

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

Thursday 27 June 1996

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****Chairman:**

Mr H. Becker

**Members:**

Mr M.J. Atkinson

Mr R.P. Bass

Mr M.R. De Laine

Mr S.R. Leggett

Mr I.P. Lewis

Mr J.A. Quirke

*The Committee met at 11 a.m.*


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 Correctional Services, \$79 507 000
**Witness:**

The Hon. W.A. Matthew, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Correctional Services and Minister for State Services.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Ms S. Vardon, Chief Executive Officer, Department for Correctional Services.

Mr T. Kelly, Director, Offender Services.

Mr R. Bos, Manager, Physical and Financial Resources.

Mr S. Briggs, Director, Justice Information Systems.

Mr G. Vinall, Director, Offender Services, Country Region.

Mr M. Boswell, General Manager, Business Services.

Ms J. Treadwell, Director, Strategic Services.

Mr R. Wright, General Manager, Prime SA.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The procedure for the Committee is relatively informal. The Committee will determine an approximate time for consideration of proposed payments to facilitate the changeover of departmental advisers. I understand that there is formal agreement to a program schedule. Changes to the composition of the Committee will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure that they have provided the Chair with a completed request to be discharged form. 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 submitted no later than Friday 12 July to the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

I propose to allow the Minister and the lead speaker for the Opposition to make opening statements, if desired, of about 10 minutes, but no longer than 15 minutes. A flexible approach is given to the call for asking questions based on about three questions per member, alternating sides. Members may also be allowed to ask a brief supplementary question to conclude a line of questioning, but any supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule. Subject to the convenience of the Committee a member who is outside the Committee and who desires 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 to the Chair in advance from the member outside the Committee wishing to ask a question is necessary.

Questions must be based on the lines of expenditure as revealed in the Estimates of Receipts and Payments, Printed Paper No. 2. Reference may be made to other documents, including Program Estimates and Information. Members must identify a page number or the program in the relevant financial papers from which their question is derived. Questions not asked at the end of the day may be placed on the next sitting day's House of Assembly Notice Paper. I now invite the Minister to make a brief opening statement if he wishes.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** In view of the fact that I am a Minister responsible for six agencies, I seek the indulgence of the Committee to refer in my opening statement to other agencies before the budget lines are opened for those agencies. With respect to the Department for Correctional Services, last year I detailed to this Committee a significant number of achievements within the Department for Correctional Services. These achievements reflected a dedicated, positive approach by the department's management and staff to implementing Government policies. This year has been no exception, with most prisons and community corrections centres implementing changes and meeting their budget targets. Only two institutions, Yatala and the Adelaide Remand Centre, have not met their budget targets for this financial year. Despite this fact, the South Australian cost per prisoner now compares favourably to that in other States. In the last financial year the cost of keeping an offender in gaol across the system reduced to \$36 000 from the \$54 000 per prisoner cost that existed at the end of the 1992-93 financial year. Our target for the coming financial year is to reduce that cost to \$33 000, and this indeed will be a major achievement.

Changes implemented to the South Australian prison system during the year have resulted, in the main, in a more streamlined and effective operation. We closed the Fine Default Centre. The perimeter fence of the Northfield Women's Prison was extended around the former Fine Default Centre, and the expanded facility was reopened as the Adelaide Women's Prison. The former Fine Default Centre has now been established as a Living Skills Unit within the new Adelaide Women's Prison. This unit is dedicated to providing skills for female prisoners to help them better cope in the community on their release without resorting to crime. Part of this facility is dedicated to nursing mothers who were not properly catered for under the previous regime.

As part of the changes at the Adelaide Women's Prison, the Government is establishing for the first time an industry section at the prison which will be designed specifically to have female prisoners involved in manufacturing production. A private sector partnership for this work is being finalised at this time. An industrial facility will be built at an estimated cost of \$95 000 within the Adelaide Women's Prison perimeter on vacant land that previously separated Northfield Women's Prison and the closed Fine Default Centre. It is intended that this industrial facility will operate by August this year. At the same time the Living Skills Unit opened the department was able to expand the men's pre-release cottages at Northfield to include those cottages that were formally occupied by female prisoners. The centre, now known as the Adelaide Pre-release Centre, accommodates prisoners who are approaching the end of their sentence and helps them to assimilate back into the community through work and

education programs and courses to deal with their offending behaviour.

A fence will be erected around the Cadell Training Centre during this calendar year. The high number of escapes from Cadell over a long period of time has necessitated the enclosure of the accommodation units at Cadell by a security fence. Low security inmates will still be able to work during the daytime outside of that fence as part of the prison's primary production activities. Cadell will soon be implementing an innovative rehabilitation program, named 'Operation Challenge', which will target young male offenders probably for the first time in this prison system. I hope to announce full details of this program a little later this year.

The introduction of mobile Outback work camps (MOWCamps) to the Port Augusta prison has been an outstanding success. MowCamps utilise low security prisoners in isolated Outback areas where work is needed to improve the environment and facilities of those regions. This work would not normally be undertaken because of the cost of employing people to undertake work in such remote locations for extended periods of time.

This Government introduced South Australia's first privately managed prison. The Mount Gambier Prison opened one year ago today and, after its first year of operation by a private sector contractor, Group 4 Corrections Services, it has proven to be a very successful operation indeed. This company recently won a contract to design, build and manage a 600 bed high and medium security prison in Victoria, which will be that State's largest and which will accommodate prisoners who are presently accommodated in Pentridge Prison in Victoria.

Port Lincoln Prison's farming operation is now running at a far more cost-effective level. The prison is undertaking hydroponic production of vegetables which will enable it to supply local markets and other prisons within the system with out-of-season produce. For the first time, rehabilitation and resocialisation programs in prisons will not stop when offenders leave gaol. The department has embraced case management for each prisoner and throughcare programs have now commenced in two community corrections centres as follow-ups to programs for prisoners upon their release. This involves work, education and rehabilitation programs for prisoners continuing through the corrections centre, and with further implementation these changes should positively affect the return to prison rate in future years.

Staff have also enthusiastically embraced another initiative, the Diploma in Correctional Administration, which for the first time in this State brings custodial officers under a professional umbrella. The diploma course is run in conjunction with the University of South Australia. From now on, all custodial officers recruited will need to complete part of the diploma before they can graduate as a custodial officer. The department's community service scheme continues to return a significant benefit to the South Australian community. The projects that have been undertaken through this program by community service and fine option offenders are far too numerous and wide-ranging for me to detail in my opening address, but I would be pleased to accept questions on the success of this program during the course of questioning today. The entire department can also be proud of the fact that during the year it became the first South Australian Government department to win an award for workplace health and safety run by WorkCover. The department won a most improved award.

As we move towards 1996-97, some future plans are worth mentioning. Work has almost been completed on options for a new prison in South Australia. Once the costings have been finalised, those options will be placed before Cabinet, and later in the year an announcement will be made. In the interim, I expect the expansion of Mobilong by 32 beds to be undertaken later this year. Work to facilitate further outsourcing of work from Correctional Services is well progressed. Tenders are currently being evaluated for the contracting out of prisoner transport and in-court management of prisoners. This work is presently undertaken by the Department for Correctional Services, police, Family and Community Services, and the Courts Administration Authority. A preferred tenderer will be selected and invited to contract for the job. I hope to announce the successful bidder by September this year. The department is also preparing tender information for the calling of tenders for the operation of the Prison Medical Service. The current system relies on several Government agencies to administer drug and alcohol programs as well as dental, physical and mental health treatment.

This brief overview of the department highlights the extent of work undertaken over the past 12 months or so and the extensive work that has occurred to identify the road ahead and projects that need to be undertaken to ensure that the prison system and its community corrections support agency is well-positioned as it moves into the next century. The department is much different from that which existed three years ago, an achievement of which all management and most staff are justifiably proud. I take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation and that of the Government for their efforts, and I commend them.

**Mr QUIRKE:** The issue of the four day remission for every day that the current dispute continues has been raised as an issue over the past couple of days. I understand that this is a long-standing tradition that started some 20 or so years ago. My understanding is that the truth in sentencing legislation finished all these sort of discretions some two years ago. Will the Minister comment on that?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The honourable member's understanding is not correct. The truth in sentencing legislative changes meant that, if such a remission procedure was ever to occur again, it would need the explicit approval of Cabinet. As a consequence, on 30 January 1995 Cabinet approved such a system. It is worth mentioning that that was over 1½ years ago. Yatala prison has been given every opportunity by this Government, the previous Government and Governments before it to make change. We had always anticipated that, if there were to be difficulties in the prison system, the Yatala Prison was likely to be such an area of difficulty. It is for that reason that significant effort was focused on Yatala during our first year in Government and, in fairness to staff there, considerable progress was made through part of the first year. Understandably, some of the staff felt somewhat concerned about some of the changes, but any change in any workplace environment is often fraught with concern for staff. This change was a little more public due to the intense interest by the media in what occurs in our prison system.

Toward the end of the first year there was a chance of a staff walk out, so for that reason I sought Cabinet authority to implement the procedure used by the previous Government, if necessary. The previous Government used the system of four day remission for one day more than 35 times. The member for Giles would tell the member for Playford, who

asked the question, that he used that system on a regular basis. I was always critical of the regularity with which that approach was used, and for very good reason. I find it repugnant to be in a position where I have had to use that system this week: I make no bones about that. I find it absolutely repugnant that we have a union that is inciting its staff to the extent that it has been necessary to take the action that has been taken this week to stand down staff who will not undertake the duties for which they are paid, who will not work to the directions of their management.

It does not matter what sort of workplace you are dealing with: if the staff will not undertake the duties for which they are paid, if they will not respond to directions of their management, the employer is left with little alternative. I support 100 per cent the efforts of my management and the actions they have taken this week. The staff at Yatala have been given more than a fair chance to behave and to run the system as they ought. I would hope that we can resolve the situation this week. If we cannot, the second phase will need to be implemented and it is a phase that I indicated a year and a half ago we would consider if necessary, namely, to privately manage Yatala Prison. The private sector has looked at it and the staff know that. We could take such a step if we needed to, but there are a significant number of good staff at Yatala who are waking up to the fact that they are not being given the full facts by their union and we are giving those staff every opportunity to respond.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I will explore a little further the change made in Cabinet in January 1995. First, it appears that truth in sentencing is not the whole truth or nothing but the truth, because that system was hardly in place for more than a few months before you sought to change it. You have just told us that the system was changed by Cabinet decision in January 1995, which would mean that the system was less than six months old before you changed it. Did you tell anyone, apart from Cabinet and your department, about this at the time? This is the first the public of South Australia has heard of it.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The honourable member needs to understand that, in order for remissions of four days to be given to a prisoner for every day the prisoner is locked in a cell and unable to come out for more than one or two hours a day, it still requires approval within Executive Council. The process that is required is that Executive Council receives a list of all prisoners, by name, for whom that remission is to be applied. I repeat: the previous Government used that system more than 35 times during its period in office. We have had that system there as a way of ensuring the quietness of the prison if it were needed. For 2½ years we have not needed it, but at a time when I have my prison management running a prison with a fewer staff than would otherwise be there, because they have been ramped up by an irresponsible union, absolutely, yes, in the interests of the safety of those staff and in the interests of the quietness of the prison, I have used that option. I repeat: I find it repugnant to reduce sentences by four days for every day in terms of those prison sentences.

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** It was there as an option if it was needed to be used. How often did the two Labor members who are here today and who were part of the previous Labor Government object when their Government used this practice on a regular—and not an exceptional—basis? It was a regular practice used more than 35 times during the period in office of the Labor Government. If those members are as annoyed as I am that we have had to invoke

this procedure, perhaps they would also exercise their friendship over their union mates to talk some sense into their union mates so that they will stop ramping up disputes in Yatala.

Yatala has always been used by the Public Service Association as its opportunity to have a brawl with Governments—Labor or Liberal. It happened under the Labor Government. It has tried under this Government, and the difference is that this Government has not given in on a daily basis, as did the previous Government. I have had the opportunity to use that facility over a long period. This week it has been used and, although I am not impressed that it had to be used, I support my management totally in doing that. People have been told about it now that it has happened and I have no difficulty with that.

*Members interjecting:*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! Let us get back to the budget.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I quote from the Minister's second reading contribution in the Statutes Amendment (Truth in Sentencing) Bill:

The Liberal Government believes that the sentence imposed by the courts should be the sentence the prisoner serves, that it should be clear to everyone—the judiciary, the prisoner and the public—exactly what sentence is being imposed by the court and what sentence will be served by the prisoner.

I come back to two important points. First, the ink was not even dry on the Bill when the Minister went to Cabinet to change back to the system that was used before. What happened this week is not something that you dreamed up last Monday in Cabinet; rather, it is a system that you put in place 18 months or so ago. Have you used this system before this week?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Absolutely not, and if the honourable member had listened, and listened carefully, he would have heard me say that this is the first occasion on which it has been necessary to invoke this power. It is totally mischievous, misleading and wrong to state in this Committee that we have reverted to the system of the previous Labor Government. Let us look at the system—

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Listen. Let us look at the system of the previous Labor Government. Under the previous Labor Government, on day one in prison a prisoner who had received a head sentence of five years for rape with a two year non-parole period was given a card that recorded his release date, and Labor's release date was not the two year non-parole period: it was a third off that for good behaviour in advance. The prisoner was given a card that stated, 'In 16 months you will get out,' but then it got better: then Labor introduced home detention.

One can go back to the words of Frank Blevins, the then Minister, in the House of Assembly and one will find that he claimed that this would be the system used for low security non-violent prisoners. That is how it was first introduced by Labor, but then it changed: the system was extended to murderers and rapists, so that a person sentenced to five years with a two year non-parole period was released on home detention after just eight months. That system has finished: it has ended. Under Liberal sentencing laws that person cannot be released until he has served that two year non-parole period. When he has served those two years, he then goes before the Parole Board and must convince the—

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Hang on, just listen—Parole Board that he has taken every step possible to rectify his

offending behaviour, to demonstrate remorse for his crime and to convince the Parole Board that he is a safer person to release back onto the streets. If that prisoner is unable to convince the Parole Board then that person stays in prison—and, yes, many prisoners have been staying in prison. And that is why today in the prison system we have more than 200 prisoners extra above those who were in prison on the day we came into office. The sentences are longer; the sentences are being made to fit the crime, and it is totally mischievous and wrong to try to indicate anything else. That was the system under Labor; we changed that dramatically and quite rightly.

With respect to remissions that have been used this week, they are used in express circumstances, such as when prison officers are stood down or, alternatively, when prison officers walk off the job. They are used only for the safety and security of the prison and also for my staff who manage it, and I do not walk away from that. I do not particularly enjoy having to reduce it in that way.

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** We do not have to use it in that way, but that is what has occurred.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Playford has a supplementary question.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Will the four-day remission come off the head sentence or the sentence that was handed down by the judge?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** It comes off the non-parole period.

**Mr QUIRKE:** So that prisoners will get the full value of the four days?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** That is correct.

**Mr QUIRKE:** How long has this system been in place? Has it been in place for three days this week, so that prisoners have two weeks off their sentence so far?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** No, they do not have up to two weeks off.

**Mr QUIRKE:** They have got 12 days; is that right?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** They have not got 12 days. They would have got three, so they have got nine—closer to a week.

*Mr Lewis interjecting:*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is the honourable member reflecting on me? Do not bother.

**Mr LEWIS:** I refer to Program Estimates and specifically to the performance indicators for the cost per prisoner. It is evident that there has been a substantial reduction in the cost per day of keeping each prisoner. Is that correct and, if it is so, how or by what processes adopted by the department have we achieved or produced this result?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As well as changing Labor's sentencing laws and ensuring that prisoners spend the time in prison, as expected by the public, we have also made considerable change in the cost of keeping someone in gaol. On the day this Government came to office, it cost \$54 000 to keep a person in gaol—that is excluding debt servicing. We reduced that cost by 33 per cent in real terms, and that is an achievement of which the department and I, and the Government as a whole, are particularly proud. It now ensures that our costs match those costs in other States. Our target for the end of the 1996-97 financial year will be to have the cost per prisoner reduced to \$33 000—a reduction of \$21 000 per prisoner—since our coming to Government.

Much of this improvement has occurred through major structural changes in the prisons, in community corrections and in head office functions, along with significant savings

that have been achieved in the area of workers compensation. Specific examples include: workers compensation savings, which have amounted to \$1.5 million; industry revenue targets have produced an extra \$1 million; a community service user pays target has made a \$500 000 saving; restructuring of central office has saved \$100 000; relocation of the Fine Default Centre into Yatala—the closure of Labor's embarrassing Stalag 13—has saved \$740 000; restructuring of prison operations has saved \$3.5 million; absorption of new prisoner costs—those extras—has saved \$830 000; and capital savings have amounted to \$300 000. In total, just over \$8.5 million has been saved from those examples alone. Most of the targets set have been fully achieved.

During our time in Government, there has been a reduction of some 120 positions in prison staffing. The outsourcing of the management of the Mount Gambier Prison has been a significant factor in being able to achieve these cost reductions. It acts as a benchmark for the rest of the prison system. It remains our most effective system in the State after just one year of operation. Indeed, if Yatala were operating at anywhere near the efficiency of Mount Gambier Prison, I would have much nicer things to say about it in this forum today. The department has obviously accommodated more prisoners in some areas through doubling up where appropriate, and a debate has occurred before about the doubling up processes that now occur in some parts of Yatala and also the Adelaide Remand Centre. There is also some multiple dormitory usage in Port Lincoln Prison.

Areas where savings are expected to be achieved to a further extent in 1996-97 include the private management of prisoner transport throughout the State, the outsourcing of prisoner medical services, the implementation of an internationally recognised program aimed at educating staff in ways in which they can assist prisoners to stop reoffending, and thereby, over time, reduce the recidivism rate, and increase work programs for prisoners. That is something that has received strong focus by this Government to expand the work opportunity for prisoners through private sector contracts. We have the continued expansion of community service work orders for offenders who have been ordered to undertake community service work by the court or for those who are paying off fines instead of being imprisoned. Community service work orders are being expanded through a significant number of private sector partnerships.

**Mr LEWIS:** I again refer to Program Estimates (page 358) under Support Services. What planning did the Minister discover was being undertaken by the previous Minister when he first assumed office? What is the Minister and the department doing in planning accommodation and other arrangements for the prisoner populations between now and 2010? In answering, can the Minister provide us with the current incarceration rate by security category per 100 000 of population, people who are in prison, and indicate whether there is any change in the direction of that rate between now and 2010?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Forward projections are obviously a difficult exercise and must naturally rely on a number of assumptions. In undertaking forward planning for the department, we have relied on assumptions that current trends will continue and we will obviously change that forward plan if any of the present indicators change in the future. The thing that staggered me most on becoming Minister—this was a problem not just for Correctional Services, but for most of my agencies—was the lack of

forward business planning. Departments were being run in a knee-jerk *ad hoc* fashion without critically analysing the resources needed, both capital and recurrent, without planning for the future.

One of my first tasks as Minister was to require that each of my agencies implement a forward plan. Correctional Services has put together some extremely good work in that area under the direction of the CEO, Sue Vardon, to ensure that the department has a forward strategic vision and plan for its needs for the future. In undertaking that work, it was necessary to project the forward numbers for the prison system based on known elements, with the opportunity to change them as and if they changed in future.

The previous Government spent \$180 million on prison buildings in 10 years. Most of that \$180 million was poorly targeted. We estimate that at least \$60 million of that amount was wasted through excessive or inappropriate capital works projects. If I had that \$180 million today—just that amount, not in 1995-96 or 1996-97 dollars—this Government would be able to totally rebuild the prison system to operate in a far more cost-effective manner, have a more appropriate prison system and ensure that its needs took it well into the next century. That money has been spent and has been wasted. To an extent a lot of our planning has been hampered by the fact that a considerable amount of money has already been spent on the system.

Projections for prison population growth to the year 2000 have been estimated at an extra 521 prisoners compared with those for 1994-95. That figure increases as we go to the year 2010 with an extra 1 486 prisoners. We anticipate that by the year 2010, because of truth in sentencing and the prison incarceration rate, the prison system will have about 2 850 prisoners. Today it has about 1 440. That is a significant increase in the size of the prison system. Those increases are comparable with increases in other jurisdictions in Australia and around the world. Obviously, predictions of that nature have to be taken into account in our forward planning now.

The department has prepared an options paper describing a number of ways in which the growing numbers can be addressed. The options paper is being assessed by me and it will go to Cabinet in the near future for approval of one of the options to take the prison system forward initially to the year 2000 and ultimately to the year 2010. Because of accommodation difficulties, the first phase will be the addition of 32 beds to Mobilong Prison. Budget papers indicate that the finances are available for that institution to have a greater number of beds—I know that the member for Ridley is particularly interested in this—and it is highly likely that there will be more than that, but at this time there will be 32 beds in the first phase. The second stage will possibly be the modification of some existing prisons, and the third stage will be the building of one new prison.

In Victoria three new prisons are in various stages of construction. The new women's facility is almost completed and will be occupied in about five weeks. A new male facility is under construction for occupancy later this year. In about two weeks work will start through Group 4 on its new facility about 20 kilometres outside Melbourne. That State has recognised its incarceration needs with significant capital works. It will cost South Australia money. Had we the money that has gone, it would not have cost the State any more, but unfortunately we cannot turn back the clock. I do not believe I have information on security classifications, but I am happy to take that part of the question on notice and provide a considered response.

**Mr LEWIS:** I find that background information fascinating. I look forward to getting that information and the assumptions underlying the calculations about numbers of days of incarceration per year per 100 000 population. It seems as though we are grappling with the problem in a constructive forward-looking fashion. In his opening statement the Minister mentioned the outsourcing of services. By what criteria are the decisions made when selecting the successful tenderer for those services and will the Minister provide the Committee with any other information about the program involving the outsourcing of prisoner movement and in-court management?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The call for tenders has recently closed for this contract. It is fairly significant, not only because it is a further outsourcing but because it involves four agencies: the Department for Correctional Services, the Courts Administration Authority, the Police Department and the Department for Family and Community Services. It is not always an easy task to get agreement amongst four such diverse agencies for a single outsourcing. However, that has been achieved, largely through the dedication of Correctional Services management and under the guidance of Michael Boswell, who has been responsible for the outsourcing of the Mount Gambier Prison contract. I am very proud of the way in which this unit has undertaken its outsourcing work and the level of detail that it has ensured is in contracts. This outsourcing has survived the scrutiny of the Auditor-General for the Mount Gambier Prison, with three pages of commentary in his last audit report, and of a parliamentary select committee, which, for some reason, is still ongoing. The team continues with further outsourcing.

With respect to in-court management, we have a dedicated project team. Whilst it is led by Correctional Services, understandably it must involve the other three agencies to ensure that all aspects of the outsourcing are taken into consideration. A task force was established to ensure that initially the registration of interest and, later, the request for tender process were impartial, fair and thorough. The representatives on that task force were from the Office of the Premier and Cabinet, the Office of Public Sector Management, Treasury and Finance, the Attorney-General's Department, the Economic Development Authority, the Auditor-General's Department and Industrial Affairs. All members of that task force signed confidentiality agreements, except the Attorney-General's representatives who are already bound by a professional code of ethics.

In order to maintain impartiality and to participate in the negotiations, we also appointed probity auditors from Coopers & Lybrand. The company was chosen from four organisations which responded to a brief for consultancy services. Advertisements for the registration of interest were placed in the local and national press in mid-October 1995. On 13 May 1996 Cabinet directed that a request for tender be provided to four approved short-listed tenderers. Those tender documents have now been lodged. In fact, tenders closed on 17 June.

