stadium will create an additional flow of traffic in that area and it is not the only problem in the area; indeed, there are quite extensive problems throughout the whole of metropolitan Adelaide. In particular, because of the through-traffic and the industrial nature of the western suburbs, it is an area to which we must give a great deal more attention. As the honourable member may recall, on 2 May the Minister for Environment and Planning authorised the Transportation: Metropolitan Adelaide Supplementary Development Plan, which formally removed the north-south freeway corridor from the Metropolitan Development Plan. Whilst some people in Adelaide may have been upset about that, particularly in the south, I think that everybody would agree that that supplementary development plan and what flowed from it as regards acquisition of land, homes, and so on, was something of a disaster in that area. Most people in Adelaide would agree that the decision was good, sensible and sound.

On page 4 of the supplementary development plan the following statement is made:

The need to construct a freeway in the north-south corridor is, in the Government's view, not proven. The uncertainties sur-

rounding traffic growth predictions and the possible changes in basic assumptions makes it difficult to justify the commitment of large sums of money to a project where the need is yet to be demonstrated. In the meantime, to continue to measure a corridor which will not be required, if at all, for a further 15 to 20 years, will continue to impact adversely on the communities through which it passes.

It certainly did that. There is no question that those communities suffered considerably over a period of years and, for as far as they could see into the future (into the medium term, anyway), 10 to 15 years, they could see no way out of those problems which the previous supplementary development plan imposed on them. I believe that the Government's decision was vindicated by the inner western area study recently completed by the Department of Transport.

The study examined the arterial road improvements required to the west of the city to cater for the north-south traffic flows projected to occur by the turn of the century. The study concluded that the following roadworks would provide sufficient capacity to cater for the north-south traffic flows in the future:

In the short to medium term:

Completion of the north-west ring route (that is, Park Terrace and Fitzroy Terrace) along Park Terrace and Port Road.

Widening and upgrading of South Road between Daws Road and the River Torrens and between Port Road and Torrens Road to provide four lanes plus a median wide enough to store right turning vehicles.

Flaring of intersection approaches to the extent necessary to overcome existing capacity deficiencies.

In the long term: widening Port Road to eight lanes and extending the North West Ring Route via Railway Terrace and the Old Glenelg Railway Reserve to Marion Road.

These are immediate initiatives and some longer-term proposals will need to be implemented as demand for road space increases in those areas.

I do not have with me at the moment an exact timetable for William Street, but I will get that later for the member for Spence. I believe it would be in the medium rather than the short term. As far as I know, it is not listed over the next five years but, nevertheless, it is a critical part of the city and of the transport planning in the western suburbs, so it is something that we keep under constant review. I will try to get as definite a time line as I can on the proposed widening.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: I hope that it will be included in the short term because there is much pressure at the moment. This activity is in my electorate and I know of the work by Woodville council in closing a number of side streets to sort out the traffic problems in the area. Much pressure is coming from the Woodville council as well as residents for the widening of William Street. I would like to see that happen as soon as possible.

I now refer to page 100 of the Estimates of Payments, where reference is made to the transport concessions under Australian National. Can the Minister say what is happening in respect to the extension of the pensioner annual trip to include travel to and from places on former State lines, such as Port Augusta and Whyalla?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Spence for his question, which is dear to my heart. One of the problems encountered by myself and the member for Stuart over the years has related to our constituents asking why they do not have concessions identical to those of people living at Port Pirie and south of Port Pirie who get one free trip a year over the old South Australian railway lines. Until now I have never been able to resolve this question, but I am happy to announce that the previous Minister of Transport (the local member for Port Augusta) and the new

Minister of Transport (myself, as the member for Whyalla) have focused on this problem as Ministers and we believe that we have come up with a solution: the State Government will pay Australian National a proportion of the cost to put people who live in Port Pirie and Whyalla on exactly the same footing as people who live in Port Pirie and south of Port Pirie.

The cost will not be great: I believe it will be about \$50 000 a year, but it has been an anomaly which we believe has taken far too long to clear up. Nevertheless, with the agreement from Australian National—and we can see no reason why we cannot get that agreement—people who live north of Port Pirie will be in exactly the same position as people who live south of Port Pirie. In effect, the State Government has put its money where its mouth is. We have been requesting Australian National to make this concession for many years. We have decided that we will pay.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: I now refer to page 257 of the Program Estimates and the program 'Transport Safety', which suggests a considerable reduction in the trend of casualty crashes has occurred. What major activities in the area of road transport is the Government involved in?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the member for Spence pointed out, there is a huge list of initiatives and programs on that page, and I can go through any of the individual items on which the honourable member wants further comment. Most important is the first item listed, that is, the objective. As indicated in the table on page 257, there has been a steady decline in casualty accidents since the peak of 9 519 in 1985. Last year there was a remarkable reduction to 7 000 casualty accidents reported in that year, and it is most important that we continue the decline in casualty accidents.

All the other initiatives support the first objective listed of a further reduction in casualty accidents. I can go to more length on that matter because it is important. I refer to some of the things which have already been announced and which the Government expects will assist in continuing the decline in casualty accidents. This includes a package of measures for the road transport industry—the heavy vehicle industry—which is over-represented markedly and alarmingly in the statistics. We have tried to put a package of measures together to indicate clearly to the road transport industry that it is expected to do better about safety and, if it does not do better in regard to safety, the chances are that the Department of Transport and the police will do it for the industry. We would rather the industry did it itself but, if it does not do that, the police and the department will become involved.

The package of measures includes a \$150 heavy commercial trailer fee, additional permit fees for road trains and B doubles, and extension of B double routes to provide access to the south of Adelaide and the South-East of the State. It is anticipated over a period of time that the greater use of B doubles will mean a reduction in the number of semi-trailers that we see on our roads now, particularly as B doubles have restricted access to our roads and have a further restriction on the hours in which they can operate.

B doubles cannot operate on certain roads during peak hours. We expect over a period that this will have a significant impact on the number of casualty accidents. On top of that there is being introduced a new initiative involving the random on-road inspections of heavy duty vehicles. As members know, except for B doubles and certain other special vehicles, South Australia does not have a system of periodic inspections. We believe at this stage that that is not required and would be wasteful of resources. However, we are introducing random inspection so that any heavy

vehicle in the State can be pulled over at any time and through the use of our mobile testing station can be tested and, if found faulty, can be put off the road virtually immediately.

On top of that we are introducing the inspection of all interstate registered vehicles aged seven years or over seeking South Australian registration. It has been suggested that people owning vehicles of that age interstate believe that the vehicles will not pass inspection procedures, particularly in New South Wales, and they bring the vehicles to South Australia and register them in South Australia because, prior to this initiative and the legislation going through, such vehicles did not have to be inspected in South Australia. They will now have to be inspected. The Government believes that vehicles of that age ought not to be able to come from interstate and escape with no inspection at all.

There are a number of other measures which I would be happy to go through but, substantially, that is the package of road measures which this Government has introduced. On top of that is a measure which I particularly favour, but it will require the cooperation of the Commonwealth and other States, that is, making it mechanically impossible for heavy trucks to speed. There is a strong suggestion from New South Wales that tachometers, which record everything a vehicle does, are one way to discourage speeding. There is no doubt that tachometers will discourage some speeding, but they do not prevent vehicles from speeding. Tachometers can be useful—if they are not tampered with—in prosecuting drivers after an offence has occurred.

I would prefer, rather than chasing people afterwards and fining them for speeding, to limit the ability of a vehicle to speed. I believe that that is the most acceptable way to go. I am pleased that the Commonwealth has also said that it believes that the measure has some merit and will be further discussed in the ATAC meeting in March next year. I believe that making it impossible for the vehicle to speed is the way to go.

I had an interesting phone call the other day which I will share with the Committee. On this issue a constituent rang and said, 'Why don't you do what they do in Japan, where in some areas they have red lights on top of trucks?'. Apparently, if the truck exceeds the speed limit, the red light comes on and the only way it can be switched off is at a police station. The light has restricted access that cannot be tampered with and, by law, drivers must take vehicles to a police station to have the light extinguished.

They tell me it is highly embarrassing for truck drivers to be driving to the police station with their red light on. That is not something that I have seen personally: I have not. However, I thought it was quite a novel idea and a little bit of lateral thinking. While I am not considering the proposal, I thought it would be of interest to members and in relation to road safety.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: I am not sure whether bicycles are included in the casualty crashes. Perhaps the Minister could clarify that. I notice that one of the objectives is to increase cycle helmet wearing rates, including use of a helmet purchase rebate scheme. Is there any Federal Government assistance with the program to increase bicycle helmet wearing?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Unfortunately, no. The Federal Government, to the best of my knowledge, does not assist us at all in that program.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: Are cycles included in the casualty crashes?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, they are. The wearing of bicycle helmets is to be encouraged. There is a suggestion—although it has not been implemented anywhere in Aus-

tralia—that bicycle riders ought to be compelled to wear helmets. Whilst I have some sympathy with that point of view, I do not think that it is one that we could realistically enforce.

Mr INGERSON: Has the Motor Registration Division, the Department of Transport or the Government employed an outside placement firm to find a job in the private sector for an employee of the division who is directly involved in the setting up of existing computing within the Motor Registration Division? If so, what is the cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will ask the Registrar to respond.

Mr Hutchinson: I will need to seek clarification on that point. We have not recently used any outside consultants to recruit staff.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Director-General of Transport, Dr Scrafton, has some more information on that, so I invite him to respond.

Dr Scrafton: The individual involved was the former project manager of on-line, and, as the Minister said, problems have occurred in previous years with the management of the project. That individual stepped aside, and he has since been seeking employment. However, the department has not hired placement firms to find employment for him. Companies from outside have cooperated with the Department of Personnel and Industrial Relations and us in seeking employment for him. In fact, the individual has been involved in quite a few project-related activities to test his suitability for employment outside. We would encourage this sort of interface to go on because the number of Government projects to which this individual might be suited are limited. There is a feeling that he ought to be broadening his scope, and we have been working with DPIR and those companies outside which have been cooperating with us. I would have to determine whether any fees have been involved. Certainly no departmental fees have been involved.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I undertake to ascertain that information from DPIR.

Dr Scrafton: I do not think there have been any. It is a voluntary arrangement with which we are pleased, because we believe this is the only way in which he could find appropriate employment.

Mr INGERSON: Page 259 of the Program Estimates refers to the Tonsley railway station study. Has that study been completed and, if it has, can the Minister advise what point it is at?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, the study has been completed. I am not sure who picked up the study, but it has been released. You are welcome to a copy of it. I will get one to you later today. The study was released some weeks ago.

The Tonsley branch line represents an under-utilised rail asset. Passenger services are presently operated in the morning and evening peak periods, and Australian National operates a goods service to Mitsubishi Motors factor at Clovelly Park. As a result of a recent trial conducted by the STA it was found that it would be feasible to operate an express train service from Tonsley to the city with a running time of 15 minutes instead of the present 29 minutes. The Government therefore sought an examination of the feasibility of rebuilding the Tonsley rail service to express operation and upgrading the Tonsley railway station to become a major bus/train public transport passenger interchange.

As the Tonsley railway station is located 13 km from the city (roughly the same distance as the Tea Tree Plaza O-Bahn interchange), the location could be attractive to bus users and motorists while its location in the Marion region (close to the Marion Shopping Centre, Flinders University and Flinders Medical Centre) make it particularly attractive

as a 'hub' in the south. Because the Government has committed itself to developing the Sturt triangle as the Southern Science Park, the option of extending the Tonsley rail line into the Sturt triangle and locating an interchange there was discarded on both cost grounds and the adverse impact that such a facility would have on the Science Park environment. If southern bus services are altered to feed into the interchange, the scheme can also provide public transport users with all-day services to the Flinders Medical Centre (not just during the off-peak as at present) and more frequent services to Flinders University, Sturt CAE and the Marion Shopping Centre.

From memory, the cost of the interchange was given as close to \$20 million, which is obviously a large sum of money. However, if we are convinced that we can get the time savings involved in an express service from Tonsley to the city, it may well be worthwhile. The difficulty with it is asking people who live in the south and wish to get into the city to change from a bus to a train at Tonsley. Adelaide commuters do not have a good record for liking to change modes of transport in the middle of a journey. I believe that is a great pity, because it would give us a lot more flexibility. However, there is not a great deal of point in building an interchange and making the rail line an express service if insufficient people will use it. That is a dilemma which we have, and we have not yet decided whether it is worthwhile. It may be worthwhile in its own right in removing some buses off South Road; it may be worth it just for that.

However, unless the patronage can be virtually guaranteed, taxpayers would not be happy if we spent \$20 million on an interchange and virtually demanded that people used it, and then they did not do so. It does not seem to me to make good financial sense. We are still working on the project. It is very much alive, and I welcome any comments on the report that was released several weeks, if not two months ago. I look forward to having the member for Bragg's comments on the proposal.

Mr INGERSON: In relation to the accessibility of the access cab system. Several blind people have told me that they have no access, or limited access, to this system and, whilst they recognise that they have the ability to get concessional travel on our bus, tram or train systems, there are many times when that is impossible for them, particularly if they are an individual case. They would like the Minister to explain why they cannot have access to this system.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is a difficult problem—a philosophical problem as much as anything else. It has been put to me on several occasions that we should not allow people who are blind to one degree or another to have access to the system. It is very important that people who have some degree of visual disability move in the community as much as possible in the normal way. In fact, it is a constant normalisation program that organisations that represent the blind philosophically agree with to a great extent. Of course, we provide a concession, that is, completely free travel on the STA for anyone who demonstrates that they have significant visual impairment. Of course, as in all things, there is a grey area which I have asked the Office of Transport Policy and Planning to look at in depth.

When you have someone who is over the age of, say, 80 years and is also blind, it becomes fairly meaningless to tell them that they should be out in the community coping the same as anyone else. Blind people are not disabled in the same way as someone who is in a wheelchair, and it is very wrong to treat them as if they were. However, for someone who is over the age of 80 and is also blind that philosophy can be a little harsh. I understand that approach in general,

but for someone who is over the age of 80 it is a little harsh. When individual cases like that come to me I ask the Office of Transport Policy and Planning to have a second look. We do not encourage, for very good reasons, blind people to use the Access Cab service. However, I do not believe that that should be taken to the nth degree where it means that someone who is old, frail and blind must stay at home because of our strict application of the rules.

Mr ROBERTSON: I refer to the Estimates of Payments and transport concessions for blind and incapacitated persons. The projected allowance has risen from \$21 000 to \$475 000. What form will the extra expenditure take, or does it represent another category that has been included in this budget?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Part of it is done with mirrors, as it were. It looks like quite a spectacular increase, but it results from a different way of arranging the finance and, through the Crouzet system, we have been able more easily to identify people who receive concessions. So the STA has benefited by receiving, under this line, a more significant part of its income from the State Government. I doubt whether it results from more people using the system. The increase results from clearer identification of people who receive concessions and, thus, an increase in reimbursement we receive from the Government. Of course, the additional money received by the STA under this line reduces its overall deficit, which means that it does not receive quite as much from the State Government under another line. Therefore, it is not as if suddenly another \$400 000 must be found.

Mr ROBERTSON: On the related subject of the Australian National concessions which received a guernsey some time ago, the actual payment last year was somewhat under the voted amount. Of course, the estimated amount this year is considerably greater again. I presume that that reflects the extension of the concession scheme to all people over the age of 60. That would account for the projected additional expenditure this year.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am happy to say that the additional expense is caused by those people who live north of Port Pirie—to wit, in Port Augusta and Whyalla—receiving access to the same amount of concession that is the case in Port Pirie and south of Port Pirie.

Mr ROBERTSON: I sensed earlier that the Minister had more to say about bicycle helmets and the argument in favour of their being worn. What are the latest figures on compliance rates for various categories of cyclist, namely, primary schoolchildren, secondary schoolchildren and adults? Do the compliance rates in any of those categories come within cooee of making the wearing of bicycle helmets feasible and viable?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Cleal, the Acting Director of Road Safety, will respond.

Mr Cleal: While wearing rates increased between 1984 and 1987—they went from 2.7 per cent to 40 per cent for commuters, from 3 per cent to 27 per cent for primary school students and from 1 per cent to 6 per cent for secondary school students—there was a decline between 1987 and 1988. For example, the rate for primary school students decreased from 27 per cent to 19 per cent. This demonstrates the difficulty in maintaining wearing rates by the promotion of bicycle helmets alone. I understand that, for this reason, the helmet rebate scheme which has been effective in increasing wearing rates in other States is being considered for South Australia.

Mr INGERSON: I understand that a bus inspector who recently resigned has not been replaced. Does the Minister

intend to replace that inspector? There is considerable concern in the bus and coach area that there needs to be an adequate number of inspectors in the field to enforce the Government's minimum requirements in this area.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can reassure bus and coach operators that the degree of inspection that is required will be maintained. The inspector has not been replaced because of the integration of the vehicle engineering branch of the old Department of Transport with the vehicle operations section of the old Highways Department. They will be amalgamated in the new Department of Road Transport, which will give us ample capacity to maintain the level of inspection that is required. Indeed, we hope to expand the role of that part of the new Department of Road Transport.

I believe the integrated department can do many more things; it only requires us to apply our mind to them. For example, with the introduction of random inspections, I am quite sure that some trucks on the roads will be defected, it will mean that repairs must be made and then, subsequently, those vehicles will be presented to our new vehicle inspection operation in the Department of Road Transport. That will ensure that a greater amount of inspection will be carried out on our roads and, without going into any speculation at this stage, because the proposals are not fully worked through, I can assure both the bus and the coach operators—and anyone else operating on our roads—that there will be a considerably greater degree of inspection, particularly of commercial vehicles, in this State. With the combination of those two divisions, our capacity to do more inspections has increased enormously.

Mr INGERSON: The Bus and Coach Association has expressed concern to me, and I understand to the Minister, about the Education Department again having the right to inspect its own vehicles. There is a feeling within the association, and I think historically there has been evidence supporting the argument, that the maintenance and standards set within the Education Department have not necessarily been the same standards that have been required of bus and coach operators in the private sector. Can the Minister explain how he sees the inspection and maintenance of the buses taking place? What action does he see his department taking, at least in ensuring that the standards are maintained?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The bus and coach operators have expressed this concern to me. That concern is quite unnecessary. The Education Department has as much expertise in this area as does my department. There is no reason for bus and coach operators to have any concern. I am very pleased to have the member for Bragg, or anyone else, inspect the Education Department's operation. I am sure that they will be totally satisfied. We were simply duplicating that process; we were adding nothing at all.

Mr INGERSON: On page 257 of the Program Estimates under 'Road Safety', specific mention is made of the red light camera program. Can the Minister explain to the Committee the performance of this program, as far as he is concerned? In other words, is the Government satisfied with what has been achieved; is any expansion of this program likely; and, if so, to what extent?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am very happy with the performance of this program so far. I think that everyone would agree that the program has been very successful. I cannot give the exact figures on the number of people who have been identified as breaking the law by going through red lights, but it is quite extensive. I invite anyone to go to Holden Hill and view the police operation—as I have. It is a quite salutary experience: once anyone sees the degree of detail displayed by the cameras, I am sure that one would

never again take the chance of going through a red light—there is no escape. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to argue against the evidence, because the cameras are so accurate in the way that they operate.

We would be guided very much by the Police Department, if it thought that any expansion was necessary. I am not aware of any request from the police, but I will have that matter checked and, if I have anything to add after having looked at the question, I will ensure that that information is presented to the Committee before the required date for incorporation in *Hansard*. However, it is something that the Police Department deals with, rather than my department. I am not aware of any request for any expansion. As I understand it, the Police Department is still evaluating the proposal and I am sure that it will form some opinion as to whether or not any expansion would be worthwhile.

Mr TYLER: I refer to page 102 of the Program Estimates, which states that \$100 000 has again been budgeted as a contribution towards the operation of the Victor Harbor tourist railway. I note that the railway has attracted considerable press coverage over the past few days. In fact, today's *Advertiser* carries a story on the subject. I would appreciate it if the Minister could advise the Committee how much has been provided to the SteamRanger and others since Australian National closed the regular passenger service to Victor Harbor. In addition, will the Minister also tell the Committee what will be the future of the tourist industry if AN closes the line from Mount Barker to Strathalbyn?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the member for Fisher for his question; it is a very topical issue. The negotiations currently under way to resolve the problem created as a result of AN's decision to close that part of the line are the responsibility of the Minister of Tourism. The Minister is putting together a package to save the SteamRanger. In the next couple of days the Minister will present to all interested parties details of the results of her negotiations. However, the \$100 000 mentioned in the Program Estimates is the final third-year payment of operating subsidy for the service on the Victor Harbor tourist railway.

Although any operator is free to run a service to Victor Harbor, the subsidy has been paid to SteamRanger, the operating arm of Australian Railways' Historical Society in South Australia. The cash is paid in arrears, following receipt of an audited statement of the 1988-89 deficit. To date, the following public funds have been expended on the Victor Harbor railway, plus contributions in kind towards technical supervisions, administration and negotiations with other parties. I think these figures are quite illuminating; they show the degree of commitment that the State Government has made to date to this particular operation. The CEP scheme contribution from the Commonwealth in 1985 was \$1.25 million. The State contribution in 1985 was \$750 000. The subsidies paid in the three financial years 1987 to 1990 involved a further \$300 000. That gives a total of \$2.3 million, which has been contributed to date from the taxpayers towards that tourist operation.

It is a very large amount of money indeed, as I am sure all taxpayers will agree. However, I believe in South Australia there is a desire to keep this particular line open to keep the SteamRanger going and supply this service for tourists, whether they be South Australian tourists, interstate or overseas tourists. It is an asset to South Australia. There is no doubt about that whatsoever. To date it has cost the taxpayers \$2.3 million. I cannot give an upper figure. I wish I could give an upper figure, but that is very difficult to calculate. The Minister of Tourism will be making details available over the next couple of days of what

we believe to be an upper figure. On behalf of the taxpayers of South Australia we can only hope that the upper figure announced does turn out to be an upper figure.

