

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 25 June 1997

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**Chairman:**

Mr J.K.G. Oswald

Members:

Mr R.L. Brokenshire

Mr C.J. Caudell

Mr R.D. Clarke

Mr M.R. De Laine

Mr M.D. Rann

Mr G. Scalzi

The Committee met at 11 a.m.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources,
\$67 969 000

Witness:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister for the Ageing.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Scanlon, Chief Executive.

Mr A. Holmes, Director, Natural Resources.

Ms A. Harvey, Director, Corporate Services.

Mr R. Thomas, Director, Office of the Environment Protection Authority.

Mr D. Carmen, Manager, Corporate Development.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind members that during the course of the day if anyone wishes to make a change we need the appropriate discharge form. If the Minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, this must be in a form suitable for insertion in *Hansard*, and two copies must be submitted no later than 11 July to the Clerk of the House of Assembly. I propose to allow the lead speaker of the Opposition and the Minister to make an opening statement, if they desire, of about 10 minutes, but no more than 15 minutes. There will be a flexible approach to the giving of the call to ask questions based on the usual three questions per member alternating either side. Members will also be allowed a brief supplementary question to conclude a line, but I emphasise that it must be a 'supplementary' question.

Subject to the convenience of the Committee, a member who is outside the Committee may wish to ask a question. That can be done at the conclusion of the line of questioning by the Committee members, but notice must be given to the Chair. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure as revealed in the Estimates of Receipts and Payments Program Paper No. 2. Reference may be made to other documents, including the Program Estimates and Information, but members must identify a page number or 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 House of Assembly Notice Paper if they are lodged in the normal manner and in a suitable form.

I remind the Minister that there are no formal facilities for the tabling of documents before the Committee. However, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution to the Committee during the day. Incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the House of Assembly; that is, it must be purely statistical and limited to one page in length. All questions are to be directed to the Minister, not to the Minister's advisers, but the Minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. I also advise that for the purposes of the Committee there will be some freedom allowed for television coverage for a period of short filming from the northern gallery behind the Chair. I now invite the Minister to introduce his officers and make a brief opening statement. I will also offer that opportunity to the Leader of the Opposition, after which we will move to questions.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: This Government has kept its promise to improve the environment and, in turn, the well-being of all South Australians. We recognise that environmental and natural resource management is a significant contributor to the economic development and job creation prospects of our State. Since coming to office three years ago, we have achieved a number of firsts. We have commenced the implementation of the three major action-based environmental strategies: a cleaner South Australia, a greener South Australia, and restoring the River Murray.

These initiatives provide a blueprint for the State's present and future environmental efforts. The landmark \$4 million Mount Lofty Summit redevelopment has been completed. We have initiated major improvements to road, visitor and ecotourism facilities in our national parks. These have included the Wilpena Pound redevelopment, the Naracoorte Caves Interpretive Centre and the redevelopment of roads at Innes, Coffin Bay and Kangaroo Island. Operation Bounceback is also successfully tackling the feral animal problem in the Flinders Ranges National Park.

These improvements will help to boost South Australia's share of the ecotourism market whilst creating opportunities to protect and conserve some 21 million hectares of national parks—the largest area and the largest percentage of parks coverage of any mainland State in Australia. We have actively advocated for the national clean-up and remediation of the River Murray—South Australia's lifeline.

This Government instigated the Murray-Darling 2001 initiative, which now has the overwhelming support of both the Commonwealth Government and the Murray-Darling Basin partner States through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. This exciting project aims to make substantial improvements in the health of the Murray-Darling Basin's natural resources by increasing the current level of funding by \$300 million over the next five years.

The Murray-Darling 2001 initiative will have significant long-lasting benefits not only for our State but also for the nation as a whole. That we have taken on this responsibility is something about which we can be very proud. Complementing the Murray-Darling 2001 initiative is the agreement by all Basin States to put a cap on water diversions from the river systems in the Murray-Darling Basin.

We have spearheaded major cleaner production efforts within industry (securing a \$1 million investment in this area) which have improved environmental technology, productivity and export potential. In implementing our policies, the Government has established strong community and business

partnerships. Our collaborative partnership with the South Australian business community is also opening doors to exciting opportunities overseas whilst building an export environment business for this State. In particular, the Government is committed to developing the State's expertise in water management and to the export of this expertise.

The South Australian community is supporting this Government's approach to dealing with environmental issues. In particular, South Australia's national parks benefit from the services of some 7 000 volunteers each year. Their in-kind support is conservatively valued each year at \$4.5 million. For instance, 90 Friends of Parks Group, 40 Campground Hosts, 18 Consultative Committees together with around 40 overseas volunteers and members of the National Parks Foundation provide diverse types of support to our parks system. This support includes: work activities on-park and a variety of project work, including fundraising. These volunteers provide a bridge between National Parks and Wildlife and the wider community. They truly ensure that our parks belong to all South Australians.

Moreover, through their high level of commitment, involvement and participation in conservation and environmental programs, South Australians are ensuring that we are regarded as among the most environmentally conscious community in this country. We are the envy of other States. The 1997-98 budget will help build on numerous efforts in the environment and natural resources portfolio that are now coming to fruition. The demands on Government today are greater than many years ago. The community expects to live in a clean and healthy environment. In this year's budget, issues of air, water and the marine environment, landcare and remediation, habitat restoration and conservation will continue to be given a high profile.

The 1997-98 budget provides for recurrent expenditure of \$128.4 million, with a capital works budget of \$29.8 million. This is a \$2.5 million increase in recurrent spending and a \$7.8 million increase in capital spending over 1996-97. The Government's budget approach for 1997-98 has been to bolster capital investment while at the same time reducing operating costs through continuing with strategic productivity improvements. In addition, a number of significant projects funded last year, such as payments relating to the Hume Dam situation, and once-off funding from the Commonwealth, have been replaced by new projects and responsibilities such as increased costs for the MDBC call-up, coastal sand replenishment and, of course, the Parks Agenda.

As I have said, South Australia is at the forefront of a number of environmental initiatives and I want to refer briefly to some of these projects. The Government has a strong focus on promoting our parks system and Botanic Gardens not only as a tourism and recreation attraction but also as a means of involving communities, including Aboriginal communities, in their management.

Two initiatives are particularly noteworthy—the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden and the Parks Agenda. First, in recognition of the Botanic Gardens being the most visited tourist destination in South Australia, with more than 1.5 million visitors each year, the announcement by the Premier of an allocation of \$950 000 for the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden ecotourism infrastructure is a most appropriate and welcome initiative. The improvements to this facility this year will include further development to car parking, roads, paths and interpretation, which will link with the Cleland/Summit development.

Secondly, this Government's recently announced Parks Agenda aims to increase community and business involvement and awareness of the State's 21 million hectares of parks. The Government has allocated an additional \$30 million over the next six years to improve management practices in the parks system. Of this expenditure, an additional \$2.5 million will be allocated in this year's budget to the Parks Agenda and \$5 million to the development of Waterfall Gully. The State Government's commitment to the Parks Agenda will steadily increase expenditure to \$5.5 million in 1999-2000.

This Government also has a strong track record in water resources management. South Australians have always had regard for water as a precious resource, and I have also advocated strongly for other Governments in Australia to become more 'water conscious'. This Government has shown very special commitment to our State's water resources, reflected in part by the introduction and successful passage of a landmark new Water Resources Act paving the way for community-based catchment management, and providing for the establishment of boards in rural catchments of our State as well as urbanised areas. At this stage, three new boards for the River Murray, Onkaparinga River and Gawler River catchments are in the process of being established under the new Act.

We are also pursuing, in conjunction with the Torrens and Patawalonga Catchment Water Management Boards, opportunities to improve urban stormwater through the development of urban wetlands. The Urrbrae wetland, opened recently, will soon be followed by a wetland at Glenside and one at Reids Road in the River Torrens Linear Park, with others still in the planning stage. Protection of the marine environment generally is encouraging the sustainable use of this State's valuable resources. There will be a significant focus of activity over the next 12 months as the Government develops a marine and estuarine strategy for South Australia.

Following concerns raised by this Government about the long-term sustainable health of the Murray-Darling Basin system, the Murray-Darling Basin ministerial council endorsed a series of recommendations which, for the first time, will limit the total volume of water diverted from the basin's river systems. This will ensure that as much water as possible is kept in the rivers to provide a sustainable environmental flow, enabling issues such as deteriorating water quality, salinity, silt deposition, nutrient levels, blue-green algae and habitat degradation to be more adequately addressed. In recognition of South Australia's historically conservative and responsible approach to water resources management, this State has retained its existing water allocations for the River Murray.

The implementation of the Environment Protection Act heralded a new era of environmental protection and standards for the community, with greater certainty for industry and small business. The collaborative approach to environment protection, through means including environmental improvement programs and a cleaner production program, has proved that South Australian industries recognise the gains that a cleaner environment can bring to all sectors of the community and are keen to work with this Government to help achieve this goal. This year the Office of Environment Protection will build on the achievements of the cleaner production program through a pollution prevention program to be undertaken in collaboration with small to medium enterprises.

In terms of managing our waste, there will continue to be a strong focus on waste management and litter. The integrated

waste management strategy for metropolitan Adelaide 1995 to 2015 is being implemented through a number of programs, including the constructive partnership between the Environment Protection Authority and the South Australian Employers' Chamber.

These are but a handful of examples of the environmental initiatives of the Government. There are many more, all showing the characteristics for which this Government is known: the careful and best expenditure of funds in collaborative partnerships with industry and the community. This pattern has also been shown to give a high degree of on-ground commitment to environment programs, ensuring the future sustainability of these programs. The highlights of the 1997-98 budget are significant. There will be a strong focus on capital works in our national parks, our coastal regions and in our Torrens Title system, whilst our recurrent expenditure will be used to continue to improve the State's environment, park system and a range of service delivery expectations across the portfolio.

In closing, I believe that many of the achievements of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have been ground-breaking. The public of South Australia is seeing many results. This is because this Government has seriously addressed the major environmental issues confronting our State, including the clean up of the Patawalonga and the Torrens, the clean up of the Murray-Darling Basin, the management of our national parks, the protection of whales and sea lions in the Great Australian Bight, the management of the Lake Eyre basin and catchment, the biodiversity of the State (including the Adelaide Plains), the long-term management of our waste, the protection of our air quality, the development of the Mount Lofty Summit and the protection and enhancement of our coasts.

These are but a few highlights of our achievements to date. The spin-offs obtained from creating exports of our intellectual capacity in a number of portfolio areas will be considerable. This Government has not been afraid to tackle the hard issues. In so doing it has won the support of the community and the business sector, which is proven by their greater involvement in DENR's program. In this partnership of joint responsibility we will ensure that our future environmental legacy to future generations of South Australians will be greatly improved.

Mr CLARKE: I will read the opening statement for the Opposition and the lead questions will then go the statesman of our Party, the Leader of the Opposition. Even though this was supposed to be an election budget packed with goodies, before the ink was dry a report appeared in the *Advertiser* on 11 June that Liberal MPs were jockeying for the Minister's job. This must have been very disheartening for the Minister who this year tried to redress some of the cuts he had made to the recurrent budget over the past three years. I guess that is the price the Minister pays for loyalty to the former Premier. Given the uncertainty of whether the Minister will appear before this Committee next year, I will briefly reflect on the commitment to the environment by the Liberal Government under this Minister's stewardship. After cutting the 1994 recurrent budget, the Minister made the following Machiavellian statement:

The budget has been developed to reflect the priorities of the Government in environment and natural resources. That cut was indeed a true reflection.

The Minister then went on to reflect these priorities by cutting the first three recurrent budgets in cash terms compared with 1993-94. In real terms after allowing for

inflation, these cuts to the recurrent budget had taken out \$12.8 million. To be fair, the capital side of expenditure had increased, but mostly in the area of new information technology for land administration.

The Minister's first capital budget was about the same as 1993-94 at \$11.6 million. In 1995-96, capital expenditure increased to \$18.7 million as major projects to upgrade information technology and the construction of new facilities at Mount Lofty were commenced. In 1996-97, capital expenditure increased to \$22 million as expenditure on information technology exceeded \$7 million. This shows how the Government moved its priorities from environmental management by cutting recurrent budgets and increasing capital spending on new technology for land administration and a new tourist facility on Mount Lofty which arguably should have been funded by tourism and not by the environment.

This year the Committee is faced with the task of trying to unravel a budget that is disguised by changes to the recording of several major transactions in both receipts and payments. For example, it will be noted that the estimates for total recurrent expenditure jumped from \$105 million in 1996-97 to \$128 million in 1997-98 because of changes in the way expenditure is recorded.

For the first time on the expenditure side, the environment budget includes the Murray-Darling Basin call-up, estimated at \$16.4 million this year. This figure includes South Australia's ongoing annual contribution to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and funding for the Murray-Darling 2001 project announced by the Minister in last year's budget. Although this is not new money and the annual Murray-Darling contribution was previously shown in the old EWS budget, the payment is highlighted in the Premier's budget pamphlet this year as a \$10.2 million increase for the environment. This is the old smoke and mirrors trick.

On the revenue side, there are new entries for contributions to the Murray-Darling 2001 project totalling almost \$3 million and revenue of \$4 million hypothecated from the petroleum products licence fees for the first time. The Minister has not addressed the hard issues and South Australians are going to demand answers to a lot of questions before the next election. The punters will want to know about the Government's attitude to exploration and mining in reserves; the lack of resources for our national parks and wildlife conservation; why capital works projects are recycled instead of using consumer goods; why the Minister has been silent on plans to dump polluted stormwater into the gulf at West Beach; and the reason for the lack of resources for the Environmental Protection Authority.

On 28 May the Minister told Parliament that the Mount Lofty development was the Government's greatest symbol of success in parks management. The Minister's cafe at Mount Lofty was built at a cost to the rest of the parks system and, given this year's cut for conservation management and the ongoing shortage of park staff, no-one will question the Minister's claim. While the Mount Lofty cafe was funded in the 1996-97 capital budget of \$4 million, the 1995-96 program of capital works flowing from the parks review to cost \$5.8 million disappeared from the budget.

It will be interesting today to hear the Minister defend this budget, knowing that in the next few weeks he will have to highlight its shortcomings by making election promises about what the Government plans to do for the environment.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to pages 34 and 238 to

240 in the Estimates of Receipts and Payments, and pages 407 to 418 in the Program Estimates and Information book. I call on the Leader of the Opposition to ask the first question.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I refer to page 410, in relation to environmental protection, and in particular in relation to the Bolivar sewage odour problem that has been dominating all of our thoughts in recent months. Is the Minister prepared to table in Parliament, provide to this Estimates Committee or to release publicly the Environmental Protection Agency's reports and memos concerning the Bolivar odour problem this year and the correspondence between the EPA and United Water and SA Water, in order to satisfy the public that there has not been a cover-up about what actually happened at Bolivar?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The first thing that the Leader should realise is that the EPA is an independent authority and it will be up to the independent authority to make any recommendations to the Government on whether it should be released publicly.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Will the Minister be making any recommendations to the EPA that it should be, in the public interest? Would you like, as Minister, to see it released publicly?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: This Government is not in the business of hiding vital material and I would repeat that it will be up to the independent authority. I should hope that the Leader would recognise that any representation made to an independent authority, such as the EPA, from the Minister would be minimal.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: It is interesting, in terms of the usual complaint when we put in FOI documents, that they are Cabinet documents and therefore cannot be released. Certainly, I will be FOI-ing these documents, and the Minister has just confirmed that they are EPA documents, not of the Cabinet variety, so there will be no problems releasing them. It has been reported that in February last year United Water allowed millions of litres of partially treated sewage to be discharged from the Barker Inlet into Gulf St Vincent without first seeking the advice or permission of the EPA or even reporting it to the EPA for several weeks. Of course, the EPA controls the licensing for Bolivar to discharge effluent and emit odours. If this is true, why did the EPA choose not to prosecute either SA Water or its contractor United Water, given the serious threat that sewage poses to important fish breeding nurseries in the mangroves and seagrass beds? Why were they not prosecuted?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is a similar response to the one I gave before. The EPA is an independent authority. I have no power whatsoever. I might point out to the Leader that it was the previous Government which prepared the environment protection legislation. It was introduced by this Government with very little amendment, and it is very largely the legislation that was proposed by the previous Government. The fact is that it is an independent authority. I have no power whatsoever to direct the EPA in relation to enforcement. The Chairman of the EPA, Stephen Walsh, has already made certain statements about this issue. I would be happy for Mr Thomas, the Director of the EPA, to make any further comment if he wishes.

Mr Thomas: Just briefly on the issue of Bolivar, I can assure the Opposition that there have been no cover-ups, and there will be no cover-up. The documentation that has been referred to will be used by the independent auditor who has been appointed, and he has been directed by the EPA. That document will be released within the next three weeks.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: All the EPA documents, reports and memos will be released publicly?

Mr Thomas: That could occur as part of that process, but no doubt it will have to go through proper FOI process. I doubt that there is any commercial-in-confidence material there, but it will still have to go through that proper process. But there is nothing in the EPA that I believe has been covered up. We go to the matter last year, and I think it is best that I provide you with a separate report on the outcome there, because there were a number of issues at large. I cannot recall fully, but from memory no environmental harm was caused by that incident. But it is best that I provide you with a separate report on it.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It would be interesting to know what the previous Government did about the spill from the Christies Beach plant in 1993, which was far more significant than anything we have seen during the time that this Government has been in office.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Will the Minister categorically deny that United Water or SA Water have not approved or allowed the discharge of untreated or partially treated sewage from the Barker Inlet into Gulf St Vincent since the incident in February 1996, which was not reported to the EPA and in respect of which there followed no prosecution, and to his knowledge have there been any releases since then?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I have not been made aware of any of that information. The Environment Protection Authority is responsible under the legislation—it is an independent authority—but I am not aware that any of that information has been made available to me. I will ask Mr Thomas if he wishes to comment.

Mr Thomas: We licence the Bolivar sewage plant. A significant part of that licence is to upgrade the plant to treat the effluent that is discharged into the ocean. It is no secret that effluent causes harm, hence the environment improvement program to 2001. This program forms part of the policy under the Marine Environment Protection Act which has been incorporated into the Environment Protection Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation from early 1990. It is important that the licence reflect the current quality of effluent that goes out into the gulf and, in turn, improvements to that effluent. If there were to be any discharge of untreated effluent, that would have to come before the authority for separate consideration. On my understanding, there has been no such approach by SA Water and no such approval.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Given Mr Thomas's reply and given that on 24 May 1997 the EPA said that SA Water paid \$190 000 under licence to discharge effluent from Bolivar, how often has the quality of effluent discharged from the Bolivar sewage works been tested for E.coli, heavy metals and nutrient levels since United Water took over the management of Bolivar in January 1996; who conducted the scientific tests; and what were the results?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will take those questions on notice.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Last night I was privileged to attend the very successful launch of the Parks Agenda for which there was a large amount of corporate and environmental support. Will the Minister provide details of where the \$2.5 million for that project will be spent?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am pleased to provide that information. I, too, was delighted with the corporate launch last night of the Parks Agenda, which was very well attended by 100-odd people representing all facets of life in the corporate sector. Indeed, it was very successful. As I said

earlier, 20 per cent of the State is conserved within 300 parks with an asset value of \$A2 billion. The parks and wildlife of the State attract more than \$500 million in tourism revenue and provide recreational opportunities for residents of the State. So, our parks are vitally important to this Government, not only for their important role in the protection and preservation of biodiversity but also for the potential that exists as far as ecotourism opportunities are concerned.

That is what the Parks Agenda is about. It is a program to revitalise the management of our parks, to promote the value of these assets (including our wildlife) to the State economy, and to secure a long-term commitment for adequate resources for the management of parks and wildlife. This will be achieved through the Parks Agenda by: promoting a reserve system which protects and enhances environmental associations and biodiversity; creating a modern, professionally managed parks and wildlife system; and developing an understanding and support of community which is committed to improving the management of parks and conserving wildlife.

As I said earlier, we are fortunate in this State to have strong voluntary support in so many different ways. This will also be achieved by delivering quality services which effectively market parks and wildlife as key tourism assets in this State and by the promotion of sustainable business opportunities through corporate sponsorship and commercial activities in parks. I am particularly pleased with the interest that is being shown by the corporate sector in getting involved in this agenda.

If we look at the current status, the Parks Agenda is the major environmental initiative for the 1997-98 budget with a \$2.5 million commitment to this year's program, increasing to \$5.5 million in 1999-2000—a total of \$30 million over the next six years. The capital works program, including the general reserves trust, bookmarked biosphere and other measures for parks in 1995-96 was, in fact, \$4 million. In 1996-97 the capital program of \$8.9 million included \$5.5 million for major one-off projects such as the Mount Lofty Summit.