The evaluation team has established strict criteria for assessing the tenders and protocol for ranking and scoring, and it will complete its evaluation by mid-July 1996. The evaluation team will provide final briefings regarding recommendations to the Ministers involved and the Chief Justice, and then they will be ready for Cabinet consideration. I do not know the identities of the companies which have tendered. The briefing that I have had since the tenders have been lodged was along the lines of companies A, B and C.

Representatives from each agency, under the guidance of the Crown Solicitor and the Probity Auditor, are negotiating with the preferred tenderer to ensure the best result for South Australia. A transition plan will be formulated for the existing staff at the 70 or so service sites to ensure that the transition is smooth. We expect services by the contractor to commence by the end of September 1996. Obviously, it has been necessary for us to consult closely with the unions involved. The member for Playford would be well aware that the Police Association is very keen to see this outsourcing progressed and that it most anxiously awaits the result.

**Mr LEWIS:** I had hoped that the Minister might refer to the level of security and confidence which we in this Committee and the wider public could have in this process. Will the Minister say whether he expects the level of confidence and security to be as good as, marginally poorer than or better than what we have been accustomed to, given that there have been some escapes in my time in this place, and your time, too, Mr Chairman.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I would definitely expect the level of security to be as good as that which is presently provided. We will set benchmarks that expect a level of service better than presently provided. Indeed, the Mount Gambier contract is of relevance. The honourable member may recall that, when I announced that outsourcing to the Parliament, I indicated there was a clause of the contract which specifically referred to escapes, whereby after the first two escapes from that institution the company would have to pay the Government for the cost of recapturing those offenders. Indeed, the contract is jeopardised at a level of five escapes. If that same situation applied to Government prisons—and perhaps it should—we would have to consider whether a number of them should continue operating.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Before I call on the member for Playford, I remind members that questions must be based on lines of expenditures as revealed in the Estimates of Receipt and Payments. Reference may be made to other documents, including the Program Estimates. Members must identify a page number or the program of the relevant financial papers from which their question is derived.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I refer to the Minister's second reading explanation (*Hansard*, page 922) with respect to the truth in sentencing legislation where the Minister said:

It will be noted that the amendments—

the amendments the Minister introduced before the House on that day—

abolish remissions as from the day the amendments come into operation.

Under what section of the Act did the Minister and Cabinet change that provision in January 1995?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The honourable member is taking that quote out of context, and I am sure he is well aware of it. I refer to the example of the rapist who was sentenced when Labor was in Government. He received a five year head sentence from the court with a two year non-parole period. On day 1 in Yatala after the sentence was handed down by the judge he was given a card. The card said, 'This is your release date 16 months hence.' But, of course, he got home detention and was out after eight months. I was able to end home detention administratively. I did not have to go to the Parliament for that: I just did not give those people home detention. People such as rapists, murderers and armed robbers do not get home detention under this Government.

They got home detention under Labor: they do not get it under this Government.

In so far as the remission was concerned, the card where a third off the day applies has been dispensed with. Insofar as the Cabinet decision is concerned with the four days for one, the Act is absolutely silent on the existence or otherwise of this. This allowed us to make an executive decision through Executive Council to provide a situation where we could offer four days for one in the event of industrial action based on a Cabinet decision. The Act neither precludes nor specifically provides for it. Indeed, the previous Government used exactly the same system. The previous Act neither provided for it or specifically excluded it. It is exactly the same system as used by the Labor Government on more than 35 occasions. What has been ended is the automatic one-third off.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I am grateful to the Minister and to his monkey on the other side for giving me advice on what has happened in previous years. Previous Ministers did not parade before the media saying that they would end all remissions. Suddenly, 18 months after this decision was made, we finally discover—like pulling teeth in the dentist's chair—that the Minister has changed the policy in the dead of night under subterfuge with no public statements being made whatsoever. The Minister has been caught out. Did the Minister make the decision or did the department make the decision to use the remissions clause which was secretly inserted 18 months ago?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** We certainly are getting dramatic. First, for the information of the honourable member, Executive Council usually meets at 10 a.m. Cabinet usually commences its meetings at 2 p.m. While it is true that sometimes Cabinet may meet into the dusk, certainly this meeting did not continue past dinner.

*Mr Quirke interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Absolutely wrong. That Cabinet submission was well known right throughout the Department of Correctional Services, because it was put through as a tool should we need it.

*Mr Quirke interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I know the honourable member has not sat around the Cabinet table before, but he might be interested to know that not absolutely every decision of Cabinet is announced the day following. There has been absolutely no attempt to hide this.

**Mr QUIRKE:** There has been no attempt to publicise it, either.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The honourable member might be interested to know that Ministers do not publicise everything they do every minute of the day.

*Mr Quirke interjecting:*

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The honourable member knows that I am very easy to contact, because he takes that opportunity many times himself. The situation as it stands is that a Cabinet submission gave us the power 18 months ago. If we needed to use it 18 months ago it would have been announced that we were using that power. As it stands, we have not had to use it for 18 months: we have had to use it now. I repeat: the Labor Government used this technique more than 35 times. If the honourable member thinks it is so objectionable, how many times did he object to its being used when he was in Government and when his Minister used that power. Did the honourable member bang his fist on the caucus table and say, 'This is objectionable.'

**Mr QUIRKE:** Now I find I was lied to.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** That is absolute rubbish, and the honourable member knows it. The fact is that early release for prisoners is finished. Labor's early release program is gone. On the day they enter prison they no longer get Labor's early release card which says, 'Guess what? We know what the judge said, but you are actually getting out in one-third of the time.' That is what Labor did. It does not happen. This is only a provision in the event of industrial action in the interests of public safety and in the interests of the safety of my staff. I put the safety of my staff first every time. I make no apology for that.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I refer to 'Future Trends' at page 355 of the Program Estimates.

*Mr Lewis interjecting:*

**Mr QUIRKE:** I suggest that the member for Ridley, as objectionable as he usually is, is preventing this Committee from a proper examination of the Minister with his constant interjections. I do not think the Minister needs his protection.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I appeal to all members. This is the budget estimates. Members are here to obtain as much information as they can from the Minister and his staff concerning the operations of the department. I ask that we stick strictly to the subject and that there be no personal abuse across the Chamber.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I have in my possession a letter, which was sent to the Opposition and which informs me that some prisoners in Yatala today are on a hunger strike. Can the Minister confirm this or tell us exactly what is going on in the prison, or because of a lack of staff does he not have that information?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I have no idea on a daily basis whether each of our 1 440 prisoners have accepted their breakfast. I dare say that on any one day there may be the occasional prisoner who throws a tantrum and refuses to consume their breakfast, or the occasional prisoner may join with others and decide that they will not eat for that day. However, I will have the honourable member's allegations checked. My management staff who are with me at this time are not aware of any reports of a hunger strike.

It also needs to be said that, regardless of what this follow-up brings back to this Committee later today, many rumours circulate amongst prisoners. On page 3 of the *Advertiser* today is one of the best headlines that I have seen for a long time since coming into politics. It claims that prison chaplains are guarding prisoners. The journalist, Michael Foster, was told yesterday when he contacted my office that that was absolute rubbish, but the *Advertiser* ran the article anyway. These things have a habit of circulating and, unfortunately, as long as people in the media keep printing rubbish, stories will keep being promulgated by prisoners because they think they will get an airing.

**Mr BASS:** Will the Minister provide the Committee with details of the department's workers' compensation experience in 1995-96, including a comparison with the previous year, and will he provide details of any actions or programs undertaken or planned by the department to manage occupational health, safety and welfare?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Much has been made of workers' compensation claims in Correctional Services by the media and others for many years. Because it is a particular dangerous industry, there is obviously a high potential for WorkCover claims because there is a high potential for injury. I advised the Committee earlier that the department has set a target of a \$1.5 million saving through reduction in WorkCover claims. There has been a significant reduction in

WorkCover claims through significant inroads being made into improving workplace safety. It staggered me that the previous Labor Government as a self-acclaimed champion of all workers paid such scant attention to workplace safety in Correctional Services.

Effectively, a number of initiatives have been put into place. The staff counsellor has continued to provide individual counselling to many staff and their families who, under the previous regime, were often left to fend for themselves and call their own doctor, with the possible outcome being a stress claim. Early intervention and attention to issues has reduced the potential for claims and prevented many from being lodged as a consequence, because those officers have received the support they quite rightly deserve. Accident/incident report forms have been distributed to each work site, and the department has undertaken an analysis of all accident causation, particularly through local workplace occupational health and safety committees, and this has enhanced prevention initiatives at each work site.

The departmental rehabilitation policy sets out the roles of managers and supervisors and clearly emphasises their requirement to be involved in early intervention. Workers' compensation budgets are now being devolved to individual locations for management. They have been provided with the incentive to utilise any savings from their budget to implement health, safety and welfare issues and enhance their working environment. Central office staff, involving claims administration, rehabilitation and safety consultants, liaise closely with local health and safety committees and management to assist them in understanding the implementation of health and safety initiatives. Training has been given to all managers and supervisors on health and safety responsibilities, safety awareness and hazard management. Training has also been provided for staff in pre- and post-incident skills and counselling.

The department has been audited by WorkCover for compliance with prevention performance standards. It achieved a level 1 rating in that WorkCover prevention audit, and it has also achieved level 3 for claims and rehabilitation audits. The audit process has provided the department with a catalyst to identify local safety problems, and given it an opportunity to further improve the workplace. The number of claims registered in 1994-95 was 258; in 1995-96, it was 227: a reduction of approximately 13 per cent. The average cost of new claims in 1994-95 was \$2 205, and for 1995-96, it was \$2 617: an increase of \$412 or 18 per cent. Obviously that is a matter that we are monitoring. In 1994-95, there were 37 stress claims, which equated to about 30 per cent of the WorkCover cost. In 1995-96, there have been 46 stress claims. Obviously, much has been made in the media of that increase from 37 to 46. For that reason, I refer to previous financial years. In 1990-91, there were 74 stress claims in Correctional Services; in 1991-92, there were 70; in 1992-93 81; in 1993-94, half the financial year of course being the first Liberal Government period, the figure reduced from 81 to 53; there has been a further drop to 37 and it has now increased to 46, and obviously the recent incident at Yatala contributed to that.

The other significant industry is sprains and strains within the prison system. In 1994-95, there were 101 such claims, and in 1995-96, there were 98, and we are continuing to monitor that matter. Overall, the hostage situation at Yatala was responsible for 24 WorkCover claims across all categories. Regrettably, that damaged the downward trend in some areas, but it is still considerably lower than under the previous

Government and acts as a constant reminder to the department of the ongoing need to focus on its WorkCover claims. Inevitably, Correctional Services will always be an area where there is the potential for claims. It is up to management to do its level best to keep the cost of those claims to a minimum but, more importantly, to ensure that procedures are in place so that the likelihood of such claims is reduced considerably.

**Mr BASS:** Will the Minister outline the improvements that have been made in the area of workers' compensation that have led to a reduction in claims?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The department gave the Treasury a commitment to achieve a reduction for 1995-96 of \$600 000 from the workers' compensation budget. This has essentially been achieved because of a range of occupational health, safety and welfare initiatives, which have been put in place to assist staff and management in their awareness of occupational health and safety requirements. Some of those I detailed in my previous answer. I am particularly pleased with the way in which local workplaces have become more diligent in their accident/incident reporting to the extent of focusing on accident causation. If we are going to reduce the number of these accidents in the work force on an ongoing basis, it is absolutely essential that the full cause is known and, upon being known, acted upon to reduce the likelihood of a repeat incident. The move to devolve workers' compensation budgets to local workplaces has assisted greatly by providing them with the incentive to use any savings they make for the betterment of their workplace environment. The department has essentially achieved a reduction over the past two years of 40 per cent in its workers' compensation claims and, while those claims are still higher than any of us would like, that 40 per cent reduction is a significant achievement.

**Mr BASS:** I refer to page 255, which states that the Fine Default Centre was relocated to Yatala and that the vacated facilities were reconfigured as a living skills unit within the women's prison. Will the Minister outline the benefits obtained through the relocation of the Fine Default Centre and the use of the facilities to accommodate female prisoners?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The Fine Default Centre was approved by the previous Government in 1992 and was one of these Cabinet decisions that the Labor Party members today probably wish had not been announced by their Minister at the time because in 1992 the Labor Cabinet approved some the expenditure of \$989 000 to construct what it called 'a 60-bed bunkhouse style' facility to accommodate male fine defaulters. Essentially they built a campus that comprised wooden buildings not dissimilar in exterior appearance to the wooden transportable classrooms in many of the State schools. The interior of those was a corridor except that, instead of classrooms running off the corridor, there were five bedrooms and a bathroom facility.

The perimeter of the facility had a 1.8 metre chain wire fence around it. Any tennis enthusiasts here would be well aware that that is a lot lower than a tennis fence. As a youngster I always found it very easy to climb over the tennis court fence to get a ball rather than go through the gate and run around. The prisoners found it easy to hop over, too, because they hopped over that fence regularly, as we know. It became not only a Statewide and national embarrassment but also an international embarrassment.

That Fine Default Centre has been closed. A much more appropriate fencing from Northfield Prison, complete with

standard prison razor wire, has been extended around the perimeter of those buildings and they have been converted internally. Some have been converted to include a kitchen in one of the bedroom areas so that they accommodate four female prisoners who are able to prepare their own meals. That is a particularly important process for them to keep up those daily life skills because the majority of female prisoners have children on the outside. If they are to be given a chance of assimilating back into the community and caring for their families, it is important that they maintain those daily life skills.

A couple of the bunkhouse units have been converted to two prisoner accommodation areas, plus allowing for two infants also in those facilities to enable nursing mothers who are incarcerated to have the opportunity to nurse their infants within the first year of that infant's life. That also was obviously assisted.

I was astounded by the weekly incident reports of the number of female prisoners who used to attempt suicide by slashing their wrists. It was a common problem among female prisoners. Those reports have now become a rarity rather than a regular weekly occurrence. It is a tribute to staff at the now Adelaide Women's Prison for the way in which they are better assisting those prisoners to adjust to their life inside the prison fence, to enable them to seek help and that that help is provided to reduce their desire to try to commit suicide.

That 60-bed Fine Default Centre now accommodates 28 female prisoners and has the opportunity to accommodate infants being nursed by their mothers and is being operated as a living skills unit with those ladies having the opportunity to maintain their life skills.

It is also worth knowing that, while Labor's intention was to accommodate 60 fine defaulters, presently we have just eight fine defaulters in the prison system. It would seem that they are not as keen to go behind the fence of Yatala as they were to go behind or jump over the fence of the Fine Default Centre.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I am pleased to know that the Minister has such a firm grip on Yatala because, if I heard him correctly before, he said that he has had so many problems at Yatala that he is considering the option of privatisation of the Yatala Labour Prison. Can he give more information as to how far this consideration has gone down stream?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** This is not something that has been announced before members of Parliament for the first time. If the honourable member cares to delve back into the records he will find that I have made this statement before. I also indicated in a similar fashion to the Public Service Association and its representatives at meetings in the past that, if the prison system advances in a way that this Government expects, if staff implement the reforms that this Government wishes to have in place, I would see no reason to outsource any Government prison as they presently stand, with the proviso that, if we were significantly to expand the existing facility, we might then consider private management.

By and large, most prisons within the system have done extremely well. I am pleased with the progress made by a number of institutions. Port Augusta was often a problem for the previous Government. Former Minister Frank Blevins regularly used his four days off for every day the prisoners were in their cells at Port Augusta. That prison has made considerable improvements over the past 12 to 18 months, and I am very satisfied with the direction in which that prison is going.



I have outlined a considerable improvement in what was Northfield and is now the Adelaide Women's Prison. Other institutions, likewise, have knuckled down well. At the end of the day, two prisons are not making their budget. Between them Yatala and the Adelaide Remand Centre have exceeded their budgets by almost \$1 million, which means that they are being carried by the rest of the system. So, the improvements that have been made in the rest of the system are carrying those two. That was a problem under the previous Labor Government and a problem under this one.

So, at this time I certainly would not rule out the private management of Yatala. It is also something that, as far as some other institutions were concerned, was not ruled out by the previous Government, either. I have often revealed to the House some of the things I have found in the past by taking a bit of a wander through the archives. The previous Government certainly was considering all manner of things, right down to the extent of preparing submissions ready for Cabinet to outsource various institutions. Indeed in 1991, former Minister Frank Blevins prepared a submission for his Cabinet of the day. He initialled it, ready to be lodged with Cabinet should he need it. It was entitled, 'Privatisation of Mobilong Prison and Port Augusta Gaol'. Former Corrections Minister Blevins put forward the proposal that expressions of interest be called for the private operation of Mobilong Prison and Port Augusta Gaol. The Minister, in putting forward his rationale, indicated that:

Privatisation appears to be the only strategy which may achieve substantial savings in the short or medium term. The Department of Correctional Services is required to make budgetary savings of \$3.15 million per annum within the next three years, and \$2 million of that is targeted through privatisation initiatives.

They are not my words but the words of former Labor Correctional Services Minister Frank Blevins. It continues:

Staff savings identified as part of award restructuring will be offset by associated costs. Immediate savings achieved in the GARG process—

members may remember that that was the Government Agency Review Group of the Blevins era—

will be outweighed by additional recruitment resources associated with Port Augusta Prison redevelopment.

Unlike the previous Government, we have not been coy about going forward with private management. Indeed, we successfully privately managed the Mount Gambier Prison. We have not yet found it necessary to pick up the previous Government's recommendation to Cabinet, namely:

It is recommended that the expressions of interest be invited from private sector agencies for the operation of Mobilong Prison and Port Augusta Gaol. (Sgd) Frank Blevins, M.P., Minister of Correctional Services.

That sort of thought process is nothing new. Yes, we will give consideration to the private management of Yatala in the future if the current situation continues. The previous Government was blackmailed and cajoled by industrial unrest in the prison system throughout its entire term. I freely admit that the previous Liberal Government likewise, just as Governments before them were; it is nothing new. The honourable member knows that this has been an ongoing problem for two decades plus. We do not rule out that possibility. Whilst at this stage we certainly do not have tender documents ready to float, work has been done and continues to be done on options, should we need to exercise them. I hope we do not need to go down that path. I have every confidence at this time that we have within the system staff who are prepared to receive the answers to their

questions from management and who want to get on with the job. There are a lot of good staff in Yatala and we need to give them the opportunity to get on with their work.

**Mr QUIRKE:** The Opposition has been made aware that some prisoners have obtained passports while in prison. Can the Minister provide information on this? What is his attitude to this practice?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I have absolutely no knowledge of anything like that occurring. We will take the question on notice and see whether there is any truth to the matter. The only instance where it may be necessary for a passport to be issued is if a prisoner is to be deported, but I do not profess to be an expert in the requirements of deportation. I will certainly follow that up. There are some prisoners in the system at this time who are likely to be deported. In fact, one will be deported at the end of the prisoner's sentence.

**Mr QUIRKE:** We will try to get further information for the Minister on the matter.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** That would be appreciated.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I refer to the impact of the recent hostage situation at Yatala. A prisoner with whom I am sure the Minister is familiar, James Lee Alexander, has apparently had a ban placed on him because he contacted the media during those recent events at Yatala. According to the information that Mr Alexander has communicated to us, the impact of the ban is that he must seek written permission from the Minister before he can contact the press or the media, and his punishment is that he cannot go to church anymore on Sunday, a punishment that I am sure the Minister would see as extreme.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Obviously, there are a number of aspects of the question that need to be responded to. As to church services, under this Government prison chaplains have been given every encouragement to provide ministry to prisoners, but not as the *Advertiser* would have us believe today in guarding the prisoners. I have encouraged that, and I have had the opportunity to meet with our dedicated group of prison chaplains on a number of occasions to receive first hand their views on the prison system and to answer their questions. Chaplains hold church services within institutions and prisoners have the opportunity to attend those church services.

With respect to media publicity, at my direction the Government has taken a very different approach to media access from that provided by the previous Government, and I do not step back from that approach. It is simply this: there will be no media interview of a prisoner without permission, in the interests of the victims of that offender. The member for Playford will appreciate that because, like me, he will have had coming to his office many constituents who are concerned about when an offender may be getting out of gaol and what they are doing while they are there. It is a traumatic experience for victims of a crime or their families to see a media broadcast involving that offender.

Indeed, we have also acted further to ensure that other processes are put in place on the release of offenders. Again, the release of more notorious offenders attracts considerable media publicity. Under the past regime victims were often totally unaware of the release of an offender until they saw details in the media. Now, through legislation that was recently put through Parliament—and I acknowledge the Labor Party's preparedness to support that aspect of the legislation—greater information can be given to victims so that they now know what movements are likely to occur for

the perpetrator of a crime against them or their immediate family. They are far better able to adjust themselves.

We involve Victims of Crime to a greater extent to assist them with counselling services. We are in the process of implementing wide-ranging mechanisms to liaise with victims through their nominated advocate. It may often be through Victims of Crime, which will pass on information in a very caring way to a victim, or they prefer to have that information put to them in a caring way by departmental staff.

So far as the prisoner is concerned, one area of the Government's policy that could be abused was that by day leave prisoners. Mr Alexander was a day leave prisoner and, as a prisoner on day leave, he abused that privilege and breached Government guidelines and policy by undertaking to do an interview with the media. I was not particularly impressed by that because the victims of his crimes were able to see him on television. That is something that we do not want to see occur. While, with the benefit of hindsight, the wording of the advice sent to the prisoner—I did not see it until after the event—might have been perhaps worded a little more tightly, the sentiment behind the direction is absolutely correct. If that prisoner wishes to talk to the media, he should approach his unit manager, who will then get approval or otherwise through my office. My office provides a central point and all the media knows that. If they wish to speak to a prisoner, they fill out a form and I will approve or not approve it. If there is any risk of exposing a victim in a traumatic fashion to the perpetrator of a crime, I will say 'No' every time to avoid that trauma for victims.

Mr Alexander has every opportunity to go to church services within the prison. As to whether he should be able to walk out of the prison and go to a church of his choosing on a Sunday is an entirely different matter and needs to be considered as part of his leave. Because he breached the guidelines of which he should have been aware, some of his leave privileges were removed for a period of time but, whether that is still in place, I am not sure.

**Mr LEGGETT:** I refer to page 356 of the Program Estimates, relating to Community Corrections. At what stage is the restructure of Community Corrections and can the Minister advise what impact this has had on service delivery?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The Community Corrections' arm of the department is probably its quiet achieving arm. In media terms it is the non-sexy area of Correctional Services: it does not have the barbed wire there or the prisoners incarcerated, but they are the people who deal with the offenders at the other end of the spectrum. They deal with the offenders when they are released on parole; they are the people who try to help offenders to stop reoffending; they are the people there on call if an offender feels he or she may commit a crime again if they are being influenced by previous associates; they are the people who supervise parole; and they are the people who supervise community service work handed down by the court by way of penalty or taken by way of fine option.

Community Corrections supervises some 7 500 offenders on community-based programs over a given period. The restructure of Community Corrections came into place from 1 July 1994. The aims were to redevelop a professional service for offenders when on probation and parole and a structure that encourages an excellence and gives staff responsibility for clients and for them to be responsive to client needs, as well as to create a professional career structure for operations and administrative staff that was not

in place in a satisfactory way until that time, and by enabling each Community Corrections office to have greater control over its human and financial resources within its region. In other words, this makes the managers absolutely responsible for their total areas.

Further, following a review of probation and parole, this involved facilitating the introduction of models that targeted service, throughcare, in-service provision and case management models to enable services to be provided in a more cost effective, cost efficient and customer focused basis.

During my opening remarks, I indicated that throughcare has been embraced by the majority of staff within the department as a way of focusing on individual offender needs to reduce the chances of a person reoffending. The reality is that all prisoners today will eventually have the opportunity to be released. I am sure that every member of this Committee would want the Government to do everything within its power, through the resources of its staffing, to deter these people going back into a life of crime. The reality is that many of them will, and the only way we will avoid a doubling in the size of the prison system is by being more successful in stopping people from reoffending and returning to prison.