Concerned individuals in the community have to put a very large voluntary effort into maintaining SteamRanger. I know that has occurred already, but the fund raising effort has to increase, because whilst we have given \$2.3 million to date and there are probably several hundred thousand dollars to go, at some stage there has to be an upper limit. Whilst the taxpayers want this tourist facility, if one talks about \$3 million or more, then I am sure the taxpayers will just have to weigh up the value to the tourist industry and tourist amenities in South Australia with the huge cost of keeping that individual tourist amenity in operation. After discussions with the Minister of Tourism I am confident that she is able to put a package together on behalf of the South Australian Government with Australian National that will keep the line open and upgrade the line. I wish I was as confident about the upper figure. History is not on the side of those who, in this particular operation, have ventured to give an upper figure. History has shown that the upper limit appears to have an escalation factor but as yet we do not know what that factor is. We only know there is one and the costs keep on escalating.

Mr TYLER: Page 259 of the Program Estimates states that the Minister tabled in Parliament in April 1989 reports on the possibility of substituting a fuel levy for motor registration and related fees. I am particularly interested in this subject because it was on my amendment to the motion of the member for Elizabeth that referred this matter to the Minister for a report. I would appreciate it, as I am sure members of the Committee would appreciate it, if the Minister could summarise the recommendations of these reports.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know whether I can summarise it. It is a very technical question but I will do my best. It was a very detailed report. The economic arguments are somewhat mixed as to whether it is a worthwhile thing to do from an economic point of view. Economics is not an exact science and one can construct a model that suits any argument. I do not propose to go into that. One can get one's economic arguments where one will and should give them the degree of consideration that one thinks they are worth. Issues of much more importance for the ordinary motorists is how much would it cost, how much on a litre of petrol to do a number of things. For example to remove the fee for driving licences, how much would that cost on a litre of petrol, and how much would it save on administration? Another example, taking it step by step, if we eliminated registration, how much would that add to a litre of petrol to raise the same amount and how much would that save in administration? One could go all the way and take the three of them and ask how much will it cost on a litre of petrol to eliminate driving licence fees, motor registration fees and also compulsory third party fees and again, how much would we save on administration in doing that?

The 1986-87 figures are available but I am sure that people will be able to add the level of inflation from that time and make the necessary calculations. It was estimated in 1986-87 dollars that to remove driving licence fees would only cost a cent a litre on petrol. Whilst that is not terribly significant I do not think there would be any savings in it at all because people still have to be licensed and the degree of public service cost in licensing people would not change significantly, whether or not there is a fee involved. People would be paying a cent more for petrol without any commensurate benefit and a low level of cost through the public service.

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To eliminate registrations for small vehicles, the family car, and to get the same amount of revenue for our road building and maintenance program, would require a 4.2 cents a litre levy on petrol in 1986-87 dollars. That would save between \$2 million and \$3 million in collection costs. That is reasonably significant but one still has the third party component so people would still have to register the vehicle in some way and also pay the third party component of the total registration and third party fee. If one is going to do it then one is best doing the lot and then there will be significant administrative savings. That is to eliminate the driving licence fee, to eliminate the registration fee and to eliminate the third party premium and to get the same amount of money for our road maintenance and building program in 1986-87 terms, that would require an increase of 15.4 cents on a litre of petrol, which is a very significant increase—something like 25 per cent increase in the price of fuel.

That was in 1986-87 dollars so it would actually be higher now—it may be as high as 17 cents or 18 cents. That is an increase of up to 30 per cent on the price of fuel for eliminating the cost of collecting that revenue. The Government does not believe that to be a practical proposition at this stage. I know every other State has gone through an identical exercise. On the surface it seems like quite a reasonable thing to do but when talking about a 17 cents or 18 cents increase in a litre of petrol I am not sure the public would welcome that particular Government initiative. Had it been in the order of about 5 cents a litre I think it would have been worthwhile but not a 17 cents or 18 cents increase in a litre of petrol. It is a very good idea, but I am unlikely to be so courageous as to put the proposal into practice.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: The Auditor-General has again commented on the slow progress of the on-line Motor Registration Division project. The Highways Department has budgeted \$3 million for the project. When will this project be completed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Three previous Ministers of Transport, including the member for Spence, have gone on record with a date. If the member for Spence were sitting on the other side of the Chamber, I would say that he had an absolute cheek in asking me this question when his own predictions proved to be so out of line. However, he made a prediction in good faith on the information given to him at the time.

Mr Hutchinson: This project will be completed by August next year and it will include the registration and licensing components. The licence component has never previously been given a date.

Mr INGERSON: What information can be provided about the evaluation of the residential street managements in Enfield and Unley as mentioned in the targets for 1988-89?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This question is becoming increasingly important. The notion of residential street management is being adopted with a great deal of enthusiasm, particularly by local government, with a lot of assistance from the former Department of Transport. This concept can be very contentious, because what suits one group of residents may not suit another group in the next street. It is possible to squeeze traffic out from a particular street, but that traffic has to go somewhere and into somebody else's residential area, unless many residential areas are delineated as no through-traffic areas and permit only those residents in those streets to use those roads.

Such an option would force all traffic on to our main roads, particularly our main arterial roads, and that would create real problems. However, we must consider the amen-

ities of those people who live in key areas and key streets and, unless we wish the city to be taken over completely by the motor vehicle, in the interests of residents in the areas concerned, I think it is reasonable that some restrictions on motorists apply. It is difficult to strike a balance and local government will increasingly have to address this problem. However, the Department of Transport and other areas have a large degree of information and expertise to assist them to make some of these difficult decisions.

Mr INGERSON: I am happy if that information could be tabled or provided later.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Because this area interests me and all local members who from time to time have to deal with some of the problems created by traffic in residential areas, I will write to all members of the Committee and outline what information is available to assist local councils and also some of the measures that are useful in residential street management.

Mr INGERSON: When will the probationary licence changes be introduced and what is the general time frame? Are a lot of young people concerned about the introduction of this change?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Although I can say it will be in the not too distant future, it is still some time away. However, I cannot give the honourable member any date at this stage.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question, what problems are involved? This legislation was passed a considerable time ago. Surely the Minister is not holding this issue up for an election release.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure what it has to do with an election; that is drawing the longest possible bow. If the member for Bragg is so keen on this as a road safety measure that he wants me to hurry it up and to give due credit to the member for Bragg that the date has been advanced at his insistence and that we have dropped other things in the department to bring this ahead, I am happy to do so. However, I suspect that the member for Bragg would not want me to do that at all. It is being brought on with all due speed, the processes for doing it are all in place, and in the fullness of time a date will be announced. However, I would like the member for Bragg to explain to me after the Committee rises what it has to do with an election.

Mr INGERSON: My supplementary question was: what are the reasons for the delay?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no specific reason; there has not been a specific delay. We are working on it in a careful and measured way.

Mr INGERSON: My next question relates to a statement, also on page 257, to the effect that the target for last year was to introduce a driver development program. What is that?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will take that question on notice.

Mr ROBERTSON: The Minister answered a question some time ago concerning bicycle helmets, and this was listed as one of the priorities in the Program Estimates for 1989-90. A number of other priorities are listed. How are the priorities set; in other words, which of those specific targets for 1989-90 are regarded as the most urgent, and what does the department see as the set of priorities within those targets?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a difficult question to answer, because all those things that are listed are of vital importance and I would not want to give the Committee the impression that the department thought the single most important thing was bicycle helmets, when somebody could equally say that one of the other programs could possibly

save more lives or prevent more injury in a casualty accident. Obviously, priorities have to be set for funding purposes, and it is very difficult—and, I suppose, fairly subjective—to determine which you believe ought to get the first bite of the funding cherry, or just how big a bite that particular program should get.

I can only say, as I stated earlier, that the whole of our road safety effort is focused on reducing the number of casualty accidents, and anything we can do and anything we can afford in achieving that objective is a priority. However, as members are aware, and as I have listed, there is a smorgasboard of programs with the potential to achieve this, and I do not want to say that bicycle helmets are not our number one priority because, if I say that, sure as eggs somebody will attack me and say that I do not care, particularly about children and about their wearing bicycle helmets when they ride their bicycles. It is a very important priority, and so are they all.

Mr ROBERTSON: In last year's Estimates, funding was allocated for the Rider Safe program, which is pre-licence training for motor cyclists. As that does not appear in this year's Program Estimates, what is the upshot of that training program and how successful was it in 1988-89?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It was successful to the extent that we have opened our last centre so, as far as it is practicable, the State is now covered by the Rider Safe program. The last centre was opened in Berri, so about 95 per cent of motor cycle riders in this State are now able to go through the Rider Safe program prior to licensing. Obviously, every program has to be evaluated and, after such a short period, it is too early to say definitively that it has been effective, but common sense tells us that any training in this area is better than none, as used to be the position. I believe that motor cyclists are now better trained when they get their licence than they used to be. The program is being evaluated and will be evaluated over the next year or more, so that we can get a better fix on just how effective or otherwise it has been.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, I declare the examinations completed.

Highways, \$21 976 000

Works and Services—Highways Department, \$79 009 000

Chairman:

The Hon. T.M. McRae

Members:

The Hon. R.K. Abbott

Mr D.S. Baker

Mr G.A. Ingerson

Mr J.K.G. Oswald

Mr D.J. Robertson

Mr P.B. Tyler

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Payze, Executive Director, Department of Road Transport.

Mr B. Attwell, Manager, Finance.

Mr D. Gerke, Supervising Engineer, Programming.

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

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand that we will deal with the Estimates as they relate to the Department of Road Transport, the former Highways Department and, because of the considerable changes that have been made, it would

be appropriate if I made a brief statement because of the complications involved.

I have pleasure in bringing to this Estimates Committee for debate a total program for the Department of Road Transport of \$247.3 million, and I would like to take this opportunity to explain to Committee members the implications of some significant recent changes to the financial position and structure and, in particular, the accountability framework of the Department of Road Transport.

The first of these changes relates to Cabinet's decision to transfer the responsibility for the Motor Registration Division within my portfolio from the Department of Transport to the Department of Road Transport from 1 July 1989. This was an important change for a number of reasons including, first, the consolidation of the revenue collection responsibility as well as the expenditure of road user charges in one department has enabled the completion of a full stewardship link which the department has with the State's motorists as well as completing the full circle of accountability to the Parliament; and, secondly, the department now has been given the incentive to minimise the collection costs of road user charges because any funds saved in this way can be spent on roads.

The second change I want to comment on relates to the provision for the first time of financial data for all the department's programs in the formal budget papers. Until now, as members may be aware, the internally generated receipts of the department, such as plant sales, land sales and rents as well as the opening and closing cash balances of the Highways Fund were not incorporated into the budget documents because they were not transactions within Consolidated Account. As a result, it has been difficult in the past to establish the total program of the department. The reformat also gave the department the opportunity to address some definitional problems within the financial statements. For example, preconstruction work and design work is shown as part of the capital program to which it relates in the 1989-90 proposed figures instead of as part of the recurrent appropriation where it has been shown up to and including the 1988-89 actual expenditure; and specifically identifiable road safety expenditure has been extracted from the department's two main programs, construction and maintenance of roads and highlighted in the road safety program.

Unfortunately, the changes have meant that the recurrent and capital appropriations between the 1988-89 actual expenditure and 1989-90 proposed expenditures are difficult to compare. However, to overcome this problem I draw Committee members' attention to Appendix 1 of the Estimates of Payments document on page 194 where not only is the department's full program for 1989-90 shown in program format but also comparative data for actual expenditure in 1988-89 is shown for your scrutiny.

These format changes, when brought together with information contained within the Auditor-General's Report, the capital works program, the Program Estimates and Information and by the end of September, the Commissioner of Highways' annual report, you would have had provided to you the full range of accountability mechanisms possible in relation to the department. While discussing budget documents, Committee members will be pleased to note the regularity with which the department is mentioned in the financial statement (Financial paper No. 1) in relation to the initiatives being taken by it in the financial management efficiency area. You will see reference in this document to their involvement in a credit card trial being undertaken under the supervision of Treasury. In addition, the department is one of three departments involved in trialling of risk management procedures in the payment of small

accounts as suggested by the Auditor-General in his last year's report.

The department's 1989-90 program also shows the first full year effect of the introduction of the Australian Centennial Roads Development Act or, as it is abbreviated, ACRD, which commenced on 1 January 1989. The most important feature of this Act is the introduction of a new category of road called 'national arterial'. This category will fund roadworks which are considered to yield high economic benefits to the nation and which will assist the competitiveness of Australian industry.

The Federal Government has announced a \$24.1 million allocation to South Australia for this category in 1989-90. Significant capital enhancements are incorporated in the program, which also concentrates heavily on the asset management strategies that have been highlighted by the Public Accounts Committee. Therefore, there have been responsible allocations of funds to plant purchases, maintenance resealing and rehabilitation projects and bridgeworks maintenance to ensure that premature deterioration of the road, bridge and support assets does not occur.

I would like to make one final statement which again illustrates the Government's record of simplifying the processes of accountability as well as consolidation of functions to avoid duplication. Committee members will already see highlighted in the documents a proposed departmental expenditure on road safety for 1989-90 of \$16.7 million. This actually understates the department's road safety effort because many of the major specific projects being undertaken, which obviously have a strong but not easily quantifiable component of road safety in their cost, are not included in this figure. Subsequent to the preparation of the budget papers, I have supplemented and consolidated this road safety effort by incorporating the Road Safety Division previously under the Department of Transport into the Department of Road Transport. The financial effect of this merger is to lift specific road safety expenditure in the transport portfolio to approximately \$23.8 million for 1989-90, a significant commitment by the Government to reducing the death toll and associated injury trauma on our roads.

Mr INGERSON: I refer to page 269 of the Program Estimates. Each year there are questions about deposit accounts. Can the Minister explain the variation between last year and this year in the recurrent account and the significant variation in the capital deposit account? Can he provide detail of how that money flows or has flown?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am sure that Mr Attwell, Manager, Finance, will be able to provide that information.

Mr Attwell: As the member for Bragg is aware, there is always a difficulty in explaining in clear terms the complexities of the Highways Fund in the way that they relate to the Consolidated Account. In reply to the question, I will give the member for Bragg an outline of where the major figures come and, if he wants further information—including a flowchart, if that is necessary—we can certainly provide that to him at a later date. One of the problems, as the Minister has already alluded to, is that the first two columns of the page to which the member refers are on a different basis from the 1989-90 proposed figure.

If I dwell on the 1989-90 proposed figure and explain the format in that way, that will simplify the discussion. The Public Finance and Audit Act requires that Commonwealth grants for roadworks must first be presented to the Consolidated Account. Therefore, prior to their being appropriated to the Highways Fund, those grants need to be recognised as revenue in the Consolidated Account. In both those cases, the recurrent column of that page and the capital column, it represents the Commonwealth grants which

come to Consolidated Account and which are subsequently appropriated without any change to the Highways Fund. That is a requirement of the Public Finance and Audit Act.

The rest of those figures that are listed as payments from the Deposit Account—the \$121.875 million, and the \$166 725—reflect the fact that all payments for roadworks are paid out of the Highways Department which, in Treasury definitional terms, is a deposit account. Because of that, the final program expenditure on the bottom line of that source of funds tabled—the \$121.875 million and the \$125.425 million in aggregate—agreed to the total program to which the Minister referred before of \$247.3 million. So, basically the reason for that reconciliation is to reflect that the Commonwealth grants in the current nature, the maintenance grants in the capital nature and the capital grants all flow originally through Consolidated Account but ultimately are spent from the Highways Fund.

Mr INGERSON: Can the Minister supply the actual breakdown of where that money comes from? Whilst it comes from the Commonwealth, it also comes through the motor vehicle registration and other accounts.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can give those figures now. I refer members of the Committee to Estimates of Payments (page 194), on which appears a table of receipts.

Mr INGERSON: That \$121.875 million is put in there as a total sum; it is not put in as the breakdown of where it has actually come from. Some of that comes from the old MRD; it is not all Commonwealth money.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If the members of the Committee consider that appendix 1 is insufficient, I will ask Mr Atwell to go through them in more detail.

Mr Atwell: In relation to compiling the \$247.3 million in terms of revenue receipts, there is one difficulty in that reconciliation in the program documents, that is, that the share of fuel franchise receipts for which the department is eligible of \$25.7 million is actually shown as a revenue item under the Treasury program papers. All the other receipts should be able to be found within the Program Estimates. To give a breakdown of the \$247.3 million, I understand that the member is concerned mainly about the Commonwealth and State sources out of that.

Under the ACRD Act, to which the Minister referred in his opening statement, the total allocation to the department will be \$90.8 million in 1989-90. We believe we will become entitled to about \$1.4 million under the interstate road transport registration scheme. We are estimating land sales and rental income to the extent of \$12.9 million in 1989-90, and, although the land sales and rental income are untied to specific projects, we classify that as a Federal source of funds because most of the land sales involved Federal road grants.

In relation to the State scene, we have (as Committee members will see from the Auditor-General's Report), a carry-forward balance of \$5.8 million. Motor registration and drivers' licence fees come into the department. This is before funding the previous Motor Registration Division, which is now part of our schedule. That involves a sum of \$91.3 million. I have already mentioned the fuel franchise figure of \$25.7 million. Also, plant sales are estimated to be \$3.5 million. We believe that we will carry out work to other bodies to the extent of \$5 million in 1989-90. You will note from the budget payments an appropriation of \$2.3 million for storm water drainage subsidy. The Accumulation Fund that is referred to in the Auditor-General's Report will, we believe, yield nearly \$1 million interest this year before that balance has expired. The appropriation documents of a capital nature refer to a \$6.4 million drawn from Consolidated Account and to other miscellaneous State

receipts of \$1.2 million. The total of those figures gives the sources of funds for a program for \$247.3 million.

Mr INGERSON: I refer to the transfer of the Motor Registration Division to the new section within Highways. Last year the cost of the MRD was \$13.879 million; in this year's budget it appears that the cost is \$19.468 million. Will the Minister explain the significant difference in transferring the cost within the Department of Transport?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The question relates to salary expenditure for the Motor Registration Division. So that we are on the wave length, if I understand the member for Bragg correctly, the salary expenditure in 1989-90 is the critical figure (page 106). That is \$10.5 million, compared to the 1988-89 amount of \$7.6 million, which appears to be a substantial increase. The apparent increase results from the elimination of the program 'Revenue Collection Service for other Government Agencies', program No. 9 which involved approximately \$500 000; the elimination of the subprogram 'Driver assessment' in program 3 'Road Safety', approximately \$1.2 million; the incorporation of 'Support services function, personnel and internal audit', which was previously incorporated under the program of 'Intra-agency Support Services, Items Not Allocated to Programs', of approximately \$240 000; an additional \$322 000 in 1989-90, for salary funding of the online project; an additional \$110 000 for salary funding of the photos and licences project, and a \$400 000 allowance for salary and wage increases not previously required but now required since the division has been transferred to the Highways Department, which is deposit funding; and an allowance for the full year effects of salary increases granted in 1988-89.

That describes the bulk of the increases. Because I am not totally clear in my mind that I have answered the question fully I will have the question examined when *Hansard* is available, and I will make sure that, if any further response to the question is required, it will be given to *Hansard* prior to 6 October.

Mr INGERSON: As the Minister would be aware, any significant cost increases in this area will significantly reflect on the amount of money available to the Highways Fund. On the figures presented it seems that, following the transfer of the division, the Highways Fund will have in the order of \$5.5 million less from motor vehicle collections. That suggests that it will probably need to be supplemented from general revenue or some other area.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I assure the honourable member that no costs whatsoever are involved in the transfer of the old Motor Registration Division of the old Department of Transport to the new Department of Road Transport. In fact, one reason for making the change is the attempt—which I believe will be successful—to make much more efficient the collection of these funds that the Department of Road Transport will depend on to a great extent for its road maintenance and building work. Compared with previous years there has been a considerable saving within the Motor Registration Division in the collection of these funds. In fact, from memory, about 150 salaries have been eliminated, and I believe that more efficiencies are possible. I still believe that the collection of these funds is too expensive and that there is a better way to do it.

There is now an in-built incentive for the Department of Road Transport to do better. It has a vested interest in ensuring that the collection of motor registration fees and other payments is as efficient as possible, because that is the department which must deal with the results of that collection process. When I took over this portfolio I thought it was quite irrational that one department was responsible for raising the funds—a responsibility that it took very

seriously—and another department was responsible for spending them. I believed that the department needed to have a vested interest in order to obtain the efficiencies that I believe are available. As I have said, I will have the question examined to see whether there is anything further that can be added to explain fully the differences that are apparent in the Program Estimates.

Mr INGERSON: Can I assume from what the Minister has said that the Highways Fund will not be short by \$5.5 million?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member for Bragg certainly can.

Mr INGERSON: What progress has been made in the past 12 months in respect of a new Highways Act Amendment Bill? I point out that I have asked this question in the four Estimates Committees in which I have participated.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A draft Bill has been drawn up, and I think it is doing the rounds of various interested parties for comment. I look forward to its introduction as much as the honourable member for Bragg. I would like to see a new Highways Act to update and tidy up this area and, hopefully, it will be more intelligible than the old one. I hope that it comes before Parliament as soon as possible.

Mr TYLER: It will come as no surprise to the Minister or the Commissioner that my first question concerns Flagstaff Road. It is a pet subject of mine, and I am sure that members of Parliament are utterly sick of my raising it. I make no apology for that because it is a major arterial road that runs through the middle of my electorate. Vehicle numbers have grown substantially in recent years. The Minister will recall that a few months ago he officially switched on the lights for the new reverse flow concept. This is now a permanent feature of Flagstaff Road following a trial period in the last quarter of last year. I thank the Minister and his predecessor (Hon. Gavin Keneally) for taking up this suggestion; and I thank the Commissioner of Highways for the support he gave the residents and motorists of my electorate, thus enabling this concept to become a reality in South Australia.

I ask the Commissioner to pass on to his work force my appreciation for the way in which it handled the installation of the gantries and the lights. Obviously there was a period of disruption on this road, but the way in which it was handled by the department was greatly appreciated, and it has received favourable comment from people within my electorate. What was the final cost of introducing the reverse flow concept for Flagstaff Road? When will the Government commence widening the remaining section of Flagstaff Road from Bonneyview Road to Black Road now that the reverse flow system is a permanent feature at the northern end of the road?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the honourable member for his kind words and particularly his reference to our sensitivity. In fact sensitivity is our middle name. Unfortunately, from time to time, we must disrupt the flow of traffic around the metropolitan area and the State. That is unavoidable when we upgrade, resurface or maintain roads. We like to do that with the minimum amount of disruption and fuss and with the maximum amount of sensitivity for road users.