I was interested in the Deputy Leader's comments about the summit. He suggested that the costs for the summit should have been picked up by tourism. The fact is that the Mount Lofty Summit is an integral part of the Cleland Conservation Park. As such, it is the total responsibility of this agency, and it is a very good flagship as far as ecotourism in this State is concerned. Funding of \$5.5 million was allocated for major one-off projects, such as Mount Lofty, the Naracoorte Caves, the development of Coffin Bay, and road upgrades. The 1997-98 capital works program for parks has been increased to \$7.1 million from a projected \$4.6 million. Additionally, the parks recurrent program has been increased by \$500 000.

A number of initiatives have been included. I have already referred to the upgrading of visitor access and facilities at Waterfall Gully. Other initiatives include: the upgrade of visitor facilities at Dalhousie Springs; integrated management strategies for Mount Lofty parks; stage one of the Flinders Chase development program; the upgrade of the Kelly Hill's cave entrance on Kangaroo Island; stage one of the upgrade of the Morialta visitor facilities; the upgrade of the Cleland Wildlife Park water reticulation system; an additional five ranger trainee positions; an increase in the Friends of National Parks support programs; staff training and development; an increase in employment program funding; and implementation of a promotion and marketing strategy for community involvement and commitment to parks and

wildlife. I could provide more information for the Opposition if it wishes.

These initiatives will be funded whilst maintaining an ongoing commitment to the State biological survey and protection programs for reserves, such as the very successful integrated pest management project in the Flinders Ranges and Venus Bay parks. Overall, and in response to the honourable member's question, I think that the Parks Agenda is one of the most significant conservation programs that we have seen in this State for a very long time.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 410 of the Program Estimates and Information which refers to State heritage protection. Will the Minister advise whether these figures include the additional \$300 000 in funding announced today, and how will this funding be used?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I was very pleased to announce today an extra \$300 000 to increase the State Heritage Fund. This was in response to a need to provide a higher level of funding for conservation of State heritage places. I think we all recognise the importance of heritage in this State, particularly our built heritage. Many visitors who come to this State, particularly to Adelaide, comment on the importance of the retention of our built heritage—and, of course, that is the case throughout the State.

The increase announced today will bring the total level of expenditure on conservation of built heritage through the State Heritage Fund to just over \$800 000 for 1997-98. The additional \$300 000 is not included in the figures mentioned in the Program Estimates as this money only became available through savings recently identified in the 1996-97 capital works program. The new funding will be targeted at conservation in State heritage areas and heritage conservation and promotional projects throughout the State. It is anticipated that over half the sum will be spent in regional South Australia, and I am very pleased that that is the case.

There is always a waiting list for funding. The current level of funding means that many projects cannot proceed because the State Heritage Fund has been spread so thinly, and the additional \$300 000 will provide a significant boost to the number of conservation projects able to be completed. The State Heritage Authority has yet to determine exactly which projects will benefit from the new funds. The Government currently supports conservation of Government owned heritage buildings through the Services SA historic buildings conservation program. It is through this program that the Government is able to support public heritage places. Of course, that is also an important commitment to conservation in South Australia. It works hand-in-hand with the ability of the heritage fund to support private property owners and the Services SA historic buildings conservation program to be responsible for public buildings. Again, it is a very good initiative. The commitment was made prior to the last election, and I am delighted that the extra \$300 000 has been made available.

Mr CAUDELL: My question to the Minister is on available EPA resources. Page 410 of the Program Estimates refers to funding for the environment protection and restoration program. Will the Minister detail current levels of EPA funding and explain whether there is sufficient funding to enable the EPA properly to undertake its functions.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am very pleased to do so in light of the comments made by the Deputy Leader in his opening statement. The Deputy Leader has used every opportunity to accuse the Government of underresourcing the EPA, so I suggest very strongly that the Deputy Leader

might like to consider the forecasted resources that were suggested by the Hon. Susan Lenehan when she announced the establishment of the EPA in South Australia. I think the Deputy Leader will find that the resourcing provided by this Government to the EPA is significantly higher than that proposed by the previous Government. Through its environment and natural resources policy, the Government is committed to operating the EPA at a size and in a form which reflects the State's needs. Under this policy, the Government is also committed to ensuring that the EPA is self-funding by using the 'polluter pays' principle. We have never hidden that fact.

The solid waste levy rose by 60¢ per tonne in Adelaide on 1 January 1997 and will rise by the same amount in non-metropolitan areas from 1 July. The projection for 1997-98 on the additional 60¢ per tonne equals \$504 000. Of the revenue generated by the surcharge of 60¢, 40¢ will go to the EPA, with the remaining 20¢ allocated to the Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry to support the employment of an officer to develop strategies for the reduction of commercial, industrial and demolition wastes. As I said earlier in my statement, the partnership that has developed there is excellent. In 1997-98 the \$1 surcharge per tonne levy will also contribute \$840 000 towards Recycle 2000. The two year freeze on licence fee increases provided as a settling in period to the 'polluter pays' principle expired on 30 April this year. Subsequent fee increases in accordance with this principle will further strengthen EPA resources.

The EPA is planning to increase its expenditure budget for 1997-98 by approximately \$800 000 to about \$9.3 million. When one adds the EPA's expenditure budget of \$9.3 million for 1997-98 to the \$840 000 put into Recycle 2000 and the \$170 000 put into the Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the total budget commitment for environment initiatives totals \$10.3 million. The EPA's resources, therefore, are now significantly greater than the annual budget of \$8 million and staff of 80 which were approved by the previous Government. A comparison with interstate EPAs demonstrates quite clearly that, even with these increases, the EPA will remain a cost-effective operation. I point out that the resourcing of the EPA under this Government is much greater and more significant than was proposed by the previous Government.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I refer again to page 410—environment protection. By way of introduction, might I say that I cannot understand how the Minister can claim some kind of blissful ignorance of the environmental response by the EPA to the Bolivar problem, when the head of the EPA, Mr Thomas, reports to both the board and the Minister. I find it extraordinary that the Minister would be totally devoid of any knowledge—in a sort of a report-free zone. Clearly, reports would have been given to the Minister.

Given the statement on 24 May by the EPA that the Bolivar sewage works 'operated under quite specific conditions', under licence, is SA Water required to report major plant malfunctions, and was the EPA advised on 11 April that the secondary treatment of the process had been stopped because gate A had been closed—that there were problems with gate A?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I can understand that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to provide some form of a trap in this area. I do not have detail as to specific dates. I might say, because of what has been said earlier, that the head of the EPA—

An honourable member interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I insist that the Minister be allowed to complete his replies.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The head of the EPA is Stephen Walsh, as I indicated, and that needs to be clarified. However, the odour issue at the Bolivar Treatment Works was recognised to be complex. As a consequence, the EPA engaged an independent auditor—and Mr Thomas has already referred to the responsibilities—to investigate the issues. I am informed that his report will be available during the next two weeks. The auditor has been particularly asked to address the cause of the odour and, in this context, will review the operations of the plant over a number of years.

As far as being specific as to what I may or may not have been told on a particular date, I am quite happy to take that on notice to see whether any further information can be provided.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: There is some confusion about this. There was a report in the *Advertiser* on 30 April of this year, headed 'Pong police sniff out a new culprit'. The article states:

The major source of the foul smell plaguing Adelaide has been discovered. Investigations by the Environment Protection Authority have revealed the culprit as a new sewage treatment method being tested at the Glenelg North treatment works. An organic sulphur smell which has hit suburbs over the past 10 days prompted the EPA inquiry into odour emissions. The cause of the smell is the atmospheric condition known as an 'inversion layer' which traps the city's normal domestic and industrial emissions close to the ground.

That was on 30 April. Even on 28 May the Minister for Infrastructure was blaming the normal smells of the city, the inversion layer and the weather, yet the Opposition has been informed that the EPA, SA Water and United Water knew in early April that the repairs to a gate at Bolivar meant that a serious odour crisis was looming and that the public was not told the truth from the start, given that it has already been reported that letters and telephone calls involving SA Water, United Water and the EPA were exchanged in early April, asking why so much partially treated effluent was entering lagoons 1 and 4, and whether they could cope. So, how can we have a situation where the EPA, at the end of April, and the Minister for Infrastructure, at the end of May, are reporting this absolute falsehood to the public, when they knew that Bolivar was the source of the problem in early April?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will ask Mr Thomas if he wants to respond to any of that, and I will say a few words after that.

Mr Thomas: I want to make it clear from the outset that there has been no cover-up and all will be revealed in the auditor's report. It is also important to make the point that odour is a complex issue. There is no doubt that it has been difficult to determine the source of the odour, in a specific site sense, and also in terms of whether it is the Bolivar plant or other plants. If you go back to April, you will find in the correspondence that will be revealed as part of the auditor's report that there is an explanation to that. Unfortunately, what you are seeing is selective editing, to a certain extent—

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Who by?

Mr Thomas: By the media, I believe. Also, the media does not have the full picture, and it is inappropriate to give the media the full picture until we have the proper story.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr Thomas: I will answer that part, because I believe it will help reveal the fact that there has not been a cover-up:

it is a complex issue. At that point, according to the debriefing I have had—and I have not had a full debriefing, and I do not want that, because I do not want to influence the auditor's report—the EPA's best information was that there was a process problem at Glenelg related to sludge. You will appreciate that all of the sludge is now pumped to Bolivar, treated at Bolivar and disposed of separately. At that point in April, it was considered that that could cause an odour problem at Bolivar, and at that point the correspondence you refer to related to the sludge lagoons. Subsequently, it has been recognised that the stabilisation lagoons are the major source. The sludge lagoons were a contributor but at that point, from what I have seen, it was not understood that the stabilisation lagoons could be the major source. So, it is an unfolding, if you like, and a collection of understanding that will be revealed as part of the auditor's report. However, I can assure you there has been no cover-up and I believe it is best that I leave it to the auditor, because it is a complex issue and I believe we will find that there are a number of factors that have contributed to this odour event. The A gate is one factor, the sludge lagoons another and the stabilisation lagoons yet another. It is not one single issue and there has not been a cover up.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I would have thought that the Opposition would recognise that the appropriate way to deal with this is to bring in an independent audit. That is totally appropriate. It is appropriate that we wait until the report from the independent auditor comes down. I suggest strongly that the Leader revisit the legislation introduced by the Government in which he was a Minister because it needs to be seen clearly that the EPA is an independent authority—it is headed up as an independent authority by Stephen Walsh QC. It is appropriate that Mr Walsh speak for the EPA as he does. Of course, the EPA is supported by the Environment Protection Office and Mr Thomas is a director of that office and also a member of the authority. I presume that the Leader would be aware that amendments were made only recently to the Environment Protection Act to clarify a situation where, under the legislation introduced by the previous Government, the Director was the Deputy Chairman of the EPA and we felt that was totally inappropriate. That situation has now been rectified. There is a separate deputy chair and Mr Thomas remains as a member of the authority.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I was a Minister with lots of independent boards: the Tourism Commission, the Centre for Manufacturing Board and the EDB and, if I had come before the Estimates Committee and said, 'I cannot answer; I have to leave it to someone else but they can't answer because it has to go to an auditor,' I would have been laughed out of court. This is a serious problem that has dominated the headlines and public discussion for 2½ months, and we have the Minister for the Environment saying, 'Don't ask me, I don't know; leave it to someone else; let's have an auditor.'

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Leader continues to play politics on what is a very serious issue and I would suggest that, while the Leader was a Minister in the previous Government, he in some way attempted to direct independent authorities that were under his control.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Mawson will not interject.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: That might have been the way he carried out his responsibilities but it is not the way that I am going to carry out my responsibilities. I will not direct the

EPA in any way because of the independence given to it under the legislation introduced by the previous Government.

The Hon. M.D. Rann: Independence of a report to you, just as—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am giving a ruling: I am not going to tolerate interjections developing into questions which require a response from the Minister. This is my last ruling on this subject. Being the lead speaker, the Leader will get one more question and then I will move to the other side. I suggest he frames his next form of words carefully and puts up a question and not a series of interjections or pseudo questions to draw the Minister to follow up with another question after that.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I am sure you will give me protection from members opposite who were also interjecting not but mentioned. The Opposition has been told that following a request from the Premier to the Minister for Infrastructure to fix the smell problem—and we have seen him on the front page of the paper saying he will fix the problem—the Minister for Infrastructure proposed a controlled release of partially treated effluent into Gulf St Vincent by draining off sewage lagoons at Bolivar. Was this ever discussed as an option with you as Minister for Environment and Natural Resources? Was it discussed with the EPA and can you confirm whether the Minister for Infrastructure discussed this issue with you?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Minister for Infrastructure has made it very clear that this is not an option. There has not been personal discussion between the two of us. That is not the case as far as my colleague is concerned: he has made it clear that that is not an option.

Mr BROKENSHERE: I refer to page 414 of the Program Estimates and the line dealing with sand replenishment programs. It is interesting to note that the problems at Bolivar go back 20 years but the Leader of the Opposition would not want to remind people that over 20 years he was a senior Minister and his Government did not do anything about that matter. Let us look at a couple of other issues such as sand replenishment, which is of particular interest to me because it affects many of my constituents who use the coastal beaches down on the Fleurieu Peninsula. Also, when we are developing further tourism opportunities, we need to ensure that we have good clean sandy beaches for tourists if we are to capitalise on opportunities that have been marketed to the rest of Australia for some time. I was pleased to see in the Program Estimates a significant increase in capital expenditure on sand replenishment programs, which is something I studied for some time. Interestingly, even in some of the most built-up tourism areas they use a similar sand replenishment program to the program our Government uses.

Given that the sand replenishment program in the budget papers shows that about 600 000 cubic metres will be dredged this year—as opposed to 200 000 in previous years and I understand in some years not even that—what impact will that have on the coast, because it is also of concern to many people that dredging may be damaging seabeds and so on? What cost savings can be made and how does the strategy generally link with the metropolitan coast review?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I recognise the interest the member for Mawson has in the area of sand replenishment. It is a very complex matter and I appreciate the interest he shows and the support he provides. The increase in dredging certainly represents a bringing forward of biannual dredgings, ensuring both significant cost savings—and I am pleased to see that that is the case—and also the enhancement and

protection of our metropolitan beaches in South Australia. The sand will be distributed over a longer section of beach between Wheatland Street and Wattle Avenue, Brighton, than previously, so the quality of sand at any particular place will not be greater than for the smaller dredging projects. Measures to prevent sand drift nuisance will be employed. Cabinet approved additional funds of \$1.9 million to extend the contract to take advantage of cost savings of \$2.9 million in 1997 dollars at a 5 per cent discount rate over six years to the year 2004 and 2005. The sand replenishment program is in accordance with the metropolitan beach protection strategy as an important Government policy. The work will commence at the end of August this year and continue through September. I understand it will take about five weeks to complete.

The larger project has been approved by all of the relevant authorities and also has been approved by the City of Holdfast Bay, which supports the replenishment strategy. As the work is to be carried out during the winter months and early spring, the impact of any turbidity on seagrasses and disruption to beach access in the vicinity of the discharge pipe will be minimal and we were very keen to ensure that that was the case. Of course, the dredging is subject to the conditions set out in the environment protection marine policy and a press release will be arranged together with a letterbox drop for residents along the Esplanade, at Brighton South particularly, to ensure that the community is kept well informed throughout this period.

It was this Government that recognised the need to review the management of the metropolitan beaches that has been allowed over a long period, particularly under the previous Government, to run down. The report of the review of the management of Adelaide metropolitan beaches was forwarded by the Chairman of the reference group, Malcolm Kinnaird, on 24 April 1997. The reference group concluded that the general strategy that has been followed by the Coast Protection Board and the Coastal Management Branch over the past 20 years, based on the Culver Report, was essentially sound, although it found many areas where further fine tuning was needed. It is my intention to release that report shortly when details of this have been finalised. It will be of interest, particularly to local government, which has responsibility for coastal management in some part along the metropolitan area in particular.

Among other initiatives taken by this Government to protect our beaches have been the significant improvements that have already been made due to catchment management programs, including the installation of the Pollutec unit at Brighton, which catches literally tonnes of litter and other debris that would otherwise wash out to the beaches. It is an important and complex area, but I am pleased that we have been able to provide substantial funding to enable this work to continue.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 415 of the Program Estimates. Information refers to the funding of the EPA generally. Will the Minister explain what approach the EPA takes to ensure enforcement of environmental standards, particularly as it relates to air quality in the city of Adelaide?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The EPA is not subject to ministerial direction in the area of enforcement. I get the impression that I am going to have to keep saying that today. Political independence and complete impartiality is an important feature of the EPA and the legislation and is rigorously observed by both the department and the EPA. Certainly it is recognised by me as Minister. This is a

fundamental factor and had the complete support of the Opposition during negotiations over the establishment of the EPA.

It should also be noted that under the EP Act prosecutions may be commenced, first, by authorised officers including all police officers and officers appointed by either the EPA, councils or the water resources Minister and, secondly, in relation to the more serious indictable offences, by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Only the EPA itself is within my portfolio and I cannot speak for other bodies, which may have authorised officers. Prosecution is only one of the many enforcement tools available to the EPA under the Environment Protection Act, but since the commencement of the EPA on 1 May 1995 until the end of May 1997 41 environment protection orders and eight clean-up orders have been issued by the EPA. The deterrence value of successful prosecutions is recognised by the EPA. Several incidents are currently under investigation with a view to possible prosecution.

In addition, as a guide to both the community and industry, the EPA is currently developing an environment policy that explains how it will use the various tools available. This document recognises that prosecutions are an integral part of the EPA's enforcement strategy, and a draft environment policy should be available for public comment in August.

With regard to the smell over Adelaide, an independent auditor, Mr Ken Hartley, has been appointed to undertake an independent audit. Coming back to the question asked previously by the Leader, I should have thought the fact that we are talking about an independent authority and the providing of an independent audit would be enough to convince the Leader that this matter is being taken seriously, is being considered independently and is not being covered up in any way by the Government. The choice of the auditor was made by the EPA, and the auditor is due to report towards the end of this month or early next month. I said earlier that it would be within the next two weeks.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer the Minister to page 414 of the Program Estimates and Information, particularly where it refers to native title and Aboriginal participation in park management. I think specifically of when the Minister and I attended the Elide Aboriginal Reserve and spoke to the elders and went down with the elders and the council. In particular, two young Aboriginal park rangers came with us to look at the head of the Bight and how it could be managed so that it could be financially viable for the local community and enable protection of the environment to occur in that fragile area. It appeared that the young Aboriginal people had a great understanding of, and passion and commitment for, getting involved in park management. Would the Minister explain what commitment our Government has with respect to jobs in the environmental sector, including Aboriginal employment programs?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I would be pleased to do that because as Minister I have been keen to ensure that partnerships are made available for Government to work closely with Aboriginal community groups. The department has been committed to the use of employment programs in the environment sector in various forms. The programs accessed include Job Skills, Career Start, new work opportunities and national training wage trainees through the Government youth training scheme.

In addition, DENR utilised LEAP schemes, Green Corps and Australian Conservation Trust volunteers to work through these programs. Through the natural resources group

DENR has employed some 193 trainees in the environmental sector. Five of the trainees are Aborigines. Programs include building of new facilities, the advancement of current maintenance programs and the urban forestation program.

In a cooperative Aboriginal land management training project with one of the communities, six trainees employed by the local Aboriginal community are working in the Koorong National Park, and DENR has put \$40 000 into the project over two years.

I referred earlier to the program in the Flinders to deal with feral animals. That program has provided the opportunity to employ one temporary Aboriginal construction and maintenance worker and upgrade an existing weekly paid position to a temporary ranger position. An Aboriginal joint management agreement between the Government and the Irrwanyere Aboriginal Corporation has been the long-term lease established for the Witjira National Park in the Far North of the State. Ongoing DENR support is being provided with funding and cooperative management.

I might say that I had the opportunity to be present for the launch of that joint program up at Witjira. I am very pleased that the decision was made by National Parks to go down that track. It is working well. It is being watched very closely by other States and is an excellent partnership between National Parks and the local Aboriginal community.

Funding has also been provided for the drafting of the Yalata land management plan. The district ranger at Ceduna has been granted leave to assist the community with the land management program. As to ranger recruitments, four trainee rangers have been employed in new positions, which have been converted from other positions to provide impetus to the ranger ranks. We now have a significant number of ranger positions, with five new positions having been made available this year through the parks agenda. A total of 88 trainees have been employed through the urban forestation project as well.