The major benefits of the structure have resulted in a much more efficient allocation of resources across regions, with a reduction in the number but an upgrading of management positions and the development of policy and research programs on a regional basis. Each region, as members would appreciate, has some fairly diverse needs, and it is fair to say that programs run at Whyalla need to be greatly different from those run at Port Adelaide, Noarlunga, Murray Bridge, and so on. We have created senior community correctional supervisor positions at the OPS4 level to supervise community service orders and home detention programs, and a Manager, Resources, position at ASO3 level to provide each of the regions with resources to manage the administrative aspects and to support their financial and human resource programs.

It is essential that every person has a job and that they undertake their work in a professional manner. We have the ability now to monitor the success of some regions, which will result in the next phase—and that has been occurring only this week—and that is to make the community corrections area aware of how successful or otherwise it has been in meeting its goals, so that we can now address its particular needs as it addresses the needs of its particular clients.

**Mr LEGGETT:** I refer the Minister to page 358 of the Program Estimates under Issues and Trends, and specifically to the outsourcing of services. Will the Minister outline some of the benefits to the Government and community that have evolved from the outsourcing of the new Mount Gambier Prison?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The benefits have been numerous. It is significant that today is the first anniversary of the opening of the Mount Gambier Prison under the management of Group 4. I place on record my appreciation and that of the Government for the professional manner in which it has managed Mount Gambier Prison. Everyone would acknowledge that prison management is no easy task, and we do not try to pretend that there have not been the occasional difficulties at Mount Gambier, as there are in all prisons. However, we say up front that those difficulties have been far fewer, better contained, better reacted to and better managed, and that is significant.

I was impressed recently to receive an indication of the benefits of contracting out to Group 4, namely, its statements against performance criteria. Group 4 management must provide Government with reports against performance criteria. I was pleased to discover that Group 4's average sick leave figure has been three days per employee—by far the lowest in the prison system. Its presence has put in place an alternative supplier and has obviously brought benchmark competition to the rest of the prison system, in terms of cost. It has initiated a diversity in organisational culture and, in parliaments over the years, many Ministers and parliamentarians have talked about the cultural difficulties of prison officers.

Mount Gambier Prison has a different culture to the rest of the prison system, and that may be a reason why the sick leave rate is so low and the prison staff morale is so incredibly high. We have been able to specify the standards of service we expect of the company, both to us as the Government and their contractor and to the prisoners. Some people might find service to prisoners a rather strange notion, but it comes back to those rehabilitation programs, and we have an expectation that Group 4 will provide prisoners with rehabilitation programs and work and educational opportunities. Minimum standards have been set and, as part of its contract, it must provide psychological and social work counselling facilities.

Group 4's performance can be objectively evaluated and compared against the rest of the system. With this contract we have an opportunity for the first time to measure the potential for ongoing and improved service and value for money to Government and therefore the taxpayer. It is a fixed price contract with increases restricted to CPI and wage movements. We have an increased accountability of prison management in that we have a Correctional Services managerial monitor located at the prison to report to me on Group 4 activities. Penalty provisions are in place, as I mentioned during these proceedings, for any escape that occurs under the management of Group 4.

A comprehensive approval process is in place for Group 4 employees: a thorough check of criminal records is undertaken by police and Group 4 has its own high standards set for employing people in the first place. It has also provided an opportunity to transfer ideas from the private sector to the Government. That has been a valuable process because I know that other prisons have watched with interest what is being undertaken by Group 4. The prison has been a successfully managed operation to date, and many of our prisons could learn from the example it has now set.

**Mr LEGGETT:** I refer to page 355 of the Program Estimates in relation to prison performance indicator. Two essential components of the Government's policy for work in prisons are to expand the range of work programs for prisoners and to establish new industries that can be developed as important replacement programs. Will the Minister explain what progress has been made in these areas in the past year, and what plans are in place for the coming year?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Mr Randall Wright, the Manager of the Prison Industries Group, is with me today in an advisory capacity. Mr Wright has the very difficult task of introducing industries to prisons. Members would be aware that previous Governments have found that task difficult and, even though we have had considerable success, we still do not pretend it is an easy task. The previous Minister, Frank Blevins, who held the portfolio for the longest period of time in the past decade, or so, often advised me as the then

Opposition spokesman for correctional services that it was difficult to attract work into prisons because trade unions would always complain that prisoners were taking work away from the private sector.

While those statements are true, we have taken that difficulty in a different direction. The Prison Industries Group comprises representation from the Employers Chamber, the United Trades and Labor Council, obviously Mr Wright, as the Prison Industries Manager, Correctional Services staff and the Public Service Association. That group initially evaluates new industry potential for prisons. The industry potential we have been examining has essentially been replacement programs. In other words, we focus, in the first instance, on those businesses that are undertaking work overseas.

Many of those businesses, as members would appreciate, often locate much of their work force in Asia to take advantage of low market rates, and that means that jobs not only go in South Australia but elsewhere in Australia. We also target those industries that would otherwise not be able to undertake activity necessarily in the State. When we identify industries, they go before that industries committee. I have been absolutely insistent that no new industry goes into a prison until the committee agrees, but particularly I always require agreement from the United Trades and Labor Council representative.

If we have the UTLC on side when industries are introduced into prisons we know that no-one can say that we are taking jobs away from the private sector. As an example, Curia mud bricks are manufactured in Yatala Prison. Curia Pty Ltd was a small business that was having difficulty finding a suitable location to undertake its manufacturing enterprises. We offered it the opportunity to undertake its manufacturing operation in the prison system. Prisoners manufacture the bricks and Curia Pty Ltd has the responsibility for marketing the bricks. The company has outside employees to undertake pick up and delivery and marketing of the bricks which produces outside jobs.

We have a contract with another company that manufactures card tables. The company manufactures to capacity in South Australia, but it had no opportunity to expand its premises. It was aware of the extra production potential in prisons and was prepared to engage staff in the areas of packing and delivery. So we have a card table manufacturing operation in Yatala. That private company has been able to expand its work force for pick up, delivery and packaging, thus providing jobs that would otherwise not have been there. We have a recent contract with a lighting company that manufactures decorative lighting for housing. I am told that there is no manufacturing or assembly of that decorative lighting in Australia. Most of it is undertaken in Asia. We are now able to undertake that assembly within the prison system and, again, that has provided private sector jobs on the outside. More importantly, it also provides the opportunity for prisoners to be given references that do not have 'Yatala' on the top. To be given a reference by a private sector company for work done that does not have 'Yatala' on the top might give them a chance of having something in the CV that is a little easier for an employer to accept, rather than the recommendation, 'This fellow has been a good boy in Yatala.'

The prison industry expansion has moved in a positive manner. We are targeting a number of industries. I mentioned that we have a new contract being negotiated for Northfield but, until that is finalised, it is not appropriate that I announce

it. Also, another very significant contract is being finalised for Mobilong and, when that is finally negotiated, I will be happy to announce it. The contract for Northfield will provide an additional 20 jobs or more for women prisoners, and the contract for Mobilong has the potential to provide more than 50 jobs for prisoners. In both cases, they will generate jobs on the outside, and in both cases I require approval of my industries committee before they will be put into play.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Obviously, the cost of the recent hostage incident at Yatala will have to be picked up in this year's budget. What costs were involved? Are all the officers, particularly the four officers who were held hostage, now back on duty? What is their current status?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I do not have all those costing details yet. Some of the repair work is being finalised. I will take that question on notice. I do not have an up-to-date report of the condition of the four officers. Mr Kelly will advise the Committee on their condition, because he has spoken to a number of them personally more recently than I have.

**Mr Kelly:** The four hostages who were involved in the incident on 6 May are off work, but two are anticipated to return to work shortly.

**Mr QUIRKE:** The Minister has commissioned a report into this, as we found out when I asked him in the House about the incident itself, and I understand that the Minister is now in possession of that report. Can the Minister tell us what happened and what went wrong in that episode? Was it a management problem or was it a staffing problem? What are the contributing factors?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As the honourable member is aware, the first phase of that report has been completed. When the honourable member asked me that question in the House, I indicated my willingness for the honourable member to review that report, and I understand that has now occurred. I have to be guarded as to how much I can release in the Committee today about the report because as you, Mr Chairman, would appreciate, the incident at Yatala involves the potential for criminal charges to be laid, and we are close to seeing those laid against some of the perpetrators of the crime, and the crimes they talk about involve assaults against staff and a number of other matters. I cannot release full details of that report.

However, details of the report that I can release, without prejudicing any further court case, indicate that a number of matters which occurred at Yatala during the lead up to that event clearly should never have happened. Those matters can involve problems in effectively implementing obvious safety procedures—procedures that should have been in place that were not in place. For that, all staff and management must take responsibility. I am not apologising for anyone I offend by those statements: staff and management must take responsibility for what occurred at Yatala prison. The fact that some of the tools that were able to be obtained by some of the prisoners were located within the prison's accommodation area and not secured appropriately is an unforgivable mistake, and one that must not be repeated.

I visited the prison shortly after the incident and, as serious as the incident was, some of the staff were quite amused at the time of my visiting because I was able to talk with some of the staff while the Secretary of the Public Service Association, Jan McMahon, was on television berating me for not going to the prison to meet with the staff. On that occasion, one of the staff turned to me and said, 'She's going to have trouble explaining her way out of this

one, isn't she?' Ms McMahon was indicating I had refused to respond to demands to meet at the prison. To this day, I have had no letter, no phone call, no facsimile message from Ms McMahon, and neither have any of my staff, requesting my presence at Yatala after that incident. It was all media hype at the time. Ms McMahon certainly had the time to talk to all the media, but never picked up the phone to make that phone call. As I said to her before, the opportunity is there. She has my phone number and that of my staff. All she needs to do is pick up the phone and dial the number. The numbers are the same as they were when we first came into government. She knows how to contact me.

But I did meet with the staff; in fact, I spent some three hours at Yatala that afternoon and into the evening inspecting the damage that was caused at the institution and also speaking with the staff. I have to say that I was particularly disgusted that the media were able to obtain footage in the first instance of what had occurred there. All media went through the normal process and contacted me, with approval, to film the prison. It was our view that the media should not film the prison. We believed that they should not film the prison because it serves to highlight to other prisoners in our seven other prisons around the State what had been done. We thought it was inappropriate that that occur. Unfortunately, an officer of the Public Service Association either arranged to have filmed or herself filmed some of the damage in Yatala—selected damage in Yatala—and distributed the film. However, that officer gave the film to Channels 7 and 10, asking them to pass them on to Channels 9 and 2, and those other television stations did not pass on the film to the other two. In view of that, and in an endeavour to try to ensure that, if it was going to air anyway from the others, I allowed a Channel 9 cameraman to go in and film the full extent of the damage and pass on a copy to ABC TV.

What the footage did not show was that the damage was concentrated in the corridor between cells and in the officer work station. In the main, the cells themselves were undamaged. It was quite an unusual situation to see chairs and other items bundled up in a corridor and to then go into the cells and find the prisoners' bedding and clothing untouched and the cells immaculately presented in the way we expect in all our prisons. Far from being a riotous situation, it was one where four officers were taken hostage and one where those officers had the immediate corridor around them and their work station ransacked, but the prisoners did not touch their own cells.

**Mr QUIRKE:** One of the allegations that has been made to me is that the incident was triggered by the protectees preparing food and drink for the rest of the prisoners. The allegation made was that some of the protectees informed the others prisoners that they had urinated in the tea and that they had done other things to the food. They said that it had been interfered with and contaminated and that that was the trigger for this instance. Could the Minister comment on that?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I have had that allegation put to me, and it was also put to the media. The investigation into the incident has found that not to be the case. The preparation of food within the prison is often subjected to that sort of potential abuse; at least, those preparing the food claiming that they have done that to other prisoners, whether they are protectees or whether they come from another section of the prison. The prisoners eating the food have no idea how it is prepared, because they do not see it being prepared. The risk of prisoners preparing food and claiming that to be the case is always present, but to no greater extent with protectees

preparing it than others. The interesting thing that had occurred since the protectees commenced preparing the food was that generally the prisoners claimed that the standard had improved. It would seem that their culinary expertise may have been better than that of those who were in the kitchen before. I have seen no evidence to suggest that there is any validity in that as the reason for the incident occurring.

**Mr QUIRKE:** It is not some mysterious ingredient?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** One would hope not. I cannot provide the Committee with the specifics regarding what is believed to have triggered the incident, because that could affect matters that come before the court.

**Mr LEWIS:** I refer to the increase in offenders who are now seeking involvement in education and training programs. Will the Minister outline the changes that have occurred in the past year in prisoner education and, given that he has provided us with instances of specific training programs in his answer to the member for Hanson, how do they fit in with the overall strategy of rehabilitation that has been introduced into the prisons, with, I think, good effect?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** It is easy to pay lip service to education in prisons, but it is important that that lip service should be followed with action. I am pleased to say that is what has been occurring in our prison system over the past 2½ years. I clearly recall aspects of the first or second meeting that I had with Sue Vardon after her appointment as Chief Executive Officer. Ms Vardon indicated that she was appalled to find that a prisoner with whom she had spoken and who was about to be released after six years incarceration could not read or write, but there was no intellectual impairment preventing that prisoner from being able to read or write. My response was, 'Clearly, we have failed.' That is a measure of the challenge before us. If that person comes out of prison being unable to read or write, his chance of turning to crime is greater.

I do not pretend that every prisoner coming out of the system can read or write; the problem is still present. We are nowhere near developed to the extent that we would like to deal with those prisoners. However, in a bid to move down that path, this year 600 prisoners enrolled in 2 000 courses or programs. This is consistent with the statistics that I presented last year when reporting on student enrolments. It should be noted that this does not include enrolments in the Mount Gambier Prison, which are in addition.

The education services section of the department has developed a database system to record more accurately the enrolment of prisoners, the types of education programs that they are undertaking, their development through them and, essentially, their education needs. It is using that data to monitor their progress and ensure that they have every opportunity that we can provide under adult education programs. The development of the database was sensibly a pre-requisite of the license to use the Certificate of General Education for Adults which is now being used within the prison system. Literacy and numeracy programs are attracting prisoners who, through the opportunities that we are providing, are less embarrassed about their problem and are more willing to come forward and ask for help.

Since December 1995 the department has been able to issue 56 statements of achievement for successful completion of modules in the Certificate of General Education for Adults and 14 full certificates. The reasons for being able to give them the statements may mean that they have elected to undertake only part of the course or their period of incarceration has finished and that then becomes the important part

of the through program: they have the opportunity to continue their education after release from prison and attain the literacy and numeracy skills that they need.

Prisoners in South Australia are now studying a nationally recognised and accredited course of study which also gives them direct access to vocational learning through TAFE. The department is also part of a move towards a national prison education curriculum as of March 1996. DCS teaching staff took part in a meeting with staff from New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia to establish national benchmark standards for the delivery of certificate programs in prisons.

The department has been involved in the provision of Kickstart-funded training programs at the Adelaide Women's Prison, Port Lincoln, Port Augusta and the South-West Community Correction Centre. This last program provided offenders on community service programs with skills to undertake the painting of school buildings at Cowandilla Primary School. That has been an interesting exercise in providing offenders with an opportunity to gain skills outside the prison environment.

We are investigating the proposal to convert the gymnasium facility at Port Augusta—members will recall that I do not have too much time for the expenditure that went into that—into an education centre. That conversion should provide a larger facility for education and allow easier access for a far greater number of prisoners to education programs at that facility.

The offender education section has also installed local area network systems in each education centre to manage the operation of education computers. These systems also provide a security system to ensure that only registered software is used by the prisoners during their course of education. I am mindful of the ability to introduce things on computers these days to which we do not want prisoners to have access. I am not sure whether this is the first time, but it is worth noting that one of the prisoners with a perfect score in business studies was presented to the Governor. That prisoner was from Mount Gambier Prison.

**Mr LEWIS:** We have heard about the benefits obtained on the one hand by prisoners in the form of improved self-esteem, survival skills and self reliance, as well as trust and team work that has come from MOWCamps. We have also learned about the in-house training for prisoners with respect to business studies and computers. I am reminded of a particular prisoner in Mobilong who was outstanding in his development of computer skills as well as his sharing of computer skills with other prisoners before he was paroled. However, we need to look at the other side of the equation where staff are concerned. With respect to support services at page 358 of the Program Estimates, I ask the Minister to provide the Committee with any information about training for correctional service staff, such as the Diploma in Correctional Administration that was introduced for custodial officers in 1995?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The role of corrections officers has changed markedly over the past century and more. The days of prison officers, corrections officers or custodial officers, as we prefer to call them today, is far different from that which the public expects through information gleaned by incorrect material in the media or on old films on television. They are no longer turn-key operators. They do not simply lock people in a cell, let them out for a meal and a bit of exercise and then lock them up again. Recognising that those prisoners will one day be released back into the community,

we expect our staff to be equipped with the skills to be able to counsel prisoners to better assist them from reoffending. If we are to do that we have to provide staff with the skills in the first place. That is something which was lacking in the past.

In an endeavour to demonstrate that custodial officers are professionals who work in a skilled area of work in which unique skills are required, we were pleased to establish the Diploma in Correctional Administration. This is a tertiary education program that was developed jointly by the Department of Correctional Services and the University of South Australia in June 1995. Twenty-eight staff from institutions, community corrections centres, the central office and, indeed, the University of South Australia itself have been accredited by that university as Associate Lecturers. The course articulates in a Bachelor of Social Science and is aimed at providing custodial officers with up-to-date skills and knowledge to fully professionalise their work. There are presently 81 students enrolled in the course. I am particularly pleased with that number in view of some past attitudes in the department.

My greater concern—in fact, it was far greater than Sue Vardon's concern—because she was confident that we would get the numbers—was that we may not get the numbers. I am absolutely delighted that 81 students are undertaking that course. Twenty-two students have already completed their first subject. Two students have received recognition of prior learning and have progressed to the second year of their course. As I indicated in my opening remarks, trainee custodial officers are now automatically enrolled in the course. To successfully pass their induction training they must pass two diploma subjects. The department supports students through the associate lecturers, local mentors and their line managers and a centrally based professional development consultant. At this stage, we expect the first graduations in 1998. I for one certainly look forward to seeing the first staff graduate from that professional course.

**Mr LEWIS:** What about Aborigines? At page 358 of the Program Estimates with respect to support services reference is made to the continued implementation of the equal opportunity strategy. Bearing in mind that on the one hand we see a many fold over-representation of indigenous people's descendants in those who are incarcerated for one reason or another, what about the level of staffing from people who have descended from Aborigines? What has the department done about the development of Aboriginal staff?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The honourable member is quite correct in his statement that Aboriginal people are over-represented in our prison system. This is a problem right around the nation and is one which the nation still has not successfully been able to respond to. South Australia is certainly no exception. Our incarceration rate of Aboriginal people is unacceptably high. I share the views of this State's Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in that the principle focus to address the issue of Aboriginal incarceration is to reduce the imprisonment rate in the first place. Even though that is so, we have to cater for those who are presently interned. We have implemented a recruitment plan to target areas where Aboriginal representation is most needed. A recruitment plan for community service officers, professional employees in custodial positions and training and development of staff has demonstrated the potential for people to become managers or supervisors. Recruitment of Aboriginal custodial staff has occurred in the larger institutions, and we have now seen Aboriginal staff becoming successful in competing for

promotional opportunities in areas where the most need was deemed, or acting in positions for development, especially in areas of high geographic Aboriginal population.

Aboriginal staff have gained access to specialised training programs and are undertaking university studies. The department, in conjunction with DEET, appointed a project officer in 1993 prior to our coming to Government (a commendable move) to develop and implement strategies for Aboriginal employees. That was a one year program so that we had the benefit of being able to use that work to implement appropriate training programs for our Aboriginal staff. We are still not satisfied with the level of Aboriginal staffing in the department. It is still disproportionate compared with the level of Aboriginal people within the prison system. We still endeavour to attract more Aboriginal staff members to the prison system. My CEO advises me that seven Aboriginal staff have been appointed in the last 12 months.

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

#### **Membership:**

Mr Clarke substituted for Mr Atkinson.

**Mr QUIRKE:** What happened during the process of replacing the CEO of Yatala Labour Prison? The Opposition has been provided with information that vacancies for the heads of Cadell, Port Augusta and Yatala were advertised, and that the successful applicants were informed of that decision. Those appointments were unanimously agreed to by a panel which determined the appointment of those three persons, but it appears that the person chosen for Yatala was not acceptable to the Minister. Did the Minister have any input in the selection of the head of any of these prisons, particularly Yatala?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As the honourable member would be aware, the Public Sector Management Act requires that chief executives be responsible for employees within their agency. If I remember correctly, section 17 provides that a Minister may not direct a CEO as to who they do or do not employ. That section has been inserted for a very good reason: probably to ensure that some of the things that occurred under past Governments do not occur under this one. I know of the difficulties that my agencies had with the various Labor Party political appointees placed throughout the Public Service who had to be moved elsewhere so that the Government could get on with its job without those people who wanted to sabotage the process.

Three jobs have been advertised for three institutions for varying reasons. Mr Barry Willoughby, the outgoing Manager of Yatala, was seconded to the Correctional Services Department from the Police Department. He finishes his position with the department this Friday, will go on leave, and then return to the South Australian Police Department. The Manager of Cadell retired recently, and the Manager of Port Augusta is under contract. It was decided that all three positions would be advertised by my CEO to be filled at the same time.

Following that process, the existing Manager under contract at Port Augusta has been confirmed as successful in that role, and Mr Kevin Raby has been selected as the New manager for Cadell.

The position in respect of Yatala will go out to public rather than internal call. Whether or not my Chief Executive has made an approach to an employment agency regarding that position, I am aware that, while the internal applicants

were of high quality, none of them had had any experience of managing a male prison, particularly at high security level. I think it appropriate that the department test those applicants against others who may be available Australia-wide. It may well be that, after that process has taken place, the South Australian internal applicants are demonstrated to be the best people available, but I am sure the honourable member would appreciate that, in view of the difficulties at Yatala this week alone, the person who undertakes this role must be capable of handling all sorts of situations. It could well be that the internal applicants fit into that category, but I fully support a national test.

**Mr QUIRKE:** As a supplementary question, can the Minister assure us that he has not spoken to his CEO about the appointment of the Manager of Yatala or advised her to reject any applicant at this stage?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Of course I have spoken to my CEO about the appointments, as I would in respect of all appointments of such import. I have received a briefing from my CEO on the status of employment at each of these institutions. From the outset, I expressed the view that it was important that we got a good person for Yatala, as I am sure everyone would agree, and that a national call would be the way to go. The CEO determined that an internal call for all three positions might attract sufficient candidates of calibre. She is now market testing nationally, and I think that is appropriate.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Was a TSP given to the previous Manager of the Cadell Training Centre and, if so, under what guidelines was that TSP offered, given that the position will not be abolished but filled by someone else?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** My Chief Executive advises me that the answer is 'Yes,' and that a position at head office has gone as a result. As the honourable member would appreciate, TSP guidelines are such that a TSP can be allocated provided that a position within that agency goes.

**Mr QUIRKE:** My last question concerns a matter which I raised recently with the CEO and which relates to a management problem of Group 4 in Mount Gambier. Unfortunately, as I understand it, Group 4 does not have an Adelaide presence. It has a Mount Gambier presence because it has the prison contract, but it has not seen fit to open an office in Adelaide, which is unfortunate. The problem concerns the hospital dispensary in the prison. The person who set up that prison dispensary applied for her own job when applications were called by Group 4 earlier this year. However, she was rejected. This woman alleges that one of the reasons therefor was that she refused to wear a Group 4 uniform. What input can we have in this prison, given that it has now been privatised and a contract has been signed, so that people who are treated in this way can get justice?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I thank the honourable member for giving advance notice of this question because that enabled us to follow the matter through and give a considered response. Group 4's contract for the management of Mount Gambier Prison requires it to be responsible for the provision of health services. It initially had a subcontract with Mount Gambier District Health Services for the provision of nursing services at the institution. Some months ago, the Mount Gambier District Health Services wrote to Group 4 stating that they wished to withdraw from the arrangement. Group 4 subsequently informed the Correctional Services Contract Administrator and initiated an alternative strategy for its nursing services.