I assure the honourable member that I am one member of Parliament who is not sick of hearing him going on about Flagstaff Road. I think his efforts demonstrate what an individual member of Parliament can do for his or her electorate if he or she has a degree of persistence. The member for Fisher has the degree of persistence that is required and he delivers the goods. The reverse flow concept has been very well received. I believe it is one of those

innovative ideas that will save taxpayers and the State a great deal of money over the next decade or so. There is a limit to what we can spend on building new roads, leaving aside whether or not it is desirable to go on building new roads at the rate we have in the past. The better management of the asset we have is now becoming the doctrine of the Department of Road Transport.

I think that the old Highways Department had something of a fixation with building roads. That was probably appropriate in the past when the State certainly did not have enough roads. While several major projects remain, we now have a huge road asset that requires maintenance. Flagstaff Road is a very good example of what can be done to make the present road asset work for the community in a better and more cost effective way. As the member for Fisher would be aware, the cost of that program was in the region of \$200 000. However, to get the volume of traffic through in peak periods in the way that we can without that reverse flow idea would have cost a lot more than \$200 000.

In road building terms, these days one does not get a great deal for \$200 000. Therefore, to have been able virtually to increase the volume on that road in the way that we have is very good value, and I commend the member for Fisher for the idea and for persisting with it. It is not only the people in his electorate who should be grateful for his persistence but the taxpayers should also be grateful because they fund these additions to our road stock. However, we do have to continue expanding our road system, albeit not at the rate we have previously.

The upgrading of the road that the member for Fisher asked about, that is, Flagstaff Hill Road between Bonneyview Road and Blacks Road, is necessary to alleviate a number of current traffic problems. The new road will be a dual carriageway with landscaped mounds between the new road and the existing service road. The reasons for those changes are fairly obvious; that is, to minimise the amount of noise transmitted from the traffic into the homes of nearby residents, because everyone is much more aware these days that the amenity of residents is as important as the road amenity of motorists. We are constantly trying to strike an appropriate balance. It is anticipated that, subject to availability of funds, the work will commence in late 1990 or early 1991 and will take approximately 15 months to complete, at a cost of \$6.9 million. Therefore, the road should be finished some time in 1992.

Mr TYLER: I thank the Minister for that detail. My second question also relates to a major project in my electorate that the department has on the drawing board. It is a project that is also of interest to my colleague, the member for Bright and other members of Parliament representing southern electorates. Of course, I refer to the third arterial road. I am aware that the EIS, and most of the planning work, has been done on this road. At what stage are we in the development of this project?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I must make one slight correction: the EIS has not been done on the road. An environmental report will be done by the department at the appropriate time. What the member for Fisher says is quite correct for his electorate, the electorate of the member for Bright and for a number of other members with electorates in the south. The third arterial road is the most significant project to be undertaken over the next five years. It is a very significant project indeed, and one I look forward to opening it with the member for Fisher at the appropriate time. Of course, I will invite the member for Bragg: we do not want to be unpleasant. A study team is carrying out planning and preliminary design for the road.

A proposal covering the 8.5 km of new alignment from South Road, Darlington to Reynella has been developed. Options for the connections to the existing arterial roads at each end have been drawn for comparison. Investigations are being undertaken to determine the necessary upgrading to the road network around Darlington and the Sturt triangle. These are considered an integral part of the Third Arterial Road project. Around 80 per cent of land necessary for the project in the Darlington area has been acquired. Along the rest of the route virtually all land required is in Government hands or has been set aside for road purposes from housing sub-divisions.

It is now necessary to establish a preferred construction staging sequence, complete environmental assessments and carry out the formal consultation process with councils, residents and affected parties. This will necessitate publication of a planning report and a public display of proposals, leading to Government approvals and the final design and documentation for the roadworks. The estimated cost for the construction of the Third Arterial road from Ayliffes Road to Reynella is in the order of \$85 million. As was previously announced, a 1993 construction start is proposed. The total length of the road is 8.5 kilometres; the total cost is \$85 million; that is, \$10 million per kilometre.

Mr TYLER: There has been a great deal of publicity in recent times relating to trends in Federal/State road funding, particularly through the RAA and its parent organisation. Will the Minister outline the trends in Federal and State road funding over the past five financial years?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Total departmental expenditure (excluding the impact of the Motor Registration Division transfer) has increased by 22 per cent since 1984-85. This compares with an increase in the consumer price index of 45 per cent and the price index which the department calculates for the particular resources it uses of 36 per cent. When one analyses why this reduction of road expenditure in real terms has occurred, one finds that Federal funding over this period has increased by 1 per cent whereas State funding for roads has increased by 50 per cent, that is, 54 per cent higher than the CPI increase and 147 per cent higher than the departmental price index. As a result the State proportion of total departmental funds has increased from 44 per cent in 1984-85 to 54 per cent in 1989-90.

They are the raw figures—the facts. A great deal of explanation can be offered as to why that has occurred and the Minister of Land Transport (Hon. Bob Brown) has done a very good job of explaining how and why decisions are made and how funds are allocated by the Federal Government.

Suffice to say that there can be no criticism of the State Government with regard to road funding. The increase in real terms has been substantial. The final figure that I quoted—the State proportion of total departmental funds which increased from 44 per cent in 1984-85 to 54 per cent this year—is a very clear example of this State Government's commitment to the public sector and to ensuring that the Public Service infrastructure is maintained at a high level. We believe that public sector assets should be maintained and that services should be of a high quality. It is all very well to talk about small government—and even in that area we have a very good tale to tell—but the remarkable thing about this Government is that not only has it been able to control our State finances very well but, at the same time, it has been able to maintain our public service assets and expand our public sector services so that we have personnel and assets of which we can all be proud.

Mr INGERSON: On page 270 of the Program Estimates, reference is made to flood mitigation funding which has

been increased by \$200 000. There is much concern, particularly in local council areas, about the lack of funding in this area. Can the Minister explain the policy direction in this area and the lack of significant increases in funds over the past two to three years? The specific reference that the Minister would be aware of is the concern, particularly by the Salisbury District Council, about its problems in the newly low-lying developing areas around Virginia.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Flood mitigation is becoming a problem; there is no question about that. I remind the Committee that the primary responsibility in this area falls on local government; it does not fall on State Government. However, it is an area of activity that is important to the State and the importance has been recognised by State Governments by undertaking a funding program to local government on a dollar for dollar basis for most of the work, not all of the work. Cosmetic landscaping work is done entirely at the expense of local government but all the substantial work on flood mitigation we subsidise dollar for dollar and are very happy to do so.

It has always been done on a first come, first served basis. Until recently there have not been any requirements to set priorities as local councils have, either individually or as a collection of councils in certain areas that are flood prone, been able to get the various projects together. We have been able to match, with comfort, what they wish to spend dollar for dollar. Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, more and more local councils are getting their act together in this area and we are pleased to see that, but we cannot at the moment match dollar for dollar all the requests from councils that are now coming in. It is just not possible for us to do that. It would need many more millions of dollars than are now available.

All that work is not of sufficient priority to warrant doing immediately, anyway. It is certainly desirable, and with the Department of Road Transport, we assist councils to put those various projects together and we acknowledge the desirability of it, although we maintain that priorities have to be set rather than it all being done at the one time as local government, quite rightly, would wish. I am having examined the question of how we establish priorities. It is something that can be done reasonably quickly and efficiently. We require the help and cooperation of local government in doing it, and I am sure we will have that.

I am confident that as priorities are identified they can substantially be met by the Government, but in this area, as in every other area of Government, it is not possible just to say to everybody, 'Well, come along with your proposals and we will subsidise them dollar for dollar,' without knowing what the upper figure is. However, I can guarantee that the upper figure will be much more than we can afford in any one year. The projects will have to be staged on a degree of urgency of those projects. It will be worked out equitably with the complete cooperation and involvement of local government.

Mr INGERSON: At page 274, under 'Construction and reconstruction of roads', it is stated that, in the main, the 1988-89 schedule of works programs was completed. What components, if any, were not completed and why not?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will provide the honourable member with a schedule.

Mr INGERSON: What is the principal reason why the schedule has not been completed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It would depend on the individual projects and I do not know how many projects were on the go last year. There may have been up to 100 projects and delays on a number of those were varied, but I will obtain a schedule for the honourable member which details

why there were individual delays. The Committee should remember that these roads are built principally by contractors who, for a whole range of reasons, wish projects delayed slightly—whether it is for the purchasing of materials that do not always turn up on the correct day or cash flows or labour flows. But none has been a significant delay that I am aware of. They are all minor delays that occur in any large building operation, particularly one that is spending up to a couple of hundred million dollars on 100 separate projects using goodness knows how many contractors.

Mr INGERSON: With regard to the consultancy cost increase of \$1.5 million in the designing of the Mount Barker Road, can the Minister say what that significant increase relates to and what is the current status of the project?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There are some technical reasons for that. It was apparently an underestimation of what was required in this year, rather than an increase in the cost of the overall proposal. We spent the money more quickly than we thought we could, contrary to the last case, when we spent it more slowly than we thought.

As regards the current state of the project, as the honourable member would be aware, the Federal Government, through us, has already spent \$4.9 million on that project on some preliminary design and identifying the particular route that the new road is to take. The next stage is a much more detailed design stage. As soon as the Federal Government approves the funds for that, we will obviously be very pleased to go into detailed design. We have no information from the Federal Government as to what date the cheque will arrive, but as soon as it is sent we will do the next stage, which is the detailed design work.

Mr INGERSON: The introduction of the national arterial road category by the Federal Government has resulted in a shift from rural arterial to urban arterial necessitating increased expenditure on land acquisition of some \$2.8 million. What land was required to be purchased and what is the reason for the \$2.8 million?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The details of those land purchases are in the hands of the Executive Director of the Department of Road Transport. I would be very happy to have a rest and let him outline all the details of those purchases.

Mr Payze: The specific projects to which that comment relates in terms of our land acquisition activities would include the Salisbury Highway extension, the widening of Tapleys Hill Road at Glenelg North, the South Road widening between Emerson Crossing and Daws Road and the Gawler By-pass, stage 4. They are the principal projects proceeding with some degree of urgency.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: On page 268 of the Program Estimates, the residual support service expenditure shows a decrease in recurrent costs of \$1.62 million and an increase of \$4.132 million in capital costs. Can the Minister explain these variations?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The support services heading against which these figures are listed in the Program Estimates is not entirely relevant in the highways context. There is a considerable amount of expenditure which, because of the nature of its work, the department cannot attribute directly to particular programs. An example of this type of expenditure could be land and building costs for depots or the purchase of crushed rock for use on future road projects.

Members can appreciate that these types of costs do not fit into the conventional administrative overhead category. In his recent report tabled in Parliament, the Auditor-General identified the fact that the department is holding certain items of plant beyond their economic life. The increase in

capital costs addresses this issue, as it provides for an increase in plant purchases in accordance with the departmental strategy to reduce the age profile of plant to a desired level by 1994.

In addition, design costs associated with the extension of office facilities are shown as capital expenditure in 1989-90, but it was reported as recurrent expenditure in 1988-89. The decrease in recurrent expenditure has arisen because of a reduction in support services personnel, some projected administration costs in this category being reported as capital expenditure in 1989-90, and reduced expenditure on reimbursement works due to the completion of a one-off project for the Department of Marine and Harbors in 1988-89.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: How much of the Western Gawler Bypass has been completed and at what cost, and when will the remainder be completed and at what cost? I refer to page 42 of the Capital Works Program.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As everybody who has driven on this section of road would be aware, this is one of the flagships of the program over recent years. It really is superb road engineering and all Ministers who have been involved in it deserve some of the credit. I know that the member for Light is very proud of this road—so proud in fact, that he wants another one built almost immediately, but that may take a little longer. Construction is being undertaken in four stages. The first stage involved the Main North Road-Chamberlain Road and was completed in February 1987 at a cost of \$5.2 million. The second stage, which involved Chamberlain Road-Trotting Track Road, including bridges over the bypass and railway, commenced in May 1987 and was completed in mid-April 1989 at a cost of \$9 million.

Stage 3 involving Trotting Track Road-Angle Vale Road and construction of contract No. 1, which included 1.1 kilometres of earthworks, the Gawler River Bridge and the bridge over the Clifford Road connector, was commenced in February 1988 and was completed in March this year. Construction of contract No. 2, which includes all works not in contract No. 1, commenced in February 1989 and is due to be completed in July 1990. The total estimated construction cost is \$11.8 million.

Stage 4 involves the Angle Vale Road-Main North Road and duplication of 1.6 kilometres. It also includes construction of twin bridges over the railway and Main North Road. Land acquisition for this stage has commenced. Detailed road and structure designs are under way. Construction is due to commence in the 1990-91 financial year subject to funds being available, and the estimated field cost of stage 4 is \$10.1 million. It has been a very expensive but very worthwhile project.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: Under the same Capital Works Program reference is made to the Golden Grove development. What is the current situation as to the provision of the major road network for the Golden Grove Development Scheme?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The work completed for the Golden Grove Development is as follows: McIntyre Road, Bridge Road-Milne Road, which was completed in 1987 at a field cost of \$5.1 million; Golden Grove Road, North East Road-Grenfell Road, which was completed in 1986 at a field cost of \$3.95 million; Grenfell Road, Golden Grove Road-the Golden Way, which was completed in 1986 at a field cost of \$2.6 million; the Golden Way, McIntyre Road-the Grove Way, which was completed in late 1988 at a field cost of \$5.8 million; McIntyre Road, Milne Road-North East Road, which was completed in June 1989 at a field cost of \$5.8 million; and the Grove Way, the Golden Way-

Golden Grove Road, which was completed in December 1988 at a field cost of \$2.3 million.

The degree of planning and coordination of services between the various Government agencies with cooperation from and in concert with the private sector developer is a credit to all concerned. It is one of the urban planning successes of the 1980s that will extend well into the 1990s. This development demonstrates what can be done with cooperation between the private and public sectors and with all Government departments working in concert. It is quite a remarkable sight and a very pleasant area.

Mr INGERSON: As to page 275 under 'Major resource variations' a comment is made about the impact of price and wage increases of \$3.5 million. What was that significant increase and change?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It reflects decisions of the Industrial Commission of South Australia.

Mr INGERSON: I understand that Highways Department engineers have inspected the bridge at Port Road, Hindmarsh. Are there any difficulties with that bridge in terms of heritage and possible expansion should it be necessary to increase the width of the road due to increasing volumes of traffic, perhaps because of the entertainment centre?

Mr Payze: My knowledge of the Hindmarsh Bridge at Thebarton that spans the Torrens River is that it is a bridge of some age constructed of wrought iron and therefore it has some significance in terms of bridge construction history in this State. The Port Road was closed last Sunday to enable us to undertake some load testing from which we measured stresses and strains simply to measure the structural integrity of the bridge. I can assure the Committee that the structure poses no danger.

Mr INGERSON: As a supplementary question, is there any need to widen that bridge if any traffic flow patterns change in the short term in that area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not aware of any proposal to widen it. I understand that, at some time in the future, there could be a requirement to duplicate the bridge rather than widen it, but the matter is not something that has crossed my desk recently.

Mr INGERSON: Page 276 of the Program Estimates relates specifically to the *Island Seaway*, in the historical sense, not a progressive sense. I note that last year the cost of the *Island Seaway* in this line increased by nearly \$700 000 from \$4.36 million to \$5.039 million. What are the reasons for that; why (and there is just one reference in the line) was \$141 000 spent by the Highways Department on the *Island Seaway*; and what was the purpose of spending that money?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am happy for the Manager, Finance, of the Department of Road Transport to respond to that. I point out that this is the last time the *Island Seaway* will feature in the Department of Transport portfolio, as far as we know.

Mr INGERSON interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, indeed, but I am confident. The responsibility for the *Island Seaway* has been transferred to the Minister of Marine, a much more appropriate portfolio for dealing with it. However, that historical information is in the budget papers, so I will ask Mr Attwell to respond to the member for Bragg.

Mr Attwell: The major variation, to which the member referred, is of the order of \$500 000. The leasing arrangement, as the member would be aware, that goes with the purchase of the *Island Seaway* and lease-back to the operators, Millers, has in it a component whereby the actual lease fee paid can be varied in accordance with the 90 day

bill rate. Therefore, because of the fairly significant increase in interest rates paid generally around Australia in the past financial year, the lease payment that was required of Millers to the lessor of the vessel increased by that amount during 1988-89.

The second question referred to the miscellaneous appropriation of \$141 000. That was a specific appropriation made to fund the sea-keeping investigation that was carried out by the Marin Institute in the Netherlands around September or October 1988. That was the total cost of the sea-keeping investigation, including the consultancy work that Millers' parent company, Howard Smiths, contributed to that investigation. Half of that cost was funded ultimately by the Department of Marine and Harbors, so the Highways Fund portion was around the \$71 000 mark. That is another reason for the variation in that program, because it was not anticipated in the original Program Estimates.

Mr INGERSON: The Program Estimates relate to photographic licence production. Several times during the past few weeks it has been mentioned that photographic licences could be manufactured in South Australia, but I understand that this will not occur. Will the Minister explain to the Committee where they are manufactured and whether there is any chance in the near future that this production could be carried out in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Bragg is quite correct; the photographic licence plates of the type, quality and security required can be manufactured only in Victoria. However, the firm that manufactures them is an Australia-wide company that has a very significant position in South Australia, where it carries out other manufacturing processes for the whole of Australia. We are one nation. I am not sure whether any South Australian company, or any other company would in the future feel it worthwhile to gear up to produce driving licences of the quality and security that we require but, if they did, they would be considered the same as anybody else when the tender became due for renewal. I cannot speculate on whether any company would feel it worth while. I do not know what is involved; whether it requires complex machinery or particular skills, I really have no idea. All I know is that the member for Bragg is correct: the licences cannot be manufactured in South Australia. Whether they can be manufactured here in the future it would be pointless to speculate about.

Mr ROBERTSON: My question relates to the line regarding flood mitigation and control and the State Government's stormwater drainage subsidy system. I preface my question by making the observation that some of the greatest acts of vandalism are carried out by local councils with the assistance of the subsidy scheme, particularly in the way that they have altered the course of the various tributary creeks to the Torrens River. I understand that councils are subject to the various SDPs and Department of Environment and Planning provisions, and so on, and that, therefore, the Highways Department cannot be expected to exercise much control over that. However, is any consideration given to the matter of the end use, when claims are made on the subsidy?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It was a remarkable comment prior to the question, that the subsidy to local councils for flood mitigation is in some way connected with vandalism. I would argue very strongly with that, but there is no doubt that mistakes were made earlier in the century. They were honest mistakes; people did not build homes on flood plains with the intention of having a swimming pool coming through the lounge. We know a lot more about hydraulics and the movement of water these days than people did then. Unless large areas of the city are levelled and building

is started again, compromises must be made. We cannot go back 50 years and say that we should not have interfered with a natural watercourse in a particular area. That is nonsense. What we have to do is make the best of what we have.

I believe that local councils, with the assistance of the subsidy and with a lot of technical assistance from the Department of Road Transport, do quite a remarkable job in dealing with a problem that was not foreseen when some of those areas were subdivided. I have had the pleasure of inspecting a fair amount of the work that has been done, particularly in the Campbelltown council area, and I would defy anyone to suggest that that work could in any way be considered to be vandalism. It is nothing like that; it is high quality, environmentally sensitive work, which is necessary if people are to continue to live in some of these areas. If the honourable member feels that we can just get a bulldozer and clear huge areas of Adelaide because of the errors (in hindsight) that were made, then I am afraid that the honourable member is living in a world that is far removed from that in which the rest of us live. I have probably said enough about the question. I ask the Executive Director of the department to enlarge on the member for Bright's question.

Mr Payze: I will enlarge on the role of the Department of Road Transport in respect of the storm water drainage subsidy scheme. I make it clear that the department's role is primarily to ensure that the designs for each individual project are satisfactory in an engineering sense. I assure the member that the design processes required include an assessment of the environmental impact. By these means one can ensure that environmental issues, as well as the engineering factors in the design process, are included.

Mr ROBERTSON: In response, I, too, would exempt Campbelltown council, having seen some of its handiwork. If I were bulldozing the city and reconstructing it I would do a better job of Sturt Creek than was done, although I appreciate that it was not done under the subsidy scheme.

My next question relates to an unfortunate experience in the past. I refer to the line relating to the tow truck industry. I used to cycle to work for a couple of decades and more than once in the bad old days before the industry scheme came into effect. I was almost run over by a tow truck that was on its way to an accident. It is clear from the 1988-89 figures and the figures in the estimates this year that the scheme is fairly effective. Is it possible to get to an end point under the scheme whereby the tow truck industry forgets about the mad scramble for bodies and bits of metal and can rationalise its activities to a point where tow truck drivers do not wilfully exceed the speed limit and threaten and harass people involved in accidents? Are we headed in the right direction, and can we go any further?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I was involved as a member of Parliament in the at times exciting events leading up to the present tow truck legislation. I took much interest in it. The way the industry was organised (if 'organised' is the right word) prior to the present legislation was not satisfactory. It was totally unsatisfactory, and I am sorry that the member for Bright suffered such a bad experience on his bike in respect of a tow truck. As to whether we can go further, one would be brave to say that nothing can be improved. However, I see no reason now to contemplate any substantial changes to the present system. It is one of those occasions where Parliament got it right. The legislation was, from memory, supported strongly from all sides of Parliament, and the degree of efficiency with which the industry works is appropriate.

Purists could argue that just leaving it to the marketplace and a free for all would make the industry slightly cheaper, as industry members bid themselves down over the carcass of the car and the maimed and injured bodies of the vehicle owners. If there is an inefficiency in avoiding that, it is a slight inefficiency that even the most rabid free marketer would have to agree was appropriate interference in the market. I see no reason to do anything now, other than to have the Office of the Department of Road Transport keep a weather eye on the industry to ensure that everything is going as well, as it appears to have gone over the past few years.

If the industry was not working as well as we had hoped, I am sure that the police, to start with, apart from anyone else, would have been in contact with us to suggest changes. To my knowledge, that has not happened. It appears to be one industry where the degree of regulation is appropriate and where the industry is working extremely well, to the best of my knowledge.