So, I am pleased with the direction that is being taken. I am also pleased not only with the progress and success we are seeing but also with the cooperation and partnership that has been established between DENR and Aboriginal communities, particularly in national parks management.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I want to register some degree of frustration on this Bolivar issue. I am trying to establish when the EPA knew about the problem at Bolivar, when it was informed, what it was told and when it acted. It has been constantly referred to an auditor. What did the EPA do? It is supposed to be the State's environmental watchdog. The Minister says he cannot tell us because the EPA is independent of the Minister, even though it reports directly to him. The EPA says, 'Wait and read about it in the independent auditor's report.' Our point is simply this: the EPA told the media and the public of South Australia at the very end of April—in fact, 30 April—that the problem was caused by Glenelg and the odours of the city and the temperature inversion. The Minister for Infrastructure made a statement on 28 May, whilst most of the people in Adelaide were aware the source of the problem was Bolivar. We have been told most reliably that EPA was told about the problem in early April. Indeed, field inspections were made in April that advised it of problems with gate A and the problems at Bolivar.

Our point is that there has been a lack of frankness, and I believe there has been today, about what the EPA did when it was told and why it persisted in assisting Ministers in blaming everything other than the source, which was Bolivar. Were discussions, proposals and options put up by the

Minister for Infrastructure for the controlled release of partially treated effluent into the gulf in April, and was the Minister aware of those options and discussions in April?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I know exactly where the Leader is trying to go on this. First, I would suggest that if he has questions that refer to my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure he should ask that Minister.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: He should ask the Minister who has the responsibility for this issue. It is the Minister for Infrastructure. I repeat: if the Leader is suggesting that I should be speaking on behalf of an independent authority, I can only say that I have no intention of doing so. It is an independent authority, and I will continue to ensure—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is an independent authority. We have commissioned an independent audit to look at these issues. The independent auditor will report within a couple of weeks. I suggest that the Leader needs to be patient until that information is made available, and then he will have something to go on. But I will not speak either on behalf of my colleague or on behalf of the independent Environment Protection Authority on this issue.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: My point is that you are the Minister for the Environment, and I am asking—

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: And I am making the point that I cannot direct the EPA, nor would it be appropriate for me to direct on licensing or enforcement. Again, I suggest that the Leader look at the legislation that he was partially responsible for introducing.

The CHAIRMAN: Could the Chair make sure that the Committee members are very clear? A member will ask a question and the question will be replied to. The Chair will not accept interruptions during the asking of the question, nor during the answering of the question. If we follow that procedure clearly during the day, we will get three questions up and three questions answered but, if members continue to interject on each other, the Committee will develop into a situation with which I am sure not everyone will agree.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: The head of the EPA reports to a board and to the Minister. Is the Minister telling me that he knew nothing about the problems at Bolivar during the previous two and a half months? That is not credible. Any sensible Minister would ask the EPA what is going on. I am trying to ask when the Minister knew about problems at Bolivar and when he was advised about what action was being taken by his agency.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I have already indicated—and I do not know how many more times I need to—that it was appropriate for the EPA to initiate the involvement of an independent auditor. It is the role of the independent auditor and the responsibility of an independent authority to make determinations in this area. I will be advised. I will certainly receive a copy of the auditor's report, and it is totally appropriate that that should be the case. If the Leader wants to get information from the EPA, I strongly suggest that he contact the Chairman of the EPA, Stephen Walsh QC.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Apparently the Minister does not know what is happening in the EPA because it is independent and apparently they do not even tell him what is going on—at least, that is what he has been trying to tell us all morning. He does not even know what the other Minister told him. He does not know what the EPA told him. Does the EPA or the Minister have a copy of page 29 of the United Water contract

that refers to the company's responsibility to prepare an environmental plan for all managed assets, including Bolivar? Does the EPA have a copy of that plan? What does that plan require United Water to do, and have all conditions in relation to Bolivar been met?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am not aware that I have a copy of that particular page, but I would like to ask the Leader, with all these questions that he is now raising today, whether he has at any time asked any of these questions of the appropriate person, the Chairman of the EPA? I doubt very much that he has even made contact with or spoken to the Chairman of the EPA.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: On a point of order, Sir, is the Minister offering to make the Chairman of the EPA available to this Estimates Committee? I am happy for that to happen.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are not in the position of the Minister's asking questions of members of the Committee. I call on the member for Mawson.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: To get on to a very important initiative for this State, a positive initiative that will stand us in good stead for the long-term future, I refer to page 239 of the Estimates of Receipts and Payments, and particularly the Murray-Darling 2001 initiative. What commitment has our Government made to clean up the River Murray and what assurances does the community have that the River Murray levy will not go to the Consolidated Account? Although I have had almost unanimous support for the clean-up of the Murray-Darling Basin 2001 initiative, many constituents are asking whether it will be a guaranteed levy to ensure that that funding goes to the clean-up.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The member for Mawson would be aware that the Murray-Darling 2001 initiative to clean up the River Murray was initiated by the former South Australian Premier and has the full support now of the Murray-Darling Basin initiative partners. I have been very pleased with the response that we have been able to obtain from all States that are involved in the Murray-Darling Basin. They have come very strongly behind that initiative. It is now a partnership between the Commonwealth and all the State Governments that have a role in the commission, and also a very strong partnership I would suggest with the community in the basin.

Only last week I attended as lead Minister for South Australia the Murray-Darling Ministerial Council, and much time was spent in dealing with a number of the initiatives that are coming out of the Murray-Darling 2001 program. The Government is committed to boosting its current level of funding to support relevant projects by up to \$35 million over the five-year period. We will continue to provide about \$1 million per annum, while the additional funds will be raised through a catchment environment levy, which will be applied to all River Murray water users in this State. I might say that it has been good that the new levy in the River Murray area has been well received, as is the case with the levy in the metropolitan area. I have assured Parliament on a number of occasions that the funds raised through the catchment environment levy will not go into the Consolidated Account, and I am happy to reaffirm that commitment today. The funds will be managed by the proposed River Murray Catchment Water Management Board. We are making progress regarding the appointment of people to that board and, of course, that board will also have a large say in how the Murray-Darling 2001 project funds are to be spent in South Australia.

The board will be established as soon as practicable after the Water Resources Act comes into operation early next month. In the meantime, a trust account has been established in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to hold in trust funds raised so far. In 1996-97 SA Water paid \$800 000 and other users paid .3¢ per kilolitre, and in total that has raised some \$2.5 million. In 1997-98, SA Water will contribute \$2.5 million and other users will continue to contribute .3¢ per kilolitre, and that will raise \$4.2 million, which is a significant amount for the program.

I am also pleased to report that the Murray-Darling 2001 initiative commenced during 1996-97 when \$9 million worth of projects were supported throughout the basin. South Australian projects received about \$1 million in addition to the \$1.5 million previously committed from baseline funding and that, in turn, enabled some 38 new projects to get off the ground in this State. I think that is a pretty good record.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 410 of the Program Estimates and Information and to water planning and evaluation. Will the Minister explain why catchment boards for the River Murray, Onkaparinga and northern Adelaide/Barossa catchment areas have recently been advertised and can he say what impact they are intended to have on water quality and other water management issues?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Again, I appreciate the member for Hartley's interest in this subject, particularly of catchment management and the importance of water, particularly in this State. Of course, water is the lifeblood of South Australia, and yet despite its importance I would suggest that the previous Government when it was at the helm just stood by and watched this vital asset become increasingly polluted and wasted, while our main artery, the River Murray became clogged and diseased. It was quite remarkable that in the 10 years of Labor Government there was no recognition of the importance of catchment management in looking after our water resources; not even with the Patawalonga Basin, and certainly the Torrens Lake continued to fester under the previous Government. The quality of water in the River Murray spiralled downwards at an ever increasing rate. This Government has now taken the issue very seriously. While the seagrasses of Holdfast Bay were at their lowest level in 40 years, the previous Government was busying itself with financial mismanagement and job destruction in this State instead of getting on with an issue which was vital to all South Australians.

So, the truth of the matter is that there is a very simple answer to the honourable member's question. Catchment boards are required for these five catchment areas, as a matter of urgency, to redress the years of inaction of the Labor Government. By any yardstick this Government acted swiftly to protect our water resources and, certainly, as was indicated earlier, I am very pleased with the priority that the Liberal Government has been able to place in this area, because it was this Government which just over 12 months after taking office put in legislation to create water catchment management boards for the Torrens and Patawalonga areas. The boards were established by May of 1995 and funds from their first levy started to be spent on catchment works by the end of the year.

Now, some two years later, these boards are a tribute to the Government's vision of best practice catchment water management and have now been recognised not only nationally but internationally and, of course, their great success has come about as a result of the fact that they combine community based boards and a wealth of local

knowledge and experience with real funding opportunities and a strong legislative framework.

Protecting our water resources which are of such paramount importance to the State's development and, I might add, to the State's future prosperity, requires a great deal of on-ground work to be carried out. I think we are very fortunate in this State with the expertise that we have in the department, particularly in the Division of Water Resources, and I think many of the targets that have been set and the achievements that have been gained are a credit to all of those involved; but it really has only happened because of the commitment of both the department and people in the community generally, who have been very keen to be involved in so many different ways and in so many different projects.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Minister, I refer to page 414 of the Program Estimates and Information, referring to the establishment of the Great Australian Bight Marine Park. I would like to congratulate you as Minister for making sure it proceeded for the community and for future generations of South Australians. It was something called for on many occasions but successive governments had not acted until you got involved. I think it is important that as a member of Parliament I put that clearly on the public record, because it is a major achievement of yours, Minister. Also, there have been discussions on the great white shark. Can the Minister provide details on how this park has impacted on the protection of them, as well as on the protection of the southern right whale?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The creation of the park at the head of the Bight is something that is of great significance as far as I am concerned, and I think the vast majority of people in this State have recognised it as such. There has been talk over many years in determining what should be done as far as the protection of both the sea lions and of the whales is concerned. The fact that we have been able to take action in declaring this as a marine park is very worthwhile.

Certainly, South Australian waters are now recognised worldwide as the most consistently occupied waters as far as the great white shark is concerned. In May this year the Government endorsed a range of measures to protect and manage the great white shark in South Australian waters. The management actions will not only fully protect the great white shark but better coordinate research into the species and, of course, its interaction with the marine mammal colonies that provide its natural food supply. I can say that the protection of the great white shark is something that has been referred to constantly by the Environment Ministers' Council, and I think the fact that the department and the Government have been able to ensure that that was to happen is great news.

The waters within two nautical miles of the key conservation islands in that area are to be proclaimed under the National Parks and Wildlife Act to provide a framework for managing the interaction between commercial operators, great white sharks and marine mammal populations. In all, we are talking about an additional 65 000 hectares of the State's waters being brought into the marine protected area system.

The Great Australian Bight has many features that make it worthy of marine protected area status. Not only do these waters show very high levels of marine biodiversity but the region is recognised as significant for rare and endangered marine mammals, including southern right whales and Australian sea lions. The tourist potential of land-based whale

viewing from Aboriginal land at the head of the Bight has scarcely been tapped. I am pleased with the progress that is being made up there, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is keen to work with the Aboriginal communities in that area to ensure that the park is sound and has appropriate visitor facilities.

DENR staff have assisted the Yalata community in a number of ways, for example, with site planning for the land-based whale viewing area. The State Department of Aboriginal Affairs currently is coordinating a major redevelopment project for the site which will remedy many of the existing shortcomings and improve its tourist appeal. I think that that will be welcomed not only by South Australians but interstate and international tourists who visit that important site in South Australia.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: Has there been any movement with regard to some of the tourism initiatives, such as roads, which the Minister discussed with the Yalata people?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I had the good fortune to meet with the Yalata Council and discuss in depth what it saw as priorities in this area. I was impressed with the council's enthusiasm and its commitment to what it wanted to achieve in this area, particularly in respect of ensuring that some of its own people are involved and employed in this project, and I am pleased to see that that is happening. Many of the initiatives that the council discussed with me and many of the projects to which it gave a high priority have now been implemented. I strongly suggest that those members of the Committee who have not recently had a chance to visit the area and have a look do so.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Regarding the issue of controls over cables, roll-outs and phone towers, the Minister would be aware, having attended a meeting yesterday at Cobbler Creek, that there is enormous concern about the installation of phone towers and cable roll-outs. I understand that Federal laws will cover overhead cables until the end of September, and that that is why councils are unable to stop the roll-outs, that Commonwealth regulations dealing with the installation of phone towers, particularly those over 25 metres, cease on 1 July, and that there is a requirement for the State to have in place new regulations and guidelines by that date. Why has the State Government not moved to put in place legislation to control towers after 1 July when Commonwealth regulations cease? Will the Minister give a guarantee to this committee and the people of South Australia that the Government will not allow towers in national parks and reserves such as Cobbler Creek?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Leader is correct: yesterday I attended a meeting with my colleague the Minister for Local Government at Cobbler Creek. A lot of concern was expressed at that meeting. It was interesting that the Labor candidate for this area was critical of the process that had been adopted and seemed to be ignorant of the fact that most of the concerns had come about as a result of legislation introduced by the previous Federal Labor Government. The advice we have received is that the work that has been carried out regarding the siting of this tower has already passed the stage where it can be dealt with in any way other than by Federal legislation.

It is a matter of concern to the community: I am very much aware of that. Yesterday, I was keen to meet with those people, particularly the Friends of the Cobbler Creek Park, who were represented at the meeting. I indicated my feelings about and support for the park because, during my previous role as Minister between 1979 and 1982, I had a significant

part to play in ensuring that much of the land that is now Cobbler Creek was retained for that purpose.

At present, the erection of overhead cables and towers is regulated by Commonwealth legislation. The South Australian Government currently is considering the new legislative regime that will come into play after 1 July and the impact that that will have on South Australia. As the Leader would be aware, the principal Minister handling this issue (the Minister for Housing and Urban Development) is currently preparing a submission for Cabinet's consideration regarding the legislative regime post 1 July 1997. I understand that that submission will include consideration of any amendments to relevant South Australian legislation that may be required.

With regard to the situation at Tea Tree Gully, I understand that Vodafone made it clear that it was considering only two options: first, the siting of the tower in the park; and, secondly, the siting of the tower in a very unsuitable site in the built-up area of Tea Tree Gully in the vicinity of two schools. The principals of those schools were present at yesterday's meeting and spoke very strongly against using the site alternative to the site in the national park, as did others.

It is my intention to have some input in the submission that is prepared by the Minister for Housing and Urban Development. When that submission is raised in Cabinet, I will have the opportunity to have my say with regard to issues such as the inclusion of these towers in national parks, and it is appropriate that I do so at that time.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: It would be nice to know where the Minister for the Environment stands on the general policy issue, whether he believes that towers should be located in South Australian national parks. Concerns were expressed at yesterday's meeting about the basis on which the Minister claimed that the Cobbler Creek tower was already under construction when clearly that is not the case because no site work has commenced. In fact, the protest tree planted at the site by concerned residents is still in the ground. It appears that that is being used as an excuse: 'Vodafone has control over this because construction work has begun.' Clearly, that is not the case. With whom did the Minister consult about alternatives to the Cobbler Creek site, and what public consultation was conducted by the Minister or Vodafone?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I cannot speak for Vodafone. I find it fascinating that the Leader would obviously want to put all the blame on this Government. He is trying desperately to put the blame, as far as Bolivar is concerned, on this Government when in fact it was the previous Government that took absolutely no action whatsoever to improve the situation at Bolivar. I recall, very clearly, statements that have been made publicly and in the House by previous Ministers, and particularly Minister Lenehan, about the priority that she was supposedly giving to improving the situation at Bolivar, yet obviously no action whatsoever was taken by the previous Government.

In regard to this other issue, I have already pointed out that my information is very clear that until 1 July, and because of the negotiations that have already taken place, this matter must be dealt with under the current Federal legislation. I might say that I have asked to have that checked out to ensure that that is the case. I have not had any opportunity to get further advice on that, but that is the advice I have certainly received.

If I am speaking on my behalf and on behalf of the department, I would be generally opposed in principle to the erection of telecommunication towers at new sites in

reserves—the preservation of environmental values and scenic amenity being the prime consideration for the agency—but I made it very clear to the meeting yesterday that if I had to make a choice between the siting of the tower in the park or in the other location suggested by Vodafone—

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: —I know where I would be going.

The Hon. M.D. Rann interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Well, you talk to Vodafone—get off your backside and talk to Vodafone.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Mr Chairman, it is totally appropriate that that should be the case. I might also say that this matter of the siting of the tower in the park has been considered. Obviously, it is a concern of Friends of Cobblers Creek. It was also considered by the National Parks Consultative Committee that has some responsibility in giving advice to the Minister and it is minuted that the committee recognises the concern of local residents but, if a tower is to be erected, the site within the park is probably the most suitable option. That is in the minutes of the consultative committee for that area.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: I would like to now turn attention to page 410 and greenhouse emissions which have been dominating the international and national agenda in the past few days. The 1993 State Liberal policy makes a commitment to national pollution standards. The policy states:

A Liberal Government will support the establishment of national pollution emission standards, national environmental quality goals, national policies for the abatement of pollution.

We have a situation where the new British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has said today that the air we breathe is all the same, that global warming and the rising of sea levels are global issues, and there is no case for Australia to argue that we should not reduce to the same levels of greenhouse for economic reasons based on our dependence on fossil fuels. Clearly, there is a major disagreement between Mr Howard and Mr Blair on greenhouse policy. In terms of your involvement, were you consulted by the Federal Environment Minister, Senator Hill, and did you agree that Australia should not be part of compulsory greenhouse reduction targets of 15 per cent by the year 2010? Was this issue agreed by Ministers attending the regular Commonwealth-State Environment Ministers conference, so that we can be clear whether you stand with Mr Howard or Mr Blair?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I think it would be appropriate if I indicated, first, what we are doing as a Government in this area and then talk about the stance of the Federal Government. The South Australian Greenhouse Committee was established by this Government in 1994. It has representatives of the Economic Development Authority, DHUD, ETSA, the Gas Company, Office of Energy, Department of Transport, Primary Industries SA, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Local Government Authority. The committee replaced the Climate Change Committee, and I would be pleased, if the Leader was interested, to provide him with the terms of reference of that committee.

As far as the current status of this situation, the committee holds meetings on an 'as needs' basis. It monitors developments nationally and internationally about climate change. It contributed to the development by the Commonwealth of the Greenhouse 21C package of measures. It established the renewable energy working group and has maintained a watching brief of its operations. It compiled a summary of the

implementation of the national strategy. It is currently involved in the revision of the national greenhouse response strategy and the Executive Officer prepares and publishes a 30-page newsletter twice annually which is forwarded to a wide number of interest groups, schools, parliamentarians and individuals.

A detailed briefing on international and national developments was certainly given to the Natural Resources Cabinet Committee in May this year. If we look at the national situation, the Climate Change Convention is an international treaty entered into by our Federal Government. The Federal Government is responsible at international law for the implementation of the treaty. The Federal Government is, within the context of agreed intergovernmental processes, also responsible for the carriage of any negotiations or changes to the treaty. I discussed the stance of the Federal Government with my Federal colleague as recently as two weeks ago at the ANZECC conference (the meeting of environment Ministers in Queensland) and, as I said to the Federal Minister, I support the general thrust of the position of the Federal Government.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: My question relates to page 414 of the Program Estimates and Information, where it refers to the management of protected areas, rangeland and coasts as one of DENR's broad objectives in resource conservation and management. This is an area about which some members of Parliament, who show a genuine concern for the environment, have expressed interest for a long time—others come in only when there are cameras around. That is the way it goes with politics. But the genuine community which is interested in the environment—like many of us who are committed to the environment on an ongoing basis, and not just when cameras are around—is very interested in what the Government is doing to protect the Lake Eyre Basin from exploitation. Will the Minister explain what the Government is doing to ensure that the Lake Eyre Basin—which is an icon for South Australia and an area that I love to visit—will be protected from exploitation?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I share the honourable member's thoughts about this area of South Australia: it is an area of outstanding natural and cultural values. The rivers of the basin have not been substantially altered by water extraction, diversions and impoundments. They are among a dwindling number of the world's rivers, with near natural flow regimes and substantially unaltered ecosystem functions. These natural flow regimes are inherently variable, and bring with them a suite of species which are adapted to, and dependent on, variable flows. I believe we would all recognise that South Australia's location, at the lower end of the catchment, makes it imperative that agreement is reached with upstream Governments—principally Queensland—for the management of these systems. Through a joint initiative between myself and the Queensland Minister of Natural Resources, we have now signed a historic head of agreement for the better management of the catchments and water resources for the rivers of the Lake Eyre Basin. I have been extremely pleased with the positive way in which my colleague in Queensland has dealt with this issue. From the very start of negotiations, he and the Queensland Government have been very cooperative and have recognised the importance of this agreement as far as South Australia is concerned. This significant document paves the way for a formal binding agreement with Queensland for the protection and management of Cooper Creek and the Diamantina River. Through our endeavours, the Commonwealth Minister is a supporting party to the

agreement, reflecting the national and international significance of the area. The heads of agreement has broad base support from interest groups, including the Conservation Council of South Australia, the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy, the South Australian Farmers Federation and the Lake Eyre Basin Catchment Management Steering Group. I see this as being vitally important for the protection of the Lake Eyre region of the State.