At about that time, the consortia headed by Group 4 was announced as the successful tender for the Melbourne metropolitan prison. This contract put Group 4 into a joint venture with the St Vincent's Hospital. While that hospital is in another State, I am sure that members would agree that it is a very large and professional provider of health care services. So, Group 4 decided to recruit its own nurses under guidance in terms of the recruitment, training and professional management of the St Vincent's Hospital. I can only assume from this that the nurse in question was not actually recruited by Group 4. Therefore, she was not fired or rehired by Group 4. The reason for that is the decision of Mount Gambier Health Services. The opportunity is now available for them to take up that supervision by St Vincent's Hospital.

The honourable member has also spoken to me privately before about the presence of Group 4 in Adelaide. I agree: whenever a new company ventures into South Australia we would love to see it set up a head office here. With a prison with 110 prisoners, compared with Melbourne with 600 prisoners, it presents us with a difficult case to lay claim to that head office presence here, but in future who knows what changes may occur in the prison system to alter that?

**Mr BASS:** I refer to page 358 of the Program Estimates. Will the Minister outline his plans in regard to the outsourcing of offender health care?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** It is a convenient coincidence that that question should follow. The approach intended to be undertaken by Government is not dissimilar to that which may be undertaken by many private sector areas. In recognising that the provision of health services is a separate profession, and considering the cost of providing health services to the prison system, the Government believes that it can not only make considerable savings against the same standard of health care presently provided but also, for the same money, provide a far greater range of health services to prisoners, with particular focus on programs that do not receive the attention we would like, such as methadone programs for those who have a drug problem.

The department is presently putting together options for the outsourcing of prisoner health services to allow for provision, probably by a single provider, to ensure that we are able to deliver a more cost effective and professional health service to prisoners and also to deliver services in those areas in which we are presently unable to do so.

**Mr CLARKE:** I refer to a report issued recently by the Australian Institute of Criminology, dated May 1996 and headed 'Deaths in Custody—Australia: Australian Deaths in Custody-Related Police Operations 1995'. For the Minister's information, that report shows, under the heading 'Trends', that:

Unfortunately, the number of deaths during the year (86) is higher than that reported for the previous year (80) and, using a consistent definition of a death in custody, was exceeded in only one of the 16 years for which data are available, namely, 1987. While the total number of deaths in all forms of police custody has remained at the same level of 26—

these are national figures—

as the previous calendar year, the same cannot be said for deaths in prison custody. The 58 deaths in prison custody during the year represents the highest number recorded.

It goes on to show that for South Australia the number of deaths of persons of Aboriginal decent in South Australia for 1995 was six out of a total of 11, and that number is the highest recorded number of deaths of Aboriginal persons in custody in any State. The total in Australia was 16 and South

Australia accounted for six of those 16. What steps has the Minister taken to ensure full compliance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody and, given these alarming statistics, will he immediately order a review of all prison procedures relating to the handling of Aboriginal prisoners?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I have not had the opportunity to view the report to which the honourable member refers, but I was certainly made aware of its existence through media publicity this morning. Therefore, I have not had the opportunity to compare the figures in that report to the ones with which I am familiar. The figures with which I am familiar are financial year based, and I can confirm that in the 1995-96 financial year there were six deaths in custody in South Australia, three of which were Aboriginal deaths. In 1994-95 there were seven deaths in custody, three of which were Aborigines. In 1993-94 there were six deaths, one of whom was an Aborigine, and in 1992-93 and in 1991-92 there were five deaths, none of whom were Aborigines. During this calendar year there have been no deaths in custody in the South Australian prison system.

Obviously any death in custody situation is not something about which any Government, regardless of its political persuasion, would be pleased. We certainly have undertaken a large number of initiatives to attempt to reduce the chances of death in custody. Earlier today I indicated to the Committee the changes at Northfield Prison and the anecdotal evidence I receive through the incident reports in the prison system which pass over my desk each week and which have demonstrated that women prisoners slashing their wrists is now becoming an infrequent occurrence. Those changes at Northfield have reduced the number of female deaths in custody.

With regard to Aboriginal prisoners, both the Aboriginal Affairs Minister and I share the belief that the grass root of the problem is the high incarceration rate. That rate amongst the Aboriginal community in all jurisdictions is unacceptably high, and that presents police and those in law enforcement areas with a dilemma in endeavouring to reduce that rate.

Within the police system, in South Australia every endeavour is being made to ensure that prisoners spend less time than they did in the past in police cells. No doubt that has had a significant impact on the drop in the number of deaths in police custody. Around Australia Police Forces are now moving those prisoners to places where staff are there to care for prisoners 24 hours a day in the institutions.

Be that as it may, six deaths in a financial year is not something about which we are pleased. We have put in place in Aboriginal custody areas a further seven officers of Aboriginal descent in a bid to better address the problems faced by those prisoners. We have more double up accommodation than was available before, in recognising the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. We have introduced greater education and work programs, as I have detailed before. We have a peer support program involving key members of the Aboriginal community to enable Aboriginal inmates to receive visits in a way that was not possible before.

We also have in place an officer who is presently reviewing—and has been doing so for the past four months—the progress against the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. That is in addition to the information tabled by the Aboriginal Affairs Minister in the Parliament about eight months ago. That work in which the department participated resulted in this further review. I am sure that I

have missed a number of things, so I will hand over to Ms Vardon.

**Ms Vardon:** At the end of last year we were very concerned about the deaths in custody and we said that whatever we are doing in the prison system is not satisfactory. So, I invited all Aboriginal groups in Adelaide to meet with me on a regular basis with Aboriginal prisoners. We have met at Yatala and other places, and out of those meetings, which 60 people from all over Adelaide attend every month, we have developed a whole series of programs. There has also been an opportunity for all processes in our department to be reviewed. The PAC has exposed what it does. We have had a chance to review the way in which we organise funeral escorts. The peer support group has been developed from that group.

We have also sponsored some important programs called 'Reclaiming our Future'. These are a series of group programs with Aboriginal men who have been in despair and anger and in a high risk group for suicide. We have worked with them to go through their problems. They do a training program that is very liberating in a sense; they are beginning to understand their addictions and so on. That has been very successful. We are going to keep those programs going through the prison system. Lastly, at Mobilong a number of prisoners feel alienated from their own culture and so we have invited someone to come in regularly to explain the history of the Aboriginal people and go through their history. We are hoping it will be successful. Certainly, it is one of the things that came out of the royal commission.

**Mr CLARKE:** I appreciate that the Minister and his department may not have seen the report, and I shall be happy to provide a copy which I obtained only this morning, but the report shows an alarming trend in deaths in custody in South Australia compared to other States. For example, I refer to Port Augusta Prison, which I visited earlier this year. One of the difficulties in preventing deaths in custody of persons of Aboriginal descent involves the screening process in trying to analyse whether an Aboriginal person is susceptible to suicide because there was only a registered nurse (and I make no criticism of her) at the prison hospital and she does her best. She has no training in psychology or psychiatry and basically operates by gut feel in making an analysis of individual prisoners and whether or not they have suicidal tendencies. That is a hit and miss approach. I understood from the prison manager that there was a budget line for a psychologist but the salary level of the mid \$40 000 did not attract anyone prepared to go to Port Augusta for that sum. Short of the Government increasing the amount of money to attract someone to fill that position, if money is available, then at the very least a qualified psychiatric nurse may be the appropriate person to employ as a stop-gap, notwithstanding the genuine work that the registered nurse is doing but is not trained for.

Other problems that I saw could relate to staffing levels. The royal commission recommended that once Aboriginal prisoners are brought into prison they should be seen within the first two hours to go through this analysis process and, when prisoners are inspected in their cells to see whether or not they are still alive, in Port Augusta it is done more by visual effort, with officers looking through the door to see whether they can see some form of body of the prisoner lying sleeping rather than going through the door to see whether that person is breathing or not. I am interested in the Minister's or the CEO's comments with regard to Port Augusta Prison, although I do not pick on it because it has



had deaths, but obviously it has difficulties in securing the services of a trained psychiatrist or psychologist.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** A number of points need to be responded to. First, the six deaths in the past financial year is most unacceptable but, equally, there have been no deaths since 16 December 1995 and that is very acceptable. That we have had no deaths so far in this calendar year—and may it continue—demonstrates that some of the changes put in place are starting to have effect. Referring to Port Augusta as an example, an addition to the Aboriginal staff has been recruited to respond to the needs of Aboriginal prisoners. I agree that cell observation was inappropriate. Plexiglass is now installed in the cell doors so that officers have a better opportunity to observe prisoners. I cannot explain why that did not happen before. I would have thought commonsense would have dictated that it did, but that is now in place.

The issue of being able to provide psychological services to prisons is a vexed area Australiawide. For a number of months work in the department has been under way principally through Associate Director Graham Vinall on the establishment of a chair of forensic psychology with the University of South Australia. Both the CEO, Sue Vardon, and I have met with representatives of the university in a bid to establish that chair in order to address the longer term need. There is a difficulty within this State and others to attract suitably qualified people to prisons. The issue is that they can earn a much larger salary working in their own private practices. That presents Governments Australiawide with a dilemma. We are optimistic about the possibility of that chair being introduced. I hope to be announcing that to cater for the future.

As to the present situation, we have been able to appoint a person to Port Augusta. When the position was advertised there was an applicant who was, to my surprise, a resident in New Delhi, India. That person responded after we advertised in December 1995 for Port Augusta and Port Lincoln. That was the only application for the Port Augusta position, which demonstrates the difficulty we have. It was from a qualified psychologist. The selection process was completed and that applicant satisfied all necessary criteria. It is expected that she will commence employment in Port Augusta in August this year. That is an extraordinary length to go to, I am sure members would agree, to obtain staff for an institution. If our national advertisement campaigns continue to prove unsuccessful we will commence recruiting in New Zealand to try to attract people to fill those positions until such time as we are able to have graduates coming from the universities specialising in forensic psychology. It is a huge problem and I agree that the process of screening prisoners, through absolutely no fault of the medical staff involved, has not been as good as it could have been, but they have done their absolute best with the skills they have. There is a need for someone with a more diverse skill.

**Mr CLARKE:** Perhaps there is a simple solution and there are legal reasons why it cannot happen, but I found at Port Augusta that a number of Aboriginal prisoners were from the lands and were often released at times which did not coincide with the bus trip back to the lands and there was a gap of some hours. There could be the problem of a person being released and having several hours at his or her disposal and then wandering off to town where problems could be created. I do not know whether the problem has been resolved since, but would the department be able to better time the release of prisoners so that they can go virtually straight on a bus and back to their lands? Is there a legal problem?

Perhaps the Government or the Parliament could consider it. I am interested in your views on this matter.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Certainly, the flexibility provided under the Act means that a prisoner should be released as near as practicable to 10 a.m. on the day of release. The CEO has indicated that she has knowledge of this problem and I will ask her to comment.

**Ms Vardon:** It has been a big problem because Aboriginal people would leave with their Social Security cheque, wait for the bus and then not make the bus. The Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Service (OARS) set off an offshoot, APOSS, for Aboriginal prisoners. It has a branch in Port Augusta and we advise APOSS people to meet a person when they are being discharged. We are trying to get that closer to the time of the buses, but they can go at 10 o'clock and we must be mindful of our legal responsibilities. The APOSS people now come and look after them until the bus goes. That has been somewhat successful, and we will give it a bit more energy.

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

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South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, \$6 673 000.  
Country Fire Service, \$6 258 000.  
Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for  
Correctional Services and Minister for State  
Services—Other Payments, \$16 300 000.

#### Departmental Advisers:

Mr C. Dearman, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Country Fire Service.  
Mr G. Weir, Acting Director, Corporate Services.  
Mr B. Lancaster, Director, State Emergency Service.  
Mr N. Cooke, Deputy Director.

#### Membership:

Mrs Geraghty substituted for Mr Clarke.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I declare the proposed payments open for examination and invite the Minister to make an opening statement.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Following changes to the ministerial portfolios that were announced by the Premier in December 1995, the State Emergency Service was separated from the Police Department and, on 21 May 1996, Cabinet approved the creation of a separate administrative unit for the State Emergency Service. For convenience, I present the State Emergency Service with the CFS for these budget estimates. In the past they have been presented in budget estimates with the Police Department.

The Country Fire Service in the past year has again responded to a number of significant incidents, including a grain shed fire at Tailem Bend on 11 February 1996; a serious bus accident at Lochiel on 31 March 1996; and, of course, the Tarlee and Mount Torrens fires that occurred in January 1996. The successful management of these incidents, and many others like them, is further evidence of the significant benefit our State derives from the strengths of the Country Fire Service and, in particular, the efforts of the 18 000 volunteers who are part of that organisation. It is worth noting that approximately 28 per cent of the incidents attended by the Country Fire Service were vehicle related, which further highlights that the Country Fire Service is, as are all of our

emergency services, more than just a fire service, not to mention the ever increasing complexity of incidents with which our volunteers are dealing.

For the Country Fire Service, the year 1995-96 was very much one of consolidating on the progress that was made in the previous financial year. It was a year where the organisation sought to balance the needs of its volunteers in the community and the need for public sector reform without compromising the quality of service or its accountability. In 1995-96 no new borrowings were made by the agency, and a further debt repayment of \$500 000 was able to be made. Committee members may recall that in previous Estimates Committees I have highlighted the extent of indebtedness that the Country Fire Service had been left with at the time of the departure of the previous Government.

Fifty six per cent of the Country Fire Service expenditure went toward the purchase of goods and services, with less than 30 per cent going towards salary-related expenditure. This is consistent with the priorities of that organisation and the corporate strategy to direct resources whenever possible to those key priorities. During the past year the development of volunteers, to enable the delivery of services safely and effectively, continued to be the highest priority and, in the past financial year, over 2 300 volunteers have attended training courses conducted across the State. These courses are based on national competencies in fire and emergency response management, and are formulated and conducted in consultation with volunteers to ensure that their special needs are addressed.

Programs to ensure that an adequate level of standardised infrastructure for the management of fire and other emergency service incidents continued in 1995-96 with in excess of \$3 million being spent on the deployment of 20 new appliances and the construction or upgrading of over a dozen fire stations. Murray Bridge-based general engineering firm, Moore Engineering, continued to equip and commission CFS appliances, once again demonstrating the role that regional communities and businesses can successfully play in the economic development of South Australia.

**Mr BASS:** Hear, hear!

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am well aware that the honourable member is pleased that a business in his community has won this contract. It is performing at a high level and producing a quality appliance. The Country Fire Service allocation for 1996-97 is \$13.02 million, an increase of \$300 000 on the previous year. During 1996-97 over \$3 million will be spent on the replacement of over 40 appliances and the construction or upgrading of over a dozen fire stations. These programs will be defined and implemented in consultation with local government where priorities are based on the standards of fire and emergency cover.

Mr Chairman, as you would be aware, Mr Alan Ferris, Chief Executive Officer of the Country Fire Service, announced his retirement on 15 May 1996 and, while he is on leave at present, his retirement will take effect from 19 September. I place on record my appreciation for Mr Ferris's efforts over the past 10 years, and wish he and his family all the best in his retirement. I am certainly going to miss his professional and personal management style. I have enjoyed working with him over the past two years, and have come to regard him as a friend and close confidant. It was particularly difficult for me to accept that he would be retiring, but those of us who know the reasons I am sure appreciate why he found it necessary to retire and wish him all the best in the future. Mr Ferris leaves an organisation

which he steered through considerable change during his 2½ years as CEO, and that is a credit to him.

As Minister responsible for the Country Fire Service, I am able to advise the Committee that, with funds made available and in continued partnership with local government and the community, the Country Fire Service will be able to uphold its quality of service and reputation as one of the best equipped and professional emergency services in the nation.

Turning to the State Emergency Service, the budget for the 1996-97 financial year has, in accordance with the changes I detailed earlier, been transferred to the Minister for Emergency Services—Other Payments line. As a result, all emergency services are now being overseen by a single portfolio, ensuring proper coordination and cooperation of State resources. It is also intended that the State Emergency headquarters will be moved from Police Headquarters within the next 12 months and collocated with other volunteer emergency services. An option presently being investigated is for both the Country Fire Service and the State Emergency Service to occupy space that will be vacated by the SA Ambulance Service in St John House on Greenhill Road, when the latter group moves to what is presently MFS headquarters in Wakefield Street. St John House, as the Chairman is well aware, being a brother of St John, is owned by the St John organisation, and we have been pleased to negotiate with that organisation the potential changes for the future.

Because of the small number of SES headquarters staff, the CFS board is likely to be asked to provide corporate and other support services to the SES. I stress to the Committee that this collocation is not an amalgamation, as each emergency service will retain its own command structure and, indeed, with the formation of the SES as an administrative unit effective from 1 July, it will be necessary to appoint a chief executive to that organisation.

The SES subsidy scheme, which had not been altered since 1985, has been reviewed, particularly in light of current local government reforms. I am pleased to advise the Committee of the substantial increase in State Government subsidy to match council funding for SES units for the 1996-97 financial year. With allowances for inflation, this increases the available subsidy from \$215 000 in 1995-96 to \$422 000 in 1996-97, an increase of \$207 000. This significant cash injection equates to about \$100 for each of the SES volunteers, and that money will go towards buying equipment for crews across the State, which I expect is good news not only for SES but every South Australian because none of us knows when we might need to call on the expertise of the SES. Having been a recipient of SES response well before I became a member of Parliament, my family and I are certainly grateful for the storm damage to our house they were able to keep to a minimum many years ago. To this day, I remain a strong advocate and supporter of the State Emergency Service.

#### **Membership:**

Mr Atkinson substituted for Mrs Geraghty.

**Mr QUIRKE:** On behalf of the Opposition, I wish Alan Ferris all the best on his departure. I understand his reasons for departing, as I spoke to him some weeks ago about this matter. It is our only hope that he finds some rest and what not in retirement. It is rather sad to see his passing. When does the Minister expect to have a permanent replacement?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The position was advertised on Saturday through Morgan and Banks, which was the same company that recently participated in the selection process for the successful recruitment of a new Chief Executive for the Metropolitan Fire Service. We anticipate being able to at least select someone for the position within two months, and obviously the timing of that new person's starting would be contingent upon their present employment situation. However, we certainly intend to have the position filled as quickly as possible.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I recently visited a couple of CFS stations, and there obviously is a need for some of the trucks to be converted, presumably to diesel and so on. Is there a long term program to convert some of the petrol driven trucks and equipment over to the more efficient and effective diesel fighting equipment, particularly in fire scenarios?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The CFS has developed very professional standards of fire cover which affect not only the areas they cover but also their equipment. The equipment standard of all new appliances requires that those appliances be diesel. Indeed, the announcement I made about the vehicles that were manufactured by Moore Engineering fit that prescribed criteria. We are also mindful of the fact that many of these appliances were purchased for or by brigades before those standards came into place. These brigades are gaining new diesel vehicles as their old vehicles are replaced. The standard of vehicle replacement is such that after 20 years a vehicle will be replaced. However, there is flexibility to extend to 25 years, where a brigade specifically wants to be able to keep a particular appliance on the road for a long period. As members of the committee would appreciate, some vehicles do not receive the use in some areas that they may in others. During this financial year—and one of the brigades the honourable member was talking about may fit into this list—over 40 appliances will be replaced. If the honourable member has a particular brigade which has a vehicle that was purchased just before the new standards came in and it needs conversion to diesel, I would be interested in knowing about it, and maybe we can specifically look at the needs of that brigade.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Has the SES in Ceduna now been provided with sufficient funding for the purchase of a replacement SES vehicle and, if not, why not?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The situation in Ceduna is a vexed one, and it is being faced by a number of brigades: it is a fairly small country community with two volunteer services—the Country Fire Service and the State Emergency Service—located in two different locations, both requiring equipment, but not necessarily to the extent that local government feels that it can afford to participate in equipment provision for both services. I met with representatives of both the Country Fire Service and the State Emergency Service in Ceduna at the request of the Hon. Graham Gunn, who is the member for that region. I also met with the Ceduna council over the matter.

In that area a new station has been built for the Country Fire Service and, indeed, the Country Fire Service had a new vehicle. Local government was desirous of having the State Emergency Service occupy the same accommodation—obviously to reduce its costs. At the time that station was built, the Government's collocation policy was not in force. Now that we have this Government and we have the collocation policy in force, from now on the situation will be different. Our requirement is that, whenever a new State Emergency Service or Country Fire Service building is to be

constructed, all volunteer services—State Emergency Service, Country Fire Service and St John—be approached with a view to locating in the one facility. The advantages are fairly obvious. All those services need a meeting room/mustering room area, they need storage facilities and a storage for vehicles, and they all want kitchen and toilet facilities. You can obviously ensure a better standard of facility provision if that occurs.

The State Emergency Service at Ceduna has been agreeable to locate in a new Country Fire Service facility with some expansion. I am advised that \$20 000 has been received from the Commonwealth joint emergency headquarters and \$7 000 has been allocated for vehicle purchase so far this financial year. That will add to moneys that are able to be raised by the local community and also by the council for that vehicle. In the meantime, the Country Fire Service has a new twin cab vehicle at that location, and that is also accessible to the SES. As these two agencies start to work together in that location, I am confident that they will also start to share their vehicles. In Tumby Bay the SES and CFS built a joint facility, and members of those two brigades elected to put both badges on the vehicles. That was a move of their own volition and one that seems to be working particularly well. Often some of these things are very much personality-driven. Some strong minds exist in small communities and the Government insisted that the money be spent in the best manner for that local community, so we can give them the maximum equipment possible, and I am pleased with the developments in Ceduna in recent times.

**Mr LEGGETT:** My question relates to the commentary on major resource valuations on page 365 of the Program Estimates. I note that the CFS debt has reduced marginally from that previously published. What is the present level of debt and what is the Minister doing about it?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As I indicated when I first became Minister, I was quite appalled by the extent of the indebtedness of the Country Fire Service when this Government came into power. The sum of \$15.2 million had been borrowed and expended from 1986-87 to purchase a number of things for the CFS. Just under \$10 million (\$9.95 million) was used to purchase fire appliances, \$4.3 million was expended on communications, \$708 000 on computing and \$235 000 on building. The interest cost on that debt for 1995-96 was \$1.68 million, which represents 13.2 per cent of gross funding. The interest on the debt in 1996-97 will be about 12.5 per cent of gross funding. A focus of Government is to reduce that indebtedness.

I can appreciate the reasons for the debt being incurred in the first place. I am aware that past boards of the CFS and the CEO who preceded Mr Alan Ferris believed that there was a need to better equip the Country Fire Service, and the organisation took it upon itself to borrow those moneys and expend them on the equipment. The equipment is being used, but it still has to be paid for. I find it somewhat shameful that the Government of the day not only allowed that indebtedness to occur in the first place, but allowed it to continue to accumulate, with no debt reduction strategy in place. This Government now has a debt reduction strategy in place. We repaid \$500 000 in 1995-96 and a further \$500 000 will be repaid in 1996-97. We are working with the Treasury to develop better ways of repaying that debt so that it does not affect the agency to the extent that it does. Every Minister would like the Treasury to write off debt. If I were in that position, the CFS would have 12.5 per cent of its funding open to be used for volunteers, and that would be a fabulous

position to be in. The reality is that the Government is not in a position to do that, but I will continue to make those requests each year.