Mr ROBERTSON: I now refer to motor registration branches. At page 278 of the Program Estimates reference is made to the consolidation of the Marion branch office of the motor registry. How much will that office capacity have been upgraded at the end of the rebuilding process? What is the projected finishing date, and how big a catchment area can we expect the branch office to cover when it is completed? Everyone who lives in the area would concede that times have been difficult in the past 12 or 18 months in that office. It has been said that staff members have shown remarkable forbearance in that time.

The stories that come back to me as one of the local members affected is one of staff showing great tolerance in fairly difficult conditions. When that office has been upgraded, people in the area can look forward to a quicker turnaround, and staff can look forward to greatly improved working conditions. When is the rebuilding likely to be finished and what capacity will the office have at the end of the project?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Because of the way in which we have organised today's program and because we confirmed at 2 o'clock that we had dealt with the old Department of Transport, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles has returned to Wakefield Street. However, in the brief time that the Executive Director of the Department of Road Transport has been in charge of this area, he has gained a remarkable grasp over of the building details of the Marion office, and I am sure that he will be pleased to give the Committee the information requested.

Mr Payze: Assuming that the member for Bright is familiar with the Marion location, I can advise that we have just successfully leased the building adjacent to our current location, formerly occupied by SGIC. This will allow us to increase the floor area, which is almost double the existing area. The development of the on-line system requires that we change the office layout. We will be moving into the newly leased half and then upgrading the current premises. It is fair to say that we are doubling the floor area and we should be able to treat our customers with greater expediency.

Mr ROBERTSON: I refer to the vexed issue of motor vehicle compliance plates and fraudulent conversions. Some months ago there was publicity about various rackets from Western Australian and the Eastern States operating in South Australia. As a result of the Motor Trade Association's concern, it has written to members of Parliament in respect of this matter. A specific target for 1989-90 is that action will be taken to further reduce the number of fraudulent conversions. As I understand it, the racket primarily revolves

around the use of false compliance plates. What action has been taken so far and what is contemplated in the future?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Registrar of Motor Vehicles (who, by agreement left at 1 p.m.) is the Chairman of a committee which is looking into this. I believe the committee's representation includes officers from the Department of Public and Consumer Affairs and the Police Force. The committee has not yet come down with a report. It is a vexed issue. I was to meet with the New South Wales Police Minister in respect of this matter but, unfortunately, he was unable to get here due to the pilots' dispute. I assure the Committee that it is very much a live issue. We do not believe—although we have our fingers crossed on this—that the degree of fraud and misrepresentation prevalent in the Eastern States occurs in this State. That is the informal advice that we have received. However, when the committee brings down its report we will have a clearer picture of the size of the problem along with measures to deal with it.

Mr ROBERTSON: Has the Motor Trade Association, which wrote to the former Minister in respect of this matter, been consulted?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, there are ongoing consultations with Mr Flashman who, I think, is the Executive Director. In all these things we attempt to involve the MTA, which is a very responsible body for which I have the highest regard. We would not dream of doing anything that could have a significant impact in the motor vehicles area without having, at the very least, discussions with Richard Flashman and, hopefully, his agreement.

Mr INGERSON: At page 271 of the Program Estimates in respect of road safety there is reference to the installation and coordination of traffic signals. What stage have we reached in the coordination of traffic signals in the metropolitan area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know whether I can provide chapter and verse in respect of what stage we have reached. I invite the honourable member for Bragg to visit—

Mr INGERSON: I have been there.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is quite a remarkable operation which has been of enormous benefit to Adelaide motorists. I understand that the Adelaide City Council is either discussing with us or introducing off its own bat a similar system to assist motorists in the central metropolitan area. That is the responsibility of the Adelaide City Council rather than the Department of Road Transport. A total of 360 traffic lights which are on the system have been installed in the metropolitan area. The projected total for the whole program is 450. So, we are three-quarters of the way down the track. I point out that those 360 sites are on principal roads and at principal intersections, while the remaining 90 sites are on lesser roads and roads carrying fewer vehicles.

Mr INGERSON: I refer to page 279 and 'Major resource variations 1988-89—1989-90', as follows:

Increase in the plant and equipment purchases in accordance with departmental strategy (\$2.7 million).

What is the reason for the increase in plant and equipment? What is the general departmental strategy in this area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The strategy is to lower the age profile of our plant and equipment. The honourable member for Bragg will remember the Auditor-General's comment that the age profile of the plant and equipment held by the old Highways Department was higher than desirable. The plant purchase program is composed of five broad categories. Of those categories, the allocation level for cars and light vehicles is governed by State Supply Board replacement policy, while that for floating plant is governed by the

safety and level of service dictates of Murray River ferries, and are non-discretionary.

Because of the real effects experienced from an ageing plant fleet inclusive of operational inefficiencies, production losses, unreliability, increased repair and operational costs, technological obsolescence and eventually large replacement expenditure requirements, the following specific plant replacement strategy was developed in 1986-87:

- The major plant replacement expenditure component of the program is to be maximised.
- Initial priority is to be given to replacement of maintenance plant.
- The fleet's mean age profile is to be reduced to 6.3 years over a period of 7 years.
- The plant fleet's residual replacement value is to be reduced to meet the target mean age profile (\$5.9m) over the same period.
- Once the residual replacement value of the fleet had been reduced to the desirable level (\$5.9m) the full value of the depreciation recoupment plus plant sales should be allocated for plant replacements (in accordance with the replacement cost accounting system principles).

The strategy is having the desired effect such that by July 1994 the targets should be met, if financial allocations are maintained. I am sure the Auditor-General will be as delighted as the department.

Mr INGERSON: Who will pay the cost of repairing roads in country areas which are devastated by car rallies and/or bush bash weekend-type activities from people outside their neighbourhoods?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It depends on who has the responsibility for those roads. One would have to specify the road. If it is in a council area, then the local council has the responsibility. If the roads are in unincorporated areas, then the responsibility is obviously ours. Is the member suggesting that we stop bashes?

Mr INGERSON: I am suggesting that the repairing is not being done.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We repair roads to the extent of our finance, and we believe we do a good job—as do the local councils—to the best of our ability.

Mr INGERSON: When will the reconstruction of the Karoonda to Murray Bridge Road—the arterial link between Adelaide and Riverland via Loxton—begin? I understand that there are pot holes in the badly corrugated sealed surface in the section of the road between the Army firing range, the bivouac area and Wynarka. Some of these pot holes are four feet across and up to six inches deep. The department has recently resorted to filling them with limestone rubble and rolling it in, apparently not having sufficient funds to seal them. Does the Minister consider it safe to put rubble patches into a sealed road?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I know nothing of this particular stretch of road, but I am sure that everything that the Department of Road Transport does in either constructing, reconstructing or repairing roads is done with road safety in mind. I do not accept that the kind of work it does is in any way a danger to anyone, traffic, drivers or passengers in vehicles. However, if the honourable member wants a report on that stretch of road, I can have that for him and have it incorporated in *Hansard* prior to 6 October.

Mr INGERSON: When will duplication of the Murray Bridge bypass carriageway commence? When will the Swanport bridge be duplicated?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We do have some information on that, and I ask the Executive Director of the Department of Road Transport to supply that information.

Mr Payze: The road to which the member for Bragg refers is locally referred to as the Swanport deviation. The section would be an easterly extension from the south eastern high-

way from White Hill to the Murray River; that is a national highway.

Funds have been provided in this current year 1989-90 program for the start of that particular project. I must add that the duplication does not include the duplication of the Swanport Bridge over the Murray River. The project terminates at the Murray River and utilises the existing two lane bridge at Swanport. It is our belief that such a facility will operate satisfactorily in the immediate future and beyond.

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

State Transport Authority, \$124 976 000

Chairman:

The Hon. T.M. McRae

Members:

The Hon. R.K. Abbott

Mr D.S. Baker

Mr G.A. Ingerson

Mr J.K.G. Oswald

Mr D.J. Robertson

Mr P.B. Tyler

The **CHAIRMAN**: I declare the proposed expenditures open for examination.

Witness:

The Hon. F.T. Blevins, Minister of Transport.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Rump, Chairman State Transport Authority.

Mr I. Fitzgerald, Director of Finance.

Mr K. Benger, Financial Services Manager.

Mr G. McLaughlin, Financial Planning Accountant.

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

The **Hon. Frank Blevins**: The State Transport authority's goal to provide an efficient and effective public transport system saw operating costs fall in real terms in 1988-89 for the third successive year and we want that trend to continue. In August 1988, a draft business plan for the State Transport Authority was released for public comment. It contained proposals to maintain a high level of service whilst reducing operational costs by \$22 million, at 1986-87 price levels. Fifteen submissions were received from unions, councils and user groups and relevant suggestions have been incorporated in the final plan to be presented to the Government later in 1989.

Recently a major achievement has been the opening by the Premier of the final stage of the O-Bahn Busway to Tea Tree Plaza on 20 August 1989. On the same day, an extension of bus and train services commenced. Some of these extensions were: regular Sunday morning train services; Hackham West bus services; Woodcroft bus services; Craigmore bus services; and Sheidow Park bus services.

Mr **INGERSON**: Page 283 of the Program Estimates refers to the source of funds. I note again that there are some trust account deposits of both a recurrent and a capital nature. Will the Minister explain those amounts? I also refer to the sale of assets—there is a very significant increase in the sale of assets in 1988-89—and the trust deposits of a capital nature. In addition, will the Minister explain how one can have a negative figure under 'Unspent funds' in the year 1988-89?

The **Hon. Frank Blevins**: Those figures are very easily explained and I ask Mr Fitzgerald to provide that explanation.

Mr **Fitzgerald**: The item on page 283 referred to by the honourable member—sale of assets of \$40 107 000—includes the sale and lease-back transaction of the initial group of twenty 3000 class rail cars for the sum of \$35.4 million. This action was taken to comply with the Treasury presentation format. Our normal disposal of land, buildings and plant, is about \$5 million. The honourable member's second question related to the trust and deposit amount of \$14.011 million. A very substantial portion of that expenditure was the result of long service leave and other pay-outs made to staff who took the early retirement option offered to them in 1988-89. The honourable member's third question relates to unspent funds of \$8.915 million. Because of the receipt of funds from the sale of railcars, some \$17 million was retained by the authority at the direction of the Treasury. The honourable member will also note that appropriation from the Consolidated Account proposed for 1988-89 was \$6.35 million. We did not draw down that amount because of the surplus funds and we finished the year with \$8.915 million in our account as a result of surplus capital funds received by the authority.

Mr **INGERSON**: In other words, it is not a negative figure.

Mr **Fitzgerald**: That is correct; it represents surplus funds.

Mr **INGERSON**: It was stated that those figures represented the sale of several lots of railcars. Will the Minister provide details of those sales: what part of the \$40 million is, in fact, the sales and what part of the unspent funds relate to the sale of the railcars or whether they relate to the same sales of cars, which was the basis of the explanation?

Mr **Fitzgerald**: I advise the honourable member that the sale and lease-back of those twenty 3000 class cars, which was arranged in October and November 1988, realised gross proceeds of \$35.4 million.

Mr **INGERSON**: I now refer to the labour productivity review, which has been put out for contract. I note in the consultants' brief that the aim of the independent review of labour productivity is to provide recommendations to improve labour efficiency in the short term, as well as assisting the general thrust of the business plan by identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, future productivity improvement over the next five or so years. The first stage is a review of all operational administrative and maintenance functions that are directly associated with the provision of bus and tram services. I further note that this review shall concentrate on the utilisation of labour and the overall aim of increasing the level of output per unit of labour.

It is anticipated that some of the issues that could come under the consideration of the consultants are work practices, allocation of work, organisation of work units, systems and procedures used, personnel policies, and relationships between the introduction of new technology and productivity. How does an overall review of that type take into consideration the comment on the next page of the Program Estimates, which states that the consultant must ensure that the review is complementary to the initiatives of the STA business plan and work underway on structural efficiency? It seems to me that one is saying that we should have a very broad review and the other virtually is saying that it should be working within a parameter that has already been set, for example, in the business plan of the STA.

The **Hon. Frank Blevins**: I see no difficulty with that and I am sure that no consultant will see any difficulty with it

either. We are in the final stage of preparing the business plan. That plan will be a definitive document and there is no point in any consultant looking at anything that is outside that brief. I can assure the Committee that there is a lot of scope within the business plan for the consultant to examine the productivity of our labour force and to make recommendations as to how that productivity could be improved. I am particularly proud of the productivity of our labour force and I referred to that continuing increase in productivity in my opening statement at the beginning of the examination by the Committee. I stated that we are reducing our operating costs year after year. Therefore, this exercise is well underway and has been conducted internally by the STA. However, it does not do any harm for an outside body to examine the work practices and make suggestions. We believe that plenty of suggestions can be made within the framework of the business plan.

If it was to go outside that business plan then there would not be much point in having the business plan at all and the amount of time and effort that not only the STA but also the union and other interested parties have put into that business plan would be wasted. I do not see any problem at all in a consultant working within that framework.

Mr INGERSON: It is my understanding that the consultant will be expected to report some initial findings to the steering committee which will then decide whether there is any justification to proceed further with the review. It seems quite strange to me that we would be calling for an outside review and then, in asking a steering committee of the organisation whose practices are going to be reviewed to have an internal committee that will then decide at some stage as to whether that review should continue or not. Can the Minister explain whether there are any guidelines which would obviously make it easier to see that we do not have Caesar looking at Caesar or we do not have a situation of an outside consultant perhaps pointing out something that the steering committee may not want to proceed with. I am not saying anything that might be construed as mischievous. I am just saying that it seems odd to me that we would have a steering committee of the STA looking at this whole review procedure in a very early stage.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Two safeguards are built in there. The first safeguard is the STA Board which has some statutory responsibilities which it discharges very well. I believe the question of Caesar examining or reporting to Caesar is invalid. On top of the STA Board there is a higher authority, and I modestly name myself as that.

Mr INGERSON: You are not mentioned in this.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can assure the honourable member that mentioned or not, the STA operates under its Act with the general direction of the Minister built in. If I thought for one minute that the exercise was going to be an internal exercise only to go as far as anybody wanted either to protect themselves or anything, then I am sure that I will be more than capable of dealing with it if the STA Board was not capable of dealing with it. I can assure the honourable member that the STA Board is capable so I see no fears. If a consultant chooses to go down a track that is clearly outside award provisions and is clearly utopian and wants to pursue that at our expense then at some stage somebody has to say or make a recommendation that perhaps that consultant is going down the wrong track and is really just wasting taxpayers' money, because we are not particularly interested in flights of fancy that some consultants may feel will make an interesting report. We are interested in some of the hard stuff, some of the realistic stuff that we can do, not in any flight of fancy. To have a steering committee is very sensible just to give some guidance to

any consultant who may wish to take the job on. I can only repeat, steering committee or no steering committee, there is an STA Board with a statutory obligation and on top of that there is a Government that is represented by me.

Mr INGERSON: Whilst I accept in principle the comments of the Minister, I still think it is worth while noting that there are other people within the department and under the Ministers jurisdiction who could have set up to make sure that there was no utopian attitude. I just find it amazing when one looks at a labour practice exercise which has involved historically many decisions by an authority over a period, rightly or wrongly, that it would have been better if the steering committee was seen to be separate from to the STA particularly in its early stages. I know there are senior people in the STA, so there is no question about their integrity or anything like that. All I am saying is that it would have been better from my point of view that this project was managed and independent totally because we are talking about a very important decision that the board and the management make in terms of labour practices. The Minister has mentioned in his explanation that the STA Board was directly involved. I am of the understanding that some of those relationships between the board and management have been severed recently. I find it quite staggering that this sort of method has been used. What is the expected cost of the program and in principle when is the review likely to be finished?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In relation to the extensive comments made by the member for Bragg, I do not understand why he is staggered. To have a consultant reporting to another outside body is utterly pointless. The other outside body will not know the workings of the STA, will not know what is practical and what is not practical and that one has to rely on the integrity of the managers of the STA, that they are genuinely seeking better labour productivity. Those *bona fides* have been long established and year after year we appear before this Committee and demonstrate quite tangibly the way in which senior management of the STA has exercised its responsibility to see that the labour is used in the most productive way. It just bemuses me how one can take half a dozen people with no knowledge or connection with the STA and say that a consultant who is having a look at labour productivity in the STA, will report to them to see how they are going. With respect to those people being pulled off the street, they would not have a clue whether the consultant was on the right track or not because they would not know how the STA operates.

Mr INGERSON: The Minister has within his own structure done that.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: They are the very people that we are using and if we feel that there is the slightest doubt about the integrity of those people then we have the board of the STA, and if there is any doubt about the integrity of the board of the STA then you have me, and you would have no doubt, I am sure, about my integrity. The cost of the consultancy is \$100 000.

Mr INGERSON: When is it likely to be finished?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We have not selected the consultant yet and that will be negotiated and will be announced at the appropriate time. As soon as we have that information I will provide it to the honourable member.

Mr ROBERTSON: At page 284 in the Program Estimates there are two items in the specific targets for 1989-90 which relate to the resignalling project. As I understand it something approaching \$20 million has been spent on resignalling the Noarlunga line from Adelaide to Noarlunga.

Mention is also made of an evaluation to investigate the potential of computerised timetable database to assist in the

provision of public information. Is there any unused capacity in the cabling associated with the resignalling project that could be used for the dissemination of computerised information to patrons via video or audio means of communication?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not sure whether or not there is any unused capacity, but the point made by the member for Bright is a valid one and it is something that has exercised our minds over the past few months. We are still considering just how to do it, but I hope to have much better real time information to be able to disseminate to passengers over the next few months. I am not sure whether or not we can get that in every metropolitan location, but we will cover all the principal areas as soon as we can find a suitable system. The suggestion is acknowledged and an announcement will be made as soon as a system is obtained.

Mr ROBERTSON: As to page 284 and 'Specific targets', the next 50 railcars are mentioned. They are the successors to the very successful and well received 3 000 class railcars of which we now have our complement of 20. What is the program for the delivery of the next 50 railcars and will they maintain the same high standards of ride, comfort and soundproofing of the 3 000 series cars which, in my view, as a regular user, are very good?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am delighted to hear that the member for Bright is a regular customer. The 50 new 3 000 railcars are essentially the same as the existing 20 3 000 class railcars. The production program covers an eight-year period. The first 10 will be delivered in about 18 months time and then, after that, 10 a year will be delivered. It will mean the total elimination of the old red hens from our railcar fleet.

Mr ROBERTSON: That will be a sad day.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In many respects, it will be a sad day. I know that a lot of people have a great deal of affection for the red hens which were built in South Australia at Islington in the 1950s. A number of present members and some very famous retired members of Parliament worked on those railcars. All good things come to an end and, whilst they have been loyal and faithful servants to public transport in South Australia, they have just about had their time. Whilst they are not structurally unsound, there is a degree of corrosion and inefficiency. The degree of comfort provided by those old railcars is not what people will expect in the 1990s so, whilst it will be a sad day in one way, I am sure that people will be consoled by travelling in new 3 000 class railcars.

The purchase of these new railcars will provide a very young age profile to our fleet. The average age of the fleet will be about six or seven years and, in railway terms, that is absolutely astounding. A number of people to whom I have spoken have said that no other public transport system in Australia compares with that low age fleet profile. This Government believes that there should be no public squalor. We believe in a very high level of public service, a very high standard of public assets and the maintenance of those assets. The fact that we have been able to achieve that while at the same time containing the finances of the State is a credit to this Government.

Mr ROBERTSON: I again pay tribute to the STA for having implemented Sunday morning rail services which are an unmitigated boon to those people who want to come to town to attend church, to visit the museum, to see relatives or to go to hospital. I assume that it will take some time for patronage to increase, given that people will probably have to adjust their habits so that they can use these services. What has been the level of patronage during the

few weeks that the services have been running and what is the prognosis for the future?

I believe it is simply a matter of publicising the service, because Adelaide has many attractions which would encourage clients to use the STA. It is simply a matter of alerting patrons to the availability of the service.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no doubt that Sunday morning public transport does provide a necessary service. However, the degree of patronage does cause some concern. It is really too early to provide any clear figures, because the service has operated for only a short time, but we will certainly make those figures available as quickly as possible.

The Fielding report made it clear that it felt that the STA had not previously promoted itself and its services sufficiently. The STA has certainly accepted that criticism and during the next few months a new public relations person will be employed. Amongst other things, the duties of that position will entail organising publicity and promotion for the STA and its services, including these Sunday services. If the services are not used to any significant extent, they will be under threat, and that would be a pity. It has taken us a long time to reach the stage when we can offer these weekend services, so we want them to be utilised and we hope that the people of Adelaide will use them.

The STA will have to attract the customers, not only through advertising but also through increased promotion. The STA supplied the Glenelg trams to take thousands of runners from Glenelg to the city for the City-Bay run. Such a promotion makes people aware that public transport is available and that it is clean, comfortable and fast. Promotions of that nature will help and we will see more of them.

Mr ROBERTSON: While we are on the subject of the Noarlunga line and savings, I presume that considerable savings will accrue from the stabling of railcars at the Noarlunga end of the line. I note from the Program Estimates that consideration will be given to constructing some facility at Noarlunga for keeping railcars overnight. It is a great mystery to many people who live along the line and who see empty trains rolling down the track at the beginning of the day and up the track at the end of the day, that railcars must be stabled in Adelaide. I presume that considerable savings in travel time, staff time and fuel will accrue from stabling the cars at Noarlunga. What are the economics of that project?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot give any precise details on the economics but, obviously, it makes sense. The Glenelg tram is a good example; we stabled the tram cars where we wanted them to start the following day, rather than several kilometres away from where we wanted them to start, and that has resulted in considerable savings. I have no details at this stage but I will look at the question and see whether I can find any details to give to the Committee. Commonsense tells me that considerable savings are to be made by doing that.

Mr ROBERTSON: On the subject of work to be constructed at Noarlunga Centre, which presumably is to be the venue for any stabling, I note that mention is also made to the extension of the service from Noarlunga Centre to Noarlunga Downs. I assume that that is part of a staged extension of the line farther south to pick up the growth areas around Moana. What is the projected time and expenditure involved in that extension to Noarlunga Downs, and how many additional people will be served by that extension?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot respond to that. My assistants here are all involved in finance, not operations, and I apologise for that.

Mr ROBERTSON: I realise that it is a fairly open question because most of the area is not developed and it is not possible to give patronage levels.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get whatever details are available and have them incorporated into *Hansard*.