I was pretty disappointed that, when the memorandum of understanding was signed, it received such scant recognition by the media, particularly. It is not that long ago that the media was spending a considerable amount of time talking about inaction on the part of previous Governments on this important initiative and, as soon as something was done about it—and it was a very positive initiative that we were able to undertake with the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments—nobody wanted to know about it, as far as the media was concerned. That is very disappointing, because I have no doubt that the community generally is very concerned about this area and would want to see positive action taken. I believe that the community deserved to know what action the Government was taking with regard to this initiative—but, regrettably, that was not to be the case.

In addition, the South Australian Government has allocated \$1 million for protection of the key sites within the basin. These funds have been directed towards protection works for mound springs, protection for river frontages and wetlands along Cooper Creek and the important Coongie Lakes.

As to the support that we have received from the community, while it is probably not appropriate to refer to individuals, I would like to recognise the significant support contribution made by Kidmans in assisting with the work in that very important and sensitive area. So, overall, it has been great to see the negotiations and the cooperative nature of the Queensland Government and the community, and I believe that the end result of that and the agreement that will be signed will be significant as far as the overall and ongoing management of the Lake Eyre Basin is concerned.

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

Mr CAUDELL: I refer to page 410 of the Program Estimates. Statements have been made both inside and outside the House about the discharge of effluent from Bolivar into the gulf, and there has been innuendo that you may have had discussions on this issue. Would you tell the Committee what has occurred in relation to the Bolivar area regarding treated effluent?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am very pleased to be able to do that. It is interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition has obviously had his 10 seconds in the sun and has disappeared, as has the large contingent of media who were obviously told to expect something significant from the Opposition, but they appear to have disappeared at this stage.

It is important that I clarify the situation, and I think I did so in the response I gave earlier. As to the question whether there was an approach about discharge into the gulf, there was no approach from the office of my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure or from SA Water to discharge stabilisation lagoon effluent directly into the gulf. This was one of five suggestions made by the auditor, and the EPA advised SA Water and the auditor that that was not an option. I made that clear in my earlier response. In fact, the Executive Director

of the EPA appeared on the front page of the *Advertiser* confirming that that was the case.

I suggest strongly that the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader, who now appears to be heading up the Opposition in the Estimates Committee this afternoon, should read the Environment Protection Act. Again, I make the point that they were responsible while in government for bringing down that legislation. Part 3, Division 1, of that Act provides very clearly in relation to the independence of the authority:

The Environment Protection Authority is established.

...

(4) In the exercise of its powers, functions or duties, the authority is subject to the direction of the Minister except in relation to—

(a) the making of a recommendation of a report to the Minister;

or

(b) the performance of its functions under Part 6; or—

that refers to licensing—

(c) the enforcement of this Act.

(5) Any direction given to the authority by the Minister must be in writing.

Regarding membership of the authority, section 12 provides:

(1) The authority is to consist of six members, of whom—

It goes on to say of whom the independent authority shall be comprised. As to the functions of the authority, section 13 provides:

(1) The authority has the following functions:

(i) to administer and enforce this Act and perform any other functions assigned to the authority by or under any other Act.

It is vitally important that the Leader, because of the ignorance he has shown this morning regarding this legislation, read the legislation so that he understands exactly what the situation is. I might also say that with the line of question taken by the Opposition this morning it might be of interest for them to consider some of the statements made by the previous Labor Government, particularly by the then Water Resources Minister, Ms Lenehan, in at least seven statements that I have been able to collate. In 1989, under the heading 'Government gives Bolivar some sweet news', an indication was given by the then Minister that the problems of Bolivar would be fixed. In 1989 the then Water Resources Minister, Ms Lenehan, under the heading 'One million bid to cut waste problems', indicated a commitment to clean up the situation, and other statements were made by the Minister at that time.

A statement in 1991, under the heading 'Bolivar stink costly', had Ms Lenehan indicating that she wanted the residents to monitor the effectiveness of new and combined measures that had been taken supposedly by the then Government to rectify the situation as far as the odour was concerned.

So, to say the least, it is hypocritical of the Opposition now to be suggesting that this is something that is the direct result of this Government's involvement. It would be appropriate for the Opposition to consider the statements that have been made. I appreciate the question being asked by the member because it is important, even though it would appear the Leader of the Opposition has now lost all interest in this subject now that the media has gone, and appropriate to reiterate that there was no approach from the Minister for Infrastructure or SA Water to discharge stabilisation lagoon effluent directly into the ocean. In fact, it was one of five suggestions made by the auditor and it was made very clear by the EPA that it was not an option that could be considered.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 417 of the Program Estimates and ageing technology assistance in the land resources sector. What is the Government doing to ensure that South

Australia will remain at the forefront of information management trends in land tenure systems?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I thank the member for Hartley for the question because the Government has made a significant commitment to redevelop the computer systems which underpin land tenure information, that is, the land ownership and tenure, known as the LOTS, family of systems. I am pleased to say the redevelopment is proceeding in two stages. Stage 1 is to move the existing systems to a more reliable standard and modern set of computer facilities by mid 1998. Stage 2 will mean the reengineering and replacement of the LOTS system by systems which meet current customer needs, and that will be a development over several years.

The stage 2 development is expected to incorporate the reengineering of the key business processes underlying the LOTS family of systems. This will lead, for example, to more flexible and more efficient ways of lodging transfers of documents in the Lands Titles Office, such as electronic lodgment of documents; the complete modernisation of presentation of all information purchased in the form of inquiries from the department by conveyancers, valuers and the public (for example, many will be available via the Internet and Windows software, which is a significant improvement on the current situation); the integration of LOTS text data, that is, property values, certificate of title data, etc.; and spatial data or map-like data, such as property boundaries, would be currently available separately.

The modernisation of the technology used in the LOTS family of systems will also be incorporated in the stage 2 development. When complete, the LOTS redevelopment project will have taken advantage of emerging technological developments and the very latest in trends in information management. It is a very costly exercise but one that was very much needed, and I am very pleased that we are able to proceed with that redevelopment.

Mr CLARKE: Obviously someone wrote the Minister some briefing notes over the lunch break to enable him to answer questions that he could not answer this morning. I take it that the Minister will answer this afternoon's questions some time later tonight after the dinner break? It also tends to remind me of the Minister's statement, in his attack on the Leader of the Opposition, that essentially he is not responsible for authorities such as the EPA and he does not have to worry about them. I am surprised that the Minister would take such a stance because, following its logical conclusion, the Labor Party had no responsibility whatsoever for the actions of the State Bank. That is the Minister's line of reasoning for his being Pontius Pilate.

I turn to the Program Estimates, page 410, to try to work out whether or not the Minister should or should not be the Treasurer of the State because he refers to the parks agenda in his media statement and in his earlier statement today on that issue. He talked about the commitment of an extra \$30 million over six years for protecting and restoring national parks, except that nobody can find where that money is. For example, 'resource conservation and management' has been cut from \$35.6 million to \$33.6 million. 'Protected areas management' has been cut from \$13.5 million to \$12.8 million, and there have been cuts to the number of full-time equivalent employees. Likewise, 'protected areas management' has been cut from \$8.9 million to \$7.2 million and 'wildlife conservation' from \$5.179 million to \$4.869 million. Where are the new funds—the extra \$30 million over six years—that the Minister says are

available for protecting and restoring our national parks, given this small number of examples of cutbacks both in dollar terms and in staffing levels?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is important that we look at a number of issues regarding this matter. There are four significant factors that explain the net reduction in total recurrent spending from 1996-97 revised to that proposed for 1997-98. First, the 1996-97 expenditure included \$400 000 spent to complete a one-off project relating to the Lake Eyre Basin. Funding was specifically for this project and is not ongoing. A change in accounting arrangements will result in expenditure of about \$350 000, which was reflected in 'protected areas management' in 1996-97, being recorded against 'program management and support' in 1997-98. This relates to expenditure on maintenance of infrastructure, which more accurately relates to the entire program rather than one specific program.

The withdrawal of \$300 000 Commonwealth funding for parks is part of a broader reduction in Commonwealth funding, and these reductions were partly offset by additional State Government spending of \$500 000 through the parks agenda. Gross expenditure appears to reduce because of accounting changes. The completion of one-off projects with the subsequent return to base funding and the reduction in Commonwealth funding should be clear. If this Government had not supported the parks agenda with additional funding the reduction would have been an extra \$500 000 higher. That is the point I made earlier.

The answer is similar for capital expenditure. By its very nature, capital expenditure tends to be project based. This means that there can be significant variations in the program size as large one-off projects are completed. Examples of this from 1996-97 include the Mount Lofty Summit redevelopment project, with a budgeted cost of about \$2.6 million; the Naracoorte Caves project, costing about \$1.5 million and that was largely funded by the Commonwealth; and a further \$1.4 million specific funding for completing the Coffin Bay Road and funding design work for Innes and Mambray Creek Roads.

There is never any guarantee that the projects for the next year will be of high enough relative priority to be funded in that year, and this Government has responded by committing another \$2 million for capital expenditure on the parks agenda in 1997-98, followed by even more in the years from 1998-99 through to 2002 and 2003. This is why the funding approved by this Government for the parks agenda is so important to the future of the parks and to the people of South Australia.

The Government has not only approved an extra \$2.5 million above the base level of funding available for parks in 1997-98 but it has also guaranteed that additional funds will be provided for the next five years as well, amounting to \$30 million in total. This will provide the surety needed for the department to embark upon the rebuilding program that this State deserves and needs very much as a result of our parks being left to deteriorate under the previous Government.

To summarise, although there is not a separate line for the additional \$2.5 million in figures aggregated at this level, it is there amongst a large number of other pluses and minuses, and it is important to recognise that that is the case.

To answer the question, the funding is there. It is \$2.5 million this year of new funding and a commitment to \$30 million in total over the next five years.

Membership:

Mrs Geraghty substituted for the Hon. M.D. Rann.

Mr CLARKE: That was an interesting explanation, Minister. You ought to be the Treasurer because, if you can conjure an extra \$30 million out of thin air, which is what you put in your media statement, you ought to be—

Mr Caudell interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Deputy Leader has the call.

Mr CLARKE: The Minister ought not to be just the Treasurer of the State, as the field would be too small for him. He ought to be national Treasurer, and no less.

Members interjecting:

Mr CLARKE: There are no depths to which you will not crawl. In the 1995-96 budget paper No.2, the Government funded the implementation of the parks review recommendations with the first \$1 million for a total project cost of \$5.8 million. In the next budget this project disappeared. Why did the project evaporate, and what parks review recommendations remain outstanding, how much was actually spent, and were funds diverted to the Mount Lofty cafe or other projects? What are the details?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am fascinated by the Deputy Leader's reference to Mount Lofty as the Mount Lofty cafe. I know that members opposite are as wild as all hell that they were not able to achieve over 14 years what this Government has achieved with that development. I can understand their frustration and the Deputy Leader's concern that we have been able to do something that they were not able to do for 14 years. I can only presume, from what the Deputy Leader is saying, that he has not even visited the Mount Lofty site.

Mr CLARKE: I have.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Well, if he had visited the Mount Lofty site, and if he was fair dinkum, he would realise that it is far from a café, that it is a world class information centre as well as a significant restaurant and gateway to South Australia. If the Deputy Leader wants to carry on about this development, I can only presume that he is jealous of the fact that we have been able to achieve it. I am very pleased that we have been able to do so. I will ask the Director of Natural Resources, Alan Holmes, to respond.

Mr Holmes: My recollection is that the Parks Review resulted in the Government's increasing the capital base from \$2.5 million to about \$3.5 million or \$3.8 million. That occurred in the first year after the Parks Review was maintained in the second year. In large part, the Parks Agenda responds to issues raised in the Parks Review, and the funding that is programmed through the Parks Agenda deals with issues that arise from the Parks Review. So, the parks review funding was maintained over subsequent years to be replaced in 1997-98 by the Parks Agenda funding.

Mr CLARKE: Were any funds diverted to the Mount Lofty café?

Mr Holmes: The funding of the Mount Lofty Summit development was a separate issue entirely from the Parks Review funding, and additional supplementation was provided for that development.

Mr CLARKE: I well understand the pride which the Minister has for the Mount Lofty café. It is his swan song before he goes to London next year, if he can beat the Deputy Leader to that post. I refer to the Parks Agenda announced by the Minister. The \$3.2 million national parks road building program was funded for \$500 000 in 1995-96 and \$1.7 million in 1996-97, but has now disappeared from the

forthcoming year's program. Has the balance of this program been recycled into the Parks Agenda capital item shown in this year's budget to include roadworks?

Mr Holmes: In answer to the previous question, I indicated that the Parks Agenda replaced the Parks Review funding. In so doing, it has picked up the range of initiatives that resulted from the Parks Review. So, the Parks Agenda funding does include the ongoing road program and is part of the \$30 million initiative.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I express my disappointment with both the launch of the Parks Agenda at Belair and the corporate launch last night. Invitations were extended to the Opposition to be present at that launch. It was regrettable that the Opposition did not see fit to send a representative or to have anybody present as it was the launch of a very positive initiative.

Mr CLARKE: I think Carolyn Pickles represented us.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: No, nobody was there. I just make the point that I think it is a great disappointment. I hoped that this would be a non-political situation and that all members would recognise the need to improve the 21 million hectares of parks in this State and the significant contribution that those parks continue to make to the protection of our biodiversity and also as opportunities for ecotourism and appropriate development within those parks. It is disappointing that we have received no positive support from the Opposition regarding this initiative.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer to page 410 of the Program Estimates—protected areas management. It is interesting that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition makes statements about whether the Government should have been hands on or hands off with the State Bank debacle. I point out to the Minister that, with respect to the Bolivar treatment plant, which has been in urgent need of major maintenance for 20 years, we could have built 10 brand new sewage treatment plants with the money that the State Bank debacle cost South Australia under the hands of the Labor Government. In that respect, the Audit Commission said the Labor Government was hands on when it should have been hands off, and that it was hands off when it should have been hands on. However, it is clearly stated in the relevant Act that the Minister has to keep away from the Environment Protection Authority.

In a situation where we do need to be hands on—and I congratulate the Minister for being hands on within his appropriate portfolio area—will the Minister explain what is being done to ensure the maintenance of the conservation values, for which he is responsible, of the Coongie Lakes (which is a magnificent area out of Innamincka, and which I encourage the Deputy Leader to visit some time if he can find his way) and, in particular, why there appears to have been no EIS for the proposed seismic survey of the Coongie Lakes area? When full, this area is one of the most diverse inland waterways that I have ever seen and probably one of the largest inland waterways in the world.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I indicated earlier the pleasure that I take in the recognition that has been given by Queensland, the Commonwealth and this State regarding the need to protect Lake Eyre. There is no doubt that the Coongie Lakes RAMSAR wetlands are of international importance. This area covers almost two million hectares. It focuses on the lower Cooper flood out and vast freshwater lake system. The RAMSAR convention recognises the outstanding natural values and habitat significance of the lower Cooper and Coongie Lakes complex. I do not know how many members

have had the opportunity to visit that area, but those who have recognise its significance.

A principal objective of the RAMSAR convention is the wise use of the wetlands concerned, and the Government is committed to the preparation of a plan of management for the Coongie Lakes RAMSAR site. A planning officer has been appointed to oversee the preparation of the plan which will involve extensive consultation with and input from other stakeholders who have vital interests in the area. It is very important that that consultation take place. The community includes the pastoral and mining industries, particularly the local pastoral community, the Aboriginal community and tourism interests.

This process is proceeding on schedule, and a draft of the plan of management will be completed by April next year. Currently, there is no proposal to allow mining in the Coongie Lakes area of the Innamincka Regional Reserve. However, the Government has a proposal before it from SANTOS to conduct a western prospect seismic survey in the area. The survey would entail the preparation of 690 kilometres of seismic line, of which 399 kilometres would be located within the Coongie Lakes Control Zone which, as I said earlier, is an area of exceptional environmental significance identified at the time of the establishment of the regional reserve in 1988.

In recognition of the exceptional environmental values of the area and its status as a RAMSAR listed wetland of international significance, the South Australian Government required the preparation of a declaration of environmental factors for the proposed survey. SANTOS also voluntarily undertook a program of consultation with key stakeholders and interest groups. While a DEF does not involve the same level of detailed assessment as an environmental impact statement, it is considered an appropriate level of assessment for seismic survey work.

The technology and methodology applied to seismic survey has changed markedly in recent years and current best practice, of which SANTOS is a leading exponent, has minimal environmental impact even in environmentally sensitive areas. If the seismic survey proceeds and the results suggest oil or natural gas reserves sufficient to encourage exploratory drilling and/or eventual product production, an additional process of rigorous environmental assessment will be required.

Whilst the Wilderness Society of South Australia has nominated the Coongie Lakes area for wilderness assessment, it is not possible to proclaim a wilderness area under the provisions of the Wilderness Protection Act while mining or petroleum tenements are in that vicinity. Bearing this in mind, the Wilderness Advisory Committee is not planning any immediate assessment, but as the current petroleum tenements expire in early 1999 the situation will be reviewed at that time. Certainly, the Government will make a decision on the proposed seismic survey shortly. If it does proceed it will be subject to a range of stringent environmental conditions.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: You mentioned SANTOS in what you were just giving us advice on. SANTOS, I understand, has been involved in supporting parks and so on in the last few years.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: SANTOS is one of a number of organisations within the corporate sector that has shown some support; but it is something that we would encourage from all sections of the corporate sector. I cannot say that SANTOS has been any more involved than many others. Reference has been made to support from companies such as RM Williams

and Wirra Wirra, and there are many others that were referred to last night. Clipsal has provided \$200 000 for a new bird aviary in Cleland. Significant support has come from the corporate sector.

Mr CLARKE: From the Shooters' Association, for koalas.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am very pleased to be able to report, Mr Chairman, in response to the Deputy Leader that our program of sterilisation of koalas on Kangaroo Island is proceeding very well indeed.

Mr SCALZI: On page 414 of the Program Estimates and Information reference is made to the new Water Resources Act 1997. The program's description shows the proclamation of the new Water Resources Act as an achievement. Minister, what will the Government do about implementing the Act?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The new Water Resources Act is, as I said earlier today, nationally recognised as an important and innovative step forward in integrating a community-based approach towards water resources management.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am glad the Deputy Leader has referred to the international recognition that is given to the management of this State's water resources—because that is dead right. That is exactly what is happening. As I said earlier, it is not just the State that is pleased with the progress; it is recognised nationally. Other States are envious of what we have been able to achieve in this State, and I am pleased that the work that is being done on water catchment management in particular is being recognised internationally. The implementation of the Water Resources Act has already commenced. I am currently considering nominations for membership of the South Australian Water Resources Council, as required under the Act. The council will be appointed when the Act is proclaimed, which is expected to occur early next month.

The first role of the council will be to consider applications for membership of catchment water management boards. Priority will be given to appointing members to the existing boards, the Patawalonga and the Torrens. This will minimise disruptions to the catchment programs presently operating and proposed in the Patawalonga and Torrens catchments after the current membership of the two boards expires on 30 June. In keeping with the transitional provisions of the 1997 Act, I signalled my intention on 10 May this year to establish new community-based catchment water management boards for the northern Adelaide and Barossa, Onkaparinga and River Murray catchments.

The new boards will develop holistic catchment water management plans for their proclaimed areas, using the rigorous planning and community consultation provisions contained in Part 7 of the Act. It is envisaged that the referral components within the planning processes will form the basis for integration of catchment water management plans, with other planning and natural resource management mechanisms. Appropriate membership of catchment water management boards is critical to their success and acceptance by the catchment community. At the public meetings that I have attended that is a point that has been made very clear by those who have attended the meetings. I have called for nominations for membership of the proposed new boards with a view to having skills-based boards established by late August. I am pleased with the progress that has been made with regard to this important legislation.

Mr CAUDELL: My question concerns the biological survey. Page 414 of the Estimates of Receipts and Payments refers to the State's biological survey. Can the Minister provide details of how much money will be spent on the State's biological survey and how the survey relates to the Government as part of the park's agenda?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The member is quite right in recognising the importance of the biological survey. It is important that we know what is above the ground in regard to various ecosystems and to the biodiversity generally. The State's biological survey is a very important component of the Government's strategy. Valuable data on the State's biodiversity will assist in the proper protection and sustainable management of our natural environment. Since 1971 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been conducting systematic biological surveys of the vegetation and invertebrate fauna over large areas of the State, as part of the biological survey of South Australia. The aim of these surveys is to document the range of biological variation across the State in order to improve long-term natural resource management.