The present funding system is not defensible as being perfect, and I think all political Parties would acknowledge that. We have undertaken considerable work to implement a new funding system, but regrettably, because of council boundary amalgamations, it is not appropriate to work with local government to introduce a new funding system at this time. I envisage a new funding system probably being introduced in about 1999 for the Country Fire Service, the Metropolitan Fire Service and the State Emergency Service to ensure a more equitable way of funding those services.

**Mr LEWIS:** I note the Minister's last comment about an alternative funding system for the CFS. In the informal consultations that I have had with local government in and near my electorate, there is very strong support for the introduction of a levy on rates on property to enable us to continue to provide for what they need. That is a gratuitous comment following what the Minister said, not a statement of Government policy. I mention it for the benefit of the Committee and Parliament. It is a piece of information which I think is vital to indicate the direction in which the community wants us to go. In connection with page 365 and following the important topic raised by the member for Playford about vehicle replacement, in addition to the information that the Minister has given about meeting the broad objectives and goals for the emergency response and management program, will he tell us whether CFS volunteers have been involved in the design of the new prototype fire appliances that they are to use?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I thank the member for Ridley for his question and statement about the support in his region for a change in the way that the CFS is funded. That is one of the many proposals that have been put to me quite strongly by a number of CFS groups. The useful life of a CFS appliance has been deemed to be about 20 years. Over that time the appliance will obviously suffer considerable wear and tear and ageing, despite technological advances that have taken place in recent times. During 1996-97 more than 40 new appliances will be purchased. The present appliance model received considerable input in its design by the CFS. All appliances which have been purchased by the CFS since 1994 have been manufactured in South Australia.

An appliance review committee, comprised of volunteers from across the State as well as CFS management representatives, reviews the design and performance of all appliances being built to the current standard. That committee determines whether the standards remain appropriate and, where necessary, develops design parameters for particular appliance needs, such as quick attack and urban pumper specifications. The committee evaluates these appliances when the prototypes have been built.

The quick attack vehicle has been identified as being appropriate for a quick response to small incidents, where larger appliances might take longer to deploy or have difficulty in reaching the scene because of the terrain. Obviously there is much benefit in a small quick response vehicle starting to control an incident and limiting the spread of fire while a larger and possibly slower appliance is on its way to the scene. The quick attack prototype is being built by Moore Engineering, Murray Bridge.

The urban pumper appliance has been designed for deployment in larger rural communities with high building structural risks. The equipment fitted to this appliance will

enable offensive fire-fighting techniques to be used in fighting structural fires. Public tenders for the urban pumper prototype have now closed. I am aware that two companies have submitted tenders. The decision has not yet been made, but it is appropriate for me to disclose that, regardless of the outcome, a South Australian company will win the tender because both tenderers are South Australian based.

There are 575 appliances under CFS control in South Australia. Of those, the board fully owns about 16 per cent. The average age of the fire appliance fleet is now nine years. That is probably a benefit of the legacy of the \$15 million indebtedness that we were talking about. While the reasons for the indebtedness are inexcusable, a start was able to be made on changing the fire appliance fleet. This Government has certainly ensured that we purchase many appliances each year, but fully funded without borrowing. That is the important aspect in changing over the fleet.

**Mr LEWIS:** My next question relates to the broad objective of managing and deploying CFS assets. Will the Minister explain how the policy of collocation works in the country, provide examples of the successful introduction of this policy and comment on the situation in some of the places in my electorate such as Karoonda?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As I indicated in part in answer to an earlier question, the collocation of the CFS with the SES and St John Ambulance occurs by combining each of the organisations' needs within a single location. When one looks at what is an ambulance station used by volunteers or what is a Country Fire Service station or a facility for the State Emergency Service, the answer is essentially the same: they are all facilities which accommodate vehicles, personnel and equipment and which provide them with appropriate amenities. It therefore makes sense to examine options for building those requirements together. In a recent example involving the CFS and St John, the new Aldinga Beach complex, which I had the privilege of opening in March, accommodates both St John and the CFS.

I earlier outlined the examples of Tumby Bay and Ceduna. During 1996-97 the CFS is negotiating collocation with other emergency services at Gladstone, Bordertown (which I believe is in the honourable member's electorate), Port Wakefield, Robe and Rapid Bay. The CFS is a member of the Government's Emergency Services Building by Collocation Committee which provides an avenue through which collocation opportunities can be identified, and they work on that with the CFS.

During 1996-97 collocated stations were built at Marla, where the CFS, SES and the ambulance service are collocated; at Marree, where the CFS and the Royal District Nursing Society (which operates the ambulance at that location) are collocated; at Port Lincoln, where the CFS and the SES are collocated; and at Cummins where the CFS and the SES are collocated.

The honourable member referred to Karoonda in his electorate. I am unsure, as is my Acting Chief Executive, about the status of that. Perhaps the honourable member could indicate whether he has any knowledge of plans that the members there may have afoot or of something they have done recently.

**Mr LEWIS:** The Karoonda ambulance service stood out when other ambulance services joined in. Collocation did not therefore occur, and it probably make things more difficult for them.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am certainly prepared to take on board the honourable member's concerns and specifically

examine Karoonda so that I can advise what options may be available.

**Mr LEWIS:** I now turn to page 366 in connection with the—

*Mr Quirke interjecting:*

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr Bass):** The Government side has now asked three questions. The member for Hanson asked one question and the honourable member has now asked two.

**Mr LEWIS:** The member for Playford indicated that he had no further questions.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** Is that correct?

**Mr QUIRKE:** I would like to know how much longer this will go on. In the interests of brevity, we cut our questions.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN:** I think there was another question about the country which the member for Ridley wanted to ask.

**Mr QUIRKE:** If there is one more question, we do not care. That is fine.

**Mr LEWIS:** This is very important to country people, Mr Chairman. We have been allocated an hour for the consideration of these lines.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Look, we will get this straight up and down now. We folded on this line so that we could proceed onto other items this afternoon and go home at a reasonable time. The member for Ridley is stretching my patience. If it is another one or two questions, I believe that is outside the scope of the arrangements. However, if that is what it is, that is fine. If it is more than that, the deal is off.

**Mr LEWIS:** Whatever the honourable members thinks. If he does not have any questions, that is not my problem. No-one spoke to me about it, and the agreement we had, for the honourable member's benefit, was that we would spend an hour on these lines. It seems to me that the Estimates Committees in most instances leave the Opposition bereft of any line of questioning directly related to the budget.

**An honourable member:** I don't think that's correct.

**Mr LEWIS:** I have considerable concerns about the capacity of the Government to continue. I do not have concerns about the Government's willingness, but we have to try to patch up a situation which confronted us. I hope that country people understand how we are doing that through the processes of the budget.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** If the honourable member asks the question I will be pleased to answer it, as I understand that this is the final one from the Government.

**Mr LEWIS:** My question arises out of my involvement in the Bushfire Prevention Committee and my close association with the desire in country areas to reduce the incidence or capacity for the spread of bushfires when they start. I refer to page 336 of the Program Estimates and to the Specific Target/Objectives relating to the upgrading of fire prevention plans. In 1989 the Country Fires Act was amended to provide significant powers to local government and to the CFS board to improve the standard of bushfire prevention in South Australia. What progress has been made to date and what is being done to further help local government in 1995-96 and in the future?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As the honourable member would be aware, the Country Fires Act 1989 gives responsibility to local councils for bushfire prevention planning. It gives the CFS board the overall responsibility to ensure that that occurs across the State. It is a daunting task for all parties involved to overcome community apathy and to ensure that individuals take their bushfire prevention responsibilities

seriously. Since becoming Minister I have been amazed, particularly after the lessons that this State should have learnt from Ash Wednesday and after the reminder of those lessons through the New South Wales bushfires, that there are still those within our community who do not appreciate that they must be vigilant in the activities they undertake on their property as far as is humanly possible to reduce the risk of bushfire.

Prior to 1995-96 the CFS board developed policies and guidelines to establish the district bushfire prevention committees. District fire prevention officers have been appointed and trained, and draft plans have been prepared for each district. Regional committees have been established to provide support and coordination, and the State Bushfire Prevention Committee has been established to deal with policy matters. In 1995-96 the CFS, with local government, has individually visited most council areas to assist in upgrading their plans and examining any barriers that may be present to implementing those plans. That task is to be completed by the end of July this year. They have commenced enhanced training of council fire prevention officers, and the process to review the responsibilities of regional bushfire prevention committees was commenced.

In 1996-97, the four main areas of focus will be for CFS bushfire prevention officers to provide greater support in the field to fire prevention officers and district bushfire prevention committees; to complete the review of responsibilities of regional bushfire prevention committees; and to develop and deliver an upgraded fire prevention officer training course which, for the first time, will be in a competency-based format. A change in focus by the CFS to provide a higher level of support in bushfire prevention at the local level resulted from consultation between principal stakeholders and, I believe, demonstrates the spirit of cooperation between the CFS and local government.

As Minister, I have been grateful for the professional way in which most local government bodies have worked with Government to put these procedures in place. For the honourable member's benefit, the rural city of Murray Bridge has worked with Government in a professional way to ensure that its plans are implemented.

**Mr LEWIS:** I refer to page 392 of the Program Estimates with respect to the SES. I believe that the SES's biannual national rescue competition was held in Brisbane this year. Can the Minister briefly tell the Committee—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr LEWIS:** I thank the member for Playford for his attention. If South Australia fielded a team, what were the results of the competition, and how does this assist the SES in providing an effective, coordinated and timely response to emergencies and disasters?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** South Australia participated in those national competitions on 8 and 9 June, and came a very close third. The final scores were New South Wales, 405; Victoria, 345; South Australia, 334; Tasmania, 285.7; and Queensland, 283.3. The competition events, which are based on standard rescue skills and techniques, are contested by the top SES rescue crews from around the nation. The event for 1996 comprised a mass casualty scenario requiring first-aid, a structural collapse rescue, the extrication of a casualty from farm machinery, a roadwork rigging rescue, the rescue of two trapped parachutists from trees, and a map reading and navigation exercise. Those exercises in themselves demonstrate the diverse nature

of the work that is performed by our well-trained volunteers in the State Emergency Services.

South Australia was represented at those championships by the winner of the State competitions held in March this year. The State champion crew was from the Tea Tree Gully unit. I was particularly pleased to have the opportunity to attend those competitions, which were held at the training centre developed by the CFS at Brukunga in the Adelaide Hills. This centre is another example of more and more emergency services utilising facilities in a joint manner. Indeed, the Metropolitan Fire Service also uses that excellent facility for its training purposes. I understand that it was the first time that SES volunteers had the opportunity to compete at that facility, and they were grateful for that. I was pleased with and proud of the standard that I observed on that day.

Our eight person team was sent to Brisbane through local fundraising efforts, which are to be commended. The Government made a small grant of \$1 218 to make up the shortfall in funding and ensure that the team was able to go to Brisbane. In all, local sponsorship and donations amounted to \$1 997 for the remainder of the air fares. The team competed in a manner of which South Australia can be proud. I look forward to the next competitions and to our units showing the rest of the country how professional they are. They did, indeed, come a very close third.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I take it that there are no further questions on the Country Fire Service.

**Mr LEWIS:** I do not want to contribute to the notion that the member for Playford might be seen as a bad mouthing, bellicose bully.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! That is not necessary.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I ask that those remarks be withdrawn as they are unparliamentary.

**The CHAIRMAN:** A point of order has been called.

**Mr LEWIS:** I think he is a nice man.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Will the honourable member withdraw those remarks?

**Mr LEWIS:** No. I did not accuse the honourable member of anything.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I do not think it is necessary that we have this conflict in the Committee. Our purpose here is to seek information as far as the Budget Estimates are concerned.

**Mr QUIRKE:** On a point of order, Mr Chairman, I believe I was alleged to be bad mouthed and bellicose, and that will be shown on the record. I believe that those remarks are unparliamentary, and I ask that you seek a withdrawal of those remarks.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I invite the member for Ridley to withdraw those remarks.

**Mr LEWIS:** I did not make any such accusation, and the record will show that. I just did not want to contribute anything towards the member for Playford's acquiring a reputation of that kind.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I ask the honourable member to withdraw those remarks.

**Mr LEWIS:** Mr Chairman, am I correct in understanding that you think I have made an unparliamentary remark?

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Playford has alleged that in his point of order. I therefore ask the honourable member to withdraw.

**Mr LEWIS:** I am quite comfortable with what I said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I ask the honourable member to reconsider. Does the member for Playford wish to pursue the issue?

**Mr QUIRKE:** Yes, I do, Mr Chairman. I insist on a withdrawal of those remarks. They were clearly audible across the Chamber and are on the public record, and I believe they are not only unnecessary but also unparliamentary. I can only presume that the honourable member is insisting on this process now. I believe he has no reason for this, and I suggest that his withdrawal will be the end of the matter.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So that the proceedings of the Committee can continue, I ask the member for Ridley to withdraw those remarks.

**Mr LEWIS:** Mr Chairman, is it your judgment that my remarks are unparliamentary?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Whether or not they are unparliamentary, a point of order has been taken, and I ask the honourable member to withdraw those remarks.

**Mr LEWIS:** For the sake of the member for Playford's ego, I will happily withdraw.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Thank you.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I thank the honourable member. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed.

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#### Additional Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Derbyshire, Chief Executive Officer, Metropolitan Fire Service.

Mr I. Pickering, Chief Executive Officer, South Australian Ambulance Service.

Mr B. Monks, Finance Director, SAAS.

Mr C. Lemmer, Metropolitan Director, SAAS.

Mr K. Hosking, Country Director, SAAS.

Mr T. Norman, Financial Controller, SAMFS.

Mr R. Hoey, Deputy Chief Officer, SAMFS.

Mr R. Hagan, Director, Support Services, SAMFS.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Mr Chairman, with the indulgence of the Committee, I have another brief statement to make in relation to the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service and the South Australian Ambulance Service. On 18 December 1995 State Cabinet approved the amalgamation of the these two agencies. South Australia becomes the first State in Australia to amalgamate these two key emergency services, which will eventually lead to a more efficient and cost-effective emergency service response in this State. Other States are currently considering similar moves.

The first stage of the amalgamation is already under way through the collocation of fire and ambulance crews at SAMFS headquarters in Wakefield Street in the city. Several other sites for combined fire and ambulance stations have already been announced. The next stage involves the amalgamation of the administration and support functions, which is expected to commence later this year, following an assessment by independent consultants, after which time I will be in a position to publicly release a more detailed amalgamation schedule. The final phase will possibly involve changes to some operational duties, the precise details of which will only be determined through an extensive and ongoing consultative process with staff and union representatives.

Consequently, one of the most significant initiatives to come out of both services for 1996-97 is funding to allow for the continuation of the collocation program. It is anticipated

that both services will spend \$2.4 million over the next 12 months on the construction of new buildings, and on modifications to existing stand alone fire and ambulance stations to ensure that they provide a dual purpose.

During 1996-97, the amalgamation process will receive a significant boost with the Ambulance Communications Centre relocating to Wakefield Street Fire Headquarters, and personnel from both services will collocate at O'Halloran Hill Fire Station and Camden Park Fire Station. In addition, construction of purpose-built fire and ambulance stations will be undertaken in the Tea Tree Gully Council area and at Mount Gambier, with the ambulance station at Whyalla being expanded to also accommodate the Metropolitan Fire Service.

This Government is committed to the amalgamation of the services as it will provide a more efficient and cost-effective emergency service to better serve the people of South Australia, while broadening the expertise of emergency service personnel. Other joint work under way includes: the Information Technology Strategic Plan, which has now been completed and will enable both agencies to further progress the collocation and amalgamation of the operational and administrative arms of both services. The South Australian Ambulance Service has an urgent need to replace and update computer hardware and software to improve system stability and efficiency. In 1995-96 I approved the development of an Information Technology Strategic Plan for both the ambulance service and the Metropolitan Fire Service.

The recommendations arising from this plan involves a significant upgrade of call taking and dispatching technology, resulting in improved response times and better utilisation of resources. Computer Aided Dispatch, or (CAD) Implementation, for which about \$191 000 has been allocated for the first phase of the establishment of shared communications and dispatch centres and the introduction of a common computer aided dispatch system. The new system will be compatible with other emergency services, improving co-operation and co-ordination with these agencies.

I now turn specifically to the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service. While Cabinet has approved the amalgamation, it has not yet been proclaimed as one administrative unit. That entire process is probably a number of years away. The new Metropolitan Fire Service Chief Executive Officer, Mr John Derbyshire, commenced his position on 2 January 1996, replacing the former Chief Fire Officer, Mr Winston Haby, following his retirement.

Mr Derbyshire is a former Lieutenant-Colonel in the Australian Army, and more recently a regional commander with the Australian Protective Services (with operational responsibility for both South Australia and the Northern Territory), and has brought with him a wealth of experience and business acumen to the newly-created position, including administration and training, human resources, industrial relations and occupational health and safety, as well as resource allocation and financial control.

Budget initiatives during 1996-97 include: the fire appliance replacement program; and, in 1996-97, the vehicle replacement program includes \$1.318 million carried over from the 1995-96 budget in respect of four pump appliances, as well as \$2.87 million for six additional appliances scheduled for 1996-97. An amount of \$335 000 has been allocated for the purchase and issue of level 2 protective clothing as part of the ongoing program to upgrade the level of protection to firefighters and reduce occupational health and safety risks.

The Fire Equipment Servicing Division of the Metropolitan Fire Service details appear in the Services SA budget papers for the next financial year. Regulations have been promulgated which will enable the Fire Equipment Servicing Division to operate as a corporate body independent from the Metropolitan Fire Service, effective from 1 July 1996. It will be transferred to Services SA which will provide administrative support. The budget represents a sound platform upon which the Metropolitan Fire Service can plan its operations throughout the next financial year.

I now turn to the SA Ambulance Service. It is pleasing to report that the SA Ambulance Service has achieved considerable progress in the past two years and projects which will commence during 1996-97 will ensure the service continues to improve the quality of its service delivery to South Australians. Another initiative which has the potential to save lives and which is delivering a high level of patient care is the continuation of the paramedic program. Indications from the statistics of cases attended by paramedics prove that this very high standard of clinical pre-hospital care actually saves lives.

In South Australia, the survival rate of patients attended by the new ambulance paramedics, following an out of hospital ventricular fibrillation cardiac arrest, is comparable with the best centres in the world. Paramedics have helped to raise the standard of patient care across the entire ambulance service, not only through their extra training but also by becoming role models and teachers of other ambulance officers. Since the introduction of the first paramedic course in October 1994, 31 paramedics have been trained and deployed throughout the metropolitan area and one at each of the country centres of Murray Bridge and Whyalla. I am sure that the member for Ridley will be pleased to hear that an officer is now operating from that location. A further 19 paramedics will be trained during 1996-97, of which 12 will be deployed in the metropolitan area and seven in country centres.

I have approved the investment of \$3 million in a significant upgrade of the SA Ambulance Service fleet that will include 26 new twin berth ambulances. In addition to this, the service is introducing 16 new single berth ambulances, which will be deployed primarily to country centres. Major improvements in clinical care for country areas have included: the introduction of automatic cardiac monitor/defibrillators on all volunteer crewed ambulances, and the provision of advanced life support training at all employer branches of the country service. I can assure the Committee that those living in rural areas are not compromised in the standard of clinical care now available to them.

In November 1995, the SA Ambulance Service embarked on an intensive marketing campaign, designed to promote awareness in the community of the vital service it provides, and the need for the public to cover itself against the cost of ambulance transportation. I am pleased to report that more than 20 000 memberships have been taken out since the start of the marketing program. This means that approximately 35 000 more South Australians are now covered for the cost of an ambulance. I have ensured that adequate funding has been provided in the 1996-97 financial year so that ambulance services can be provided at an appropriate level required and expected by South Australians. The total amount of Government funding will increase in 1996-97 by some \$800 000 to reflect the increase in community service obligation carries and the consumer price index.

**Mr QUIRKE:** It would not be an Estimates Committee hearing on the fire services if we did not ask about our

favourite boat the *MV Gallantry*. How often was it used last year and how many fires did it put out? Has the Minister finally worked out what he is going to do with it, and at what point will it be scuttled?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am not sure whether the honourable member thinks it should be scuttled or not. He might like to volunteer that to the Committee. To this day the *M.V. Gallantry* has yet to pour water on a fire. The service has endeavoured to find other uses for the *M.V. Gallantry*, as part of the program on which this Government embarked to see whether it could be fully utilised. That has meant that it has been involved in some other incidents; for example, in 1994-95 it responded to three hazardous materials incidents on the request of the Department of Transport's Oil Spill Commander. In 1994-95 it was called to assist in the search for a light aeroplane in St Vincent's Gulf at police instigation. It also arrived at 22 incidents for which it was not required but, nevertheless, it was able to respond.

I have to put to the Committee that it has been particularly difficult to find full uses for the *MV Gallantry*, despite the best endeavours of the management of the service. *MV Gallantry* was approved through Cabinet submission by the previous Government and, at the time of that approval, a number of points were indicated to the previous Government and the previous GARG committee that we have been able to establish were not the case. For example, the previous Government was told that in order to have another boat, such as a tug, on standby at Port Adelaide it would cost \$150 000.

We cannot find a tugboat operator who would charge that. We cannot find one who will charge us a standby fee. They have all indicated a fee for response. A number of operators are able to handle the work of the *MV Gallantry* utilising fire service personnel on their tugboats. There is only one reason and one reason alone why this Government would keep the *MV Gallantry*, that is—and we are undertaking the final analysis now—if the cost of taking out another service exceeds that of retaining the boat that we have already purchased. The annual cost of running the boat is \$823 000, but, as I said, it is yet to pour water on a fire.

Based on the information we now have I could not possibly justify the purchase of that vessel. It was purchased by the previous Government. We need to have a fire-fighting capacity for the Port River region but we could have done that in South Australia without a fire boat. Indeed, the whole Sydney Harbor waterfront is protected without fire services owning a boat but utilising contract operators. I have had expressions of interest for the purchase of the *MV Gallantry*, one of which is a serious expression of interest. As I indicated to the Committee, I cannot give a final answer today but I will be able to do so shortly as we complete the final assessment on whether or not it is more cost effective to retain the boat as we already own it or whether we wait until the boat reaches a stage where it becomes expensive to maintain and we then sell it. If the decision is not made to sell this time, I put on the record for any future Minister for Emergency Services to obtain the file notes that we now have in order to demonstrate the errors that were made previously. Even the previous Government, if it had the information we have found, would not have approved it either.

#### Membership:

Mrs Rosenberg substituted for Mr Leggett.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Has the Minister come into contact with the document 'Conceptual Report on the Rationalisation and

Unification of SA Emergency Services', circulated to all members of Parliament by the United Fire Fighters' Union? If so, does the Minister believe that the savings outlined in that report are achievable? I trust you have read it.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am familiar with the document and have read it from cover to cover. I read its contents with interest. Shortly after I received that report I met with the Secretary of the United Fire Fighters' Union, Paul Caica, and with two of the three authors of the report, two former Fire Chiefs, Mr Bruce and Mr Grubb. At that meeting I expressed my disappointment that the report's authors had not spoken to me. If they had, I could have given them much more information than they put in the report. They spoke to various personnel in our agencies and put together a document that, at the end of it, had a \$10 million saving, but there was absolutely no quantification for the saving. Further, they could not tell me how to calculate it. I put to them that there was a good reason why they could not work out how to calculate it, because the \$10 million saving had been announced by the United Fire Fighters' Union before they were engaged as consultants.