Mr INGERSON: Earlier this week an announcement was made about the purchase of 50 railcars at a price of \$143 million. What is the reason for the difference between that announcement and the announcement made in February, when the previous Minister said that 50 railcars would be purchased for \$75 million? I assume they referred to the same railcars. They have been announced eight months apart. The headline in February 1989 read: '\$75 million order spells end of red hens'. The article went on to state: 'The Transport Minister, Mr Keneally, today announced he would call for tenders to supply 50 cars. Costing roughly \$1.75 million each, these would be similar to the class 3 000 cars'. The statement released last week mentioned \$143 million for 50 new diesel electric passenger railcars over the next eight years, similar to the class 3 000 cars. This implies that, over the past eight months, there has been a very significant increase in price. Is that the end price or the purchase price?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no mystery in that at all. The Government made this decision, as it was announced by the Minister, Mr Keneally, in February to put out a tender for the 50 railcars. The tenders that subsequently came in were evaluated and the decision was made by Cabinet a week last Monday that the tenders would go to Clyde Engineering. The cost of the railcars is the all-up cost at the end of eight years and includes an inflation factor and a foreign exchange variation factor. We cannot be absolutely precise on either of those factors but nevertheless we can make reasonable assumptions about them.

The important thing on the letting of Government contracts of significant amounts of money, particularly over a period of time is that, when a contract has been let in the past and the amount of that contract has been given (quite scurrilously in some cases) and, after a period of years, the product appears with the inflation factor built in, we get screaming headlines of cost overruns. They are not cost overruns at all. When the tenders were accepted in 1988, the estimate was in 1988 dollars; in 1986 it was in 1986 dollars. All of these contracts contain an inflation factor and, on many of them, foreign exchange variables. I intend to be here in eight years' time and to drive the last of these new railcars into the depot.

I do not want the member for Bragg or his successor looking back at the press release saying that the railcars were to be X million dollars, and that there has been a 50 per cent or 60 per cent overrun, when it has not been a 50 or 60 per cent overrun. I am looking ahead and pre-empting a question in eight years' time about why we allowed a cost overrun of this order. What I am trying to do is give the public of South Australia a more honest picture of just how much these railcars will cost over the eight year period of the contract. As far as we are able to estimate inflation and the foreign exchange factor, the \$143 million is the closest figure that we can come up with.

Mr INGERSON: In a recent agreement entered into with Comeng, there was a considerable escalation in the price of the vehicle from the original contract to the supply of the last vehicle. What protection is built into this contract that will prevent the STA's having the same difficulties that it seemingly had in the price arrangement between this new deal and that with the Comeng group of companies?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will ask Mr Jim Rump, the Chairman of the STA, to outline the details of the two contracts to which the member for Bragg referred.

Mr Rump: The situation with Comeng was that the contract called for the supply of 20 railcars with options to increase the contract to a further 80 cars. When the first cars were designed we found that their capacity was greater than we had anticipated so we did not really need another 80. In fact, as it has turned out, the 50 cars that we have ordered is sufficient to meet our anticipated requirements.

When we tried to extend the contract Comeng refused to accept an extension without renegotiating the price. We had legal opinion suggesting that we had an enforceable contract. Comeng had legal opinion saying that we did not have an enforceable contract. After much consideration the Government decided that it would be prudent to call for fresh tenders.

If the tender prices received had justified our taking legal action, we could consider taking legal action against Comeng for breach of contract. As circumstances turned out, the price we had for the 50 railcars is less than the extension price that we were trying to enforce with Comeng, so we have no grounds at law for any recovery. That was the situation. Comeng just refused to accept an extension. There is a rise and fall clause built into the contract, the same as was built into the Comeng contract. The only difference with Comeng was that we had an option to extend in increments for additional railcars. In this contract it is for 50 railcars to be delivered at a specified rate over the period of the contract, which calls for 10 railcars a year after the initial two-year period.

Mr INGERSON: Can the Minister supply the contract price and can he explain how the financial arrangements are to be entered into? Will it involve cross-border leases, and so forth? How is the project going to be financed by the Government over the next 10 years? I know that no finance is available in capital expenditure this year. Obviously, if it is going to be 18 months down the track before the first railcar arrives, there will be a need for some financial arrangements to be entered into.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The cost per railcar in 1989-90 prices is \$1.74 million. As to the financing of the railcars, I will take that question on notice and get back to the honourable member.

Mr INGERSON: I understand that Clyde Engineering in New South Wales has been granted the contract, but what previous experience has it had in the manufacture of diesel electric railcars?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Clyde Engineering has not had any previous experience in diesel electric railcars, but I understand that previous experience is not a terribly important criterion in being able to build such cars. There is nothing particularly novel about them.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: My question relates to the Hackney Bus Depot and the parklands. On page 284 of the Program Estimates reference is made to the temporary car park at Hackney depot having been returned to parklands. The Botanic Gardens Conservatory is due to open shortly, yet the Hackney Bus Depot is still located on its present site. Can the Minister outline the Government's plans for moving the buses and say when the site is likely to be available to be returned to the parklands?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Obviously, the Government would like to provide a clear view of the conservatory—but not at any cost. I will explain that. It would need to demolish the remaining structures in the yard and incur short-term but significant cost to continue to provide the present service. We would have to consolidate some of our

engineering and maintenance workshops into the one area to give a clearer view from Hackney Road of the conservatory. The costs were significant, in hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the reconstruction would apply only for a relatively short time until the whole depot was closed down.

We were also advised that because of the lie of the land the only thing that could be done with the land that we vacated—whilst it would give a clearer view—was to grow lawn. There were all kinds of drainage problems and the like resulting from the slope of the land. Overall, it seemed like a good idea which in execution would have been terribly expensive for merely a short-term gain. There are other things we can do. The Government is trying to work with the authority to have the depot restored to parklands completely, without duplicating costs or disrupting services. The Government believes that this is in the best interests of all taxpayers.

Also, \$6 million has been allocated for the expansion of the St Agnes depot, which will allow for the transfer of some buses from Hackney, once the extensions have been completed. To get some of the buses out of Hackney depot up to St Agnes requires the expenditure of that \$6 million to expand the St Agnes depot. To remove the buses from Hackney means that we have to have somewhere to send them—we cannot park them in the street. St Agnes depot will take a considerable number of buses. Parts of the Hackney depot have already been released to the Botanic Gardens, including the temporary car park, built by the Botanic Gardens, to accommodate STA requirements when it released land for the conservatory to be built.

We pledged that the car park was a temporary car park and that as soon as we had made other arrangements, the car park would be returned to the Botanic Gardens to revert to parklands. That has occurred. The Government has a commitment to relocate the entire Hackney depot elsewhere. I have already mentioned the \$6 million expansion of the St Agnes depot to accommodate part of the fleet. The design of the new Mile End bus depot is now taking place. As to the construction of the Mile End depot, there is no timeframe for that. Until we get the St Agnes extensions built and the additional buses operating from St Agnes, there is not much point in allocating funds to the construction of the Mile End depot, but that project is expected to be in the Government's forward capital works program in the next few years.

I cannot let the question pass without mentioning that the STA has released four hectares of land used previously and now no longer required. That has been released to the city council, which will use the land for parklands. That has demonstrated the *bona fides* of the Government and the STA in releasing as much land as possible both at Hackney and along North Terrace for use as parklands. At the same time, the Government has not unnecessarily spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars for what would have been essentially a short-term cosmetic measure at the Hackney depot.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: At page 286 of the Program Estimates is a reference to 'Property and Advertising Services'. One of the broad objectives or goals is to maximise the returns from the income earning property owned by the authority, to identify and dispose of the surplus property to help fund capital works. Can the Minister report to the Committee on what the STA is doing about any excess buildings and structures that it owns?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The authority intends to reduce the number of structures on its list of assets by disposing of redundant buildings and structures. The signalling project and the reduction of the number of attended stations has

made a number of buildings and structures (such as signal cabins, relay rooms and station master offices) superfluous to operating requirements. Disposal will be achieved by sale, leasing or demolition, as appropriate. Where buildings are on heritage lists, the disposal will involve sale or transfer of control to parties that could occupy and maintain them as worthwhile rather than redundant assets. I know that we would all wish for that to happen.

In recent times there has been an alarming increase in vandalism to buildings that are unattended. Proceeds from the sale of assets, including redundant buildings and structures, is used to offset capital expenditure proposed for upgrading the transport system. The anticipated figure for 1989-90 is \$7 million.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: I understand that recently the member for Albert Park arranged with the Minister responsible for the authority to grow shrubs and trees on the inside boundary of the western side of the Grange railway line between Port Road and Trimmer Parade. What is the authority's policy in respect of this activity, and under which budget line does it appear?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the member for Spence says, the member for Albert Park managed to get me out on a cold and blowy day to perform what turned out to be a very pleasant task. For seven years the honourable member's constituents had been asking that that part of the railway line be beautified by the STA. The local residents said that they would cooperate and assist in the beautification and in maintaining it. It was with a great deal of pleasure that I assisted the students of a couple of primary schools in the member for Albert Park's electorate to plant trees. The beautification program will make quite a considerable difference to the area. It was interesting to look at the other side of the railway line where one resident had taken the trouble to landscape a very considerable length of the line. The contrast between his work and the rest of the line was quite stark. He has created a real amenity for the people who live in that area, and his work also has the effect of diminishing the noise of passing railcars.

It gave me a great deal of pleasure to assist the member for Albert Park and his constituents in what was a worthwhile community project. It is interesting to note that three years ago the STA appointed its first environmental officer to coordinate its responsibilities for landscape maintenance and environmental projects. Three teams work with the environmental officers to achieve the authority's goal of being a good neighbour to the community. The three teams work full time on environmental projects.

The linear park along the busway is an example of the benefits the community derives from this approach. As part of the busway project, some 50 000 trees were planted, and they have enhanced the Torrens valley enormously. Anyone who has the pleasure of travelling the full length of the busway will appreciate the difference they have made. I am not sure whether the member for Bragg has travelled the full length of the busway, but I invite him to do so.

Mr INGERSON interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Of course, he was there on opening day, so he will appreciate what has been done. The authority is willing to assist groups or individuals with specific proposals, although major projects are restricted because of the task of working within the budget. The cost proposed for 1989-90 is \$420 000, and that is shown as 'Train services' as part of 'Public Transport Services' at page 281 of the Program Estimates. So it is a very significant commitment indeed. The member for Albert Park was very persuasive. He told me that he had been trying to have this work done for seven years and that I was the first Minister

with whom he had made any progress at all. I found that very hard to believe, knowing that at least two of my predecessors are very supportive and caring people. The member for Albert Park's persuasion resulted in the STA supplying the Grange project with trees, shrubs and stakes; it also dug the holes for planting and erected a temporary fence to allow access for the community; and it presented certificates to participating residents. So, the STA put considerable resources into this project.

The member for Albert Park arranged for his constituents to plant the trees and for each of them to adopt a tree as part of the scheme to look after them. It was a pleasure to see the enthusiasm of not just the residents but also the students from the two primary schools. I am very confident that they will assist in watering the trees and looking after them until they are big enough to take care of themselves. So, all in all, it was a very significant initiative indeed by the member for Albert Park. The STA is prepared to look at similar joint projects which will beautify local areas to the benefit of the community. However, I stress that when the community is involved the projects must be relatively small. It is preferable, in the case of large-scale projects, that the STA includes them in its environmental and landscaping program so that the work is done professionally. The community does not have the capacity to participate in large-scale projects. However, we welcome community involvement in small-scale projects.

Mr INGERSON: Earlier today the Minister stated that the contract price of \$87 million was inflated to \$143 million. Will the Minister explain how that occurred? The Minister mentioned that there was a foreign currency component.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The best estimate for inflation over the period is \$34 million, and the possible variations on foreign exchange is \$12 million. We have allocated \$5 million for spares and a contingency line of \$4.7 million, which brings it up to \$142.9 million. In eight years we will be able to sit here and see how good we were!

Mr INGERSON: Where will the trains be built in South Australia and how many people are expected to be employed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: They will be built at Gepps Cross. The bogies and the bodies will be built in New South Wales and will be shipped over to South Australia. They will be fitted out at Gepps Cross, and about 70 people will be employed for the five years of the fitting out of 50 railcars; that is, 10 a year.

Mr INGERSON: When you say 'Gepps Cross', where do you mean specifically?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: At O'Connor's.

Mr INGERSON: What is the current status and cost of the signalling system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The implementation of the signalling project was approved by the Government in August 1982, at an estimated project cost of \$25.16 million at June 1981 values. The project is expected to be completed within budget. The total estimated cost of the project in 1989 dollar terms is \$46.5 million. I hope no one will say that that is a cost overrun, it is well within budget.

The benefits of the project are: better signalling and control facilities; provision of effective real time passenger information display systems; signalling staff reduction of 51; and improved train monitoring and implementation of remote control. The train describer system became operational in February 1989. The post-commissioning problems have been overcome, and the systems are operating satisfactorily. The passenger information system is expected to be commissioned some time this year. The system will not be available on the Belair and the Outer Harbor lines until

the resignalling work on these two lines is completed, which is anticipated to be in mid-1990.

The installation of the automatic warning system on trains to alert drivers of caution or stop signals ahead is scheduled for mid-1990. The new signalling equipment on the Gawler Centre and the Noarlunga Centre lines commenced during December 1987/January 1988. Also, the new signalling system was commissioned in the Adelaide yard in November 1988. I might add that some interruptions to services that have been well publicised were due to breakdowns of equipment on the days immediately following the commissioning. I am happy to report that the system is now operating satisfactorily.

Mr INGERSON: I note on page 284 of the Program Performance Budgets, that there was a significant drop in patronage last year—a drop of some 7.4 per cent, from 58.24 million to 53.93 million. I note in the Auditor-General's Report that over a five-year period there has been a 17 per cent reduction in patronage. Will the Minister explain how he expects the trend, which is significantly downward, will be halted in the 1989-90 year by the statement that it is expected that the drop will be a drop of only .9 per cent?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: One could adopt a number of strategies to reverse this trend. I do not know whether too many of them would be palatable to the people of Adelaide or, I may add, to the member for Bragg in particular. I suppose the problem is that when one is running a public transport system, people have a choice; for example, as people become more affluent they choose the convenience of door to door travel. At present, it suits them to take their own vehicles rather than using public transport. I believe it is a significant feature of most developed countries that, when the country becomes sufficiently affluent and more people of that country can afford motor cars, public transport becomes a less attractive option. I do not necessarily see anything wrong in that, either. Some countries have a high usage of public transport. In the main, there are countries where people cannot afford motor cars. I believe that the degree that public transport in preference to the motor car is a measure of a country's affluence.

We are fortunate in South Australia that our forefathers designed and laid out the city so that it lends itself to a swift, simple and easy road transport network. It is easy to drive on and use the road transport network. We are fortunate that that is the case. However, for public transport purposes, perhaps we should wish that the city was not so well planned and easy to travel around in a private motor vehicle; then we would have a higher patronage on our public transport system. Essentially, we believe that people should have the choice.

Of course, we could take some of the measures that other countries take, that is, if we really wanted to be tough on motor cars—particularly in the inner city area. An extreme example is Singapore, where cars that do not pay a heavy levy are not allowed in the city centre. That would have a remarkable effect on public transport usage. However, I am not sure whether the member for Bragg would advocate that; in fact, I am sure that he would not. So, in a beautifully laid-out city with a relatively affluent population, there will always be problems filling public transport, unless one is prepared to take some drastic decisions.

I believe that the STA could be promoted a great deal more than it is at present, with some passengers being encouraged to use it and others being encouraged to return to it. As I am sure all members noted earlier, we spend about \$250 million on the road system one way or another every year in this State to make it much more attractive and easier for people to travel on the roads. It seems to me

that some of the moneys we spend are cancelling each other out. We are spending heavily on roads to make it more attractive for people to drive and, at the same time, spending multi-millions of dollars trying to attract people to public transport. I suppose, in a way, that we provide an abundance of riches in this State, particularly in Adelaide, in regard to the way that people can choose to travel to and from work.

Another problem from a public transport point of view is the easy availability and relative cheapness of car parking in the city centre. Again, in a country that was perhaps less enlightened—or more enlightened depending on your point of view—we would prohibit any more long-term car parking in the city centre in order to encourage people to use public transport. It would not just encourage them, it would compel them to do so, because there would be nowhere for them to park their car in the city centre. Do we want to go to that extreme and say to people, 'You cannot have car parks in the city centre. You are not allowed to develop car parks in the city centre. You certainly are not allowed to price them 20c below the return journey home on the STA,' as some of them do.

These questions are not easily answered in a democracy. Nevertheless, I believe that there is a long-term future for public transport in South Australia, which will be achieved through encouragement and, hopefully, not through coercion. I also hope that the standard of living in Adelaide remains sufficiently high so that people can use their motor cars, if they choose, without feeling guilty about it. However, we would always argue that an efficient public transport system is available and that it is in the interests of everyone in Adelaide for it to be used. We will do everything we can, within reason, to see that that continues.

The O-Bahn is a very good example of where \$100 million has been invested in a very high quality public transport system. In addition, the Government has purchased 50 new railcars: that, again, is an example of where the Government is prepared to make the facilities available and to make them high quality. How much further the people want the Government to go essentially is a political decision. Over the next few months, I will be interested to hear the Opposition's transport policy in relation to whether it believes that a degree of coercion is required, or whether it agrees with the Government that a degree of balance has to be maintained along with freedom of choice between alternative modes of transport.

Mr TYLER: Page 426 of the Auditor-General's Report states that the administration and general expenses per passenger journey have increased by 21 per cent in real terms. Will the Minister tell the Committee how that has occurred and, in particular, whether enough attention has been directed to reducing the number of white collar staff?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A great deal of attention has been given to this comment of the Auditor-General. Naturally, to make any meaningful comparison, it is necessary to express expenditure in the same dollar terms. If the 1984-85 administration and general expenses are converted to 1988-89 dollars, then comparing 1984-85 to 1988-89 for this category reveals an increase of only .8 per cent. Further, in 1988-89, a series of costs occurred which were not in 1984-85. These costs are outside of the STA's control or will not occur again. For example, the 3 per cent superannuation cost (\$2.6 million in 1988-89) and payroll tax on 'made available' employees (\$800 000 in 1988-89) were not in 1984-85. In addition, early retirement costs (\$1.4 million in 1988-89), direct employment costs (\$500 000 in 1988-89) and lease costs (\$400 000 in 1988-89) will not occur again.

To get a valid comparison, these should be allowed for. When this is done, the administration and general expenses actually drop by 13.5 per cent between 1984-85 and 1988-89 in real terms. In particular, the white collar staff of the authority reduced by 11.7 per cent between 1987-88 and 1988-89. This is an achievement which I doubt is matched by any other Government or semi-government department in South Australia. In my view, the STA has been given no credit for this efficiency drive. This achievement has been made possible through working smarter, using the latest technology and by thorough planning. Many private organisations, both local and overseas, have expressed interest in the systems that have been used by the STA to achieve this result. I want to repeat one figure: the STA reduced the number of white collar staff by 11.7 per cent between 1987-88 and 1988-89. That is a quite remarkable achievement in any organisation.

Mr TYLER: The Auditor-General, again at page 426, indicates that the cost per passenger journey has increased by 23 per cent in real terms over the past five years. Is the Minister satisfied with this result?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We are never satisfied: we make enormous progress, but we are never satisfied; we are reaching for the stars. Pages 426 and 436 of the Auditor-General's Report show that the cost per passenger journey increased from \$2.95 in 1984-85 to \$3.62 in 1988-89. This represents an increase of 23 per cent in real terms. The STA has continually upgraded its facilities for the benefit of the travelling public over this five-year period. Expenditure of some \$242 million has been made on purchasing new buses, railcars, construction of the busway, installation of new and safer signalling equipment, upgrading stations and constructing other infrastructure to support the foregoing. The ownership costs, which contribute to the cost of each passenger journey, have increased markedly as a result of this passenger orientated expenditure from 49 cents per journey to 89 cents per journey—an increase of 82 per cent. The provision of a better and safer system has led to increasing ownership costs.

This Government has shown that it is committed to a modern transport system and has upgraded facilities and rolling stock through prudent financial management to make public transport an attractive and economical form of conveyance, as well as minimising environmental issues and reducing road congestion. In essence, it is expensive to have a modern system. If we were content to have a system ageing in the way that it once did—becoming run down, providing the minimum of maintenance required—I have no doubt that we could run a cheaper public transport system. However, it is not this Government's philosophy to have cheap and nasty public sector services and facilities—we will just not do that. There is a price to pay and we acknowledge it. We have identified that cost to Parliament and to the taxpayers of South Australia. We have a very strong commitment to the public sector: it must be efficient, but if it is efficient and increasing its efficiency then the Government will show its commitment by investing very large amounts of taxpayers' money in ensuring that it is a modern system of which all South Australians can be proud.

Mr TYLER: I note that the Premier recently announced that a Seniors Card will be introduced from 1 November. That is a quite exciting initiative on the part of the Bannon Government. The constituents in my electorate who have contacted my office seeking applications for the Seniors Card greatly appreciate the fact that the Government is extending travel concessions to retirees over the age of 60 years. Will the Minister explain the background of the oper-

ation of the system and the cost involved in its introduction?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I was very pleased when the Premier made this announcement. It has long been a source of irritation to many people in the community that, when they retire at the age of 60, many concessions are not available to them until they reach the age of 65.

Many people in that age group have retired on superannuation and pension schemes that are nowhere near as good as modern superannuation and pension schemes. There is no doubt that there is a significant group of people in the community who are not affluent by any stretch of the imagination, and who cannot avail themselves of the very many concessions made available by the various authorities to people over the age of 65. The transport concession area is very clearly one area that lends itself quite readily to being implemented.

We believe that there are about 55 000 retired people over the age of 60 who have not previously been entitled to concessions for travel in South Australia. We were very pleased to be able to extend the concession to those people. It has a twofold benefit to the STA: first, it will cause more people to use STA services; and, secondly, the higher the usage, the happier we are. There will be a significant cost to Government of about \$1.8 million in this financial year and about \$3 million in a full financial year. I have been very pleased with the response to date and I am sure the Committee will be interested in the figures.