The current capital works allocation for the biological survey is \$300 000 per annum for five years. This has allowed us to significantly increase our programs and reduce our previous almost total dependence on Commonwealth Government funding for new survey programs; but it will not complete the program by 2005 as we had hoped. The Government gave a commitment in principle to complete the biological survey of South Australia by the end of 2005. The Government funded the first three years, 1994-95 to 1996-97, to \$661 000.

This funding enabled completion of the biological surveys of eastern South Australia south of the Flinders Ranges. The Government is maintaining its commitment to the biological survey in 1997-98 by providing \$300 000 capital funding to supplement base funding of the survey. Part of this commitment will be used to attract Commonwealth funding and the Natural Heritage Trust progress for a biological survey of the Sandy Desert of north-eastern South Australia. I would hope that, eventually, we might be able to seek support for funding from the corporate sector for the biological survey to enable us to proceed a little more quickly than we had envisaged. I think it is vitally important to the State and I would be very surprised if there was not support in the corporate sector to enable us to carry out that survey a little more quickly.

Mr CLARKE: The minutes of a meeting of the Patawalonga Catchment Management Board held on 17 April indicate that the Mayor of Glenelg had raised concerns about the future use of effluent from the Glenelg sewage works for watering public reserves. The minutes state:

Concern was expressed that the water may not be available in the future as it may not be assessed suitable for reuse.

Has the EPA allowed SA Water to downgrade the quality of effluent from these works? At the beginning of Adelaide's big pong, the EPA said that the Glenelg sewage works was part of the cause because of a new process that had been introduced. What are the details of this new process and why did it cause this stink?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Before I ask Mr Thomas to contribute to this question, I have already indicated that the EPA and SA Water have negotiated a plan to upgrade treatment works in the metropolitan area by the year 2001. It is a program worth \$150 million. It is a lot of money to go into environmental improvement. It is recognised that it is

needed and, again, it is an area that was totally ignored by the previous Government and we are left with a considerable bill and a considerable amount of work to bring up those plants to a standard that would be accepted by the community. I will ask Mr Thomas to respond in more detail.

Mr Thomas: There are a number of issues that have been raised and I will endeavour to answer them all. First, with regard to odour, I think it is fair to say that will be dealt with by the auditor's report. However, I did refer to a process issue involving sludge at the Glenelg plant which may have contributed initially to the odour problem. I think that will be revealed in the auditor's report—and we still believe that is the case—but I do not believe it is the main contributor as will come out in the report.

In terms of effluent, the sludge from Glenelg, Christies Beach and Port Adelaide is pumped via a pipeline to Bolivar where it is collected in the sludge lagoons. However, effluent currently is discharged into the ocean. Your question is primarily in reference to effluent. The nature of the question suggested that there will be a downgrading of the effluent making it unsuitable for reuse. I do not know the exact numbers, but I suspect that currently about 10 per cent to 15 per cent of Glenelg effluent is reused in that region for the local golf course and other local parks. The quality of effluent for that sort of reuse does not have to be as high as for horticulture reuse such as at Bolivar. I understand that there is no proposal to reuse it for horticultural use. If it was to be used for horticultural use, then the quality would have to be increased through significant ultra filtration as is happening at Bolivar as part of the Virginia irrigators' proposal.

The main efforts being developed through the Environmental Improvement Program to which the Minister referred are in relation to nutrient removal because nutrients have been damaging the sea grass over the past 50 or 60 years. Most of the capital to be invested is for nutrient removal so that damage to sea grass does not continue. One could ask the question: why does it not all go onto land? The intent of this Government and the EPA is to negotiate those EIPs so that we get as much effluent onto land and into reuse as we can. The difficulty is whether there is demand for it. At Bolivar there is high demand so we are currently negotiating a significant reuse, but there has never been high demand at Glenelg. We would like there to be greater demand and that is the most limiting factor in its reuse rather than the quality.

Mr CLARKE: I have a supplementary question. It sounded like the Mayor of Glenelg was keen on using the water but was worried that the quality of the effluent was being downgraded. Do I take it from your answer that there has been no allowance by the EPA for SA Water to downgrade the quality of the effluent to date?

Mr Thomas: That is news to me but I will follow it up and, if I feel there is a need to provide a supplementary response, I will do that.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: In line with a number of comments that have been made today about the reuse of water, it is significant what is now being done in this whole area. If we look at the progress that is being made with the recharging of aquifers, the reuse of water for recreational purposes, and the turnaround in recent years from pumping effluent out into the ocean to providing it for recreational and horticultural purposes, it is quite significant. Over the next 12 months or so we will see considerable advancements in that whole area.

Mr CLARKE: My next question relates to page 414 of Program Estimates—resource conservation and management.

Open spaces for recreational purposes are becoming scarce within metropolitan area, especially within the inner metropolitan area. Having my electorate very much in the inner metropolitan area, it is almost claustrophobic at times. The Government is contributing to the scarcity by selling large tracts of land previously owned by the Government, especially land around schools. This is land which could be used for recreational, sporting or other community uses. Are you prepared to declare a moratorium on the sale or development of State-owned urban open spaces until a plan for the area has been agreed to by the community and the Government?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I realise that there is some sensitivity in this area. As far as the role of DENR, it is the selling agency and is not the agency that makes the decisions in regard to sale or otherwise of that land. Certainly, DENR participates in the Property Divestment Steering Committee of Government and operates in accordance with the Department of Premier and Cabinet instruction No. 114 and guidelines for the disposal of Government property. Current practice is to resolve outstanding matters associated with issues such as contamination, open space, zoning and local government consultation prior to placing properties on the market. Any variance of this practice is carried out with Cabinet approval. I would want to say, in recognition of DENR's role, the sale of Government held land and open space is an issue across Government that is being worked on.

Mr CLARKE: What is your view?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: My view is that, if we compare the space that has been retained over the past three years with the years prior to that, I would suggest that this Government has done fairly well. A number of significant sites were sold by the previous Labor Government and some significant areas have been retained under this Government. I refer to Bowker Street—and I know of the Chairman's interest in this section of land—to which the Government gave considerable consideration, and determined that that should be retained as open space.

Mr CLARKE: Again under 'Resource Conservation and Management', page 414 of the Program Estimates, the South Australian Farmers Federation has signalled its belief that the Native Vegetation Act requires major changes. The Farmers Federation believes that the Native Vegetation Act has achieved its original aim of stopping broadacre clearance, and that it is now standing in the way of sensible land management and well planned development. Does the Minister believe that the Native Vegetation Act should be freed up, as suggested by the Farmers Federation, to allow development? Or does the Minister believe, as many conservationists would suggest, that the Native Vegetation Act should be tightened, as it is not fulfilling its objective of protecting native vegetation?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: As is so often the case with environmental issues, I believe that the most important thing is to obtain an appropriate balance in this area. Nobody is more aware of the interest in the native vegetation legislation than I, and there is extreme interest shown by the two organisations to which the honourable member has referred. Obviously, the Conservation Council would wish that the legislation should be strengthened, and it has made strong representation to me. The Farmers Federation is of the opinion, as the member has indicated, that the legislation should be amended to provide more flexibility.

It is my opinion that the legislation is reasonable in its current form. I have had discussions with both the Conservation Council and the Farmers Federation and I have indicated

that it is not my intention to open up the legislation for amendment. Opportunities have been provided, and I believe that there need to be more opportunities provided for both the South Australian Farmers Federation and the Conservation Council to get together to talk out some of these issues. I have indicated on a number of occasions that I would be interested in being part of those discussions. But, at this stage, it is not my intention to open up that legislation.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: My question relates to page 415 of the Program Estimates and Information. It is stated that one of the specific targets for 1997-98 is to implement strategies for litter control. How will the litter strategy be implemented, what funds are to be dedicated to this, and what role will be played by KESAB?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: As the member for Mawson would know, the litter strategy discussion paper was released by this Government in March 1996. The document discussed litter fines, appropriate bins that could be used, highway litter abatement, container deposit legislation, plastic bags, building sites, industry codes of practice, best practice and Government expenditure. The document received wide community support and, according to most of the comment that we received, it was recognised as being a sensible approach to litter control. I believe that most people in the community recognise, as does the Government, by the title that was given to that campaign, 'Litter: It Is Your Choice', that Governments can only do so much. Governments cannot have litter police behind every tree or building. It really comes down to responsibility on the part of individual citizens as to whether they litter or not. The document also detailed a number of strategies to reduce litter—enforcement strategy, equipment strategy, education strategy and information strategy.

The document also called for the formation of a litter committee to continue the work necessary to oversee and implement the litter strategy. The litter committee is working well, I am pleased to say. It comprises membership from the Conservation Council of South Australia, the Local Government Association, the Retail Traders Association, the Environment Protection Authority, KESAB, McDonald's Family Restaurants, Recyclers of South Australia, the Beverage Industry Recycling Fund, the Beverage Industry Environment Council and the South Australian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry and it is chaired by Robert Brokenshire, MP. The litter strategy is being reviewed by the committee, and the programs have been reviewed in order to prioritise those programs.

I believe that litter is of concern to the average South Australian. I believe that, particularly through the beverage container legislation, we have been able to maintain a very high standard of cleanliness in South Australia. I believe that it is recognised, when one drives from South Australia to the other States, that South Australia continues to be the cleanest State, as far as litter is concerned, and it is certainly the intention of this Government that that should continue. But there is a need to consider a number of areas—where we go with the whole issue of beverage container legislation; whether it should be extended; and whether there are other opportunities for Government and local government to work more closely together.

As I have said on numerous occasions, I believe that we are very lucky in this State to have organisations like KESAB, with the information and educational opportunities that it provides through schools and community organisations. As I mentioned earlier, with the support of the

community for a cleaner South Australia, I believe that we can look forward to an improved situation in the future.

The role of KESAB is pivotal to the success of the litter strategy. Its involvement at grassroots level cannot be underestimated. The Environment Protection Authority and Treasury have provided KESAB with a \$155 000 grant each financial year, and it was supplemented with a further \$100 000 in the 1996-97 budget. In addition, the EPA has \$40 000 set aside in its budget for monitoring performance, consultancy services and servicing the litter committee. I am pleased with the progress that is being made and I believe that we will soon see significant improvements in that whole area of dealing with litter.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I have a supplementary question on that issue. This morning, when travelling through my electorate, I noticed a rubbish truck collecting litter, where the hydraulic ram had not tipped all of the litter in from the bin and it had fallen out onto the road. I note the Minister said earlier that there needs to be a holistic approach. Does the Minister see local government, the contractors, industry and the community all needing to adopt best practice standards if this litter problem is to be addressed?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Yes.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 414 of the Program Estimates, relating to Torrens Lake dredging. This is of great interest to all South Australians and especially the city of Adelaide. Can the Minister explain how this project is progressing?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is progressing very slowly at this stage.

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am not in charge. The Deputy Leader might be aware that the project officers are the Adelaide City Council.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is a triviality on the part of the Opposition. The present state of Torrens Lake tells a sorry story of neglect—one that this Government has pledged to turn around. It is unfortunate that when most people think of the Torrens they are not so terribly interested in the fantastic work that is going on upstream under the management of the catchment management boards but tend to think more of the Torrens Lake. I guess the same thing applies to some extent with the Patawalonga: we hear more about a few cartons floating in the Patawalonga Basin than the magnificent work that is going on upstream.

The dredging of Torrens Lake is a key project being undertaken jointly by Adelaide City Council, the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board and the State Government. The project will remove sediment which has accumulated in the lake over the last 60 years. The project has been initiated by the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board, which itself is an initiative of this Government to address the serious water quality and other problems affecting the River Torrens catchment. The Torrens Lake project has been managed by the Adelaide City Council, and I am delighted with the interest that has been shown in the need to get on with this project by the new Lord Mayor. She has indicated over a long period a real interest in these matters and has been, and continues to be, a member of the Patawalonga Catchment Board and has contributed significantly to the running of that board and its responsibilities.

Prior to commencing the project, however, it has been necessary to give careful consideration to an appropriate site

close to the lake where the sediment can be dewatered. I understand that that has now been finalised. The project is a complicated one but, notwithstanding that and the delay to date, it is expected that the dredging will commence in September this year. This project is yet another example of this Government's working in partnership with other responsible bodies to achieve outcomes which otherwise would be waiting and gathering dust on the shelves.

Mr CAUPELL: My question deals with Newland Head. Page 410 of the Program Estimates refers to coast management and Crown estate administration. Can the Minister explain what the Government is doing to protect this portion of the Heysen Trail and the conservation values at Newland Head generally?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: There are many of us who enjoy the beauty of the area surrounding Newland Head. Certainly, it has been, and continues to be, a favourite spot of mine, and we all recognise that it is important.

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is in close proximity to Waitpinga. Coastal access and the integrity of the Heysen Trail are currently being examined by the District Council of Victor Harbor and the relevant Government agencies that have an interest in this area. The Coastal Management Branch of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has prepared a base plan on the area to show the Heysen Trail, Crown land boundaries, erosion prone areas and vegetation that requires conservation from which options for considering public access can be prepared.

A survey is also being arranged to determine the cadastral boundaries of the coastal reserve along the cliff top and a search is being done to clarify which Government departments have control of the various sections of the land. The Southern Hills Soil Conservation Board is in the process of drafting a management plan for one of the properties which could suffer from grazing and erosion, and the local coast care group is applying for funds to carry out rehabilitation work.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is examining the amalgamation of the coastal reserve with the Newland Head Conservation Park to provide appropriate management and conservation for what is recognised as an important coastline. Bearing in mind the high level of public interest, it is intended that there will be early consultation with landholders and key community groups, but it is essential that the beauty of this area be retained, and the Government is very keen to work with local government to ensure that that happens.

Mr CLARKE: I refer to page 411 of the Estimates and water monitoring. Has DENR been involved in plans to pipe treated sewage effluent from Christies Beach to Willunga for irrigation uses? What benefits have been identified? Have you considered the option of building a new waste water treatment plant at Seaford Rise and to pipe both treated sewage effluent and stormwater to the Willunga Basin as an alternative to piping effluent from Christies Beach? What is DENR's view of that proposal?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The construction of a pipeline—not so much the possibility of a Seaford Rise development—is currently being considered by the Water Policy Division of the department and by the Natural Resources Cabinet Committee.

Mr CLARKE: As a supplementary question, is there likely to be a decision or an announcement soon? It is obviously an important issue for the people down south.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is an important issue, and it was something that the Government indicated in Opposition it would very much like to see happen. A considerable amount of work is being done. There have been a number of presentations to the Natural Resources Cabinet Committee of which I am a member, and I am pleased with the progress being made by the department on this initiative. I would not like to say exactly when a decision is likely to be made but, as far as I am concerned, the sooner we can work through a couple of complexities associated with it and come out with a positive response the better it will be.

Mr CLARKE: Does DENR have any input into the expenditure of the environmental levy on sewerage accounts—about \$10 million a year I understand—and should these funds be allocated by DENR?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I do not believe we do, but I ask Mr Thomas to respond.

Mr Thomas: No, we do not have any input as to how that money is expended. It is collected by SA Water and it is money that is set aside for its own projects for environmental enhancement. However, we get a fraction of that levy as part of EPA revenue, and I think it is close to \$400 000 per annum; it is only a fraction of the total levy. I can get the total amount if the honourable member is interested.

Mr CLARKE: The Minister announced a program of \$5.19 million for coast protection and rehabilitation works, including the construction of groynes, flood surge barriers and sand replenishment at specific locations. Will the Minister detail the nature of works at specific locations with costs that make up this program, in other words, give the full details, and will he say whether these works coincide with the recommendations of the review of the management of our coast, whether the review recommendations will be made public or whether they are being saved up as election announcements?

Mr BROKENSHERE: Where are your policies? Where are Labor's policies?

Mr CLARKE: You'll get them.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The sand replenishment project is in accordance with the metropolitan beach protection strategy as Government policy, and I referred to that earlier. To bring the Deputy Leader up to speed, public tenders were called to replenish the Brighton beach with 200 000 cubic metres of sand within the preliminary department estimates for the Coast Protection Board of \$2.5 million in the financial year 1997-98. A contract was let for 250 cubic metres of sand. The scheduled biannual volume of 200 000 cubic metres was increased to 250 000 cubic metres to maximise the advantage of lower rates within the 1997-98 budget limit of \$2.5 million.

Cabinet approved additional funds of \$1.9 million to extend the contract to 600 000 cubic metres to take advantage of cost savings of \$2.9 million in 1997 dollars at a 5 per cent discount rate over six years to 2004-2005. So, the new contract is being prepared. The work will commence at the end of August this year and continue through September, taking approximately five weeks to complete.

The larger contract has been approved by all authorities. The City of Holdfast Bay supports the replenishment strategy, and open criticism is not anticipated. As the work is to be carried out during the winter months and early spring, the impact of any turbidity on seagrasses and disruptions to beach access in the vicinity of this discharge pipe will be minimal.

The report of the coastal management Adelaide metropolitan beach review was forwarded to me by the Chairman of

the reference group, Malcolm Kinnaird. I am pleased with the results of that report.

Mr CLARKE: You should want to tell us.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am quite happy to tell you. I am quite happy for the details of that report to be provided. The implications of the report, which is what it is all about, are currently being examined with a view to its public release. A strategy for the report's public release and implementation is being developed. The pleasing thing about it was that the reference group concluded that the general strategy being followed by the Coast Protection Board and the Coastal Management Branch over the past 20 years, which goes back to the Culver report, was essentially sound, other than the fact that it found some areas in which there was a need for fine tuning. Overall, the people who carried out that report had exceptional skills in this area. We were fortunate to have someone of the calibre of Malcolm Kinnaird chairing the review. I have been very pleased with that whole process.

Mr CAUDELL: I refer to koalas and to page 414 of the Program Estimates, where reference is made to the management plan for koalas on Kangaroo Island. Will the Minister indicate the benefits of the sterilisation program as opposed to the culling suggestion of the member for Ross Smith?

Mr CLARKE: The member for Reynell!

Mr CAUDELL: Ross Smith. You suggested it before—you referred to shooters and to shooting koalas. You said it before; it's on the record.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: As I have pointed out previously, the Department for Environment and Natural Resources is involved in the preparation of a number of innovative initiatives. I was informed recently that we might be considering a goose management plan, but we have not put too much resources into that at this stage! I am pleased with the progress that has been made with the sterilisation program of koalas. I could spend some time talking to the Committee about the tubal ligation of female koalas if someone would like to ask me a question about it. The program is working well, although it has been a very controversial one.

There has been a lot of community input into this whole subject. As has been explained on numerous occasions, the Government had no alternative but to give consideration to this program and it is working well. The program, which was developed in cooperation with Victoria, has now successfully treated well over 700 animals in three months at a rate of about 100 a week. The fertility control program is integrated with translocation of some animals to the koalas' native range in the South-East and with revegetation projects to enhance the habitat for all wildlife.

One of the most pleasing things about what we are achieving on Kangaroo Island is the community support that has been shown in the setting up of the mobile veterinary clinic or caravan. A lot of commitment has been shown by National Parks staff and the community. A considerable amount of patience has been shown by the Kangaroo Island community itself.

Overall, the program is a successful one. It has a budget of some \$635 000 to be spent over two years. Funding sources for the program are \$150 000 (or \$75 000 both in years one and two) from the Commonwealth and \$485 000 (\$135 000 in year one and \$100 000 in year two) in underwriting public appeals from this State Government. Only recently I launched the public appeal, and we hope to be able to raise at least \$250 000 from State contributions.

There are also direct economic benefits for Kangaroo Island, with 17 people employed on the program on the

island, 10 of them being Green Corps trainees from the Commonwealth-funded employment initiative for young people between the ages of 17 and 20 years.

Also, our knowledge of the koala, which is poorly understood, is being increased through cooperative research projects with our universities and other research agencies. These results will significantly improve our understanding of koala ecology and will have positive benefits for koala management throughout Australia, including the constant review and updating of the program here in South Australia. Again, that is a positive aspect of this program and it demonstrates the difficulties that we have had to encounter. If a decision had been made to cull, as the Deputy Leader has advocated, we would have had to continue to cull once that program had started.

We faced two major problems in this whole area. The first was the fact that previous Governments must have recognised that this particular issue was going to reach crisis point at some stage, but no action was taken by the previous Labor Government over 11 years to do anything about it. Secondly, absolutely no work had been carried out in this whole area of fertility control of koalas. The fact that that research is being carried out and the program is in place will be helpful for Victoria and will be valuable information for South Australia.