I provided them with the evidence of that. It was a press release put out by the United Fire Fighters' Union and unfortunately I do not have a copy with me now, and it is obvious that the UFU had announced publicly—before the report was even commissioned—what its findings would be. I saw the document as a provocative document that was extending the machinations that the UFU had had under way for some time to amalgamate the Metropolitan Fire Services and the Country Fire Services. As a Government we said, 'We are not having that. We are simply not amalgamating our paid and volunteer services.' I said that there were a lot of positives in the report.

I was pleased that they endorsed the amalgamation of the Fire and Ambulance Services, because that is something we have ensured has occurred. In my opening remarks I advised the Committee of Cabinet's decision last year to amalgamate the two services. Also, I drew to their attention a number of matters under way at this time: the collocation of fire and ambulance stations; the work on the communications project; and the work on the dispatch system which would all result in a more consolidated, consistent and professional emergency service response.

I put to them that, while the report in its entirety was not acceptable to Government, and while certainly their savings were not detailed as to how they came up with the numbers, we would get work under way and that, after that work was finished, we would see how close it came to their guess. But at the end of the day I am pleased the union at least accepts the advantages of training centre joint use, communications of dispatch and shared administrative resources. Certainly I and the Government will not consider in any way, shape or form an amalgamation of those paid and volunteer services.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Will the Minister identify the savings the administrative and human resources section will accrue from the amalgamation of the ambulance service and the MFS?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As I detailed in my opening statement, work is under way at this time to finalise terms of reference. An outside consultant will be appointed to determine the potential savings. Certainly my Services SA agency has assessed the present accommodation of the Metropolitan Fire Service headquarters in Wakefield Street to determine its suitability for occupancy by ambulance service personnel, and it is working on a number of options at the moment to address those accommodation details. When



its work is finished—as well as the work of my chief executives, Mr Pickering and Mr Derbyshire, who are working on some of the parameters—we will be in a position to have that work costed by an outside consultant, and I will then be happy to release details of it publicly.

The union has been told this before and it has endeavoured to use, for peculiar reasons, the conceptual report as a tool for enterprise bargaining. In recognising the union's concern at not having information available, and recognising the fact that we had to do the work before we could make information available, we offered to enter into an enterprise agreement with the United Fire Fighters Service that was dissimilar to other enterprise agreements for Government employees in that it would have been a six month agreement only. That six month agreement was to take place for the period until 30 June but we offered to backdate it to 1 December.

That would have given all fire fighters a backdated pay increase effective from 1 December, and a further pay increase from 1 April in accordance with the offer given to other Government employees but wrapped into a shorter agreement. On 30 June, when we would be in a position to give them more information, allowing for a couple of months drag, we would then be able to enter into a further enterprise agreement based on known data. The Secretary of the United Fire Fighters Union indicated to me that that was a pretty agreeable proposition. Unfortunately, it got rolled by State Executive.

That has been a big problem for Government in resolving the dispute with the United Fire Fighters Union, but those negotiations are faring far better than they were. I place on record my appreciation for the endeavours of not only the management of the MFS but also the Federal President, Mick Doyle, who has come to South Australia and effectively taken over those negotiations. It seems that whenever Mick Doyle is involved in negotiations we move 10 steps forwards and, if he is called to one of his other Federal responsibilities in another jurisdiction, we take another two steps backwards. But I am optimistic of a favourable outcome with Mick undertaking negotiations as the national secretary in South Australia.

The union now has a genuine desire to resolve this matter, but had the members accepted the Government's original offer fire fighters would have had a pay increase on 1 December and we would be negotiating another agreement now, and it defies every logic that they did not accept it because those two time frames have now passed

**Mr BASS:** I refer to page 370 of the Program Estimates and the capital expenditure for the provision of fire service facilities. The 1996-97 figure has increased substantially. What improvements in station and equipment are planned for this financial year?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** A number of projects is planned for this financial year, including an additional \$2.87 million for six appliances. There is also a carry over from the previous financial year of \$1.318 million for four appliances that will be ready for collection during this financial year. There is an allocation of \$335 000 for level 2 protective clothing, and that is part of an ongoing program within the service to upgrade the level of protection to fire fighters and reduce their occupational health and safety risks. The computer-aided dispatch (CAD) implementation has been allocated \$191 000 for the first phase of the establishment of shared communications.

That is a shared system, with the Metropolitan Fire Service and the ambulance service utilising the one facility.

At this stage it is highly likely there will be two computer-aided dispatch centres in Adelaide: one at the current police location where dispatch services will be provided for police and the State Emergency Service; and the other centre will be within the Metropolitan Fire Service location to dispatch services to the MFS, CFS and ambulance service. Each centre will be a back up for the other, with the MFS, ambulance and CFS facility being a training facility for new operators. That particular process is not dissimilar to that applied in other jurisdictions in South Australia.

At this time, probably the jurisdiction most advanced with new equipment is Victoria, which is about to undertake the second phase implementation of the new computer-aided dispatch system for its Country Fire Authority and Metropolitan Fire Service. The collocation of fire and ambulance stations will receive a \$1.5 million injection for the replacement of Ridgehaven and Mount Gambier stations, and \$186 000 to upgrade existing stations in line with occupational health and safety regulations.

**Mr BASS:** The commentary on major resource variation between years 1995-96 and 1996-97 at page 373 of the Program Estimates states:

Capital expenditure is mainly appliances, four pumpers . . . and two specialist vehicles.

Why does the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service require four new pumpers when it already has quite a sizeable fleet of fire appliances? What are the two specialist vehicles, and what specialist tasks are they designed for?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I can assure the honourable member that, particularly after the fireboat incident, absolutely every appliance which is purchased for the Metropolitan Fire Service and which gets in the budget goes through the third degree. It is true that the Metropolitan Fire Service does have a good operational fleet. Indeed, it has 64 urban pumpers in both metropolitan and country stations. The average age of those is 12 years, and members will note that is actually an older average age than that of the present Country Fire Service fleet.

**Mr BASS:** It's older than the boat.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** It's certainly older than the boat. There are 27 pumpers that are greater than 15 years old, and a further 10 are greater than nine years old. Some work has been undertaken on the cost effective life of a fire appliance. At this time, the Metropolitan Fire Service is saying that it is 15 years. We are comparing some of that data with that of the Country Fire Service which has a 20 year life for its appliances. Members will note that early in the Country Fire Service estimates questioning, I indicated that it was introducing an urban type pumper. We will be assessing that for wear and tear as well to determine whether or not the 15 years is a little too early to dispose of an appliance.

However, based on evidence I have seen, I am prepared to accept that 15 years is a reasonable age for a metropolitan pumper. Therefore, those appliances that have exceeded that age are the ones being replaced. So the replacement program involves five pumpers per year, to replace the older fleet, and that will not cause the same difficulties for the MFS capital works budget that the CFS had when it bought without funding in advance. Two specialist vehicles are pump rescue appliances, and they are based on the general urban pumper design, and they will carry additional rescue equipment to act as heavy rescue units. These vehicles are dual purpose and will increase the availability of pumps and therefore improve

fire fighting capability available to the community. These appliances will be located in suburbs to support actions at fire grounds and rescue incidents.

**Mr BASS:** It also states:

The construction and delivery of a 37m Bronto Skylift aerial appliance.

What is that?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** One of the joys of the job has been learning a lot of new technology and finding out what it means. Obviously, when I was confronted with a request to buy an appliance for the cost of \$950 000, I had awful images of the fireboat revisited. I made sure that I was convinced of the value of purchasing this appliance. As it has been explained to me, the Bronto is an elevated cage platform. It is on an articulated hydraulic boom, and it is capable of reaching heights of 37 metres above ground level. It provides a very stable site from which to direct a stream of water onto a fire from well above ground level. It also allows rescue operations to be undertaken from a large variety of locations, and the height also allows for improved observation and assessment of a fire incident.

It is also capable of being used as a lighting tower, which has the obvious advantage of lighting a large area without impeding activities at a rescue site. The platform can actually be manoeuvred from the elevated cage or at ground level, so it has a high degree of flexibility, and I am told that it is a very safe appliance. It is also a very sophisticated apparatus to the extent that, to compensate for the vagaries of wind and smoke travel, compressed air is supplied to four outlets in the cage to supply crews with respirable air at all times, should it be required. Many rescue and cutting tools obviously can also operate with that type of air supply, and electric power is available to provide energy for the lighting that I talked about and for electrical tools and the like.

A number of water outlets effectively permit the cage to also act as a mobile fire hydrant to supply water at locations where the hydrant system might be damaged or may not have been installed correctly. The appliance combines the reach of a turntable ladder of 37 metres and effectively the operational flexibility of an articulated arm. The appliance is the only type that has this sort of versatility. It weighs 26 tonnes, and obviously it has to meet all the Australian design rules and comply with the relevant sections of the Road Traffic Act. Construction mounting and final fabrication of the appliance has been completed by a local South Australian company, the Australian Fire Company. It was fabulous to see a South Australian company win a tender of that size.

**Mr BASS:** I refer to page 373 of the Program Estimates, which states that the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service will be continuing the program of joint communication infrastructures with the CFS and SAAS. What is the CAD system? How will this improve the dispatch and control of emergency service vehicles?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I touched on the CAD system earlier. As I explained, it stands for computer aided dispatch system (or is often called common computer aided dispatch system). As I indicated to the member for Playford earlier, if United Fire Fighters and consultants had consulted with me, I could have given them some of the detail they did not have. In March 1995, I approved the establishment of an emergency services executive group, with an aim of developing initially a feasibility study and later implementation plan for a combined emergency services dispatch system for all emergency services plus police. A reference group consisting

of senior emergency services personnel was formed, and it was convened by a project director from what was then known as the Office of Information Technology and which, of course, today is an agency. The study concluded that the South Australian emergency services and police should, indeed, share communication centres and a common computer aided dispatch system. Obviously, response and information needs for emergency services are essential to be timely and accurate, and they all have that same requirement, so there was obvious sense in combining them in the one facility. As I explained to the Committee earlier, it was recommended the fire and ambulance and Country Fire Service operate from the Metropolitan Fire Service site, with police and the State Emergency Service operating from the police site, and the former also to act as a training site for new dispatched trainees.

The project is at the stage of developing a full business case, and I expect to have that before Cabinet by about September this year. The first phase of the system—and I insist the system be phased in, as around the world there are examples of emergency service organisations trying to implement too much at once—will just simply allow for a more rapid response for emergency services through inclusion of a mapping system, derived from geographic information systems, and it will be able to interface real-time mapping and spatial information and vehicle locations.

The second phase will introduce automatic vehicle location, so an operator will know at any one point in time where a vehicle is. Obviously, that will have particular benefit to the Police Department, too; if there is an officer in distress call, they will know exactly where that vehicle is from that sort of technology. I would also envisage in later phases the implementation of what today is known as pen-based technology—the ability effectively to use a computer as a writing implement, with the aid of an electronic device that is revolutionising the way a lot of work is being done around the world, particularly in emergency services.

There are huge benefits in that type of facility for the ambulance service, because medical guide sheets or cards that officers presently use can be provided by the hand-held computer and the officers can fill in the forms on the computer screen by writing on the screen with a device that resembles a pen which is actually an electronic probe and, as they write on the screen, their writing is transmitted into text on the computer screen. They arrive at the hospital, plug their computer into a printer, and print up what they have done with the patient—for example, the drugs that have been administered—and give it straight to the surgeon.

The advances from technology are enormous. I would expect this CAD project to be a developing one for more than a decade in this State. However, later this year I will be able to announce the schedule for the first phase as we again to take advantage of new technology.

#### **Membership:**

Mr Rossi substituted for Mr Bass.

**Mr ATKINSON:** My question is about licensing to operate an ambulance. Last year I travelled in the emergency van of the Hospitaller Programs which operates from premises in the city. I served on the evening shift. We started with a Glenside outpatient who needed a lift home. We dropped him at the Hindmarsh detoxification house, gave an old alcoholic a lift from the Salvos at Whitmore Square, where he had been playing up, to Archway at Port Adelaide,

and took a youth who was out on home brew from the Paralowie area to Hindmarsh, where we put him to bed for the night. Hospitaller Programs would like to place the people they help and who need it on their back on a stretcher and place them in the van, but owing to regulations by the department they are prohibited from doing so. We were unable to lay down the young man who was zonked by home brew because that would be a breach of the law; we had to sit him up all the way from Paralowie to Hindmarsh. Is this not an unreasonable regulation; and what can be done to remove obstacles to Hospitaller Programs being able to use a stretcher for the people who need that service?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am not sure whether the member has been in communication with Hospitaller Programs in recent times, but on 28 March this year I wrote to Mr Marcus Tomlian, the President of Hospitaller Programs, advising him that, in accordance with the Ambulance Services Act 1992, I was willing to grant a restricted licence, subject to a number of conditions. Essentially, they are that the restricted licence is to be regarded as a patient transport service licence only and restricted to patients who meet the following criteria: patients whose condition has been certified by a medical practitioner as being non-urgent and able to be transported by this means; patients (or their 'agents') who request non-urgent transport on the grounds of financial hardship and who are not expected to require clinical intervention; and patients involved in major incidents transported at the request of the SA Ambulance Service.

I also required that the service provided by the organisation should not be referred to in any way as an ambulance or paramedic service and indicated that they may describe the service as the Adelaide free patient transport service or any combination of words which does not include the expectation of medical treatment.

**Mr ATKINSON:** So they could not use the words 'emergency' or 'trauma'?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am not sure what words they may have indicated to you they would seek to use, but I made clear that they were not to be referred to in any combination of words that indicated an expectation of medical treatment. 'Trauma' and 'emergency' conjure the image of the expectation of medical treatment. They have not approached me with those words, but, at first hearing, I would need to be convinced that those words were appropriate.

**Mr ATKINSON:** So you would not grant the licence if they continued to use the words 'emergency', 'medical' or 'trauma'?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am not sure where the member is heading. His first concern was about a stretcher.

**Mr ATKINSON:** It is.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The indication that they could be granted a limited licence means that they can have a stretcher, and they are aware of that.

**Mr ATKINSON:** So they can have a stretcher?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Yes, and they were aware of that from March of this year under the guidelines. That is why I was not sure whether the member had had recent communication with the group. Indeed, I recall receiving a communication of thanks from them for the progress that had been made. Their licence has been granted for an initial period of 12 months so that we can be sure they are providing a service of an appropriate standard. I also put to them that, should they at any time wish to extend their level of care beyond patient transport in the restrictions I placed upon them, they should approach me for further approval. Obviously,

I reserve the right to refuse any such application which is not appropriate.

The reason for that process—and I would defend it as not being bureaucratic—is that the transport of patients is a serious business. As Minister, I have the responsibility vested in me that an ambulance licence should be granted only to an organisation which can demonstrate that it can provide a level of care. That level of care includes an assessment of the recruitment and training methods used by the group to be sure that they have ongoing training opportunities for their personnel and that they are trained to a standard to enable them to deliver the service that they wish to undertake. The last thing I want to do is grant a licence to an organisation which then has a patient death on its hands because it has not been professional enough. The guidelines are so stringent because they mean saving or not saving lives.

**Mr ATKINSON:** The work that the Hospitaller Programs do among the poor and people at the lowest points in their life is very important, and I think that every member of Parliament ought to mix in those circles once a year. I hope that the Minister will give Hospitaller Programs every opportunity to continue their good work.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I know that I signed the licence in the last couple of weeks, and I am advised that the formal processes have been entered into so that they have that licence operational.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think they have lobbied quite a few members of Parliament over the past few years, have they not?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** They have. Regrettably, in their infancy, there were within the organisation personnel who were disenchanted with the ambulance service provision in this State. Some may have been in the nasty St John bust-up. I had some fairly frank discussions with the Hospitaller Programs people, and I am pleased with the work that they are now undertaking.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I thought that they just wanted to be a transport service, but it seems they want to go further.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Some of the personnel, when they were first seeking a licence, in their letters and statements during discussions gave me the impression that they wanted far more than just a transport licence. They clearly were and are not in a position to be an ambulance service. As the member for Spence pointed out, they are able to provide a quality service in the way that I have described within those limitations, so they now have a licence to carry a stretcher and administer to people in that manner. They are not an ambulance or emergency service, but they are able to carry people and use a stretcher, if necessary.

**Mr ATKINSON:** They cover a section of the market that no ambulance service would want to cover.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** That is granted; there are standards in place. I think that Hospitaller Programs would now acknowledge that they can guarantee to operate to a standard because of the requirements that we have placed on them. They have also been assessed by my Medical Advisory Committee to ensure that they meet a certain standard. I will always be cautious in granting such licences. I would need to be convinced that organisations provide an appropriate service before granting a licence.

**Mr QUIRKE:** What savings in recurrent and capital expenditure will come from a collocation of engineering functions to the Deeds Road site?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The final details are not yet at my disposal, because that work has not been completed. I

should explain the member's question for the benefit of the Committee. The Metropolitan Fire Service operates a vehicle mechanical workshop, as does the ambulance service. In combining the two agencies consideration has been given to three options: the status quo, amalgamating the locations into one or outsourcing. That work was undertaken in conjunction with the Asset Management Task Force. I have not yet seen the calculations from the Asset Management Task Force, but I am advised that that work has not yet been completed. It is a further example of the sort of work we indicated to the union. We are more than happy to make details available when they are ready, but we obviously have to undertake the groundwork first.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Will the Minister make available the report regarding the engineering functions to the Committee when it is finished, together with the draft IT strategic plan, both of which are described on page 375 of the Program Estimates?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** At this stage they are internal working documents. I would need to take that question on notice. In the first instance, I cannot see that it is appropriate to make those reports available, because if they become public, particularly if any outsourcing work is being undertaken, it may allow some people to unfairly position themselves at this time. I am prepared to take the question on notice and consider it, but the answer will probably be 'No.'

**Mrs ROSENBERG:** I refer to page 373 of the Program Estimates in respect of the suppression program. Further collocation with the South Australian Ambulance Service in both country and metropolitan areas is indicated. In what way will the proposed collocation of the South Australian Ambulance and South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service benefit the community?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Obviously, the collocation of fire and ambulance stations offers some initial advantages in capital infrastructure. When one looks at what a fire station and an ambulance station actually are, one sees that they are essentially the same thing. They are buildings that accommodate vehicles, personnel and equipment, the main difference obviously being that the roof line of a fire station vehicle bay is higher than that for an ambulance station. There is no logical barrier to those vehicles being accommodated at the same location, particularly when one bears in mind that both the fire service and the ambulance service respond to similar criteria, that is, they aim to have a six minute response time to an incident within the metropolitan region. If one service strategically places its stations throughout the metropolitan region to achieve that, it stands to reason that the other would, if it did the same exercise, finish up with the same locations.

The fire service undertook that exercise in the early 1980s, and many fire stations were relocated under the previous Government to meet that six minute response time. The ambulance service developed in a different way and has its history in the St John organisation. It obtained many of its locations through estates that were often left to the St John organisation. Many of its properties are not ideally located around the metropolitan area to meet its response criteria. Further, at the time the initial joint venture agreement was put together by the previous Government for the ambulance service no consideration was given to resolving the ownership of properties.

So, we have today an ambulance service that is provided ultimately by the Government. Officers operate from locations that are owned by the St John organisation, because the property issues were never sorted through. For the past

2½ years we have sorted through the legal mine field and mess of grouping those properties together and transferring ownerships. We now have agreement for all metropolitan Adelaide properties, including the hangar at the West Beach airport, and we are progressing resolution on some of the country property issues.

So, the collocation of the services provides the additional benefit of being able immediately to rationalise out those unacceptable ambulance site locations within a relatively short period of time. It provides the benefit in country regions (for example, in Whyalla where there is a very good ambulance site) to expand the ambulance site to accommodate the fire service. Obviously, if we better locate our ambulance officers they are able to respond within a better time.

It is worth mentioning for the benefit of the Chairman that our first purpose-built collocated ambulance service is at Brooklyn Park. It is a matter of shame for the United Firefighters Union that today that station accommodates only its personnel, because union members from stations other than Brooklyn Park came to that site, crossed arms and refused to allow ambulance personnel to occupy their workplace. They demanded a pay rise for collocation—not a pay rise for collocation just of Brooklyn Park fire employees but for every fire employee in the State. That has soured the benefits of collocation and has meant that the ambulance service is unable to move its ambulance into that location until we resolve that matter. This means that the ambulance service has not been able to deliver the benefit of a two minute faster response time to some western suburbs' people.

I sincerely hope that no-one dies because the ambulance is two minutes later than it would otherwise have been. I can only put on record again the fact that this is a bloody-minded union activity which has occurred at that station. I ask the United Firefighters Union to exercise common sense and move union thugs out of the way so that the officers can collocate. The station was actually jointly designed by personnel from both services. As you know, Mr Chairman, the firefighters and the ambulance personnel were greatly disturbed that that should happen. However, for obvious reasons the firefighting personnel at Brooklyn Park were put in a very difficult position if they did not agree to the demands of their union.

**Mrs ROSENBERG:** In the Program Estimates at page 375 one of the significant initiatives, improvements and achievements for 1995-96 was the completion of the draft information technology strategic plan for the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service and the South Australian Ambulance Service amalgamations. Why did the plan have to be prepared?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I confess to being very particular about information technology activities within my agencies. While it is the career path from which I came before I entered politics, I have also seen many information technology disasters within Government. It is of concern to me that Government in the past has not focused sufficiently on strategic information technology delivery but has, rather, reacted in a knee-jerk fashion. This Government has acted swiftly to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to all IT development. Even in being part of that, it is important that we understand what agency needs are. So, the plan was commissioned with the aim of developing an information technology strategy of an integrated fashion to serve the two organisations over the next five years. In preparing that plan it was necessary for the consultant to examine the detailed needs of both the fire service and the ambulance service.

Because the management information systems for each service have evolved separately, there are obviously different problems facing each organisation. For example, the ambulance service has an urgent need to upgrade its computer hardware and software so that it has a system which operates with some stability and efficiency. On the other hand, the Metropolitan Fire Service has an existing information plan but it desperately requires updating.

This project was therefore commissioned and it also took into account the whole of Government mandated systems, such as Concept for Human Resources and Masterpiece for the financial systems. It is also being used in such a way as to plan the amalgamation of the administrations of the two services. A schedule has been drawn up for that and it will be used by the consultant in planning the amalgamation of administrative areas of the two agencies. The plan was prepared by Ernst & Young, which did an excellent job. I have had the opportunity to read it from front to back and am confident that it now provides both agencies with a meaningful and detailed implementation program during their time as separate agencies and, ultimately, that as a single agency.

**Mrs ROSENBERG:** On page 374 of the Program Estimates, one of the specific targets and objectives for 1995-96 was to gain Cabinet approval for the Fire Equipment Services to be separated from the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service. Was this achieved and, if so, what are the latest developments in the process of separation and corporatisation of the Fire Equipment Services?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** This is another area where union activity and consultation is particularly important. The United Fire Fighters' Union represents the Fire Equipment Services Division. I made it aware very early in my time in Government that it would be our intention to separate the Fire Equipment Services Division so that it could undertake its activities in a more corporate manner than the way it could as part of an emergency service response agency. The union was concerned that it would not be able to represent that group of employees. I put to the union that this Government's policy allowed employees the freedom to belong or not belong to a union of their choice. So, if the union represented its members well, I was sure that they would be more than happy to remain with the union but, if it did not, that they would be equally more than happy to abdicate union membership altogether or undertake membership of another union, such as the Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

The union did not heed those words and it did not change its constitution. So, it was left with the dilemma, as we approached the situation of separating the Fire Equipment Services Division from the Metropolitan Fire Service, of no longer having constitutional coverage. I could not help that. The Secretary of the union knew from having had a number of meetings with me that this step was about to occur. Regulations pursuant to the Public Corporations Act have now been proclaimed and will be effective from 1 July this year. They will apply the relevant sections of the Act to me as the Minister for Emergency Services to create a subsidiary called the Fire Equipment Services (South Australia), which I have placed within the Department for State Government Services for administrative and reporting purposes. Of course, Services SA is an agency which, for many years during half of its time as the Department of State Services, has had a mandate of being responsible for a Government business enterprise. I believe it will be able to provide the corporate support that is more relevant to the work undertaken by the Fire Equipment Services Division.