Since the launch of the Seniors Card advertising program on 10 September—a relatively short time ago—there have been 7 400 applications (up to yesterday). That is quite an incredible rate of response. At the moment, it averages about 1 500 applications a day. So, quite clearly there was a very large unmet need for this concession. Another aspect that pleases me is that there have been indications from many groups and businesses in the community that, when the Seniors Card is in common use, they in turn will give concessions to this group of people. That will be very welcome. Anything we can do to enrich the lives of people who have worked for a lifetime for the State of South Australia and indeed the country of Australia ought to be done and I believe is a very small reward for the years of effort that they have put in.

Mr TYLER: I note that in past Committees the member for Bragg has been very vocal on the subject of the Crouzet system. It would seem that this system is now working very effectively because the member for Bragg has been silent on the subject for some time: he would be the first to let us know any hiccup was occurring in this system. Will the Minister provide details of how the system is working? For instance, I know that it is designed to cut out some of the fraud that has been occurring in the system. Is there some information the Minister can give the Committee to show that the system has been effective? I also note that the ticketing system gives significantly more detail about the style of patronage achieved on STA services. How will this new data be used by the authority?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the Committee would be aware, the Crouzet system was introduced in September 1987 at a cost of \$10.77 million. It was \$10.77 million very well spent. The advantages of the new system (according to our operators) are improved security, less cash handling and simplified record keeping; greater flexibility in selling fares, introducing new ticket types and fare structures and providing discounting arrangements; a more efficient revenue accounting system through the operation of a computerised system; more accurate collection and analysis of patronage and revenue data; and the eventual utilisation by the emer-

gency radio system of vehicle location information stored in on-board ticket equipment.

The ticketing system has worked well and continues to work well. As in any area of human endeavour and mechanical operations, there are faults. However, the number of reports of faults that we have every day on on-board equipment has dramatically reduced from an average of 80 faults per day in January 1988 to an average of 25 faults per day at present. There are about 256 000 validations per weekday—yet only 25 faults. There are now only about 12 daily ticket refund claims per 10 000 multi-trip validations. Australian-made magnetic striped tickets are now being progressively introduced and are now 60 per cent of cash tickets and 50 per cent of multi-trips now in use, so we are buying Australia. Fare evasion has now been reduced by an estimated \$1.5 million per annum. To provide additional outlets for passengers to purchase tickets a contract has been let for the supply of four ticket vending machines to be used for trial operation purposes at selected locations in the metropolitan area. Delivery is expected in the first half of next year.

The Crouzet system supplies the STA with statistics that are more accurate and the need for estimating from survey samples has been considerably reduced. More detailed data are now available on a daily basis compared with fortnightly previously, and it is more timely in that data are available within a few days compared with up to one month previously. This means that the STA can quickly identify the potential for savings as the data indicate where and when excess capacity is provided, and the data also provide early indications of routes with growth trends and hence the need to plan for additional services in future.

The Crouzet ticketing system does not record alightings, so on-site load checks have to be carried out on a regular basis and hence the inspectors that the member for Bragg sees from time to time.

Mr INGERSON interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Bragg says he uses the system. I am very pleased that he does because it is a 1990s system; and our bus fleets and railcars are 1990s rolling stock. This State has a superb public transport system staffed by very highly qualified people.

Our fleet of rolling stock is very modern, and our ultra modern systems of ticketing and recording enable us to undertake a great deal of forward planning. I become a little annoyed when members of the South Australian Parliament sneer at the STA when we should be proud of it. In my view, those members are sneering at their State when they should be proud of having the best system in Australia. However, they choose to abuse and sneer, which I think is very sad. I must say that I do not understand that attitude.

Mr INGERSON: In relation to the permanent way, how many areas on the metropolitan lines require reduced speeds, and why?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will take that question on notice and provide an answer later.

Mr INGERSON: Page 437 of the Auditor-General's Report states:

... the authority entered into a partial and full debt defeasance arrangement of the resultant lease liability where debt totalling \$19 million was assumed by third parties at a cost to the authority of \$17.9 million resulting in a gain on defeasance of \$1.1 million.

How does this defeasance work, what parties are involved and where does the profit sharing or profit change occur?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have those details with me, but I will take the question on notice and provide a reply prior to 6 October.

Mr INGERSON: Page 426 of the Auditor-General's Report also makes some significant comments about sick

leave. A report was made to the Minister in August 1989. What has happened, or what does the Minister intend to do about this situation?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Auditor-General has expressed concern regarding sick leave and associated rostering practices within the bus operations area. A number of issues were raised of which the authority was aware and it developed management systems to provide suitable information to assist depot managers to manage sick leave and other related absences and costs better. The Auditor-General has acknowledged that absenteeism reports have been generated for individual depots, thus allowing the depot managers to monitor and take appropriate action.

This system has been upgraded since the audit report so that depot managers are able to compare their depot with others. Furthermore, the Fielding report recommends that depot managers be given greater day-to-day accountability and responsibility. Accordingly, the next phase of information accessibility will be to provide terminals in depots for daily reports to enable a prompt analysis and response, thus improving management.

It is essential that sick leave is kept in context. The sick leave taken by bus operators does not differ significantly from other areas within the authority, particularly when safety considerations are considered. However, it is more prudent for bus operators to report sick rather than be a safety risk whilst driving a heavy vehicle and carrying passengers. Where a bus operator has a high incidence of sick leave with or without a medical certificate, the employee is counselled by the depot manager and the authority's qualified medical officer to determine whether they are suitable to continue as a bus operator.

The focus of the audit report is on the use of cancelled days to cover sick leave. By way of background, the term 'cancelled day off' or CDO means a day on which an operator would normally have had no work rostered but which is cancelled and the operator is required to work at short notice. The bus operator receives significant penalty rates. The information on CDOs was prepared manually in 1987-88 and previous years. Depot managers and management now have a fortnightly report showing CDOs provided.

However, all cancelled days are not attributable to sick leave. The service that the authority provides is instant and action must be taken at a specific time rather than in other industries where staff shortages can be covered by overtime or temporary staff. Bus operator relief covers long service leave, annual leave, block book off, workers compensation, release of union delegates as well as sick leave and traffic emergencies. The authority must meet the service rather than leave people stranded.

The depot selected—St Agnes—requires busway trained operators and therefore cannot have short-term absences covered by other depots. Other depots can have their work more easily covered. The number of cancelled days would reduce if award changes were agreed to by the respective unions. Particularly in the areas of annual leave and block book-off rosters could be more flexibly amended. As acknowledged by the Auditor-General, these issues 'require careful and sensitive negotiations'.

As I have indicated, I believe that the authority is doing a great deal to identify individuals who appear to be taking sick leave to which one could suspect they are not entitled. I have always had a great deal of difficulty with this argument because, overwhelmingly, sick leave is taken within the award. Sick leave in the public sector is not significantly different from sick leave taken in the private sector. In fact, depending on the quality of the workplace, sick leave in the

private sector can be considerably higher. I do not think that anybody should point the finger before undertaking some investigation.

Australia is a relatively affluent nation and there is no doubt that sick leave provisions in this country are more generous than those applying in some other countries. Unless the Australian system decides to reduce the number of sick days available to employees, I believe that, whilst the situation should be monitored constantly and individuals counselled, the argument does not help anyone's case. If people who constantly abuse employees who take sick leave do not like the situation, then a tribunal can decide the matter of reducing sick leave. I certainly do not advocate that course of action, because I believe that Australian sick leave provisions are appropriate.

We are not a third world country, and I believe an appropriate level of sick leave is something to be proud of, not something to be ashamed of. I do not agree with people abusing sick leave; I make that perfectly clear. However, it is extremely difficult to identify, particularly where in many awards, both in the public and private sectors, medical certificates for single days do not have to be given. I know that many companies in Australia have chosen to allow their employees to use this system because they believe that it is less trouble for them to have the provision to take a day off when they have the flu, rather than struggle out to a doctor or, even worse, to come in to work and give it to everyone else. I do get tired of this constant picking at public sector employees in relation to sick leave; there is very little difference, if any, between the public and the private sector, and overwhelmingly it is taken within the award provision.

Mr OSWALD: In relation to the operation of a depot, how many drivers are brought in on pay to stand by a pool each day, in case someone reports in sick? I am familiar with the nursing profession, and how there is a pool of nurses on call, but does a pool of drivers come in to the depots each morning, sitting around in case drivers do not come in to work?

Mr Fitzgerald: The formula for the provision of total spare operators is 15 per cent. This does not mean that 15 per cent of the operators sit in the depot each day; this accounts for annual leave, long service leave, sick leave and so on, and the training and retraining of bus operators. A small percentage is involved in providing people to come in and wait for something to go wrong in the fleet, for example, with a driver who may call in on the radio system that he is not feeling well. The bus waits, a crew car takes another operator out and the sick driver is brought back. Because the operations of a particular day can span something like 5.30 a.m. through to midnight, this requires a couple of operators to be available virtually all day for that sort of emergency.

Mr INGERSON: I would like to comment on the Minister's statement. Whilst I agree that in some private sector areas figures of the sort referred to do relate, in other areas they do not, particularly in small businesses. Another important thing to note—and the Minister did not talk about this—is that it is the Auditor-General, a person of some importance, who has commented on this directly to Parliament. The Opposition has picked up these comments and questioned the Government, principally because of the statements made directly by the Auditor-General. Whilst the Minister's statement was clear, it is important that everybody recognise that it is the Auditor-General who has initiated these comments and made specific reference, not only to the STA but also to several other Government authorities.

My next question relates to foreign exchange currency contracts. I note from the Auditor-General's Report that several contracts were entered into to hedge against currency variations arising out of specific overseas purchase contracts. What were those contracts for and what were their costs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: First, in response to the comment made by the member for Bragg regarding sick leave and the Auditor-General, I concur with the Auditor-General's remarks completely. There is no argument about that, but any auditor in the private sector auditing a range of operations such as those carried out in the public sector could make identical comments. That is the point I am making—that there is virtually no difference between the level of sick leave taken in the public sector and that taken in the private sector. As regards small business, the honourable member's comments may be correct, but I could indicate small areas of operation in the public sector where the same thing applies and sick leave is minimal. There are large areas in the public sector where the jobs are different from some of the difficult jobs that some of the blue collar people do, again, where sick leave is very low and where, for example, there are no back injuries or industrial injuries because they do not work in an industrial setting.

It is all too easy to pick up on what the Auditor-General said—and with which I completely concur—and use it as a worker-bashing exercise within the public sector and, unfortunately, that is what has happened year after year in response to the Auditor-General's Report. It is an abuse of that report and certainly a misunderstanding of what the Auditor-General is trying to achieve. As regards the actual question asked by the member for Bragg, I call upon Mr Fitzgerald to outline to the Committee some of those foreign exchange dealings to which the member for Bragg referred.

Mr Fitzgerald: I believe the honourable member referred to page 430 of the Auditor-General's Report where a statement is made about accounting standards:

Foreign exchange: During the year a number of foreign currency contracts were entered into to hedge against currency variations arising from specific overseas purchase contracts. All realised exchange variations incurred on the contracts have been included as part of the purchase price of the goods received under the purchase contracts.

A number of contracts were still outstanding during the 1988-89 financial year and they specifically related to the 20 diesel electric railcars for which the last delivery was undertaken in October 1988; the resignalling project, which is still continuing and has a significant British contract; and elements of the end of the Crouzet system. We took out a number of contracts to cover the exposure of the authority to the necessary foreign exchange payments that had to be made under the contractual conditions and those costs are shown and included in each of the individual projects. The financial statements of the authority have been audited by the Auditor-General as to the conclusion of those costs, and the financial statements have been given an unqualified audit certificate. There are a number of individual financial arrangements with various firms that offer forward cover, namely, banks. As the foreign funds were required, these contracts were matured.

Mr INGERSON: At page 287 of the Program Estimates is a statement that surplus bus operators were redeployed within the authority and other Government organisations. How many people and what other Government organisations were involved?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand that between 80 and 90 operators were transferred. I cannot tell the member the other departments involved, but I will get that information for him.

Mr INGERSON: At pages 287 and 280 are references to employment projections. At page 287, as a specific target, it is stated that employees are expected to be reduced by 15 per cent over three years and that that will continue through 1989-90. The first two years have seen a reduction in salaried employees of 11 per cent. At page 280, in terms of full-time equivalents, the same number of people are set down for both last year and this year. Will the number be further reduced? Can the Minister say how those two statements correlate? Am I comparing like with like?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Fitzgerald has that information, and I will ask him to give it to the Committee.

Mr Fitzgerald: The member has drawn attention to the fact that a number of employees in the authority in 1988-89 reduced by 285, yet apparently in 1989-90 the number of employees that we proposed to have at the end of June (namely, 3 304), is still the projected number and is, apparently, stable. The proposal was to reduce further some of our white collar workers this year, and that will occur. We have had to put on a number of extra operators to cover the additional services introduced on 20 August 1989, thus accounting for the constant number.

Mr INGERSON: On page 209 of the Program Estimates it is stated that \$29.39 million was financed from internal and other funds. Can the Minister detail where that money comes from?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Rather than going through a table of figures, I will have that information incorporated in *Hansard* before 6 October.

Mr INGERSON: Can the Minister advise on the promotional cost of seniors cards?

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

Mr TYLER interjecting:

Mr INGERSON: We support it. We said nothing negative about it. The completion of the business plan has been foreshadowed towards the end or middle of next year. Can the Minister say when the plan will be publicly presented?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I intend that it will be presented before the end of this year.

Mr INGERSON: At page 428 of the Auditor-General's Report is a comment on short-term cash investments, which have increased from \$6.75 million in 1988-89 to \$16.598 million this year. Can the Minister explain that significant increase, when over the years there has not been such a variation?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I ask Mr Fitzgerald to respond to that.

Mr Fitzgerald: The additional cash resources come from the sale of the railcar sale contracts; that generated \$17 million in funds, which SAFA chose to leave with the STA rather than refunding it. That was part of the source of our funds for the 1988-89 capital works program.

Mr INGERSON: Can the Minister explain the line 'Sale of equipment, plant and machinery, \$37.113 million'? All the figures are different, which explains my need to ask the question.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Mr Fitzgerald has those figures.

Mr Fitzgerald: The \$37 million includes \$35.4 million from the sale and lease back of railcars.

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

[Sitting suspended from 5.53 to 7.30 p.m.]

Correctional Services, \$52 399 000

Chairman:

The Hon. T.M. McRae

Members:

The Hon. R.K. Abbott
Mr D.S. Baker
Mr S.J. Baker
Mr J. Oswald
Mr D.J. Robertson
Mr P.B. Tyler

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr M.J. Dawes, Executive Director, Correctional Services Department.
Mr I.J. Winton, Director, Support Services.
Mr K. Coulter, Chief Finance Officer.
Mr R. Wright, Senior Resource Analyst.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination. Mr Blevins, Would you like to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Following the outstanding events of the 1987-88 financial year when the closure of the archaic Adelaide Gaol was finally achieved, the 1988-89 financial year saw continued effort towards this Government's commitment to upgrade correctional facilities and programs. Progress was achieved with the completion and opening of G Division, the continuing redevelopment of B Division and the continuing construction of F Division at Yatala Labour Prison. The redevelopments occurring at Port Lincoln Prison and at Northfield Prison Complex and planning for upgrading of Cadell Training Centre, Port Augusta Gaol and the Yatala Labour Prison kitchen are further indications of the Government's significant efforts to provide secure, humane accommodation for our prison population. Progress was also made on a facility at Mount Gambier for the Community Corrections Division of the department.

The budget for this year includes additional allocations to provide for the commissioning of the redeveloped Port Lincoln Prison and for the expected commissioning of the new F Division at Yatala Labour Prison late in the financial year.

The capital works program has been provided with \$16.47 million this year. Of that amount, \$3.6 million relates to new works planned for commencement in 1989-90 (the most significant works being the new kitchen at Yatala Labour Prison and the redevelopment of Port Augusta Gaol). Works in progress have been allocated an amount of about \$7.6 million, with Port Lincoln Prison redevelopment and Yatala Labour Prison's B and F Divisions being the most significant items of works in progress. One of the most significant events impacting upon the Department of Correctional Services in 1988-89 was the release in December 1988 of the interim report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The recommendations contained in the interim report have relevance to the operations of the department and it has acted quickly to identify procedural improvements and, where necessary, remedial actions required to address the recommendations. Every effort will be made in the forthcoming year to act upon these identified aspects of the department's operation in endeavouring to overcome perceived shortcomings. A significant increase in the resource allocation to the depart-

ment has been included in the 1989-90 budget for this purpose.

The fine default scheme, which is run in conjunction with the Community Service Order Scheme, has recorded a major increase in usage during 1988-89 and is now providing an effective option to imprisonment for non-payment of fines. Increased resources have been included in the 1989-90 budget to support the higher demand to exercise the fine default option. This year the total recurrent allocation to the department is \$52.399 million, representing a 9.6 per cent increase over last year's allocation and provides for an additional 103 staff in a full year. This provides further evidence of the Government's commitment to law and order and the upgrading of correctional facilities. The staff of the department have continued to respond to the demands that their work places upon them in a difficult area of Government administration.

Mr OSWALD: I refer members to page 292 of the Program Estimates, where it refers to management of drug and substance abuse. How much was spent in 1988-89 in routine drug testing in prisons, and what does that testing involve? How many prisoners are tested at each institution, and with what frequency? How many prisoners tested positive? I was interested to read in the *Advertiser* on 3 February of this year the following statement attributed to the Minister:

The Government could no longer 'turn a blind eye' to illegal drug use, and must immediately act to introduce widespread urine testing of prisoners to deter and detect drug abuse.

Mr Blevins said his department had been considering the introduction of urine tests for some time, and a decision on this was expected later this month.

Even without the tests, the Government was using every method that had even been used in Australia to detect drug use.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would like the reference to that quote. I am quite sure that the Minister for Correctional Services did not say that he was no longer going to turn a blind eye to drug use in the gaols. However, the question is serious. I cannot give the precise number of people tested for drugs, but it would not be a large number.

If the member for Morphett is referring to urine analysis, I gave a commitment on behalf of the Government earlier this year that we would investigate the introduction of a urine analysis in the prison system. Funds have been allocated for that, as members of the Committee will see from the budget estimates, and the program will be introduced during the financial year. I have outlined a whole range of difficulties with the proposal that I have outlined to the Parliament on numerous occasions, but basically there are three ways in which it can be done. A prisoner can be tested on a suspicion basis: if we believe that a prisoner has been taking drugs, we can demand a sample of urine and test that. The second way of doing it is on a truly random basis, for example, by numbers being thrown up by the JIS and our taking samples from those particular prisoners. Also, we can close down entire gaols and urine test everyone to see what the level of drug use is in the prison system. It does require a great deal of cooperation to introduce any of those programs. I have a preference for introducing all those methods; not of least importance is the cooperation of our staff, who must take the samples. Without going into details so close to dinner, members of the Committee would appreciate that a degree of cooperation is also required from prisoners. It is not as simple as holding someone down and taking a sample of blood. It can be much more difficult than that.

Our staff quite properly have some concerns about the procedures for taking the samples and a number of similar issues. In fact, some of our staff believe that the whole exercise is a waste of money and that the money could be better used in other drug detection methods. However, most

of our staff to date have been very supportive, and now that we have the funds we will start part of the program this year. I believe it is preferable to start the program in a prison that does have the complete support of the staff, as they are the people who have the difficult task of actually obtaining the samples. I would expect a gradual increase in the number of prisoners tested by this method throughout the prison system this year.

Mr OSWALD: Can you tell the Committee how many prisoners have been tested in each institution and say how many tests proved positive? Will you take that on notice?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can do that and consider the question. My officers may be clear, but in my own mind I am not clear what the member for Morphett wants. Does he believe that we take blood samples from prisoners on some kind of basis and test them for drugs?

Mr OSWALD: How many prisoners in the Minister's institutions have been tested for drugs, and how many have been positive?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: What method of testing is the honourable member referring to?

Mr OSWALD: The institutions test for a range of drugs. It is a medical procedure. A decision is taken to determine whether there are drugs in an institution.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This is a blood test?

Mr OSWALD: A blood test or a urine test.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We do not do either. We do compulsory tests in prisons for Aids but not for drugs. There may be some particular incidents, which I will have researched, but we have no authority to take blood from prisoners.

Mr OSWALD: I am just seeking information as a fact gathering exercise.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To be able to provide you the information I must know what testing the honourable member is referring to.

Mr OSWALD: I think the Minister has answered the question. The Government's crime prevention strategy released several weeks ago provides \$100 000 to be spent on routine drug testing this year. What does it propose to do with that money? That may give us some indication of what the future plans are.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The proposal is for a urine analysis program in South Australian gaols. We now have the funds to commence that program.

Mr OSWALD: As at 30 June 1989, how many prisoners in South Australian gaols had been identified as being infected with the HIV, Aids virus, hepatitis B and any other contagious diseases?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will try to obtain that information, but it is more properly obtained from the Minister of Health. The Department of Correctional Services does not run the prison medical service—it is run by the Health Commission through the Modbury Hospital. I will refer the honourable member's question to the Minister of Health.

Mr OSWALD: How many individual clients were treated by the prison drug unit during the 1988-89 financial year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is possible to obtain that information for the honourable member. Whilst the Drug and Alcohol Services Council actually runs that program, it is in conjunction with the Department of Correctional Services. We have significant input into that program.

Mr OSWALD: How frequently in the past 12 months has the prison dog squad been used at each correctional institution for drug searches?

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

Mr TYLER: I would like to compliment the Minister on the way he handles this portfolio. There is no doubt that, over the past four or five years, he has been an outstanding Minister of Correctional Services. My first question relates to capital works. The department has received significant support for capital works projects in recent years. Will the Minister advise details of the 1989-90 capital works funding and projects and indicate whether further capital works projects are planned for commencement in the next year or so?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the honourable member for his kind words. He is an excellent member for Fisher. The Government has a very strong commitment to operating correctional facilities in this State.

That is again reflected in the budget document. After spending \$13.3 million in 1987-88 and \$10.6 million in 1988-89, the 1989-90 budget provides for an outlay of \$14.3 million on correctional facilities and \$1.17 million on motor vehicles. Of the \$14.3 million set aside for correctional facilities, work is already in progress which will account for \$9.63 million. Two of the largest projects are the F Division construction at Yatala, at a cost of \$4.4 million this financial year, and the Port Lincoln Prison redevelopment, which will cost just over \$2 million this year.