Mr BROKENSHERE: I refer to pages 410 and 411 of the Program Estimates—'Program/Sub-Program Resources'. I refer to the department's magnificent operation at Netley (Mapland) which does infra-red imagery. That group is now doing quite a lot of work in the Willunga Basin, where this infra-red imagery photography will help with irrigation by identifying dry areas that could not be located previously. It is leading edge technology. My questions are: first, is the Minister supportive of the technological work that that section is doing; and, secondly, does he believe that South Australia has a leading edge in those areas?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Again, that is correct. The work that is being carried out down there is significant, and it is leading edge. The Resource Information Group of DENR is involved in two large mapping projects associated with national initiatives. The group may also become involved in providing essential base data for several projects in the Federal Government's natural heritage trust program as well. Five years ago the Murray-Darling Basin Commission commissioned the Resource Information Group to produce a photographically based map series of the whole of the length of the River Murray. The purpose of that series was to provide for the first time a reliable homogenous base upon which planners, developers, managers and monitors of the river system could plan and record their activities.

The national program of standard scale topographic mapping was initiated by the former National Mapping Council of Australia. The map production was set up by State and Federal Governments to collect and present topographic information in a methodical coordinated way to a national standard on a common referencing system. Within South Australia, map coverage of agricultural areas has been the responsibility of the State Government and pastoral areas have been the responsibility of the Federal Government.

If members have not taken the opportunity to look at what is happening with the Resource Information Group at Netley, they are welcome to do so. It is a fantastic story. This is a group of very committed people who have achieved a considerable amount for this State and nationally through the work they are doing. That section of the department has the potential of participating in several of the 15 projects coming

under the umbrella of the Natural Heritage Trust program. Its involvement will depend on the success of South Australia's bids for funding for various regional projects and the need for a land related database upon which projects can be planned and monitored, but we are very fortunate to have that work going on in South Australia. I encourage members to have a look for themselves at the work that is being carried out.

Mr SCALZI: Will the Minister provide details of what impact the Murray-Darling initiative has had on capping water diversions and what gains that cap has had or will have for South Australia?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I think the agreement by all of the States in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to the capping initiative is one of the most fundamentally important decisions affecting the sustainability of the Murray-Darling Basin that has ever been made. Together with other Ministers, I was disappointed that this issue was not able to be concluded last week when the Murray-Darling Ministerial Council met, because it was intended that that should be the case. However, at the last minute, Queensland Ministers were not able to attend. A special meeting of the Murray-Darling Ministerial Council will be called on 25 July to finalise that situation.

For the first time, it has been agreed that a balance needs to be struck between consumptive and in-stream users of water in the basin. The first step in achieving this balance has been to establish a cap on diversions which reflects the current level of use. This will ensure that the increasing trend in total diversions from the basin will cease and therefore protect the existing environmental integrity of the river and maintain the economic and social resources of the region.

To give him credit, the former Minister (Hon. J.H.C. Klunder) of the previous Labor Government first put the idea of a cap to the Ministerial Council. I was pleased when I became Minister to support that. I think we are all particularly pleased now that we have reached a stage where that cap is about to be put in place. If somebody had said a decade ago or less that it was likely that we would have the cooperation of the four States involved to be able to put that cap in place, we would have all felt that that was highly unlikely and virtually impossible to achieve. The responsible attitude adopted by South Australia, particularly over a long period of time, regarding the limiting of diversions from the Murray is a very good record that has been recognised by the independent audit that was put in place to finalise the cap with the four States.

I think South Australia can be very proud of what has been achieved in this area. It is vitally important for South Australia that we get it right as far as the Murray is concerned. It is our lifeblood, and we stand to lose or gain more from this whole exercise than any other State. I believe that the capping initiative will result in a much improved situation, particularly in terms of the improved environmental flow which will come into South Australia and which will in turn have a very positive impact on the quality of water in South Australia.

Mr CLARKE: Minister, I want to deal with the Patawalonga, Program Estimates page 410. I know that this is a matter of extreme interest to the Chairman who, of course, is very much interested in the Patawalonga development and I know how he very much favours an open channel for the stormwater going out to West Beach. In any event, other than the fact that we would all be vitally interested in knowing when both you and the current Premier are going to take a dip in the Patawalonga, since you missed the deadline of

31 December last year, I want to know what research has been undertaken by the EPA of the effect on the gulf at West Beach of plans announced by the Premier to mix effluent from the Glenelg sewage works with stormwater from the Sturt River for discharge through a sub-marine pipe. Further, what advice has been given to the Minister on the likely effect on sand movement and retention at West Beach of the proposed offshore boat facility and how will this be managed?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Government is committed to two objectives: redeveloping the Glenelg foreshore so that it provides first-class recreational and community facilities and also reducing land-based pollution discharges in order to protect the marine environment. We have had a number of questions on that so I will not go into that detail. The marine pollution of the metropolitan coastline comes from two principal sources, stormwater and treated sewage effluents. Improving the amenity of the Patawalonga and the Glenelg foreshore has required the removal of sediment using dredging, and that process has been completed.

Reducing ecological impacts from stormwater and sewage effluent is more difficult and will take much longer. Stormwater improvements will occur through the introduction of EPA codes of practice and through a capital works program implemented by the catchment water management boards. It is estimated that through these initiatives sediment loads to the Patawalonga catchment will be reduced by 50 per cent over the next five to 10 years. The stormwater diversion scheme will incorporate a new sedimentation facility and, while not as large as the Patawalonga Basin, could if properly designed and maintained provide an efficient sediment removal system for small to medium flows in the Patawalonga. I ask Mr Thomas to refer specifically to the involvement of the EPA in this area.

Mr Thomas: With regard to the combined outfall, this is a new initiative and it is an idea which has been put forward by the MFP which is currently working on the feasibility for that project. Once it has some idea of how it will operate—and it will have to conduct some modelling as to what environmental impacts there will be, compared with separate outfalls—that information will be put before the EPA. It has not yet been put before us because they have not completed their feasibility work.

Mr CLARKE: The local effect on sand movement and retention at West Beach of the proposed offshore boat facility?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Coast Protection Board is continuing to provide advice for me on that issue. I met with the Chairman of the Coast Protection Board, Skip Tonkin, a couple of weeks ago. I have asked him to keep me informed on a regular basis. I have not received further information to this time. Certainly, sand replenishment and sand movement are significant issues that we have to watch very closely. I have made it very clear to the catchment board that there is a necessity to keep me informed on those issues.

Mr CLARKE: The Patawalonga Catchment Management Board has advised the Opposition that a priority for the catchment plan is the urgent upgrading of the Heathfield sewage works. What timelines are being placed on the SA Water Corporation by the EPA to upgrade this plant? What standards will be applied? Will land-disposal instead of discharge to the creek be a condition of the licence?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I received a detailed response on that just recently, and I have not got it with me. I will take

that question on notice and provide that information later to the Deputy Leader.

Mr CLARKE: Does the Minister agree with the General Manager of the Patawalonga Catchment Authority, Mr Alan Ockenden, that it is okay to send the 62 tonnes of contaminants that pass into the Patawalonga each year direct into the gulf at West Beach because this is less than the contamination loads from the Torrens and Glenelg sewage works?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I was not aware that Mr Ockenden had made that statement. I will take that question on notice and speak to Mr Ockenden about that. It would be helpful if the Deputy Leader could tell me when Mr Ockenden made that statement.

Mr CLARKE: I will speak to the Minister at the conclusion of this session. I do not expect the Minister to have the information here, but can I have details on fees expended by DENR on consultancies and on any polls or advertising?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I shall take that on notice.

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

Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources—
Other Payments, \$2 519 000

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

Mr BROKENSHERE: I refer to the budget line for Monarto. I understand that there have been some significant achievements at Monarto in recent times which will stand for a long time in the future, as to the stead and direction of Monarto with respect to some infrastructure. I also understand that they are having some success with breeding programs. Can the Minister enlighten us on these matters?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am delighted to do so briefly. I have a particular interest in Monarto, and recently the Chairman and I had a very pleasurable visit to Monarto. I am particularly interested because during my previous term as Minister we were able to set aside this land at Monarto for agistment and a future open range zoo. I am delighted with the progress that has been made and I am pleased that the zoo now is open to the public seven days a week. Recently I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the new visitor centre at Monarto, and I again invite, on behalf of the Royal Zoological Society, any members of the committee who have not been to Monarto to go up and have a look at it.

It is an excellent facility: the new visitor centre is superb. I cannot recall the name of the architects, but they are the same architects who were involved with the visitor centre in the Southern Vales. The breeding programs are working well and the bilby breeding program is going better than expected. It is a great place to take kids, families or anybody. I am thrilled with the progress that has been made at Monarto.

Mr BROKENSHERE: As a supplementary question, when I was there the manager told me that they hoped at some time to have accommodation at Monarto so that people could experience the sunrise, the activities of the wildlife and the flora. He said that the zoo could tie in the environment with ecotourism to generate economic activity, perhaps with the possibility of corporate sponsorship in something that was unique. Do you agree with those proposals?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I would be keen to support such a project. I think the opportunity that would be provided,

particularly for young people in the way of educational experiences, to be able to stay on site would be unique. The huge amount of land presents great opportunities. It is all about ecotourism, and it is doing very well with the facilities that it already has developed. I strongly support the opportunities that might be provided with appropriate cabin-type accommodation on that site.

Mr CLARKE: Will the Minister provide a schedule of the grants made under this line to the various community organisations for the last financial year?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The grants for war concessions are as follows: Legacy Club, \$200; the Returned Services League (grant towards burial costs of ex-service personnel), \$900; and the Tubercular Soldiers Aid Society, \$900; making a total of \$2 000. The grants for other miscellaneous payments are as follows: retraining and research into arid zone ecology, \$9 000; the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia—Adelaide Zoo, \$2.012 million and Monarto, \$496 000; total, \$2.517 million.

Mr CLARKE: Regarding the information the Minister sought with respect to my question on the Patawalonga, the comment by Mr Ockenden is contained in the *Guardian Messenger* on page 1 of Wednesday 2 April 1997 under the heading 'Big picture plea to Pat outlet critics'.

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

Department for Family and Community Services,
\$160 998 000

Membership:

Ms Stevens substituted for Mr Clarke.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Deyell, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Family and Community Services.

Mr J. Fiebig, Director, Office of the Ageing.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed payments open for examination and invite the Minister to make an introductory statement if he wishes, following which I will give the lead speaker for the Opposition a similar opportunity.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I would like to make a brief opening statement regarding the responsibilities that I have in ageing and then, with the concurrence of the Committee, when we move into other issues relating to Family and Community Services, I will make another brief statement in regard to FACS.

The 1997-98 budget marks an important time to consider the reforms that this Government has introduced into ageing in South Australia. These reforms have clearly recognised the social impacts brought about by this State's having the highest ageing population of any State in Australia. When this Government came into power three years ago it found an ageing portfolio devoid of both direction and funding. In the three years of this Government, we have set out a firm policy direction for ageing in 'Ageing—A Ten Year Plan for South Australia' and an increase in funding that has seen the Home and Community Care Program surge ahead by \$20 million from \$47.7 million in 1992-93 to \$67.7 million in the latest year.

This 42 per cent increase in the three consecutive years of growth, adding an average of nearly \$7 million a year to HACC funding, reflects this Government's commitment to older people. This commitment has been maintained in this year's budget even within an environment that has not been conducive to spending because of the continuing State Bank debt legacy. This commitment has involved the establishment of:

- The Ethnic Older Persons Grants Program which allocates \$147 000 each year to the Coordinating Italian Committee, the Greek Orthodox community, ANFE and the Greek Welfare Centre, plus \$55 000 to other ethnic organisations.
- \$196 000 has been allocated to the Grants for Seniors Program which includes \$45 000 already advanced to the Council on the Ageing for Seniors Week in 1997.
- \$200 000 has been made available for the implementation of the Ten Year Plan for this year.

The 14 per cent of South Australia's population aged 65 and above and born in non-English speaking countries are a very important element in our community structure, bringing to it much needed diversity and experience, skills and culture, thereby enriching the quality of life of all South Australians. Hence our support for Ethnic Aged, which also includes funding through the HACC program for services such as Ethnic Link.

Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people are being given particular priority by this Government. In general, their lifespans are about 20 years less than other people in Australian society. A research tender has recently been let by the Office for the Ageing which will focus on the causes and how these might be addressed. Funding for services for Aboriginal people is also high priority and this has been reflected in the recent Office for the Ageing funding rounds which have seen grants of over \$500 000 directed towards Aboriginal communities, particularly those in remote areas of the State. A senior management position concentrating on Aboriginal issues has been established within the Office for the Ageing to work with Aboriginal communities in the development of better and more appropriate services for older Aboriginal people.

Importantly, funding for older people is now underpinned by the guiding philosophy of the Ten Year Plan—the concept that all South Australians continue to enjoy full citizenship in our community, irrespective of age or frailty, and that the whole of Government takes into account the needs and rights of older people in this State. To monitor the implementation of the Ten Year Plan, I established a ministerial advisory board on ageing, most ably chaired by Dame Roma Mitchell. The ministerial advisory board has recently had discussions with most portfolios across Government and in every area advances have been made to improve the way in which services are being developed and tailored around the needs of older people. For example, in education there has been a significant increase in the marketing of courses in computer education. That marketing has resulted in many more older people participating in these classes. In transport, volunteer transport services have been or are in the process of being developed in a number of country and outer metropolitan areas, including the Willunga basin, the Riverland, Mid North, Murray Mallee and the South-East. Funding has grown for crime prevention through such schemes as Neighbourhood Watch and the Home Assist Scheme which provides advice and assistance to people to secure their homes.

Both direction and funding were badly needed when this Government came to office. The best report card on Labor's commitment to older people comes from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. When reporting on Australian's aged-care services the Institute said of funding levels to 1993-94:

South Australia had the lowest level of HACC provision in relation to the frail, aged population of all Australian States.

One of the major tasks this Government has set itself is to ensure that older people in South Australia are not second-class Australian citizens, where the amount of home care service one might receive in some regions of this State are half the level of those available to the average Victorian. The HACC program will grow by about \$2.6 million in 1997-98. Growth will be achieved by matching the Commonwealth offer for additional funding. Funding for respite care has grown since 1992-93 from \$3.7 million to \$6.9 million. Home help domiciliary care and home nursing funding has also increased.

Additional funding is not the only progress that we are making. We are also exploring options for doing things better. In the northern suburbs, there is a coordinated care trial of national significance in Care 21. Along with the other coordinated care trial, Health Plus, Care 21 is seeking to bring about better care outcomes for older people through best practice approaches in care management coordination. This trial will add to the reputation that South Australia already has, both nationally and internationally, as a State of innovation in aged care. We are working closely with the Commonwealth to develop a national framework for healthy ageing. The framework will reflect the philosophy of wellness in 'Ageing—A Ten Year Plan for South Australia'.

I conclude by saying that support for carers has been given considerable prominence. Funding for respite services, day care and carer support has doubled in the life of this Government, and I am also working on a package of measures for carers which will be announced as part of our election policy. This Government has achieved significant advances in the area of ageing and has established a guiding philosophy and direction across Government and in the community. More than that, however, this philosophy has been backed up by funding and a determination to continue to improve on what we are already doing well.

Ms STEVENS: My question relates to page 430 and the program title 'Ageing and Community Care'. The report 'Ageing—A Ten Year Plan for South Australia' clearly identifies the importance of increased funding for home and community care as a major issue. I believe the recommendation in the report is that HACC program funding will achieve the national funding standard over the 10 year period of the plan—that is, 1995 to 2005. I have looked at the 1996-97 annual plan for the Home and Community Care Program, and I note the following comment made therein:

Following the Commonwealth 1995-96 budget plan to incorporate fee collection, the capacity to achieve this target will depend heavily on fees collection in the future.

I have some questions in relation to those statements. The first is: how will the South Australian expenditure in the 1997-98 budget under HACC compare with the national average?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: We are well below the national average, and that is of very real concern to me. I have already indicated in my opening statement—

Ms STEVENS: Can you tell me, more specifically, how much below?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will ask Mr Fiebig, the Director, to answer that question.

Mr Fiebig: If the population figures were taken in relation to the HACC program and compared to national averages, South Australia would be around about \$25 million to \$30 million below the national level of funding that ought to be in the program, compared to the average across Australia.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Committee needs to understand that this is as a result of a lack of priority given to that area over a very long period of time. I have been intent to try to improve that over the past three years, and this Government and I will do everything we can to improve that situation.

Ms STEVENS: Did you say \$25 million?

Mr Fiebig: It would be around about \$25 million below the national figure.

Ms STEVENS: It needs to be increased by around about \$25 million?

Mr Fiebig: Yes.

Ms STEVENS: Even this year?

Mr Fiebig: If you looked at national averages, that would be about the figure.

Ms STEVENS: Will the Minister inform us what the implications in achieving this would be, now that we need to consider fee collection?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: In June 1995, a national efficiency and effectiveness review of the HACC program which was conducted by the Department of Human Services and Health recognised that user fees and donations were widely collected in the program but recommended that a fees policy be implemented to ensure consistency and equity. In its August 1996 budget, the Commonwealth Government announced that future funding for the HACC program would assume that 20 per cent of the overall program would be funded by user fees by the year 1999-2000. The introduction of a fees policy will enable the equitable collection of fees across the HACC program and a continuance of growth to the program.

The Office for the Ageing is currently developing a fees policy proposal for consideration by Cabinet. There has been some consultation out in the community and generally—and bearing in mind that fees are in place in most of the other States—there has been an acceptance. There is some concern, for example, on the part of Meals on Wheels, which is expressing strong concern about the fees policy that is being considered. However, it is currently a matter that will be finalised in a Cabinet submission and placed before Cabinet.

Ms STEVENS: As a supplementary question, I noticed in the plan that the draft policy was due to have been finished by the end of this financial year, so I presume that is what you are talking about. I also understand that concerns that people might have in relation to fees might arise because of those organisations which already charge fees and direct those fees back into their own coffers, rather than having to use them as part of growth funding. Is that the issue?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: That is exactly the issue. For 1997-98, it is anticipated that HACC will increase by about \$2.6 million without fees. It certainly is our intention, in line with the Commonwealth policy, to move towards the introduction of fees in South Australia.

Ms STEVENS: Minister, I have received a letter (and I am sure I am not the only one to have received it) from a group of providers in the western region. It is from Mr Geoff

Whitbread, Chief Executive of the City of Charles Sturt; Trevor Starr, City Manager, City of West Torrens Thebarton; Mark Withers, Director of Community Development for the City of Port Adelaide; Dr L. Mykyta, Clinical Director and Executive Officer of Western Domiciliary Care; and Mr Gus Trotter, Chairperson, Western Suburbs Dementia Lobby, and they state:

As service providers for people with disability of all ages who reside in the western metropolitan region, we wish to bring our concern to you as we believe that recent developments in the Home and Community Care program will have a major negative impact on the people that we both serve. In its latest draft annual plan for the Home and Community Care program, the Office for the Ageing has ranked out of 11 regions in South Australia the western metropolitan region in terms of need and priority for funding as follows: home nursing, eleventh; paramedical, eleventh; delivered meals, seventh; home help, tenth; home maintenance, eighth; respite care, eleventh; and transport, fourth.

They go on to say:

The HACC planning process relies heavily on the concept of a potential client population and that this is based on work undertaken by Clare F.R. Warhola in the United States and published in 1980. This work is based on an analysis of practice patterns in the United States at the time of the study and US epidemiological data, and it is called the Warhola formula.

They make their point a little later:

This formula has never been validated in a South Australian context and is grossly deficient in considering only one need variable—age—in arriving at the basis of resource distribution, when there is a mass of local data which should more appropriately also be taken into account.

They believe that the western region has a whole range of needs and complexities that are not taken into consideration by the formula that is being used to calculate need. Do you agree or disagree, and can you explain why?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I need to go into a bit of detail first. The HACC program used the Warhola formula until 1995, when it was decided to follow the Commonwealth in the use of ABS survey of ageing disability in carers 1993 extrapolated down to an SLA level for South Australia. This data is used by the Commonwealth Department for Health and Family Services in the distribution of its aged, disability and other funding. These extrapolations form the basis for the ranking of areas of need in the Office for the Ageing's HACC program annual plan 1996-97, and hence the position of the western region.

The use of synthetic figures to provide estimates of needs is always problematic in terms of which are the most relevant components to include, for example, income, age groups, health use, etc., and, if included, what variables are produced. The office and the Commonwealth at this stage have chosen to use a relatively simple formula in determining the need to help in its allocation of funding. Under the proposed amending agreement to the HACC Act 1985, the HACC program in this State will be moving to regionalised funding based on regional planning frameworks and identified service provision targets. ABS data, HACC service provision data and information from regional and State-wide consultations will contribute to these frameworks and, of course, this may in turn affect the western region in its priority ranking for future funding.

The draft of the triennial plan for 1997-98 to 2000-01 and the annual plan for 1997-98 will shortly be released for public consultation and discussion. Quantitative information arising from discussion and consultation around the plan will certainly be taken into account in the final settings of State-wide priorities for the HACC program. I need also to say that

the western region is still well below the national average in its level of service provision and that that is a legacy of the low level of HACC funding by the previous Government.