It was of concern to me that the organisation was not sufficiently funded to allow it to develop its business and also that its North Adelaide premises were in an expensive real estate location and were not ideally suited to its activities. So the Fire Equipment Services Division has entered into a lease at a new site in Deacon Avenue, Richmond. It commenced operations from that site about a week ago. The moneys derived from the sale of the North Adelaide property are being used to fund the organisation to allow it to expand its business opportunities. The FES will continue to provide a valuable service of the provision and servicing of fire extinguishers, and it will meet a community service responsibility by ensuring that people who live particularly in remote South Australia who might not otherwise receive such a service will know that someone is prepared to service their extinguishers. It also provides a benchmark of costs for the private sector who, in some cases, are undertaking some of these activities to ensure that prices for South Australian businesses are kept at a reasonable level.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Has the Minister decided to place an additional officer in his office to handle emergency service issues and, if so, where will funding for this position come from?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** Yes, I have, and I have announced this matter before. I have a position that will operate not from within my office budget, but that person will be located in my office simply because there is an empty office available and I wish to incur no additional accommodation expenditure. That person will be responsible as the Project Director for Emergency Services for coordinating such things as the amalgamation of the Fire and Ambulance Service; the collocation of various stations, including the volunteer emergency services; the communications and dispatch project involving emergency services; and also, in respect of the police, the combination of training facilities. Funding for the position has been derived from each of the emergency service agencies which have been requested to provide an amount for the duration of the position, with a specific amount for this financial year. The amount they have been asked to provide should well and truly be exceeded by the savings the position is able to generate.

**Mr QUIRKE:** How will the occupant of this position be selected, and will it be open only to persons who work in emergency service agencies?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The position was finalised only within the last week as an MAS3 position. It will be advertised Public Service wide and will be available to employees not only from within existing emergency service agencies but also those who work in other Government agencies.

**Mr QUIRKE:** The commentary on page 375 explains the fall in recurrent expenditure of \$1.802 million as following the removal of Fire Equipment Services. However, I assume that Fire Equipment Services is self-funded. In fact, I understand that it made a profit last year. What impact on receipts and expenditure will the removal of Fire Equipment Services from the MFS budget have, and what therefore are the real savings targets for the MFS?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** It is true that the Fire Equipment Services Division is required to contribute a profit component to the MFS. As the honourable member would appreciate, while I was in Opposition I often raised the fact that that unit did not make a profit. Efficiencies generated under this Government will make sure that the unit is more profitable than it was under the previous Government. Fire

Equipment Services is an emergency service agency. It is not there to draw funds from a business unit. So, the efficiency that will be gained from the move will allow the Fire Equipment Services Division to be a far more profitable and business-like organisation and improve its level of service delivery to ensure that it has a business focus. It has nothing whatsoever to do with whether or not it returns revenue to the MFS.

**Mr ROSSI:** The 1995-96 and 1996-97 specific targets and objectives on page 373 of the Program Estimates focus on training and development of the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service. What steps have been taken by the Government to establish a common facility for training of emergency services personnel in general?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As I indicated in some of my previous answers, one of the roles that will be undertaken by the officer to whom the member for Playford referred earlier is following through the amalgamation of training centres for emergency services. One of the amazing things that I found on becoming Minister, not only for Emergency Services but initially for Police and also Correctional Services, was that all these organisations had separate training facilities. For example, Correctional Services had a training facility at North Adelaide, which at present is on the market; the ambulance service has a facility at Payneham; the Metropolitan Fire Service has a facility at Brookway Park; the police obviously have a facility at Fort Largs as well as one at Echunga; and the Country Fire Service has a facility at Brukunga. It made sense to examine the nature of training that occurs at these facilities. So, again, I commissioned a consultancy to examine the training needs of emergency services.

Not surprisingly, there was considerable overlap between those training needs. Also not surprisingly there was considerable under utilisation of each of the sites and the recommendation of the consultants was that there would be considerable benefit in amalgamating several of those sites into one or in using one facility, disposing of the surplus properties and ensuring that the training for personnel was done in a more uniform manner. It recommended that there was nothing wrong in having personnel from all services sitting side by side in the same classroom. In the case of the Correctional Services Department, it would seem from our further work that they will not need to utilise a facility with Emergency Services at all as there is a number of TAFE and university lecture theatres not fully utilised every hour of the day and that agency will be able to make use of some of those other Government facilities for their classroom training, which is all it was using its North Adelaide facility for.

The CFS Brukunga facility is now used by the State Emergency Service and the Metropolitan Fire Service and some of the funds derived from sales of other properties will be used to better upgrade that facility to ensure that it is developed to an even higher standard than it is at present. The Ambulance Service examination is still under way, as it is for the Metropolitan Fire Service, to ascertain whether it is advantage through using the TAFE lecture theatre operations or the Fort Largs facility and I expect those decisions to be made in the near future.

There is also a facility at West Beach, built by the previous Government and owned by SARDI. It has a high standard lecture theatre, which is being taken advantage of by some of my agencies. It is owned by Government and is probably still drastically under-utilised. It is about more central utilisation of resources and about providing greater

value for the dollar that we are expending on that emergency service training.

**Mr ROSSI:** I refer to page 373 of the Program Estimates, '1995-96 specific targets and objectives'. Amendments were made to the SAMFS and CFS mutual aid procedure. What amendments were made and how have these amendments improved service delivery?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The principle behind enhanced mutual aid is to ensure that the response to any fires in boundary areas between the two services consists of a designated number of general purpose pumpers and other specialist appliances and is composed of the closest available appliances. No member would want to be in a situation of hearing about a fire that is at a location close to the boundary of the CFS but responded to by an appliance further away simply because an appliance from that service was not close at hand. Enhanced mutual aid ensures that those boundary lines, which are fuzzy at times, are better responded to. It ensures that the community has the best fire protection possible from the appliances available, regardless of which fire service has primary legislative responsibility for those areas.

The agreement identifies the fundamental difference between full-time and volunteer services by extending SAMFS responses to all emergency calls in the CFS boundary areas, whether or not confirmed fires. That has meant that we are getting a lot more Metropolitan Fire Service appliances called out as part of mutual response. I am aware that the Program Estimates papers show that a couple of financial years ago there were only about 10 callouts to some of those mutual response areas. In 1992-93 there were 10 out-of-district calls for the Metropolitan Fire Service overall and most of them were in CFS areas. After we started implementing changes, in 1993-94 there were 535 calls and in 1994-95 there were 711. That increase to 711 from 10 calls—701 more callouts—indicates a far better level of rapport between the two services. Having developed that level of rapport, I do not want to see it damaged by the concept report that the United Fire Fighters' Union has been floating around.

I am grateful to the MFS officers who are saying openly to the CFS that they are not pushing for that concept plan and that they did not know about it until the union talked about it. They have developed a good working relationship. When the union talks about its increasing number of callouts, that is where they are. In the main it is in those out-of-district areas. As absolute proof of that, on page 373 of the Program Descriptions, the table I am referring to breaks into far greater detail the tables that have been in Budget Estimates in the past. Budget Estimates in the past simply had a performance indicator of total incidents attended. We have broken down those incidents in the number of categories. Property fires for 1994-95 totalled approximately 1 693, and for 1993-94 they totalled 1 694. That is pretty well *status quo* for property fires. Vehicle fires totalled 491 to 554 and in 1992-93 it was 645, which is again a reasonably stable situation. Grass/tree/rubbish fires totalled 2 062 this current financial year compared with 1 952 previously. Members can see from that table that the union is claiming that it is required to do more and is getting a lot more callouts, which are actually the out-of-district calls, as we ensure that enhanced mutual aid works as it should work.

**Mr ROSSI:** I refer to page 374 of the Program Estimates. One of the broad objectives is to ensure that buildings are constructed with safety equipment installed to provide a fire-

safe environment for all occupants. How is this achieved and what is the annual cost of providing the service?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** This is obviously a particularly important aspect of fire service work and the prevention measures that have been introduced nationally over the past decade have meant that we now have buildings that are better designed to combat the risk of fire. Officers of the Fire Safety Department appraise the plans of proposed buildings prior to local government building approval under the Building Code of Australia to include a certain fire safety procedure and if developers request a variation to any of the fire safety requirements. The department reports to the authority, be it local government or a private certifier, which must consider the opinions expressed by the MFS. The department often liaises with consultants, particularly on large projects, through the life of the project to ensure that all fire safety matters are considered at the appropriate time, thereby avoiding expensive delays and rework.

Prior to the issue of a certificate of occupancy by the local government authority or private certifier, the MFS will inspect and test the installed fire safety features such as fire detection systems, hydrant and hose reel systems, smoke handling systems, and so on, and report on whether these features are installed and operating satisfactorily. Provision of this service costs about \$235 000 per annum, some costs of which are able to be recovered.

It is worth mentioning that changes of this nature across the years have certainly had an effect on MFS callouts. Some work I had undertaken by the agency recently produced an interesting result. I was surprised to find that the chances of a firefighter being called out to operational duty during any 24 hour period is 4 per cent. That includes not just fires but also vehicle accident rescue—which we have encouraged the service to become more involved in—and dangerous substance spillage. In all of the public utterances by the union, it needs to be considered that we are talking about an agency that needs to be at the ready, needs to be properly trained and have professional staff; but the chance of callout in a 24 hour period is 4 per cent.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I turn now to the current industrial dispute in respect to the MFS staff. I understand that the offer made to employees is that, by a reduction of 81 operational positions this year, which equates to something like a 20 per cent reduction in front line services, employees will receive a 12 per cent pay rise in graduated steps. Is that correct?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** No, that is not essentially correct. It is a good follow up to my statement about the 4 per cent call out. Obviously, since the time the fire services were first formed, the Metropolitan Fire Service has undergone a number of changes: there was not available either the equipment to combat fires or the equipment to warn about them such as electronic alarm systems, smoke detectors or the requirements to install sprinkler systems. These have all changed the way in which the fire service operates today and will continue to operate into the turn of the century. It is a dilemma facing Governments around the world as to what changes are necessary to alter the way in which those fire services operate. That dilemma was felt by the previous Government in regional areas.

A good example is to compare Port Pirie with Mount Gambier, two regional centres. Port Pirie has a full-time fire fighting presence: it has had 41 firefighters there. That goes back to a deal done at the time when Tom Stott was the Independent Speaker for the Lower House. On the other hand, Mount Gambier has one full-time staff member and

retained firefighters. Mount Gambier had more call outs than Port Pirie. Mount Gambier costs about \$300 000 to run, yet Port Pirie costs about \$2.1 million. The people of Mount Gambier have been getting no less a service than the people of Port Pirie. Those are the sorts of issues that we must now focus on concerning what the fire service should look like in the future. A Port Pirie situation will not be recreated at any regional centre. At this time there is an agreement that the full-time staff at Port Pirie will be progressively reduced and auxiliary firefighters will be introduced into that location. I announced that some months ago at Port Pirie when I met with the local community about the matter.

As to the city, it is obviously a problem of which the union is aware. Indeed, the union Secretary, Paul Caica, put to me at the first meeting we had after I became Minister that the biggest difficulty that Governments faced with fire services was that they had a well trained, well equipped and professional work force that was drastically under utilised. That is true. They are drastically under utilised and the 4 per cent call out demonstrates that. At the same time we need to have those personnel ready when a fire occurs. The issue then becomes where do we draw the line? How many staff do we need to have to do the job and what resources do we need to call out others? That is why the service has now undertaken an analysis of how it uses positions. The fire boat about which I spoke earlier is obviously a target to reduce the number of personnel and the union is well aware that the 81 comprises some staff from that boat, regardless of the decision to keep it or otherwise.

The other issue involves the way in which the service has been structured over the years. It is unlike other services, for example, the Ambulance Service, which has a career structure and a designated number of people at particular levels, as with the Public Service where there are a certain number of ASO1 and ASO2s. They have differing duties, which is why they are classified as such. The fire service did not have those set numbers. People would go from a firefighter to a senior firefighter: they served about eight years and passed some examinations to prove they knew a bit about firefighting and they became a senior firefighter. We have over 200 of those but in reality we probably need only about 36. As to station officers who manage a station and are in control of an incident, we have 18 metropolitan fire stations and one at Port Pirie with full-time staff, making 19. For those 19 stations there are 160 station officers.

Even allowing for four shifts on a continuous cycle, one might say we need 76 station officers. Negotiations with the union have been fair and reasonable indicating that 47 of those should go in this instance. There are district officer positions where we have 21 district officers for three fire districts. To have 21 people managing three fire districts is an interesting management exercise. There would be changes to the number of personnel riding some appliances consistent with what is happening in some areas and in other jurisdictions, for example, Victoria. I know that the union is running round claiming that public lives will be put at risk by the reduction in numbers, regardless of the pay increase. No offer has been put to them of 12 per cent; they have received no formal offer for a 12 per cent pay increase. They have been negotiating within parameters and they received a paper putting a broad range of options. So, those 81 positions need to go regardless. The union has the opportunity to draw the benefit of that through a pay increase. It is perfectly fair and reasonable for us to put to them that opportunity, which is why I have welcomed having people who have Federal

secretarial positions knowing the situation in other States and being here to try to resolve this in a sensible manner.

One might ask why we do not go in and do it. In normal circumstances we would, but the Metropolitan Fire Service has registered a bizarre agreement which requires that on any one shift there will be 126 personnel on duty regardless of changes in time or anything. That is a registered agreement and it needs to be changed. Otherwise staffing numbers would have already been changed. Every consideration has been given to the number of firefighters required. It puts no-one's life at risk, but I suggest that, if we went to a call for separation packages, we would get people to take the 81 positions. I am now getting firefighters contacting me and saying, 'Don't listen to the union—I want a package.' That is the other side of the coin.

**Mr QUIRKE:** What percentage of the total cost of the MFS is self-funded?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I appreciate that the honourable member may be picking up on the union's claim that the Government does not make significant savings through this because 12.5 per cent of the cost of the fire service is provided by the Government, 12.5 per cent by local government and 75 per cent through insurance premiums. That 75 per cent is provided by South Australians. In early budget estimates questioning I indicated that we are considering options for a total new way of funding. We have to ask the question whether or not it is appropriate that funding should occur through insurance premiums. It means that if you do not insure your house, you do not pay for the fire service even though it will come to put out the fire if it is there. In order to move to an equitable way of funding, we also need to ensure that we have an efficient structure. At the end of the day it is South Australian money.

It has been put to me on a number of occasions that it is only 12.5 per cent. The 'it's only 12.5 per cent' argument was put to every Minister before me and put to those Ministers during the time of the Labor Government saying, 'It is only 12.5 per cent to buy a fire boat; it is only 12.5 per cent to let the staffing get out of control; and it is only 12.5 per cent to get everyone's insurance premiums up.' I would like to see South Australians get the benefit of at worst contained and at best reduced insurance premiums by providing a more cost effective fire service.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Is the MFS currently filling operational staff vacancies? Is it the case that there is no promotion of senior firefighters to vacant station officer positions at this stage?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I hope the answer is 'Yes.' I am advised that the answer is 'Yes' and it is for the reasons I outlined earlier. Clearly, we have an excess in numbers and there is not lot of sense in continuing to fill positions permanently that we hope to negotiate through the EB process to no longer exist.

**Mrs ROSENBERG:** Will the Minister give details of the Ambulance Service capital expenditure for 1996-97, which is shown at page 379 of the Program Estimates, and will the Minister detail for the Committee why the Ambulance Service is spending \$3 million on its vehicle fleet?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The service will be investing \$4.6 million on capital expenditure initiatives in the 1996-97 financial year. Subject to the resolution of the current industrial negotiations, obviously the most significant initiative will be the collocation with the MFS at a number of metropolitan and country locations. The initiative includes the communications centre to be relocated to the Wakefield

Street fire headquarters, and \$346 000 has been allocated for that relocation exercise; and an allocation of \$150 000 for the relocation of a Marion crew to the O'Halloran Hill Metropolitan Fire Service.

This particular station becomes very important to the Southern Expressway, and my agencies have undertaken work with Maunsell and Partners in the planning of that road. Ambulance and fire vehicles will be in the vicinity of that station and will require quick access to that expressway. It is crucial that that station is ready at the time of the opening of the Southern Expressway. The total relocation of the Torrens ambulance station to the nearby Camden Park MFS station will cost about \$150 000 and the ambulance contribution to the construction of a joint facility at Mount Gambier will be \$125 000. No capital expenditure of any significance is intended on existing buildings for this financial year.

The Ambulance Service, in conjunction with the fire service, will be implementing the new computer-aided dispatch system. There will be a significant upgrade of the Ambulance Service with an allocation of \$3 million; 26 twin-berth ambulances will be acquired and, for selected country locations, 16 of the smaller purpose built single-berth ambulances. While those single-berth ambulances are intended for the carriage of one patient, they are capable of being used for two patients, but obviously conditions are a little more cramped than the twin-berth ambulances that are used at the moment in city areas.

**Mrs ROSENBERG:** My question relates to paramedics, and I have a particular interest in the Aldinga Ambulance Centre which has a paramedic on duty. At page 383 of the Program Estimates, a broad objective of the metropolitan emergency ambulance program is to have one paramedic and one advanced life support officer crewing each emergency ambulance by the year 2000. I know the Minister touched on this in his opening remarks, but could he expand on the benefits the development a paramedic system will have to the community of South Australia?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The paramedic system has been one of the resounding successes of the Ambulance Service in recent times, and it is one in which I have taken a close interest, principally because of my lack of medical knowledge. I consulted extensively with the Minister for Health and a number of other medical practitioners and professionals to determine the benefits of a paramedic system. Other jurisdictions in Australia and elsewhere in the world have paramedic systems, and my concern was to ensure that we did not skill ambulance officers to the extent they may be tempted to undertake more roadside work on a patient and delay their transport to hospital.

The paramedic system has been carefully overseen by the Ambulance Service's medical advisory committee, which is very pleased with its progress. My Chief Executive, Mr Pickering, has experienced ambulance services overseas in New Zealand and the United States of America, and has himself worked in paramedic services. He was convinced from the outset of the benefits of this system. His knowledge has proved to be absolutely right. The most immediately quantifiable benefits of the system are best demonstrated by the survival rates of patients following out-of-hospital ventricular fibrillation cardiac arrest.

There has been a large improvement in the survival rate of such patients, and I have detailed this information to the House of Assembly previously. The figures are already comparable with some of the best centres in the world. The benefits to patients suffering trauma or medical emergencies



are no less dramatic, although they are probably a little more difficult to quantify in statistical terms. The effects on both mortality and morbidity of this group of patients has certainly profited by those individuals and also the hospital system as a whole. If we are able to get better resuscitated and managed patients to hospital, they often need less intensive and shorter treatment regimes, thus generating long-term savings to the hospital systems.

The Minister for Health was particularly keen to impress that point upon me when we first commenced implementation of this new system. Paramedics have also helped raise the standard of patient care across the service, and those officers have become role models and teachers to many of their colleagues. They have certainly made a considerable impact within the service with their demonstrated knowledge. Since the introduction of the first paramedic course in October 1994, 31 paramedics have been trained and deployed throughout the metropolitan area, with one paramedic being located at the country centres of Murray Bridge and Whyalla. To date 6 600 patients have been transported by paramedic crews. A further 19 paramedics will be trained during 1996-97, 12 of whom will be deployed in the metropolitan area, and seven of whom will go to country centres.

**Mrs ROSENBERG:** The account for the 1994-95 year, as reported at page 511 of the Auditor-General's Report, shows that the Ambulance Service made contributions to St John Ambulance South Australia Incorporated for capital improvements to buildings used principally by the service. Will the Minister explain what is happening with the properties, particularly now that the St John organisation has indicated its intention to withdraw from the Ambulance Service?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** One unfortunate aspect of the legislation that resulted in the present Ambulance Act was that no work was undertaken by the previous Government on resolving the property issues, and a complex legal web has been worked through by the Crown Solicitor's office to develop the legal process to transfer to the Ambulance Service those properties identified by the St John organisation as being solely belonging to the Ambulance Service. It is important that members of this Committee understand that we are talking about two organisations.

The paid Ambulance Service, to add to the confusion, was registered as SA St John Ambulance Service Incorporated, but is a totally different organisation from the volunteer St John organisation. For that reason, and certainly with the approval of St John, we registered a trading name of SA Ambulance Service and that trading name is used extensively by the paid service so that it is not confused with St John. In referring to SA Ambulance Service, I loosely refer to it as the Ambulance Service. The properties, certainly in the metropolitan area, for transfer have been agreed to by St John, and ownership issues with respect to country properties are being worked through at this time.

The Ambulance Service is progressively collocating with the Metropolitan Fire Service in those areas where the siting of the ambulance station is not presently suitable or, where new premises are required by either one of the services, the decision is that we will build a new facility to cater for both, if neither one nor the other serves as an adequate premise. We envisage that principally most of the country properties will remain in St John ownership, but the Ambulance Service will enter into occupancy agreements with St John for each of those properties. That then provides St John with a guaranteed occupancy agreement and income, which is the sort of

thing one would expect in a tenancy agreement with any organisation, regardless of who the owners of that property are. That process should ensure that we have an Ambulance Service that is sure about its direction and sure about the property it occupies, and that St John, as an organisation, has greater certainty about its future.

It is worth noting that St John has also received allocation in this budget for \$100 000 which has been taken from the revenue from poker machines. That \$100 000 will be put to good use by the St John organisation. I certainly was pleased to advise St John that that money is available. I know that you, Mr Chairman, through your longstanding and respected involvement with St John, have been pushing for that, and I know the St John organisation is appreciative of the effort you have made on its behalf.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Has the Minister intervened to refuse to accept the nomination of the UTLC to the governing body of St John South Australia?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As the honourable member would be aware, the Government has a policy following Cabinet decision such that, where a board vacancy exists, that vacancy needs to be addressed to help Government overcome the gender imbalance that existed on Government boards. That is something that is largely embraced by all sides of politics: that we should ensure that we have equal representation on Government boards. The imbalance has been quite significant. In order to achieve that, our Government determined that, where a vacancy arises that is to be filled by nomination from an outside organisation, that outside organisation should be requested to provide three names, one of which must be male and one of which must be female. Unfortunately, the United Trades and Labor Council has refused to do that. It has nominated just one name—that of the current Secretary of the Ambulance Employees' Association. That is unfortunate because, as I indicated earlier, I have had some good dealings with the UTLC during its involvement with the industries committee for Correctional Services.

I have contacted it and implored it to keep within the spirit of the Government requirement to provide three names. That is not to say that the nomination may not be filled by Mr Palmer, and certainly it can indicate that he would be its first preference. It is not at all unreasonable to require that female nominees be forwarded. I hasten to admit that that is not the only organisation that has refused this: the only other organisation I have struck was also in the ambulance service, and that was the Ambulance Employees Association itself. Indeed, the vacancy for its representative is about 11 months old, and only about three weeks ago I received its nominations. I was pleased to advise it that I would be putting forward one of its nominees to be included on the board but, in the interests of Cabinet efficiency, would wait for the UTLC nominees so I could process both together.