Both of these projects are scheduled for completion before 30 June 1990, but at this stage likely completion date of F Division is a little unclear. Work will continue on redevelopment of the Northfield Prison Complex, the construction of a community corrections facility at Mount Gambier, the finalisation of the B Division upgrade at Yatala prison and some work at the Adelaide Remand Centre. In respect of new works to commence in 1989-90, the most significant project is the redevelopment of the Port August Gaol. The budget provides for about \$2 million to be spent in 1989-90 on the first stage of the redevelopment, which will include an industries facility, stores building, administration building and staff amenities.

The project has not yet been subject to the normal approval processes, including the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, and therefore remains subjective at this stage. Work will commence in 1989-90 on a replacement facility for the kitchen at Yatala which is of very poor standard and is a very unsatisfactory facility. There is a plan to provide a new workshop facility for the community corrections function in the north-east suburbs. I have with me a schedule setting out the capital works program in respect of the Department of Correctional Services which I am happy to table for incorporation in the *Hansard* record of this evening's proceedings.

DETAILS OF THE 1989-90 CAPITAL WORKS FUNDING AND PROJECTS

| Annual Provisions 1989-90 | \$000's |
|---|---------|
| Land and Property | 250 |
| Minor Works | 1 000 |
| Maintenance | 300 |
| Community Corrections | 300 |
| Investigations Design Task Force Salaries | 1 300 |
| Subtotal | \$3 150 |
| (Carry Over) Work In Progress | |
| Adelaide Remand Centre | 354 |
| Mount Gambier Community Corrections | 277 |
| Northfield Prison Admin. Low Security Females | 421 |
| Port Lincoln Additional Accommodation | 2 046 |
| Yatala 'B' Division Upgrading | 75 |
| 'F' Division | 4 400 |
| | \$7 573 |
| Less 'G' Division Adjustment | (-)43 |
| Subtotal | \$7 530 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| New Works to Commence 1988-90 | |
| Yatala New Kitchen | 1 000 |
| Community Corrections—North East Workshop | 400 |
| Port Augusta Stage One—Demolish Old Gaol | 160 |
| Yatala Reserve Road Network Stage 1 | 180 |
| Port Augusta ST1 Administration Building | 400 |
| New Store Building | 400 |
| Industries Facility | 500 |
| Staff Amenities | 280 |
| Common/Site Developments | 300 |
| Subtotal | \$3 620 |
| Allocation—1989-90 | \$14 300 |

After 1989-90 the Government is likely to undertake further stages of the Port Augusta Gaol and the Northfield Prison Complex redevelopment, replacement of the existing Mount Gambier Gaol and significant upgrading of facilities at the Cadell Training Centre. Obviously, these proposals are still in the early planning stages, but they are indicative of the Government's continuing desire to provide humane conditions for our prison population.

Mr TYLER: My second question relates to accommodation. What will be the total bed space available to prisoners at 30 June 1990? How will that accommodation compare with projected prisoner numbers at the same date?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The answer will be very brief and will also, in my view, be quite salutary. The total bed space available at 30 June 1990 will be 999, whilst the projected prison number at the same date is 976. So, honourable members will see that we are racing ahead with the building program. Essentially, as regards beds for prisoners, we are merely marking time.

Unfortunately, that trend will continue as far as we can see into the future. Each year we add about 40 prisoners to our total numbers. Our predictions have proved to be pretty accurate over the years. We are slightly ahead of the game, and we hope to stay that way—but it is a very close contest.

Mr TYLER: I refer to the segregation unit on page 292 of the Program Estimates. I note that this is a new segregation unit which became available with the commissioning of G Division at Yatala Labour Prison earlier this year. What philosophy is applied to the use of the unit? How many prisoners are currently held in G Division? Is the unit functioning in a satisfactory manner? What is the change in recurrent costs of operating G Division compared to the old S and D Division?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: G Division is a special facility to accommodate 24 prisoners in a highly secure environment, segregated from the wider prison community. It is located at the south eastern corner of Yatala Labour Prison, within the existing perimeter security zone. The integrated prison system of South Australia aims to provide safe, secure and humane custody of all prisoners. It is therefore necessary to provide a number of regimes to accommodate a range of prisoners with differing security ratings and behavioural patterns. One such regime is that of a segregation unit which can accommodate the small number of prisoners who, for varying reasons, cannot or should not remain within the main prison system.

The principle of confinement in a special separate environment is embodied in section 36 of the Correctional Services Act 1982. This section provides for the segregation of the following categories of prisoners: those under investigation for an alleged offence; those whose welfare may be in jeopardy if they remain within the larger prison environment; those who are likely to injure some other person or unduly harass another prisoner; those who are likely to attempt to escape from custody; and those who pose a threat to the security of the correctional institution or to the good order or discipline within the institution. These relatively

small groups of prisoners are a cause of concern to both correctional staff and other prisoners and as such require a setting which is unique to their needs. Every effort has been made to create and maintain an environment that is positive and non destructive of the human spirit without compromising the necessary security requirements to keep prisoners safe.

As at 7 September 1989, 17 prisoners were held in G Division. The very brief answer to the honourable member's third question is, 'Yes'. G Division is functioning in a satisfactory manner, and I give due regard to its staff. This is probably the most difficult area of our prison system. The staff in this very difficult area are managing it superbly. Of course, the staff are under intense observation—from both the Department of Correctional Services and a number of outside bodies—to ensure that there is no abuse of prisoners in such a tight, closed environment. From the reports I have received, I am delighted to say that the monitoring procedure indicates that the division is working extremely well. I am very pleased, and I give due recognition to the staff who have delivered those results.

In response to the member for Fisher's fourth question, the change in the current cost of operating G Division as compared to the old S and D Division is four correctional staff. These staff were allocated in the 1988-89 budget. Therefore, whilst it is slightly more expensive than the old S and D division those members who have had the dubious pleasure of seeing S and D Divisions and having looked at the new G Division will appreciate that four staff is a very small price to pay to do away with S and D Divisions and to have a much more secure and humane facility for the very few prisoners who cannot be either controlled or kept secure in the main body of Yatala Labour Prison.

Mr OSWALD: In response to a previous question, the Minister advised the Committee that the department does not carry out any random blood or urine testing amongst prisoners. If that is the case, and random testing is not carried out, is this not contrary to the department's expectation as expressed in its 1988 annual report?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think we are talking, to some extent, at cross purposes. The Government has been working with institutions and, in particular, with correctional officers to introduce a system of urine analysis. In this budget we have been allocated funds to commence that procedure, and that is what we will be doing. We have never claimed to have such a program. The debate has always revolved around whether we could put one together that is worthwhile. We believe that we are very close to that now and, if we decide to do it, we have the funds. I am not quite sure what the honourable member means by his reference to a previous annual report.

Mr OSWALD: I refer again to page 292 of the Program Estimates, under the heading 'Issues/Trends' and the need to extend community-based alternatives to imprisonment. By what criterion does the department determine the need to extend community-based alternatives to imprisonment? What area is planned for extension this year, and to what extent is that extension planned?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The department itself cannot do very much about this issue. Principally, it is a program for the courts. The legislation exists for the court to sentence offenders to non-custodial punishment, such as community service orders and so on. The Government has been involved in a considerable amount of agitation, which has resulted in legislation to create a system where fine defaulters can also do community service orders rather than go straight to gaol to work off the fine that they owe the community, as was the case in the past. We have been encouraging the

machinery of the courts to allow fine defaulters to take advantage of the provision that allows them to do community service orders to work off a fine rather than going to gaol. We have made provision for increased supervision in order to do that.

Apart from the home detention program, we have no control over the number of offenders who take up this option. Of course, when the courts impose a non-parole period, and when that non-parole period is completed satisfactorily and prisoners are out on parole, obviously our Community Corrections Division has to deal with them. The numbers in this area are slightly increased, but we hope that the courts will impose, where appropriate and within their discretion, a lot more non-custodial sentences.

Mr OSWALD: In the year ended 30 June 1989, how many offenders were in each category of community-based alternatives, for what offence and how many reoffended?

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

Mr OSWALD: What problems in each correctional institution have suggested a need to improve policies and procedures relating to security? What improvements are proposed? I am referring to 'Issues/Trends' and the stated need to improve procedures and policies relating to security in prisons.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Morphet will have to be a bit more specific. We have nine institutions that are all very different, with varying security requirements. We believe that we meet those security requirements. At the moment, our escape rate is very low indeed.

The prison we probably have the most problem with at the moment is the Port Augusta Gaol. All escapes are serious, but some are more serious than others. The escapes from Port Augusta have not been terribly serious. The escapees have usually been picked up at home usually no longer than a matter of hours after their escape. Quite frankly, some of those escapes make me sad more than anything else but, nevertheless, we do not like escapes. The Port Augusta Gaol is having quite significant modifications made to it so that the temptation for people to escape can be minimised.

Mr OSWALD: Your department has recognised a need to improve procedures and policies relating to security. It would seem that there is some concern in the department about security, otherwise it would not have been included as an issue. What improvements are proposed to cover this concern?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We are concerned about security 24 hours a day. That is our job 24 hours a day.

Mr OSWALD: It seems strange that you have included it this year.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is the principal role of the Department of Correctional Services. Our main function is containment.

Mr OSWALD: Are you more concerned this year than you have been in previous years and is that why you have included it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is certainly not the case. I have no greater concern this year than the previous year. I feel more comfortable every year with the level of escapes. Before security at Yatala was increased over the past three or four years the escape rate from Yatala was very alarming. I have been very fortunate in that, I have probably had only two serious escapes in the five years I have been Minister and that was in the early stages. Since the main security has been improved at Yatala, we have had only one escape in three or four years, so the security is obviously of a very high standard. However, the security does vary.

Not all institutions are like Yatala: they are not all high security institutions. They range from the extreme high security at Yatala down to Cadell, which has a minimum security. Cadell does not even have a fence around it other than the normal farm fence of every property in South Australia.

Mr OSWALD: You are not planning any major public works schemes?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Certainly not, no. It costs us \$2 million just for a fence around Yatala and it is very effective, so there are no major problems. However, having said that, tomorrow they will probably flock over the wall.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: As to page 293 of the Program Estimates, the fine default program is an option to imprisonment that was slow to gain momentum when introduced in late 1987. What is the current level of usage of the program and what resources have been budgeted for 1989-90?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The fine default program commenced in November 1987 and in that month 24 people entered undertakings to work off their fines. The undertaking is an agreement entered into between an offender and the Department of Correctional Services to undertake eight hours of community work for each \$100 of debt. As at 30 June 1989, 336 persons were on 359 undertakings to work off fines.

The program is run in conjunction with the established Community Service Order program, and shares resources. In November 1987, 3.4 FTE community service officers and three FTE clerical officers were allocated to the fine option program.

The 1989-90 budget provides for an additional 12.7 FTE positions to meet the growth of the combined programs at a cost of \$505 000. The full year impact of these increased resources will be \$520 000. The total cost of the Community Service Order sub-program in 1989-90 involving community service orders and fine default agreements is expected to be \$1.65 million with an average staffing of 36.3 FTEs.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: As to page 294 of the Program Estimates, what is the proposed increased resource allocation in 1989-90 in respect of staff development and training and what specific actions will be taken?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Staff development and training in the Department of Correctional Services has an increased resource allocation of \$475 000 over a full year. Of that amount \$238 000 will be used to employ staff and develop programs, which will provide increased training for officers in identifying and assisting prisoners at risk in the system. This amount is broken down into the following: A Field Training Officer to be employed from January 1990. This officer will work primarily with officers in country institutions and district offices to conduct awareness and follow-up programs in regard to prisoners with special needs. Liaison between Department of Correctional Services' services and other community resource providers should be increased through such programs, providing extra assistance for minority groups within the system. A Research/trainer-training officer is to be employed from May 1990. The dual role of this officer will be to research the most efficient and effective developments in staff training and to train officers who have responsibilities in the training area. This will ensure that officers based at the staff development centre are kept up to date with appropriate methodology and that officers in institutions, who are responsible for in-service and post-induction development of recruits and other officers are able to use appropriate techniques.

Funds equivalent to a 0.5 training officer, from May 1990 will be provided. Resources allocated to this position will

be used to ensure that lecturers in specialist fields, such as identifying and assisting prisoners at risk, conflict management and resolution are the best available. Payment of consultancy fees, or enabling the release of officers from institutions will thus not be a barrier to providing services.

The recruit induction program is to be increased by one week from May 1990, providing eight weeks of training for new officers. The increased time will enable greater emphasis to be placed on issues related to special needs of prisoners and developing greater awareness and understanding of Aboriginal prisoners and their culture. Of the full year cost of \$475 000 it is expected that \$145 000 will be spent in 1989-90.

The Hon. R.K. ABBOTT: As to page 294 of the Program Estimates in regard to workers compensation, it is indicated that the department intends to develop an occupational health and safety strategy. Will the Minister provide some detail of the actions being taken by the department to address this issue?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The incidence of workers compensation and, more particularly, the incidence of stress related illness has significantly increased. The department is most concerned about this trend and has implemented a number of strategies to address the situation. These include contracts with consultants to recruit officers (including psychological assessment in an effort to improve the suitability of persons recruited). This practice is currently under review with the establishment of a working party to redefine the criteria for recruitment of correctional officers in line with the current departmental requirements.

The department has upgraded medicals and has introduced a 'family evening' to involve the close family of recruits.

It has reviewed the risk management program presently operating in the Department of Marine and Harbors, and TAFE. Additionally, it has discussed with the executive of the Highways Department its program for risk management and rehabilitation.

A component is now included in all departmental in-service training courses to address occupational health, safety and welfare. Four departmental instructions have been issued stating policy towards smoking in the workplace, pregnant correctional officers, claims for damage to personal property and procedure for processing workers compensation claims.

Closer liaison with the Department of Labour has been effected and it has acknowledged that the department is well advanced in handling employees with compensable disabilities.

Closer liaison with the Department of Personnel and Industrial Relations has resulted in the successful relocation of injured employees to alternative duties.

The Department of TAFE conducted a one day training course for all correctional officers and elected health and safety representatives. The department has introduced a pilot employee health and fitness program and its success is currently being evaluated by consultants employed by the Australian Health Foundation. Components of the program include fitness classes, nutrition education programs and lifestyle management programs. Officers of the department are developing strategies for an integrated prevention program.

The department has recently called for expression of interest from providers for a post trauma counselling program. Previously an officer travelled interstate to Victoria and Western Australia to observe first hand the effectiveness of a post trauma counselling program. An accident investigations, analysis and reporting system is being considered.

Management education and awareness programs have been conducted. Development of an information system to provide essential statistical data to monitor the incidence of workers compensation is also under consideration. The Director, Operations, and two other uniformed officers will travel overseas this year to experience developments in other countries concerning the role of correctional officers.

To support further the integrated prevention plan thrust, interstate corrective services departments have been contacted to ascertain the developments they have made in the area of occupational health and safety, especially in view of the similarity of problems encountered in this area. The department is currently analysing the data received and will research and investigate these programs further in the very near future.

The department is considering the introduction of the Department of Labour Penstar program which comprises the elements of hazard management, training, management information system, rehabilitation and lifestyle management. Many of these elements are consistent with the department's proposed integrated prevention plan.

The incidence of workers compensation is continually being monitored and advised to the executive of the department. Until an effective information reporting and recording system is introduced the department will continue to react to these incidents within existing staffing and financial resources. The department has reassigned a senior officer from other duties to coordinate the occupational health and safety function. The industrial situation concerning correctional officers in the department is also considered to be a contributing factor to the increased incidences in workers compensation.

Since the officers resigned *en masse* from the FMWU in October 1987, the consultation mechanism concerning staff welfare and related issues has been virtually non-existent and this has had a destructive and negative effect on departmental operations. It is understood application has been made by these officers to join the PSA, but indications are that a decision concerning this application will not be made for some time.

Further discussions concerning the incidence of workers compensation in the department are currently taking place with the central agencies and the Department of Labour in order to address this serious problem. The department will continue its positive efforts to address this issue and provide solutions, both long-term and short-term.

I have indicated the great concern that the Department of Correctional Services has about the degree of workers compensation. The job is a difficult one which cannot be compared to a clerical job or some other jobs where sick leave and workers compensation are very rarely taken. However, having said that, I believe that the department and the Government have a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that workers compensation in particular and sick leave are kept to the absolute minimum and, when a worker is injured, that an appropriate amount of support is given to that officer to enable that officer to return to work as quickly as possible.

Mr OSWALD: How many staff were actually inducted in the 1988-89 financial year, what period of training were they given and how many still work for the department?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will obtain those figures for the honourable member.

Mr OSWALD: How many staff undertake additional further education, and is this a necessary prerequisite for promotion and what sort of further education is encouraged amongst the officers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am very pleased with the level of further training undertaken by our officers. I will provide the honourable member with precise numbers. We do encourage as many officers as possible to take various courses run by the department. It is essential that, before general duty officers, for example, are promoted into higher duties, a certain amount of extra training and different courses be undertaken. Over the past few years we have opened a special training facility in North Adelaide. It is an excellent facility and is well used. Correctional Services officers overwhelmingly enjoy taking these courses which, for the majority of them, will lead to promotion. We do not have any great difficulty in filling the courses. I do not believe that the level of training in the department today can be compared with the level of training that took place five or six years ago when the training consisted of only the five week induction course and very little after that, even if one stayed with the department for 25 years. That is not the case now: training courses are fairly readily available and our correctional officers take advantage of them.

Mr OSWALD: Page 292 mentions a specific target as follows:

Proceed with the implementation of strategies to give effect to recommendations made in the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Have any charges been laid against any prison officer either under the Government Management Employment Act or by the police as criminal charges arising out of the report by Mr Justice Muirhead into the death of Kingsley Dixon in Adelaide Gaol? I refer the Committee to a newspaper article of 3 February 1989 headed 'Prison officers may face charges'. The article states:

Criminal charges will be pursued against prison officers seriously implicated in Justice Muirhead's finding on Kingsley Dixon's death, the State Government has promised. The Government admits the allegations in the report are 'extremely serious' and says it will move to see whether any officers can be charged by police or the Correctional Services Department.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: To my knowledge, the police have not laid any charges and on Crown Law advice the department has charged only one officer with an offence, which was a relatively minor offence. One officer resigned from the service but that was before Justice Muirhead's decision was handed down.

Mr OSWALD: What stage has the proposed redevelopment at Port Augusta Gaol reached, when will it commence and what is the proposed completion date?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This depends very much on a number of factors. The proposal is at the stage of discussions with the Port Augusta council. We have fairly detailed drawings, etc., but it has not been to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works as yet, and it may be some time before that occurs. Funding is always a query, so I cannot give any precise date but we would like the Port Augusta Gaol to be redeveloped, in operation and completed by the year 1994.

Mr OSWALD: What consultation was there with officers at Port Augusta Gaol on the redevelopment and staffing of the gaol?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There has been very extensive consultation with officers about what kind of facility we should have, but until the gaol design is agreed upon, and until the Public Works Standing Committee has agreed that it is an appropriate facility and an appropriate use of taxpayers' money, the question of staffing will not be dealt with. It will be at least a couple of years before the question of staffing levels can be considered. That is usually not a problem; these matters are usually dealt with in a normal way and there is a procedure for this. Everybody in the

Department of Correctional Services has been doing this for a long time. Whilst there may be some argument among staff at the margins, it is not really a huge issue.

Mr OSWALD: It has been put to the Opposition that officers saw the plans only in mid-July 1989, although they had been promised these 12 months previously and that there had been no consultation with the staff; it was a *fait accompli*.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I wish it were so easy. There are no plans. All we have are all these drawings so that we can show the Port Augusta council what we are proposing to do there. I wish it was as easy as the staff indicate. Until we have plans and the Public Works Standing Committee has okayed the project, there is no project; it is only a concept at the moment. My present information is that there has been some consultation with staff in the Port Augusta Gaol but when we get from the concept to the planning stage, we will welcome any involvement the staff wish to have—any at all.

Mr TYLER: I note on page 292 of the Program Estimates that reference is made to the social justice strategy relating to Aboriginal deaths in custody. I am aware that, in the budget handed down by the Premier, there is a strong emphasis on the social justice strategy, and none more important in my view than the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Recommendation 27 of the interim report of the royal commission refers to the development of appropriate screening procedures to ensure that officers who hold racist views and who will have contact with Aboriginal people are not recruited or retained by the police and prison departments. Would the Minister outline for the Committee what resources are provided in respect of this recommendation and indicate the procedures planned for use in the Department of Correctional Services?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: New and existing staff are informed that they are bound by the Department of Correctional Services equal employment opportunity policy and that they are subject to disciplinary action if it is contravened. The department through the training process aims to create an atmosphere of non-discriminatory behaviour. The present screening process of prospective officers does not formally identify racist attitudes but blatant prejudices have in the past contributed to decisions that candidates are unsuitable. The Chief Training Officer regularly reviews induction recruits and those with racist views have their services terminated. An amount of \$100 000 has been provided for the 1989-90 financial year with a full year cost of \$400 000. This will enable the employment of an AO-1 level officer from January 1990, who will be responsible for the development of an appraisal system in the department. A further nine CO-5 level personnel consultants who will be involved in the implementation of an appraisal system are provided from June 1990. As a secondary function, these officers will provide advice, support and training in institutions on personnel related matters. An amount of \$40 000 is provided for consultancy fees in 1989-90.

Mr TYLER: Supplementary to my previous question, on the same page the interim report of the royal commission recommends that police and prison officers, who are involved in the apprehension and/or detention of persons in custody, should be trained so as to be able to identify persons in distress or at risk of death through illness, injury or suicide. What resources have been provided in 1989-90 in respect of this recommendation?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Department of Correctional Services' induction program for new recruits already includes sessions of basic training designated to assist new officers

to identify persons in distress or at risk of death through illness, injury or suicide. The Royal Commissioner stated in his interim report that he is encouraged by this element of the training program in South Australia. The basic training given to officers is augmented by requirements contained in each institution's manager's rules. The budget provides for a CO-5 level roving training officer, an AO-1 level research officer and the equivalent of an extra half-time training officer (PO-1) from May 1990. Liaison has commenced with Aboriginal community groups to develop and enhance training practices for induction and promotional courses. Provision has been made for an increase in the induction training course by one week (to eight weeks) from May 1990 to facilitate extra training required by this, and other recommendations. The cost of this recommendation is \$5 000 in 1989-90 and \$238 000 in a full year.