Mr BROKENSHERE: I refer to page 430 of the Program Estimates. 'Ageing—A Ten Year Plan for South Australia' is cited as providing the policy and planning funding framework for Ageing in South Australia, a program that was readily adopted by my electorate and those of my colleagues as being an innovative initiative and one that probably should have been forthcoming many years ago. Nevertheless, at least it is here now. I have been constantly asked by constituents, since the release of the plan in April 1996, to what extent it has been implemented. How far down the track are you now with the implementation of the 10-year plan?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: 'Ageing—A Ten Year Plan for South Australia' has been recognised and hailed by older people in the industry and consumer groups as a major vehicle for change and commitment across South Australia. In fact, I see the 10-year plan for ageing as an example for Government across the board, and the recognition that has been given to a situation where you can look ahead over a 10-year period for a decade, rather than going from financial year to financial year, is quite significant. Implementation of the plan is proceeding well. A formal progress report will be available following a review in August 1997. That was always intended.

The 10-year plan is, of course, a whole of Government approach to issues involving older people. It is pleasing to see the number of issues being developed by portfolios other than my own, and I referred to that in my original statement. The sum of \$200 000 was made available in the 1996-97 budget to implement the 10-year plan. The main areas of achievement in the key result areas of the plan following the first six months' implementation include planning and consultative mechanisms. I have already referred to the draft triennial and annual plans produced for the HACC program by the Office for the Ageing and also a planning and policy framework for 1997-98 which is being developed.

As to the Home and Community Care program, for the third consecutive year, as I have said before, the Government has met the Commonwealth growth offer for the HACC program. This is particularly satisfying because of the historically low funding base for the program in South Australia when compared with other States. Tenders have now been let, and I can provide information in regard to that if the member is interested. A quality assurance framework has been developed, and currently the Office for the Ageing and South Australian HACC service providers are participating in a national quality assurance pilot project to monitor HACC service standards.

A lot of work is being carried out in regard to the rights of older people. We have seen a review of the rights of older persons being developed. The Care 21 pilot project, which has developed a consumer managed approach to community care, is being supported very strongly by the Office for the Ageing. I am particularly pleased with the progress that is being made in that pilot project.

A research project on ageing has tended to advance the status of research on ageing in this State and encourage cross sectorial collaboration between the three universities. I am thrilled about that, because there has been an absolute need and it has frustrated me for a long time that, when we travel interstate, we hear about the magnificent work being done at the tertiary level in South Australia. Previously, I do not believe we were able to link into that work, and we are now

able to do so through research. There have been significant areas of achievement in health as far as older people are concerned with the formulation of the Older Persons Health Council. That council is advising on the implementation of the health of older persons policy.

Mental health services for older people have been restructured based on the principles outlined in the health of older persons policy. Significant areas of achievement have occurred in recreation. The Department for the Arts and Cultural Development is developing fantastic strategies to remove barriers in many of those areas. Much has been achieved in employment and education, safety and security, multicultural issues, housing and transport. From 1996, all new buses will be accessible. It will take approximately 15 years to upgrade the whole system.

I could spend a lot of time on Aboriginal issues. Much more information is available than I have been able to provide for the honourable member this afternoon, but I will be pleased to make that information available. I commend Jeff Fiebig and the Office for the Ageing for the commitment that has been shown to this plan and its implementation.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 430 of the Program Estimates, which refers to the importance of services for older Aboriginal people. What initiatives has this Government taken to ensure that Aborigines receive an adequate level of aged care?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: As I mentioned in my opening statement, the needs of older Aborigines were identified as major issues to be addressed in the 10 year plan for ageing and they certainly remain a high priority target group of the HACC program. A designated position with responsibility for Aboriginal policy and programs across the State has now been established within the Office for the Ageing. I am delighted that that has happened as it has been needed for a long time. That position has provided the capacity to work more closely with Aboriginal organisations.

The current focus of OFTA is to improve the database to enable more effective needs-based planning, to develop a strategic plan for Aboriginal older people within OFTA and at community level, to develop a response to specific issues such as management, administrative practices and training needs within community projects, and to provide advice to both mainstream and Aboriginal specific programs with regard to outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Funding for Aboriginal services is intended to augment, not replace, mainstream services, and it is important that that should be the case. A number of initiatives were not provided for in the 1996-97 budget. Total recurrent funding for Aboriginal projects for 1996-97 is \$1 675 175 (approximately 2.5 per cent of the HACC program). I am pleased that that represents an increase of 67 per cent for Aboriginal projects in the life of the current Government.

Comparatively, the program has grown by 42 per cent, and the higher level of growth reflects the commitment of this Government towards older Aborigines, particularly disabled Aborigines and their carers. The 1997 World Congress of Gerontology is hosting the Australian leg of the conference in Adelaide, and I am pleased that Aboriginal people are playing a lead role in this venue with the strong support of OFTA.

Mr CAUDELL: The Minister answered part of my question in his reply to the Opposition about the 10 year plan for ageing in relation to the HACC program and the draft plan for the efficiency and effectiveness review. What were the

main recommendations of the HACC efficiency and effectiveness review and what has been its progress?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The review made a number of recommendations for reforms in the program, including moving toward output based funding away from funding particular service streams and costs towards a focus on paying service providers for what they do for clients. It also included: reforms in Commonwealth and State roles in the HACC program to avoid duplication and streamline administration; the development of nationally consistent eligibility and assessment criteria for the program and the move towards single assessments for people requiring services; and the implementation of a national fees policy.

The Office for the Ageing has been working well with South Australian service providers to identify outputs required and renegotiate funding and service agreements that reflect those requirements. This has involved the redrafting of funding and service agreements *pro formas* in output terms. The process of negotiation of new agreements with all service providers is expected to be completed by December 1998, which I believe is appropriate. The recommendations also include the implementation of a national fees policy.

I am pleased with the progress being made in this area. The Commonwealth budget of 1996 announced that it expected that current growth levels in the HACC program would be maintained through the contribution of user fees, which we have talked about. Commonwealth projections propose that the level of fee collection will reach 20 per cent of the HACC program by the year 2000, and the South Australian Government is in the process of determining through Cabinet a final strategy in regard to that matter.

Ms STEVENS: How much of HACC funds are diverted to post-acute health care and how is this controlled by the Minister's department? We know of the great need for HACC services in our community and that we need to maximise HACC funds, yet I believe there has been a considerable shift of those funds towards topping up and bailing out the health service by taking up the slack in post-acute care.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: We are aware of some leakage, and service agreements with the Health Commission is one way of helping to control this situation. I will ask Mr Fiebig to comment.

Mr Fiebig: A report was produced by the South Australian Health Commission in relation to domiciliary care units, and the Royal District Nursing Society looked at its spending on post-acute services and the report found, when it was produced about two years ago, that a significant level of funding went to post-acute care services. Since that time we have been quite scrupulous in making sure that the applications that have come in to the HACC program have been directed towards the HACC client group. We have worked on reaching agreements with the Health Commission and health units in terms of ensuring that there is no further leakage towards post-acute care services, which ought to be funded by other funding mechanisms. As far as an actual amount is concerned, we will take that question on notice and come back with the information.

Ms STEVENS: I would like the actual figure. Mr Fiebig said that when that report was completed two years ago it showed a significant level of leakage of cross-transfer. He also said that after procedures were put in place and things were tightened up there would be no further leakage. Did you mean that it is still at the significant leakage level and has not got any worse or has it got better?

Mr Fiebig: Also in issue is the way we are looking at combining and coordinating programs. In days gone by, the sort of level set for the HACC program was about 1 to 2 per cent of funding directed towards post-acute care services. As we move towards trials such as Care 21 and so on, we are looking at a better pooling of dollars between the various funding programs.

In that context, if we are trying actually to make programs targetable but at the same time more flexible, I do not think we are as concerned about the fact that we are looking towards better ways of bringing programs together. We have decreased the leakage somewhat, if you still want to talk about it as leakage, but we have probably been more concerned about getting programs which are better coordinated, such as the Care 21 trials and so on, and not creating artificial barriers between programs which say, essentially, that this little bit is for post-acute care and cannot be used for home maintenance or support.

If a person goes out to provide someone with a post-acute care service and they say, 'I would not mind my light bulb being changed,' in days gone by, that person would have said, 'No, we can't do that, we are here actually to provide post-acute care.' Nowadays, a much more flexible approach is being taken to the way in which some of those services are delivered. We are not as concerned, because we have a range of district nurses, for example, who will do other things besides post-acute care work.

Ms STEVENS: Obviously that is the way to go. It is important to get the *quid pro quo* from the health system, otherwise it all goes one way. The Minister talked about the Ministerial Advisory Board on ageing, and he mentioned that a whole-of-Government approach was being made toward meeting the tenets of the 10 year plan. I would like to know how things are going in relation to health services for the aged. I refer to a letter dated 27 April 1997 from the Premier to Mr Ian Yates, the Executive Director of the Council of the Ageing, which states, in part:

Your comments on issues relating to health services for the aged are noted. These issues point to the considerable amount of work which needs to be done to improve the planning, coordination and delivery of health services to the aged.

Will the Minister give us some information on what his advisory committee has found and what it is doing in relation to that aspect of the health system?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will ask Mr Fiebig to expand on the answer, but I can say that the amount of effort put in by the advisory board in that area has been fantastic. It has been a concern of all of us to ensure that ageing and related issues are recognised across Government, because it is not just a one or two portfolio based responsibility—it is right across Government. The suggestion made by members of the board, and particularly the Chair (Dame Roma Mitchell), to meet with CEOs was a very good one, because it cemented a very good working relationship with all the different agencies with whom they have had discussions. The Chair has reported to me that the board was very pleased with the response and the detailed discussions it was able to have.

The Older Persons Health Council took a while to get off the ground, but it has now been established. It is advising on the implementation of the health of older persons policy. I think it was only yesterday that I received a letter from one of the members of that council who indicated very strong support for the work the council is now doing. Also, matters of funding for primary health care initiatives and advancement have been discussed together with programs that have

been allocated in areas that have already been identified in the health of older persons policy.

Mr Fiebig: The Ministerial Advisory Board met with the Health Commission and passed on a number of concerns that have obviously emerged from the health of older persons policy. In the main, the Ministerial Advisory Board has been working closely with the Older Persons Health Council. It has formally met with the health council on one occasion since its inception, and it is passing on issues that have come up through its own discussions and consultation for the health council to advise the Minister for Health. As I said, the Ministerial Advisory Board has also met with the commission and raised issues.

Ms STEVENS: What are the concerns that were raised?

Mr Fiebig: The board raised issues about the levels of funding that exist and where the commission might look to put any funding which it might have available to supplement the levels of service, particularly for home-based care. It raised a number of issues about the use of more home-based care as a substitute for in-hospital care and so on.

Ms STEVENS: With respect to the Seniors Information Service (page 243 of the Estimates of Receipts and Payments), it appears as though there was an allocation of \$80 000 last year. There is nothing in the revised column, and nothing is allocated for next year. I presume that this funding is not being cut. What is the explanation for this?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: We are not cutting the funding. It has been transferred to the HACC program post-budget. So, it is incorporated in the HACC budget.

Ms STEVENS: How much?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The same amount; all of it.

Ms STEVENS: Is it \$80 000?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Whatever you have got written down there. The important thing to recognise is that it is not just \$80 000 but that it has also been matched under HACC.

Mr Fiebig: That \$80 000 would produce a figure of approximately \$180 000 all up. Not that all the \$180 000 will go to the Seniors Information Service. We will perhaps use some of that amount for other purposes. I will get back to the honourable member with further information.

Mr BROKENSHERE: My question relates to the ageing and the 10 year plan for South Australia, but particularly with respect to an area that is of great interest to me, and that is initiatives surrounding crime and the elderly. I have noted with concern in recent months that candidates, particularly Labor candidates, have been trying to scare some of the elderly in my electorate with respect to crime. As a member of Parliament on the Government side, I am pleased to say that, because I am a member of the Government, when an initiative is put forward I can lobby Ministers and get results for my constituents. For instance, \$2.7 million is being spent on the Christies Beach Police Station which has been urgently needed for years, and 26 additional police officers have been appointed, yet the candidates are still not happy and say that I should not claim credit, even though I fought for it for 3½ years.

I respect the fact that other people are involved in helping keep things secure and that there must be a holistic approach. To that end I ask the Minister: what initiatives have been specifically undertaken to ensure that older people in our community are safer and feel more secure in our environment today?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Before I respond in detail to the member for Mawson, I might just pick up the point that he has made in regard to some of the scare tactics and some of

the concerns that older people have. I think it is a great pity that the media these days seems to concentrate on crime particularly as it relates to older people. A whole heap of unsavoury things happen out in the community that the media seems to concentrate on particularly when they happen to older people. That brings with it fear for older people who are living alone and does very little to help us in this whole area. Besides broader initiatives such as increasing the number of police, etc, specific areas have been progressed as part of the 10-year plan.

The State Government's crime prevention strategy is administered by the Crime Prevention Unit in the Attorney-General's Department. The strategy focuses on reducing crime. Funds are allocated to local crime prevention committees to address local issues. While I cannot speak for all of them, I know that a couple that I am involved with have really gone out of their way to work with older people and to recognise the particular concerns that older people have.

As I said earlier, the State Government's crime prevention strategy is working well. The South Australian police community safety and Neighbourhood Watch programs are focusing on assisting individuals and communities to take preventative measures. The South Australian Police Security Advice Unit provides practical advice on crime prevention measures that are of use particularly to older people. It is a program that is well used by older people and organisations for the aged. The Home Assistance Scheme, funded by HACC and administered by local councils, is a scheme which provides security advice and hardware and subsidies to older home owners throughout the State.

I can tell the Committee that the distribution of the booklet *Crime Prevention and Safety Tips for the Elderly*, which is put out by the Office for the Ageing, is a very popular booklet and has been distributed to a large number of people throughout the community and is very well received. I know from the large number of organisations involving older people that I communicate with on a fairly regular basis that that booklet is one that is recognised generally as being one which is of considerable assistance, particularly to older people living by themselves.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 430 of the Program Estimates which relates to the importance of services to older people from a non-English speaking background. The Minister is very much aware of my interest in the area and my electorate has a significant proportion of Australians from a non-English speaking background who come up to me with their concerns. Can the Minister outline what initiatives this Government has taken to ensure that older people with a non-English speaking background receive adequate levels of service?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Again, it is very important that specific services are provided for non-English speaking background communities. Again, through the Home and Community Care program, services which improve the access of older persons with a non-English speaking background to mainstream services have been developed, and if I can refer to two or three: the ethnic link services, the multicultural respite care services and the multicultural efficacy and liaison services of South Australia. The Office of the Ageing also funds a number of agencies through the ethnic aged care grant program. It is developing a multicultural ageing strategy, involving consultation with key agencies and peak bodies to identify future service priorities and policy directions.

Approximately 14 per cent of older people are from non-English speaking background communities, and it is import-

ant that we recognise the special cultural needs and other needs of those people, and they are right through the community. The Office for the Ageing is also working with organisations that receive or are eligible for grants under the ethnic aged care program to transfer and/or complement their level of funding through Home and Community Care funding. So I think the advancements that have been made in working with and providing support for the non-English speaking background communities are quite significant—very much needed and I hope that we will be able to continue to look at ways of improving those services.

Mr CAUDELL: I refer to nursing homes. Page 430 of the Program Estimates states that South Australia has the fastest growing population of older people of any State in Australia, and the electorate of Mitchell has one of the fastest growing populations of older people. This is currently reflected by the number of older people in our community who are currently seeking to enter a nursing home, estimated by the Seniors' Information Service to be over 200 people. Prior to coming into Parliament and since coming into Parliament I have been approached by a number of people who have been on waiting lists or unable to enter a nursing home, especially in some of the areas in the southwestern suburbs, around Glenelg, Brighton, Somerton Park, etc. What is the Government doing to assist those people wishing to enter nursing homes?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It certainly is a significant issue in the responsibilities that I have in the ageing portfolio. I probably receive more representation on this issue than any other. It is not just the requirement that is out in the community for more beds, more facilities, but also the need to ensure that those facilities are provided for older people in familiar communities, because it is not much good having facilities on the other side of town or large distances away from families. It is imperative that wherever possible older people are able to move into nursing homes within their own districts and communities and close to their own families.

We would all be aware that funding for nursing homes is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. I have certainly raised with the Commonwealth on a number of occasions the high level of demand for nursing home places in South Australia; in particular, I have written to Judy Moylan, the Commonwealth Minister, and have raised the matter personally with her on a couple of occasions. A submission was also put to the Commonwealth Grants Commission via the Office for the Ageing seeking an increase in the number of nursing home places. The basis on which the increase in places is being sought relates to the current distribution of nursing homes and hostel places being estimated on the basis of 90 places per 1 000 of population aged 70 and over.

The average age of people in residential care across Australia is just over 80. If the distribution of nursing home and hostel places were to be based on a more realistic average age, the number of residential care places would increase by between 120 to 150 places in South Australia. In the meantime, South Australia is bearing the cost of the care required by maintaining many of the people who require residential care within the hospital and community care system until an appropriate vacancy arises in a residential care facility. It is a major issue and I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that our colleagues at the Commonwealth level are made aware of the concerns that there are in the community.

Mr CAUDELL: As a supplementary question, in your concluding remarks you said that the cost of care required to maintain these people is being borne by the hospital system.

Are you aware of the cost to the Health Commission for caring for these people instead of their being cared for in nursing homes?

Mr Fiebig: You would need to get a more detailed response from the Health Commission on that. It would be in the vicinity of the cost of nursing home care, which is between \$25 000 and \$30 000 per year.

Ms STEVENS: How many times has the Health of Older Persons Council met and what recommendations has it made which have been implemented?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: We will take up that question with the Minister for Health and get a response. That committee reports to both the Minister for Health and me, but I do not know the exact number of times it has met.

Ms STEVENS: Mr Fiebig said that a range of concerns were passed on from the advisory committee to this council. I would like to know in detail what they are.

Mr Fiebig: We will get back to you about that.

Ms STEVENS: The line 'Funds for Seniors' on page 243 shows a reduction in funding. Would you comment on that because that is a program that many groups in the community want to access. Can you take on notice the number of applications that were made and their total value?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: We will take the latter question on notice. It is important to explain the situation. The 'Funds for Seniors' program this year shows a commitment of \$196 000, so it has not been cut. A grant of \$45 000 has been advanced to the Council on the Ageing for the 1997-98 Seniors Week, and that money has come out of that amount. That was something that I negotiated with COTA over some time.

I am aware of the appreciation that is shown by the many groups which receive these funds. I think this is a good lesson for Government: we get many more notes of appreciation for the small amounts that are made available through programs like this than through the huge amounts that are made to organisations on an ongoing basis where there is an expectation that we will continue to pay. The \$1 000 difference—it was \$197 000 and is now \$196 000—represents a technical adjustment which needs to be made because the figures are presented on a cash rather than on an accrual basis. Concerning the number of applications, I am told that of the 545 applications 306 organisations received funding, and I can provide the amounts for the honourable member.

Ms STEVENS: With regard to the Elder Protection Program, a submission, with an attached summary of concerns, was sent to me from the Australian Association of Social Workers. I will read it and ask you to address the concerns it expresses. It states:

The Elder Protection Program in South Australia was started in March 1994. It was an innovative program and one which South Australia can proudly claim as unique in Australia. It came about as a result of a pilot study which identified a need for workers with a specialist mandate to ensure that older members of our community at risk of or, in fact, in the midst of abusive situations could have their rights upheld and be protected. In the three years that the program has operated 870 inquiries have been received and responded to appropriately. Elder protection workers have also been involved in raising awareness of the issues of elder abuse and protection in the broader community. The program has demonstrated that there are situations happening within our community which are harmful and distressing to many older people, and they are powerless to resolve.

Workers were located in the four metropolitan Domiciliary Care Services as these agencies were identified in the pilot study as having the most contact with the targeted client group. Although the positions were classified as social work/registered nurse, the positions have been consistently held by social workers. A review

of the program was conducted in 1996. The Aged Rights Advocacy Service is currently awaiting the transfer of funds [for the management of the program]. This gives rise to the following concerns:

The first one is as follows:

Downgrading of the positions from a PSO2 to a Community Service level 4. This appears to imply a lack of recognition of the difficulty of the task of working with abused persons and abusers, and of the skill level required to undertake the other functions of the job—training of health and welfare professionals, public awareness and contributing to public and agency policy. There is a danger that due to the lowering of the classification no individuals with appropriate skills and/or experience will apply for the positions.