I am sure that is a matter we can resolve with the United Trades and Labor Council. To date, I have been pleased to appoint two female members to the board. Two respected professionals, Dr Jennifer Menz, who is a specialist in dermatology and who was appointed because of her knowledge and experience in voluntary work in the community and also her medical knowledge, and Robyn Pak Poy, a solicitor who was appointed to the board for her legal skills. Both those people have proved to be superb board members—indeed, as have been the other current members, John Blackwell, who is the Executive Director of the country section of the South Australian Health Commission; Marcus

Diamond, who is a retired banker, Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee and who, at the time of this appointment, was a member of the board of the Adelaide Bank; Rick Butler, who is a farmer and a nominated representative of country volunteers; and Leith Daniel, likewise, a farmer and representative of country volunteers. Those organisations, too, have been asked to forward female nominees at the next vacancy call. There is also Professor Gary Phillips, who is the Director of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care at the Flinders Medical Centre; and, finally, my CEO, Mr Ian Pickering. So it is a professional board.

I am endeavouring to rectify the gender imbalance in accordance with what I believe is a very sensible Government policy and to insist on a standard of excellence in board appointments. I hope the UTLC understands the reasons for that and responds to it, because, after all, about 30 per cent of the ambulance service is female.

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

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State Government Services, \$24 095 000

**Departmental Advisers:**

Ms A. Howe, Chief Executive Officer, Services SA.  
 Mr A. Secker, Executive Director, Operations.  
 Mr B. Miller, Director, Resources Management.  
 Mr R. Frinsdorf, Director, Supply SA.  
 Mr B. Griffin, Director, Real Estate Management.  
 Ms M. Marsland, Director, Building Management.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** With the permission of the Committee, I intend to make a brief opening statement about this agency.

Services SA was established on 30 October 1995 from the amalgamation of the former Departments of Building Management and State Services. The benefits of this initiative are already evident and will be ongoing. They include, by way of example, the sale and leaseback of the public sector light vehicle fleet, expected to result in savings of not less than \$2.5 million a year commencing from July 1996; administration savings of a minimum of \$650 000 per annum; and savings of more than \$3 million introduced in a period of three months, but obviously with work undertaken prior to that to reduce Government office accommodation costs. This was achieved in the three months to 30 December 1995 when the total area of office space occupied by the State Government fell by more than 13 400 square metres, from 324 452 square metres to 311 022 square metres, culminating in a reduction to the State Government in office accommodation costs from more than \$73.5 million a year to \$70.5 million a year.

The ongoing sale of Government employee accommodation buildings is expected to return more than \$10 million by the end of September 1996. To date, \$7.8 million has already been returned to the Government through the sale of employee housing.

Services SA will have a turnover of \$301 million in the coming financial year and provide a return to Treasury in the form of a \$4.2 million dividend. The potential for Services SA to make a positive impact on the budget is considerable.

Currently under review, in conjunction with the Asset Management Task Force, are linen management and laundry services delivered through Central Linen and printing services delivered through State Print. The scoping exercises now under way for each of these business units will identify economic and financial benefits of options for sale or retention of the businesses within Government.

Building maintenance and minor works services provided in a tiered arrangement to Government agencies by the department's building maintenance services have also been the subject of an extensive study by external consultants. Consideration is now being given to the feasibility of opening this area to private sector competition through appropriate packaging of work.

Examination of the potential for contracting out of State Fleet's fleet management operation is also under way. Mr Chairman, you will be particularly aware that this is the second stage of the earlier process which resulted in the sale and leaseback of the public sector light vehicle fleet.

Key core business areas in building asset management and the procurement of goods and services will be priorities for development in the coming year. The opportunities for efficiencies, cost reductions and savings to the Government through improved asset management and better procurement methods are considerable.

During the past financial year the Government released two major asset management documents: a strategic asset management framework (SAM) and a document to assist management of the project initiation process (PIP).

The SAM framework will be applied across all public sector land and building assets (currently estimated to be worth \$7.6 billion), subsequently producing expected savings to the Government of about \$200 million over the next 10 to 15 years, representing about 3 per cent of total building asset value. This initiative reflects the department's changing role and new responsibilities for the development and monitoring of whole of Government asset management policy.

Services SA also has whole of Government responsibilities for the management and preservation of public records. In 1996-97 State Records will continue to oversee the implementation of the RecFind records management system in public sector agencies. The system, to be implemented over three to five years, will encourage improved records management practices across Government and ultimately we expect to achieve savings of over \$5 million in areas of storage and training once the system is fully operational.

The operations, services and market involvement of Services SA are extremely diverse. As a result, within the organisation there is extensive market and supply knowledge and expertise in contract management and administration.

The agency is well positioned to assist the Government to introduce improved approaches to the procurement of goods and services and to ensure that it gets value for money in its transactions with the private sector. The introduction of electronic commerce will be a key driver for the improvement of procurement methods.

With the recent signing of the Government's electronic services business (ESB) contract between the Government, ISSC and IBM, Services SA will be the lead agency in the application of ESB to electronic trading and procurement within the public sector. A feasibility study, which is now under way, will be completed in the first half of 1996-97 and initiatives will then be implemented in accordance with the study.

In the long-term interests of Government, investment is being made in the skills and technology which support the agency's core business. The coming year will see the development of project management systems, consultant/contractor and supplier performance management systems and upgrading of the department's building and land asset management system (BLAMS). This system holds considerable information on the State's public buildings and assists agencies in their asset planning and management.

Programs are also being developed to enhance Services SA's existing skill base in areas which are critical to the Government, such as project management, supply management, contracting, contract design and administration and property management.

In addition to the functions that I have outlined, Services SA has collaborated with the private sector to improve industry performance and create opportunities for economic development. For example, Services SA is working with the private sector construction industry to broker the export of South Australian expertise to Asia, particularly in the area of heritage building restoration, and it is pursuing opportunities arising from the Olympics 2000 project. Services SA is also working closely with industry groups in the selling of industry standards.

This is a large and diverse agency which is often underestimated in its size and impact by many people both within and outside Government, and I believe it can reasonably be described as the quiet achieving arm of Government. I take this opportunity formally to place on the record my thanks to the staff of this important agency for their hard work in amalgamating the former Departments of Building Management and State Services and for improving their service delivery to the public sector.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does the lead speaker for the Opposition wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr QUIRKE:** No, Mr Chairman. I will go straight to questions. How did what we used to know and love as State Fleet determine the price for its lease of vehicles this year?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The determination of the price was involved in the recent announcement of the sale and leaseback of the fleet. Effectively, the sale of the fleet returned \$195 million to the Government. The contract is with the Commonwealth Bank. The total lease facility—in other words, the amount to which we can go to cover the cost of vehicles—is \$218 million. That makes this the largest deal of its kind undertaken in Australia to date. I am aware that other jurisdictions have closely monitored our progress in this area.

The vehicles were sold to the financier at market value with a value being determined by an independent organisation. As I indicated earlier, the benefits that we expect to achieve are approximately \$2.5 million per annum through the cheaper financing of the fleet. This will result in reducing these payments to public sector agencies in the order of about \$300 million per annum as a rule of thumb. I will ask Barry Griffin to elaborate on how each lease price was determined.

**Mr Griffin:** The charge to agencies that is charged by State Fleet was determined some years ago. It is based on the full recovery of the total cost of the vehicle plus an allowance for administration plus an allowance for a return to Treasury as a dividend. That is an average rate struck across each category of vehicles. At the moment we have eight categories of vehicles. It does not necessarily relate to the individual cost of leasing one particular make of vehicle as against another make of vehicle. It is done by categories. At the

moment, as a result of the leasing out, those prices will reduce by \$25 per month, and with efficiencies gained with FleetSA itself we expect that to increase by an average of \$35 per month per vehicle in terms of the lease charge. It is different from many other agencies in the sense that many of those who had their own vehicles did not take account of the capital cost of the vehicles themselves. The State Fleet charge does that.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Is it true that the Manager—and I understand he is soon to be the former manager of State Fleet—used SA Water to trail for tenders for the provision of cars so that he could work out the price he should charge for cars to different agencies.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** I am happy to take this question on board. To some extent, I would have preferred this to come to me outside this forum. I believe that in any dealings the Government undertakes it must abide by a standard of decency and probity. If the Government undertakes any marketing exercise to benchmark costs, it should do that in a full, open and honest way. I was less than impressed when I discovered via a fleet management company that it had received an approach to provide vehicle costs for leasing of vehicles to SA Water. I was unaware of that approach. Equally, the Minister for Infrastructure was unaware of that approach. Equally, the managers who sit at this table with me were unaware of that approach. On obtaining a copy of the letter, which was promulgated by a marketing company, I immediately made the CEO aware of the situation. The CEO personally handled the situation and contacted the six companies which received that letter.

Essentially, a Government employee—and I do not intend to name the Government employee in this forum—took it upon himself to market test, using a marketing company to contact him seeking prices. My view is that if we are to obtain benchmark costs from organisations in that way we will simply contact them as a Government and tell them who we are and get our benchmark costs. The situation was unacceptable. I repeat: it is something that neither I, Minister Olsen nor anyone at this table were aware of. We jumped on it within 24 hours of the letter going out, and that is where the matter ends.

**Mr QUIRKE:** The Mike Newman review into the use and abuse of Government cars as I understand comes to an end very shortly. What sort of watchdog will the Minister put in place to continue this important monitoring function?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** As a result of the excellent work undertaken by Mike Newman, who was an excellent choice for the job (he also worked for me as Chief-of-Staff and I know that he is well known to you, Mr Chairman), we now have in place a system whereby light vehicles have been transferred to a central point instead of being operated in a very *ad hoc* manner using a variety of mechanisms to follow up their operation in agencies all over the place. We now have a centralised monitoring system. As that monitoring system collects its data we are better able to determine the use of vehicles. Clearly, that provides us with the ability to have in place a central watchdog to oversee the way all Government vehicles are used. Exactly what form that central watchdog will take is largely dependent on the outcome of the assessment being undertaken at the moment for the management of the fleet and the management of the fleet maintenance.

If the decision is taken to outsource that, obviously the watchdog will be appointed in a different manner to watch both that outsourcing process and the number of vehicles. If

it is not taken, we will utilise some of the existing central FleetSA facility to oversee it. The most accurate answer I am able to provide is that there will continue to be a watchdog mechanism. We are now far better able to do that as a result of the excellent work of the Fleet Management Task Force. In view of the decision made by our Federal colleagues to impose a sales tax on vehicles included as part of executive remuneration packages, I can assure the honourable member that all vehicles will be watched very carefully.

**Mr ROSSI:** I refer to page 403 of the Program Estimates and to the title 'Building management policy'. I note that in the 1996-97 Specific Targets/Objectives, ServicesSA is developing a CBD strategy for office accommodation. What actions have been taken to improve the performance of Government in the use of office accommodation? When I was in the Public Service there was plenty of office accommodation which was leased by the Government but in fact not used.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The member for Lee's concerns are certainly legitimate. There has been a poor utilisation of Government accommodation space. The Government established an accommodation committee, the Government Office Accommodation Committee (GOAC), and provided the committee with a charter of examining office space available. With the construction-related part of this ServicesSA portfolio, my colleague Minister Ingerson placed on that committee two private sector professionals who were able to provide considerable advice based on commercial standards. GOAC has reviewed its office accommodation policies, including the area of provision for accommodation space. We have set, through that committee, an area target of 15 square metres per employee. This compares with the current average of about 23 square metres per employee. We still have a considerable way to go to reduce our employee occupancy to that level. New office accommodation proposals are being assessed against the target with those new standards. There is a major focus on improved planning of accommodation requirements by agencies and a better coordination of Government-owned agency to minimise vacancies and the cost of accommodation.

All major office accommodation projects costing in excess of \$1 million are now subject to Cabinet approval, and a review by GOAC. The committee is using the Government's new project initiation process (PIP), which I outlined earlier, which requires a rigorous evaluation of options and justification of office accommodation proposals. The fit-out of new offices is a major cost of accommodation, and GOAC is at present developing guidelines for office fit-outs aimed at achieving an acceptable standard of fit-out at an affordable price. All Government agencies have been required to provide GOAC with a strategic plan which identifies their future accommodation needs. These needs are presently being assessed in conjunction with available information on a present cost and usage trend to identify the main impacts of recent reductions in the number of Government employees and the contracting out of services on accommodation trends across the Government. Obviously, office accommodation is becoming excessive because employees are being reduced in number. Until such time as that accommodation is rationalised, the real benefits cannot be known. We also, regrettably, are locked into some long-term leases which have resulted in some city buildings having vacant floor space, and we are endeavouring to ensure that that accommodation is filled by other than Government employees.

**Mr ROSSI:** I note in the broad objectives and goals on page 403, that Services SA is supporting the development of the building and construction industry in South Australia. How does Services SA propose to support industry through its export activities, and what results have been achieved so far?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** A construction industry export strategy group is a feature of the new Construction Industry Council. This group, consisting of Government and industry leaders, will coordinate effort and report to me through the Construction Industry Advisory Council. Potential export opportunities available in interstate and Asian markets are substantial. Since 1988, the old SACON Department, which then became the Department for Building Management, had been developing and nurturing contacts throughout the Asia-Pacific region and other areas through personal liaison and minor advisory assistance in the area of heritage restoration. While it was nice to have the agency under those previous guises undertaking that liaison, the time has obviously now come to ensure that that liaison develops into quantifiable and deliverable items, so that there is a focus on that work that has been undertaken by the agency delivering an opportunity for South Australian companies to obtain contracts in Asian markets, particularly in the area of heritage restoration, and the agency is working with a number of companies in that area at this time.

Effectively, Services SA is acting as a broker to bring together developers, consultants, contractors and suppliers to collaborate with Asian customers on a range of new ventures from heritage building restoration, in the main, to asset management, to low cost housing and specialist consultancy and training. In addition, following the successful bid by Sydney for the 2000 Olympics, a number of opportunities have developed for all Australian construction companies to participate in building activities. Services SA is endeavouring to ensure that doors are opened for our companies to win the opportunity to undertake work in those areas. Obviously, Services SA already has expertise in the building of projects associated with sport.

I think I am right in saying that the construction of the cycling velodrome occurred in the electorate of the member for Playford. He would be aware of the excellent work that was undertaken on that facility. That facility has been used as an example for Sydney of the sort of work that is capable of being organised through South Australia involving South Australian building companies. Obviously, we have a range of expertise here, and we are bringing together pre-cast concrete manufacturers in South Australia for the first time to give South Australia pre-cast concrete presentation in Sydney. Obviously, if we pre-cast that material here it will create South Australian jobs. This general strategy is to be repeated for other industry groups which have been identified as being capable of providing opportunities for the Olympic building projects.

A number of heritage projects in Malaysia and Taiwan have been initiated and coordinated through Services SA. These projects have resulted in contracts being awarded to specialist heritage consultants and contractors. In view of these activities, a heritage consultants and contractors group has been formed, which utilises the expertise of Services SA and the contacts it has made in South-East Asia. To date, five South Australian organisations are involved in ongoing work in Malaysia and Taiwan. South Australia, also through Services SA, has led a group of heritage consultants, contractors and suppliers at the 1996 international SIBEX

building exhibition in Singapore. This has resulted in the identification of a number of business opportunities for further examination by these organisations. One, in particular, has been appointed as sole agent for South-East Asia covering a range of Australian made and imported tiles. A joint strategy initiated by Services SA and pursued by the Australia-South Africa Business Council and a South Australian manufacturer has resulted in a visit by a South African housing group to Adelaide recently and an agreement to construct two pilot houses using South Australian technology in South Africa. We look forward to seeing what benefits that may produce in the future. As a result of this initiative, the manufacturer is currently in South Africa negotiating arrangements for a much larger project.

**Mr QUIRKE:** The new State Services Department subsumes the functions of the State Supply Board and, as a consequence, the Minister now has responsibility for one of these areas in which I have a particular interest, namely, gaming machines—not putting money in them but the policies under which they are operated in South Australia. I refer to a number of contributions I have made in the House and to the Treasurer last week in respect to the licensing arrangements that State Supply holds for the installation and service of gaming machines. I chose not to make a statement on this earlier, but I wish to get a couple of points on the record.

I have pursued for many years now the fact that there ought to be a competitor—if not two competitors—introduced at the earliest opportunity. It will be three years in September of this year since the signing of that contract with Bull Australia. I have been advised by the Treasurer that the contract for the monopoly service and installation of machines will continue until July next year, bearing in mind that that will then be the anniversary of the first machines being switched on.

Will the Minister assure us that he will make his best endeavours to tell my constituents and all the pubs and clubs out there, which are now required by law only to get their service and installation from one source, whether his department has worked a way around allowing in competitors, given the commitment that his Premier has to competitive tendering in every other area of Government activity?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The member quite correctly identifies Bull as the company with whom the initial contract was entered into. Ownership of that company has now gone to Wang. The contract took effect on 9 July 1994, which means that the three years is up in July of 1997, although I am aware that there is potential in the contract for a one year extension option. I have not examined the contract but the honourable member would be aware, from the variety of statements I have made in the House about gaming machines, of my interest in the manner in which they are serviced and of my strong belief in the benefits of competition. While I have not yet had the benefit of analysing that contract, the honourable member has my assurance that it will occur before the expiry of that contract. His sentiments and mine are fairly similar and I will be pleased to advise him in future of what opportunities we may have.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I have never asked for the contract to be modified or terminated. It is at the culmination of all of those contractual obligations that either the State Supply people will allow multiple services to operate under the one licence they hold pursuant to the Gaming Machine Act or we will need to proceed to have legislation to create several licences which could then be held by other bodies. I have no prefer-

ence for which way to go. Personally I was very disappointed by the decision made three years ago while my crowd were in Government whereby the State Supply Board did the usual Public Service thing: created one contract, one servicer and one installer. That agency has done an extremely good job. I have had no complaints about the work it has done, but the Minister and I are on the same wave length in terms of the necessity for competition out there. I move:

That the time for the suspension of the Committee be extended beyond 6 p.m.

Motion carried.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I turn now to the Central Linen Service. Will the Minister tell the Committee what has been the number of TSPs in the past 12 months, what has been the cost of those TSPs and where are we going generally with the Central Linen Service?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** In my opening statement I indicated that a review is under way to determine the costs associated with either retaining the service within Government or outsourcing that service. The results of that review will be determined later this year. We do not have those details with us, so I will provide it to the honourable member at a later time.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I ask a similar question about the State Fleet management team. How many TSPs have there been and what has been the total cost of TSPs, particularly in the light of the decision to transfer fleet management to the Commonwealth Bank?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** There have been no TSPs since the signing of the contract. I will need to take the question on notice and provide the details of packages taken prior to that time.

**Mr QUIRKE:** How many vehicles will now be subject to sales tax? Will plain plated vehicles attract sales tax from now on? How many cars are involved?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The agreement with the Commonwealth requires only those vehicles specifically included as part of a salary package to attract sales tax. Ordinarily, they would be vehicles with plain plates, but there are a number of other vehicles within Government that may have plain plates. All Ministers have been made aware of the number of vehicles within their agencies so fitted so that they can determine their validity to have plain plates. Obviously, there are some in the Police Department with plain plates by necessity, for example, all detective vehicles. Some States do not have plain plates. Plain plates are not being used as a determiner but as a guide for agencies other than the police. That work is being undertaken now. As to the total number of vehicles affected, we still do not have the total answer but we anticipate about 200 vehicles. We are still clarifying it with the Tax Office and, when I have that information, I will provide it.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Which staff in the Minister's office and in departments in his portfolio have use of Government funded credit cards? What conditions are attached to their use? I am happy to take that question on notice.

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The first part of the question is easy to answer because neither I as Minister nor any staff in my office have any access whatever to a Government funded credit card. That results from my belief in a system of individuals making the purchase, using their own credit card and providing justification with a receipt; that provides an adequate audit trail. Other of my colleagues may prefer to operate in a different manner but the important thing is that

an audit trail is provided. As to Services SA, amongst the six agencies in my portfolio it has the largest number and for good reason.

While the agency continues to employ maintenance workers—and there has been considerable downsizing in the number of maintenance workers but some still presently work for the agency—96 cards are allocated. We call them business van credit cards, used essentially for the purchase of building trade supplies including engineering, flooring, carpentry, plumbing, roofing and sundry. These are used in preference to purchase order books. At this time agency management have nine cards and one cardholder is assigned a credit card for overseas travel from the Export Initiatives Unit. There are seven credit cards assigned for payment for sundry computer equipment and supplies. That is the agency under my control with the greatest number because of the nature of the business performed. But numbers in my other agencies are sufficient to be counted on the fingers of certainly one hand, but I will take that question on notice and bring back the exact number to the honourable member in a formal reply.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I ask the same question about Government-funded mobile phones for your office and the department. Again, I am happy for the Minister to take that on notice. Are any Government-funded vehicles assigned to any of your ministerial staff, or to anyone in the department?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** No Government-funded vehicles are assigned to any of my ministerial staff. They obviously have access to telephones. I am a great believer in the need for mobile telephones in this job, so I will bring back the detail of the number of telephones. The question also covered other members of the department, and I will take that on notice.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Who decided to sell the Government Motor Garage? Who went through with that decision? Was that your department or was it the Asset Management Task Force?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The decision to investigate the options for the sale of the garage was made by my predecessor, Minister Ingerson. I agreed with that decision on becoming Minister responsible for the agency. I decided to accept the bid that was put forward by United Yellow Cabs, and I signed the contract for the sale of that garage. It is worth noting that the Government garage was a grossly under-utilised facility. The property required extensive decontamination as a result of the usual things that occur at a premises used for vehicles: leakage from fuel tanks and oil drainage, and some paint work on the exterior of the building contained asbestos fragments.

The ability to sell the property to United Yellow Cabs for essentially a similar but a much more extensive use meant that none of that work had to be undertaken because it was to be used as a garage site. To my amazement, a loan was on the property as well, which we were able to pay out on the sale. The property achieved a reduction of debt, after the payout of loans, of \$613 000.

**Mr QUIRKE:** It paid out a debt of \$613 000, or it was a return to Government?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** No, \$613 000 was available for debt reduction. The sale price of the property was \$900 000, so the difference was used to pay out the loan on the property.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Who valued this property at \$900 000? Was it independently valued?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The Valuer-General undertakes all property valuations of that type. The Government, having that facility, certainly makes sure that the Valuer-General is used at every opportunity.

**Mr QUIRKE:** I understand that this sale did not go to tender. Is that right?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** The sale followed an inquiry from United Yellow Cabs. Prior to my becoming Minister, there had been informal negotiations with a number of parties, including the possibility of being able to dispose of the property for building works, but decontamination work would have been required on the property. Being able to achieve the Valuer-General's valuation, with an offer for continuing use on a walk-in walk-out basis was a very good offer, and the Government took advantage of it.

**Mr QUIRKE:** Is it correct that ministerial chauffeurs and chauffeurs of VIPs have received an instruction that they are to take their leave to coincide with absences by their Minister or VIP, and that their applications must be approved by you?

**The Hon. W.A. Matthew:** That is not correct. The ministerial drivers report to an officer within Fleet SA. As is any staff member who takes leave, they are required to ensure that their leave is approved by their manager. Government drivers have the double bind of reporting to a manager and also being responsible to a Minister. So we require that, at the time they submit their leave application, it has been endorsed by their Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or for whomever they drive, and their leave is allocated accordingly. That was done because leave was taken in such a way as to often mean that a number of drivers were on leave at any one time, necessitating a large pool of relief drivers. As a result of requiring their leave to be more appropriately streamlined, we are able to operate with fewer drivers, again returning a saving to the taxpayer.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed. I thank the Minister and his staff for assisting the Committee in the way that they have today. I would also like to place on record my appreciation for the attendance given to the Committee during the past two weeks by the House staff, particularly the clerks at the table, who have been of immense valuable and assistance to me. I would also like to thank the people who really help us out a great deal and who to put up with many problems at times—*Hansard*. I want to place on record my appreciation for their assistance to the Committee. I lay before the Committee a draft report.

**Mr ROSSI:** I move:

That the draft report be the report of the Committee.

Motion carried.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That concludes the examination of the budget Estimates and concludes the sessions of Estimates Committee B.

At 6.12 p.m. the Committee concluded.