Mr TYLER: My next question relates to page 294 of Program Estimates and involves the recruitment of Aboriginal staff. In respect of the management of Aboriginal offenders, would the Minister please advise the Committee whether the Department of Correctional Services has attempted to recruit Aboriginal correctional officers into its institutional workforce and, if so, what strategies are used by the department in attempting to recruit Aboriginal correctional officers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The department has recognised that benefits to Aboriginal offenders may arise from the employment of Aboriginal correctional officers for institutional duties. Over the six-year period from 1982 to 1988, the department trained and employed three male Aboriginal correctional officers who remain currently employed. In 1988-89 two females and four males were selected and commenced training. Since then three of this group have, for various reasons, not continued their employment with the department. The current situation therefore is that six Aboriginal people (all males) are employed as correctional officers in the department at an annual salary cost of about \$200 000.

The strategies for recruitment of Aboriginal people over the past two years have included:

The establishment of an action force which liaises through the Department of Personnel and Industrial Relations in communicating with groups of Aboriginal people, to market the career of a correctional officer, so that it is seen as appropriate and appealing to Aboriginal people.

Ensuring that appropriate action is taken to overcome existing barriers to allow for the maximum number of Aboriginal people to be recruited.

Requiring selection panels for base grade correctional officers to include an Aboriginal person (where there are Aboriginal applicants) to take into account the historical disadvantages and differences of culture which may be encountered.

The development of realistic criteria and appropriate screening procedures for the selection of Aboriginal people for correctional officer positions.

The provision of additional tutoring services to assist Aboriginal people to overcome difficulties encountered during the training program.

The provision of assistance with accommodation for country applicants during the period of induction training.

The provision of a full-time permanent Aboriginal recruitment officer from January 1990.

The provision of funds to develop Aboriginal cultural training.

This is an area which gives us a great deal of difficulty. It would help the Department of Correctional Services enor-

mously if we could have, for example, 10 per cent of our staff with an Aboriginal background. This would be of enormous benefit, particularly as such a high proportion of our prisoners are Aboriginal, but it is extremely difficult. With the best will in the world and as much money as we feel is necessary, we still have a great deal of difficulty in recruiting Aboriginal staff and, on occasions when we have recruited them, in maintaining them in the department. It is a difficult job; there is no question of that. Many people find it a very hard job to do and to stick with. We can only admire enormously those who do it.

Mr TYLER: I concur with the Minister's comments and I am sure that the Committee appreciates the role of the department in this important area. At page 292 of the Program Estimates reference is made to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths. Will the Minister summarise the resources that have been allocated to the department in the 1989-90 financial year to address issues arising from the interim report of the Royal Commission?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government has made a significant commitment of resources to the Department of Correctional Services in 1989-90 to address those recommendations of the interim report which impact upon the department. In total, 20.5 additional positions have been provided in 1989-90. The budget provides \$689 000 (with a full year cost of \$1.53 million) which will be predominantly utilised in improving staff recruitment and training. We are trying to ensure we select the right staff, and that we train them appropriately to ensure they are more fully aware of, and able to manage, issues arising from the imprisonment of Aborigines in South Australia.

To put on an additional 20 staff to assist in dealing with this problem is obviously a large commitment when many public sector areas are encountering a reduction in the number of staff that they are able to employ. This gives a clear indication of the Government's commitment to try to prevent any further Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The problem is not predominantly one for correctional services. Probably the police have a great deal more difficulty than we have in dealing with this phenomenon, which seems to have been visited upon us over the past couple of years or so, but I hope that it will not be something that will be with us for much longer. By the time prisoners come into the prison system they are usually more settled than when they are first arrested and, if alcohol is a contributing factor to the crime or the reason for their being arrested, by the time we get them they are usually sobered up and in a settled frame of mind.

Of course, we have had our tragedies, as has every other State, but I believe that the large resources we are putting into this area will enable our staff to more readily recognise someone who may be in danger of taking their own life or harming themselves in some other way. Our staff are not doctors, trained psychologists or psychiatrists—they are prison officers. The degree of training they have has to be limited and it is unreasonable to expect prison officers to identify every prisoner in danger of killing himself or herself. It is unrealistic to expect that but, nevertheless, we do what we can in training and any other program that will be useful. To have allocated 20 extra staff to assist us in this area indicates the seriousness with which we view the problem.

Mr S.J. BAKER: At page 293 of the Program Estimates I note that in 1984-85 the number of successful completions of community correction orders approached 80 per cent and that by 1988-89 the percentage of successful completions had dropped to just above 60 per cent. Can the Minister provide the Committee with details in a summary form of

those cases that were unsuccessful, and why 1 288 failed to complete the program successfully?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have a summary prepared for the Committee and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr S.J. BAKER: Related to that question, how many people who commenced community service orders in 1988-89 are currently on parole, when were they sentenced, for what non-parole periods and for what crimes?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If it is possible to get that amount of detail, I will obtain it for the honourable member. We will do our best.

Mr S.J. BAKER: How many offenders—not necessarily those associated with community service orders—committed further offences in 1988-89? What were the crimes for which they were on parole? Why were they convicted originally, and what was the offence committed while on parole?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will examine the annual report of the Parole Board, which is tabled in Parliament, to see whether that degree of detail is in its report. I will also have the department examine the question to see whether that amount of detail is readily available.

Mr S.J. BAKER: At page 293 of the Program Estimates in darker type the following statement appears:

An effective victim of crime information response mechanism has been established in accordance with Government policy.

What does that statement mean?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Executive Director of the department will give those details to the Committee.

Mr Dawes: The Government's requirements relating to victims of crime require the department to keep a register of interest in offenders by victims and other persons closely associated with that crime. That register requires us to record the person's interest and keep that person informed of the movements of the prisoner through the system and current release date details. A designated officer in the department fulfils that function.

Mr S.J. BAKER: At what point do the victims declare their interest in the release of the offender, and how many persons were so informed in 1988-89?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will ask the Executive Director to supplement his previous reply.

Mr Dawes: When the case goes before the courts, the Police Department has the responsibility of advising victims of their rights under the South Australian proposals. At that point persons are told about the responsibilities of the Department of Correctional Services, and that is when the interest is registered. In relation to the second part of the question, I will have to obtain that detail for the Minister to provide at a later date.

Mr S.J. BAKER: I refer to page 293 of the Program Estimates, and to the target 'Establish the use of needs/risk instrument by October 1989', which I must admit is a strange heading. Can the Minister say what it means?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a reference to an occupational health and safety program that may be introduced. However, I will have that checked and, if that is not correct and I have advised incorrectly, I will supply an amended answer by 6 October.

Mr S.J. BAKER: On page 293 of the program estimates I note a reference to continuing to monitor the bail assessment program and the impact on the use of bail by courts. What were the results of the bail assessment program for 1989-90?

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

Mr S.J. BAKER: How many prisoners were remanded in custody during 1988-89?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will obtain that information and give it to the honourable member.

Mr S.J. BAKER: On 31 December 1988 and 30 June 1989, how many persons were on remand in each of the institutions, and on what charges?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The raw numbers are certainly available. It would be about 200. I cannot promise that we will have the resources to go through all the charges, etc., for those 200 or more persons on those dates. However, the raw figures are readily available for any date at any institution. Bearing in mind that in our institutions collectively we have around 900 prisoners, to list the charges against all of them, would be a big exercise.

Mr S.J. BAKER: Just the main charge in each case.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Even so, that is hundreds of charges that we have to identify. We will try to do that, but I am not giving a guarantee that I will be able to do that prior to 6 October.

Mr S.J. BAKER: Considerable concern has been expressed, ever since gaols were first used to incarcerate people, about the extent to which people are kept on remand within those institutions. Will the Minister provide either an average length of stay on remand, or will he indicate how long prisoners were on remand at 30 June 1989 without having their trials heard?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My understanding from memory—and I will get a more precise figure—is that the average time a remandee stays in a remand centre, for example, is 13 days. However, I will obtain a more accurate figure for the honourable member.

Mr S.J. BAKER: On page 239 the Program Estimates refers to the capital cost of holding a workshop at Holden Hill. What will be the cost of this workshop? What does the workshop actually try to achieve? Is it a permanent type of workshop, or is it run in course segments? If it is a permanent type workshop, how many persons are employed there and what sort of jobs do those involved do?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That cost can easily be obtained. It is one of the places from which our community service order scheme operates. I believe a certain amount of training of community service order officers occurs there. Also when the weather is too wet to work outside, we have some community service order offenders working there. It will be purchased late in the financial year. I do not have the figures with me, but they are readily available and will be supplied to the member for Mitcham.

Mr OSWALD: Is it correct that the Occupational Health and Safety Committee has not met at the Port Augusta Gaol for nine months? Can the Minister say how often, under normal circumstances, it has met in the past?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not know when they last met. If they have not met for nine months, I do not think it reflects too well on anyone, including the staff, there.

Mr OSWALD: I take it from that statement that the Minister is also concerned that they have not met and the implications of it. Quite clearly, having asked the question, we have been informed by a fairly reliable source that that is the situation up there. I guess it is fairly important that the department should examine it.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will certainly look at it. I am surprised that the staff occupational, health and safety representative has not done something about it.

Mr OSWALD: Is it true that on Saturday and Sunday evenings, from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. there are no attendants on duty in the women's section?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The women's section of Northfield prison is part of a complex. That complex is staffed 24 hours a day. Where precisely the staff are at any given

hour is something which I will ascertain for the honourable member.

Mr OSWALD: Is there a women's section at Port Augusta Gaol? My question related to the Port Augusta Gaol.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I really would not know. It depends whether there are any women there, I suppose.

Mr OSWALD: The assumption is that there are, of course.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: You are making the assumption that there are, but quite often there are not.

Mr OSWALD: I would ask the question if there were no women in the section. It has been put to the Opposition that on Saturdays and Sundays, from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m., there are no attendants in charge of the women's section of the Port Augusta Gaol.

An honourable member: There wouldn't be if there were no prisoners.

Mr S.J. BAKER: There is always someone there.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No, there isn't always some there at all.

Mr OSWALD: For the sake of the question, our information is that there are women in the section and that they are not being attended to. What is the Government's view?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have that question investigated, but I point out to the honourable member that the system at all our gaols is that prisoners are able to push a button and have someone attend to their every need.

Mr OSWALD: Is it correct that at night in the gaol two officers are on duty and that there are no patrols?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: If it is correct that two officers are on duty it is actually a 100 per cent increase from the time I took over this portfolio. There actually used to be only one officer on duty. I will have the question examined for the honourable member.

Mr OSWALD: So that means in the whole gaol at night there are only two officers on duty.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is probably correct. As I pointed out, when I took over this portfolio there was only one.

Mr OSWALD: Is that sufficient for the security of the gaol and any contingency, and the fact that that does not allow for any patrolling or other security activities to take place?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is quite sufficient. We do not have any security problems once the prisoners are locked up in their cells. It is very secure.

Mr OSWALD: When an escort is required, is it correct that the garden and workshops at Port Augusta Gaol are closed and prisoners are returned to their cells?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have the question examined for the honourable member.

Mr OSWALD: Is it correct that there is no drug surveillance in the Port Augusta Gaol?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That certainly is not correct.

Mr OSWALD: If that is the case, how often has it happened in the past 12 months?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I said that it is not the case. Every part of a prison officer's working day is involved in drug surveillance. That is what they do.

Mr OSWALD: All these questions are being asked as a result of information that has been given to us. It would indicate that you could have staffing problems at the Port Augusta Gaol. I would like to ask the Minister or his Director to comment on that, because it is of some concern that, if informed sources within the gaol are making these statements to the Opposition, there is some concern among the personnel in the gaol. Is that concern reflected among the senior executive officers of the department or by you as Minister?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It certainly is not; I have no concerns about staffing levels at Port Augusta Gaol. If they have concerns about staffing levels, or anything else, prison officers do not hesitate to contact the Minister, just as they contact the Opposition. To my knowledge, and to the best of my recollection, I have never had any queries from the Port Augusta Gaol about staffing levels. However, the staff of every gaol in South Australia is the same as the staff at every hospital, school and probably even Parliament House—they would, from time to time, complain about staffing levels and would, if possible, choose to have more staff. Over the past six years, this Government has increased, by at least 100 per cent, the number of custodial staff in our institutions for exactly the same number of prisoners. The number of prisoners has remained the same as it was when we came into office and the number of prison officers has doubled.

Mr OSWALD: What was the average number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal prisoners in the gaol between 1988 and 1989?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have that question examined and see whether that information is readily available.

Mr OSWALD: What special arrangements are made to care for Aboriginal prisoners?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a very broad question, which would take at least an hour to answer. However, I will very happily obtain an extended response for the Committee.

Mr OSWALD: 'Issues/Trends' on page 294 of the Program Estimates states:

Implementation of privacy principles and the release of information.

What privacy principles are being implemented and at what cost? When will this be done and what will it achieve? What information is proposed to be released, and to whom?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would appreciate it if the member for Morphett would elaborate on that question.

Mr OSWALD: The issue of the implementation of the privacy principles and the release of information has been raised with me. What privacy principles are being implemented? This is a straight-forward question seeking information. The Government talks about the implementation of privacy principles. What are they? What is the Government trying to implement, and at what cost? The Opposition needs some explanation as to what the Government means by these privacy principles.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Any information that we have in the Department of Correctional Services is available to people who have a right to that information, with some exceptions relating to security. The Government has provided two full-time equivalents to deal with the release of information that anyone with a legitimate interest can request.

Mr OSWALD: What type of information is the Minister talking about?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It depends on what information is requested. If someone wants to see their file going back 10 years, we will go through the files over the 10 years (if they are available) and provide information of a personal nature. That policy applies throughout the Government.

Mr OSWALD: Does the Government have any policy in relation to who can ask for that information?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Only the individual concerned can ask for information about themselves. We do not supply information on any person to anyone else. If someone wants their personal record going back many years—and many of them go back for a long time—it is Government policy,

throughout the public sector, to make available whatever information we have on that individual.

Mr OSWALD: Page 294 of the Program Estimates also refers to the new StateLink telephone system. Was that system implemented at any cost to the department, or was the cost picked up through State Services?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Department of Correctional Services just pays the normal telephone charges that any business, for example, pays.

Mr OSWALD: The Justice Information System has been introduced into all institutions and finalised for introduction into district offices. What cost was incurred by the department in 1988-89? Is it the same answer as before, that is, no cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think there was some cost on that, but I will get the detail.

Mr OSWALD: What is the expected cost of further implementation of the JIS and when will it occur?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will take that question on notice.

Mr OSWALD: I refer to 'Specific targets', on page 294 and to the trial of an electronic time recording system. What is the proposed application and its cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is for the use of staff. I do not have the cost, but I will provide that information later.

Mr OSWALD: This is for pay purposes?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

Mr OSWALD: A specific target for 1989-90 is:

Make appointments to vacant senior positions.

What senior positions are vacant, for how long have they been vacant, why are they vacant and when is it proposed to fill those vacancies?

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

Mr S.J. BAKER: What is the going payment rate for prisoners? How much per day are they currently paid? When I previously asked this question it was around \$2.25.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is not very much higher. All that detail is available. I thank the member for Mitcham for his question, which I refer to Mr Wright, the Senior Resource Officer from the Department of Correctional Services.

Mr Wright: The pay structure is based around a figure of \$2.20 per day for working prisoners. They receive a skill and performance allowance on top of that, depending on their abilities and the workshops in which they are involved. Unemployed prisoners still receive 10c a day. It is a sliding scale, increasing with the performance and skill used in the job.

Mr S.J. BAKER: Some time ago concern was expressed when two prisoners broke out of Yatala and received remissions for the month in which they broke out of gaol. We thought that that was quite anomalous. Considerable concern has been expressed about the remission system, and I know the Government gave an undertaking to review the system. Will the Minister inform the Committee how many people were placed on charges for prison offences during 1988-89? Will he also inform us whether, in the month those offences were committed, those prisoners received full remission?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Mitcham does not appear to be aware of the amending legislation that was passed a considerable time ago. There does not seem to be any point in canvassing the rationale as to why the legislation was introduced, because, it has been changed.

Mr S.J. BAKER: Just to clarify the second part of the question, how many charges were laid against prisoners for offences committed whilst they were in gaol and how many

of those persons who had those charges laid against them received full remission for the month in which that offence was committed?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It would be very hard to find that information. We would look for situations where charges were laid but the prisoner was subsequently found not guilty. If the prisoner is found guilty, then the penalty is up to the visiting justice or the manager, depending on the seriousness of the offence. Unfortunately, many prisoners in the system do not earn full remission. I think it would be an interesting exercise to establish, for example, how many days remission were lost by prisoners during the previous financial year at Yatala because they did not behave. Even the phrasing I have just given is incorrect. Prisoners cannot lose remission: all remissions in South Australia have to be awarded by the prison officers. Not a day's remission applies unless a prison officer says so. It is done in a very positive way rather than a negative way of losing remission. If a prisoner has not behaved during any given month, then the prison officers just do not award various days remission, as the manager of the institution or the visiting justice thinks appropriate.

The amount of remission that is not awarded is quite extraordinary. I have never quite understood why some individuals behave in gaol in the way they do: the prison officers always have the whip hand because they award or do not award the remission.

Mr OSWALD: As to page 292, and the electronics surveillance as part of the home detention program, what problems have been identified with the electronics surveillance system?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No problem has been identified with the electronics surveillance system as such. Most of our problems in correctional services are not technical problems; rather they relate to people. Some offenders on the electronics surveillance system have been returned to prison because they failed to comply with their contract with the Department of Correctional Services as a condition of their release on home detention. We found no flaws in the system itself but, rather, a lot of flaws were found in the people.

Mr OSWALD: How many people committed further offences while on electronics surveillance? How many offenders were included in the electronics surveillance system in 1988-89?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is very easy to find out and I will have that information researched. Approximately 30 offenders on any given day are on home detention. I think there are 33 this week, but I cannot name them all offhand.

Mr OSWALD: Without researching it, how many actually committed further offences whilst out on electronics surveillance?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have no information about criminal offences, but they would comprise a very small percentage.

Mr OSWALD: Could you obtain that information?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

Mr OSWALD: The same page of the Program Estimates, page 292, refer to 'purchase land and finalise plans for a new regional prisor. at Mount Gambier': what land has been purchased so far, where and at what cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The department has not purchased any land at Mount Gambier.

Mr OSWALD: Is there any further requirement to purchase land there in the future?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The department would like to purchase some land at Mount Gambier to build a new gaol in the South-East region around the Mount Gambier area.

The present Mount Gambier Gaol has just about outlived its usefulness.

Mr OSWALD: It is a terrible gaol.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not think it is a terrible gaol; it is quite popular, and it has a waiting list. It is an old building and not terribly secure or well located, because it is right in the centre of a residential part of the City of Mount Gambier, so the department would like to build a new facility there during the next five years or so. The department has identified about 15 sites that are worth future investigation, and has held extensive discussions with the city council and the district council to try to identify a site that will suit the department's and the community's requirements, but no particular site has been decided upon at the moment.

Mr OSWALD: You said that it will happen some time down the track. However, the Program Estimates state that it will happen this year and that the department will purchase land and finalise new plans for a regional prison in Mount Gambier.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, that is what it hopes to do.

Mr OSWALD: If the plans are so far advanced, surely the department has some sites under surveillance?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The department has 14 or 15 sites under surveillance at the moment, but it has not come to any agreement with the councils as to which site should be purchased.

Mr OSWALD: Surely the department's plans are far enough advanced for the Minister to be able to tell the Committee what sized gaol is envisaged.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, it will be a 75-bed institution.

Mr OSWALD: What about the security ratings? I seek information about what the department proposes to build there.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It will be medium security.

Mr OSWALD: The department has no idea what the potential cost will be?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is very hard to say.

Mr OSWALD: It should not be. If the department is so far advanced as to know that it will build a 75-bed medium security prison, it should be able to provide an estimate of the cost.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The gaol will not be built for several years. It is low on the Government's list of priorities. The highest priority at the moment is Port Augusta Gaol, and Cadell requires considerable upgrading. There are only 23 beds in the Mount Gambier Gaol. Whilst it is useful for the people of Mount Gambier as a regional prison, it is not terribly significant in the management of 900 prisoners. A 75-bed regional prison at Mount Gambier will be a great asset to the community. The department does not have a site but it is looking at 14 or 15 sites. Much more consultation will be undertaken with the city council and the district council at Mount Gambier, but the Government is in no hurry.

Mr OSWALD: The Committee could be excused for thinking that the Government has given this matter low priority, because the Program Estimates mention that plans have been finalised to purchase land for a prison this year.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government would love to do that.

Mr OSWALD: On the basis that it is stated in the Program Estimates, this is a legitimate question.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I agree, the question is very legitimate.

Mr OSWALD: Will the department do something this year, or will it be some time down the track?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be delighted if this matter were finalised this year, but I will not be concerned if we do not.

Mr OSWALD: The next paragraph states:

Proceed with the implementation of strategies to give effect to recommendations made in the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths—

What recommendations have been so far implemented, and at what cost?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will have the question examined. The reply would be extensive and I am sure that the Committee would appreciate the information being incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr OSWALD: These further questions can all be taken on notice. What other recommendations are still to be implemented, at what cost and in what institutions? What is the timetable for implementation? The next line states:

Develop a pricing/costing system within prison industries.

To what does this refer? I seek an explanation of this objective.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Executive Director will provide that information.

Mr Dawes: That objective refers to making improvements on the way in which we cost items for sale manufactured in the prison, to make the costs more realistic while still properly competing but we hope obtaining a better return on the Government moneys expended within the prisons industry system.

Mr OSWALD: Is there any costing to Treasury in setting this up? Are computers required, or is it small internal bookkeeping involving a staff member?

Mr Dawes: Essentially it is an internal exercise to provide costing of what we sell, taking into account more of the overheads in the prison system, particularly the cost of salaries of the industry officers who supervise prisoners at work. They would be more realistic costings having regard to raw materials used.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: We are too cheap.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, I declare the examination completed. I thank members of the Committee, officers and the Minister for their attendance.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9.38 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Wednesday 20 September at 11 a.m.