Can you address the first issue of concern?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am aware of the concerns that have been expressed. The member for Elizabeth is right in saying that back in 1996 the program was reviewed and recommendations were made about the future operation of the program with the Aged Rights Advocacy Service. The program is to be transferred to ARAS in early July, and that is awaiting final approval for the new funding arrangements through HACC. Once that has been signed off by the Federal Minister and arrangements have been finalised we will be able to proceed.

There have been discussions between the Office for the Ageing, ARAS and the Domiciliary Care Services regarding the transfer arrangements for the program. Currently the office is negotiating interim service arrangements with the Domiciliary Care Services until the new service comes on stream in July-August and funding for the program has been approved, when ARAS will receive Office for the Ageing and HACC funds of \$189 400 and \$23 500 for a one-off establishment cost. I do not know whether the Director can expand on some of the other issues.

Mr Fiebig: We have been very clear with ARAS that we expect it to achieve the same high standards that were achieved by the Elder Protection Program. There was no issue as to the work the Elder Protection Program was doing but there were considerable concerns from service workers about the independence of the program and a worker not feeling compromised by the fact that they were working for the agency that was providing the service to the potentially abused person. Basically, it is up to ARAS to employ the level of people it considers will be required to meet the outcomes which will be specified in the service agreement. We would be much more concerned with outcomes rather than, necessarily, the classification of the worker. That is an issue which ARAS must deal with.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer to page 430 of the Program Estimates in relation to Home and Community Care (HACC) service programs and assistance for older people to live independently. My question relates to transport, particularly in the Willunga Basin, which is in my electorate. Earlier today I was pleased to hear that you and the Minister for Transport had approved funding for community transport networks. Can you advise of any support that the Home and Community Care section of your department has given to senior people in the Willunga Basin in recent times with respect to transport needs in this rural community?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Earlier this year, I was fortunate to attend a meeting of local constituents in the electorate of Reynell. I became aware of specific demands and needs in regard to transport issues. The Home and Community Care section of the department has allocated \$28 100 as per the agreement between the Federal and State Governments to purchase a new community bus for senior citizens in the Willunga Basin. I point out to the member that both the

department and I are very keen to see this new community bus for the rural region which is a major need for HACC bus support.

Through my colleague, the Minister for Transport, \$25 000 has been allocated for a coordinator to work out a strategic transport plan for the Willunga Basin, together with a six-month trial project which will begin during 1997 for the provision of east-west transport services between Aldinga, Willunga, McLaren Vale, Seaford and Noarlunga Centre. I am delighted to see these initiatives, and particularly the joint transport developments between my office and that of the Minister for Transport.

Community transport is a priority in the community. I know that in my own electorate it is a huge issue that requires a lot more consideration by Government if we are keen—as this Government is—to continue to encourage older people to stay in their own homes. Once out of the metropolitan area and away from permanent services, it becomes a major issue for older people living by themselves in out of the way places if they are not able to do shopping, go to the doctor, dentist, and so on.

Mr SCALZI: On page 430 of the Program Estimates, it states that:

Funding directions will aim to achieve a more equitable allocation of funds between the major HACC target groups.

What does this mean?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Office for the Ageing is currently developing a HACC State triennial plan which will provide an analysis of the levels of funding available on a service region and population basis. I think it will be an important part of the process of evaluating data available and consulting with consumers, carers, service providers and many other stakeholders to establish areas of funding priority. Those priorities will, of course, be based on current levels of service provision from both HACC and other sources. That is what we are trying to achieve when we say that we are working towards a more equitable distribution of funding. It is something that I support very strongly. I think the community would recognise also the need for us to work towards that goal.

Mr CAUDELL: In relation to carers and unmet support, on page 430 of Program Estimates it states that the unmet need for support for carers has increased. What is the basis for this statement and what is being done about it?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: We all recognise the importance of carers in our community. Those of us who have had the opportunity to spend time in our electorates would recognise that many of these people are the unsung heroes. There are many whom we do not hear about. Many of them are older people looking after younger members in the family. There are some younger people who are dedicated to looking after older parents or older people. The reliance on community-based care for frail, older people, and also younger people with disabilities will inevitably make demands upon informal care networks, particularly those including carers. It has been recognised in a number of recent reports that is the case, including the State Carers Report and the recent National Respite Review.

Funding for respite care in South Australia has increased by \$3.2 million from \$3.7 million to \$6.9 million over the three years from 1992-93 to 1995-96. That represents an average growth rate of 28 per cent per annum. I am very pleased we have been able to achieve that, but I also recognise that it is an absolute necessity. In the 1996-97 HACC

funding round more than \$300 00 was allocated directly to recurrent respite services for older people, while the \$3.9 million allocated to younger people with disabilities (and that includes respite care and other home support services) will assist carers to provide support.

Carer support programs have been extended to many country areas through funding provided in the past three years, including this year, and once again it is important that we do not forget those people who are carers in more isolated areas. We tend to recognise more easily the support that is provided in the built-up areas, but those carers in more isolated areas in regional and rural South Australia do a fantastic job because of the lack of facilities available to them.

Ms STEVENS: I put the following question on notice. What are the amounts and organisations which received HACC funds in the past year on a recurrent basis? Also, in the media release in relation to your budget, you talked about the expansion of transport services, particularly in country and outer metropolitan areas. I would like some specifics about what is happening in relation to that and the amount of money that has been allocated for this.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: There are a number of initiatives. We will have to obtain the sums. As I mentioned earlier, from 1996 all new buses will be accessible for people with disabilities. A draft plan on disability access has been developed. Community transport networks are being developed in rural areas—we have heard about those. These networks make use of existing community transport and provide links with city routes, hospitals, employment, community centres, etc. Networks are operational in the Barossa, Victor Harbor, Goolwa and the Murray-Mallee.

Submissions are also being considered for Mount Gambier, the Riverland and the Mid North. Specially designed vehicles forming part of the Access Cab service are being replaced with newer models, and 15 new general taxi licences are being made available for accessible vehicles.

Information for people from a non-English speaking background will be included, in appropriate suburbs, in the new bus stop information, which now also contains information in braille. I realise that the member asked for some of the funding associated with those things, and I will take that on notice.

Ms STEVENS: Has the Minister conducted any assessment of the effect on older people in South Australia of changes to Federal policies concerning, first, nursing home accommodation; secondly, the abolition of the Commonwealth dental program; and, thirdly, the increased cost of some pharmaceuticals? Does the Minister propose to extend any State programs to provide safety nets?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will answer the latter part, and I will then ask the Director to respond more generally. This matter has given this Government a fair amount of heartache, because we are pretty limited in the funding that we have in this State. As much as we would like to be able to provide safety nets for programs that are being knocked out at a Commonwealth level, it is not always possible for us to do that. In fact, we believe very strongly that we need to work through our own priorities, as far as programs are concerned, independently of what the Commonwealth may have been promoting.

It is a matter that we will be discussing at ministerial level at the meeting of the ministerial council at the end of July. It is a matter on which I continue to make representation to my Federal colleague concerning some of the changes to funding

and some of the reductions that have been made that have affected quite severely previous Commonwealth programs. The Director may be able to expand on that.

Mr Fiebig: A submission was made by the South Australian Government in relation to the proposed Commonwealth changes that outlined a number of issues, the most particular of which at the time was that there was not enough information to make a full assessment of what the effects might be. Some of that information has since been forthcoming and we have been talking with some of the residential care providers about the effects that they would see on their services. As yet, some of those things are not particularly clear; they are taking their time to work through the effect on residential care services, and we will be interested to follow that up.

In relation to the dental and pharmaceutical scheme, the responses are being looked at by the South Australian Health Commission, and I am not aware of what stage those considerations have reached within the commission. I understand that you are talking with the commission tomorrow, and you might take it up then.

Ms STEVENS: I have a supplementary question. The dental program was cut a year ago. That was not this year's budget but the one before. Are you still not certain of their response?

Mr Fiebig: It is a health issue, and I would not want to—

Ms STEVENS: Yes, but it affects older people especially.

Mr Fiebig: Yes, I understand that.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is a health issue, and I believe that that is the responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Health. We have certainly received a fair bit of representation regarding this issue from older people, and that representation has been passed on to the Health Commission.

Ms STEVENS: Can you give me the details of that representation? What sort of things are people saying?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I do not have it in detail. Concern has been expressed—and that has come through pretty clearly—by people who are in need of dental services. I believe it is certainly a matter that will be discussed in some detail when the health and community services Ministers meet at the same location sequentially, and I believe it is important that some of those issues be discussed. I have discussed it with Minister Moylan, as the Minister responsible for the ageing, and I have asked her to make strong representations to her colleagues in the Commonwealth as well.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer to page 430 of the Program Estimates. The Minister has previously mentioned Care 21 and the phases. Will the Minister advise us as to what Care 21 involves?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am very pleased to be able to do so, because it is an excellent program. I was very pleased to be able to attend the launch of Care 21 at Salisbury earlier this year. It was very well attended. The member for Elizabeth was at that launch. The advancement to the live phase of the trials required the establishment of a legal entity to act as the trial sponsor and sign the tripartite agreement. It is important to realise that the development and research for the trials is coming to a close and a proposal to go forward to the live phase has been completed and is now, I understand, being considered by the Federal Minister for Health.

The research phase has identified a pool of \$10 million over two years which will be cashed out for the trials. Funds will be cashed out of the medical and pharmaceutical benefits schemes, hospitals and the Home and Community Care

program. I am confident that Care 21 will go through to the live phase, and it should be a matter of pride for South Australia that we have been able to galvanise the support of the number of stakeholders and to develop a particular focus on community care in the context of what I believe is generally recognised will become a major reform strategy in health services.

I know that there has been a lot of interest in this trial program. I have been contacted by a couple of my colleagues who are keen to know about the details of Care 21. They have requested that they be kept informed of the progress that is being made. It is a great initiative. Some fantastic people are committed to programs such as this and, if we can work it through, the achievements gained will be significant for the community.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: The OFTA grants program is new. It is referred to on page 430 of the Program Estimates. What is involved?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: This is a new program. The late distribution in 1996-97 has resulted from the need to develop guidelines for the competing workload demands on the office. It provides one-off funds to community organisations to develop proposals which enhance and promote the citizenship of older people. It combines funds from a number of sources: the 10 year plan implementation funds—\$200 000; the ethnic organisations funding program—\$200 000; and the age of opportunity funds—\$278 500. The Office for the Ageing, through the ethnic organisations funding program, continues to provide recurrent funding of \$147 000 to the Coordinating Italian Committee, the Greek Orthodox community, ANFE, and the Greek Welfare Centre.

This year, some \$249 000 in non-committed funds will be allocated to community organisations through the OFTA grants program. The Office for the Ageing is currently considering the applications. Funding priorities have been considered and the recommendations are now with me for my approval which, if I have not already done so, will be done within the next couple of days.

Mr CAUPELL: I refer to the Seniors Card funding. I understand that the Office for the Ageing is investigating outsourcing the card. What will this involve?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Seniors Card is recognised as a success story. It has a broad range of benefits, including: discounted public transport, pharmaceutical, hairdressing, clothing, optical, accommodation and entertainment goods and services. The State Government contributes some \$215 000 together with considerable in kind support through the Office for the Ageing for the production of the card. We are currently investigating the possibility of outsourcing the functions of the card. These days, it is vitally important that we look at core responsibilities for departments and, as has been stated previously both by the Director and me, there is certainly an increase in workload as far as the Office for the Ageing is concerned. It is appropriate that we should consider the outsourcing of this initiative.

In South Australia, all functions are carried out in-house, except card manufacture and processing, graphic design and printing of the directory which are currently outsourced. If a card is lost, a replacement fee of \$10 is charged. A few people have expressed concern about that, but I think it is appropriate that that fee be in place. I point out that no fee is levied where a card is stolen. The fee is intended to offset handling costs and to encourage holders to keep their cards secure. I suggest that there is no reason why the \$10 fee

should necessarily rise with outsourcing, although costs will be a factor explored in examining outsourcing options.

Each year businesses are canvassed to join the Seniors Card scheme and I am delighted with the response that we continue to receive from businesses throughout South Australia. Consideration is being given by the Benefits Registering Committee to the nature of discounts and benefits provided by participating businesses. Consultation has taken place also with the Benefits Registration Committee, which is made up of representatives from several aged organisations, including COTA, the Australian Retired Persons Association and representatives of business providers, including the Retail Traders Association and the Australian Hotels Association. So, a fair bit of consultation has taken place.

One of the disappointments that I have is that we have not been able to provide for reciprocal rights across State borders with the card. This is something which a previous Prime Minister indicated he would achieve, but he was not able to do so. There are difficulties in doing that, particularly when it comes to transport, but it would be good to be able to use the same card across boundaries, and I hope that one day we might be able to achieve that goal.

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

Additional Departmental Advisers:

Ms J. Whitehorn, Director, Policy and Development.

Mr J. Southgate, Manager, Physical and Financial Resources.

Ms L. Carpenter, Executive Director, Field Services.

Mr R. Squires, Director, Community Services.

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

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The 1997-98 budget offers an important opportunity to reflect on the achievements of this Government in this portfolio, achievements which have been marked by the need for change but also the need to consolidate in both direction and commitment. The appropriation in this budget of \$250 million brings to nearly \$1 billion the funds committed to Family and Community Services in the past four budgets—\$1 billion dollars dedicated to supporting and strengthening families and communities and protecting the vulnerable in our society.

This time last year I spoke about the achievements of the Office for Families, the Office for the Ageing, and the contributions made by both direct services and the community sector. I also spoke about the \$500 000 set aside for the innovative Parenting SA program, the Care 21 coordinated care trial and the additional funds that the Treasurer had made available to the Charities and Social Welfare Fund.

The Government's resolve to support these important programs and initiatives is unswerving. In this current budget, a further \$500 000 has been allocated to Parenting SA, and recently the Commonwealth approved an additional \$240 000 for programs under the Parenting SA banner. The Care 21 trial is set to go into its live phase with an estimated funding pool of \$10 million over two years and the charities and

social welfare fund will moving into its second year of funding.

In addition, this budget reflects support for three important developments: first, the reform of the child protection system. We have set aside an initial \$900 000 in this budget for implementation of that reform agenda. This includes: the new 131478 child abuse report line and central intake team; the specialist Aboriginal team; new risk safety and needs assessment tools; more effective interagency work; tighter quality assurance; and, the development of strengthening families programs for those situations where a less intrusive community response is more appropriate.

Secondly, this budget also includes new funds for care packages for one of the most difficult and most vulnerable groups to protect: those adolescents with complex problems and at severe risk, particularly those at risk because of paedophile behaviour. Thirdly, this budget signals important progress in the replacement for the Magill secure care facility, the expansion of the Cavan Centre, and some additional resources to assist the current operations of residential and youth services under significant stress because of the increase in detention orders. Clearly, 1997 is a year of consolidation in this portfolio. Initiatives over the past three years will come together to consolidate the directions for welfare into the next century.

In its first term of office, this Government has progressed agendas which had stagnated under the previous Government. It has been able to do this despite being hampered by the State Bank debt shackles of the previous Labor Government, which costs this Government and the people of South Australia about \$300 million a year in interest payments alone. Considering the \$300 million that has had to be paid without any increases in taxes, this Government's ability to bolster expenditure in the community service arena to \$950 million in four budgets—8 per cent more in real terms than the Labor Party outlaid in its last four budgets—is even more exemplary. This money has not been pumped into the system willy-nilly but has been carefully allocated after serious consideration of the gaps and shortfalls left by the previous Government, of the needs of the people of South Australia and of how to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and structure of welfare so as to achieve a far greater cost benefit ratio.

Many of these changes were long overdue, but this Government is not afraid of making tough decisions when it comes to improving services for those in need. Perhaps the clearest symbol of that is the planned restructure of the alternative care system. I assure members that a long overdue reform of enormous significance will be implemented in 1997 after extensive consultation and review to achieve a balanced outcome. Today, the Family and Community Service portfolio is fundamentally about balance: balancing the safety and needs of children and young people with the need to support and help families; balancing the crisis response with the need for early intervention; balancing the demands of restorative and rehabilitative justice for young offenders; and balancing the need of accountability and the need for responsiveness.

A community services system simply focused on performance is not an option for any Government today. The system must have clear goals that take into account these balancing factors, and it must have a commitment to achieving them and providing the resources to deliver them. It must be accountable and responsible and it must recognise that if we do not act to prevent family breakdown and if we do not stop

young people reoffending we will not only face increased demands for social support services but will carry those costs through into the health system, public housing, the courts, the police and so on.

This Liberal Government has, with this and its previous three budgets, moved community services a long way towards a system that is now well equipped for the challenges of the next century.

[Sitting suspended from 5.55 to 7.30 p.m.]

The CHAIRMAN: I invite the member for Elizabeth to make her opening statement.

Ms STEVENS: In his opening statement, the Minister began by suggesting that this would be a time to reflect on the achievements of this portfolio. I believe that this is so, and I would like to put before the Committee some other ideas and facts for the Government to consider. I quote from the budget submission of the South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS). Under the heading 'Restoring confidence and building community in Community and Family Services' it states:

Lower income South Australians are in strife. Causes include continued cost of living increases, the highest unemployment rate in the nation, and contraction of the scope and resource base of manifold services vital to communities. Country and outer metropolitan populations are particularly hard hit, suffering also transport problems and inadequate means of maintaining social coherence and self reliance.

Applying statistics from the Smith Family's 'Australia Poverty Challenge' (October 1996) to South Australia, we can estimate that 30 per cent of households receive less than \$22 000 income each year and that among these low income households: most have inadequate cash levels to cover basic family costs; most have been forced to move away from family and friends and face deep loneliness and isolation without support networks; 18 to 35 year olds are the most at risk group of poverty; those renting privately are likely to be spending over 30 per cent of their income on rent—a quarter of these are paying over 50 per cent of income in rent, resulting in the risk of payment default and dislocation; around 50 per cent have one or several of their family members suffering from the effects of trauma or chronic illness; up to half have had to rely on a benefit for more than two years; a large minority are single parent families; and 30 per cent of those families over 18 years of age are part of the work force but unemployed.

This picture of emotional and financial stress on a large scale helps us to understand why community and family services are in greater demand and why an emphasis on prevention is necessary to prevent a costly spiral of demand and crisis response.

Further on it states:

Especially in the context of global cuts of over \$120 million to health, education and community services over three years, these cuts are symptomatic of the reality that SACOSS is made aware of daily: that relative to increasing poverty and support needs, often of an urgent nature among South Australians, there is a serious lack of financial attention paid to community services by the State Government and a profound lack of long-term strategy. The 'Families Summit' in November 1996 conveyed emphatically this same message.

Just to focus on the budget of Family and Community Services, I put the following facts on the record. A look at the Minister's budget performance in FACS tells a bleak story of what has happened over the last four years and indeed backs up what has been stated in that submission. The appropriation from the Consolidated Account over four Liberal budgets has suffered a total cumulative cut of \$27.9 million in real terms. The number of full time jobs in the budget has fallen from 1 217 in 1993-94 to 1 072 in 1996-97, and in this year, an election year, has been increased to 1 094. Even this is still a cut of 123 jobs. In the four—

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

Ms STEVENS: Excuse me, Mr Chairman, could I have some protection?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Elizabeth has the call. Please proceed.

Ms STEVENS: In the four capital budgets for FACS managed by the Minister, including 1993-94 to 1996-97, a total of \$25.9 million was allocated for capital works. Of this, only \$16.1 million was spent, leaving carried over unspent amounts of \$9.8 million. This unspent total is double the amount of \$4.9 million budgeted this year.

I refer to page 427 of the Program Estimates and Information booklet, under 'Services for young people who offend or are at risk of harm'. A few days ago the Opposition received the following letter from a social worker. I will ask a few questions concerning the letter. Headed 'Duty of care residential care units' it reads:

Following our recent phone call, I am following that up with this letter. I stated in my concerns to you regarding the Minister of Family and Community Services, 'Duty of Care' for the children who are placed under his guardianship. As a youth worker working with the Department of Family and Community Services, I have worked across the whole range of residential care units. I am concerned that the young people who are placed in these units are in fact being poorly served by the units. They are not being cared for as a parent or guardian should care for them. This being the Minister, who is legally their guardian, for some of them until they are 18 years old. My concerns are:

- It has become common behaviour in one residential care unit that self mutilation has become a group norm. Over 50 per cent of residents are slashing their arms, from wrists to shoulder, leaving scarring they will carry for the rest of their lives. There is no counselling for these residents and training for the staff who appear unconcerned. (Sturt Unit)
- In a number of units, bullying is rampant and no programming or counselling is in place to reduce this. The result is that bullied residents would rather abscond from the unit than face the torment of other residents. So living on the street is more attractive than being in a residential care unit. This leaves them at great risk to paedophilia [and paedophiles] who prey on these types of kids who are at risk.
- Residential Care units have become a revolving door for residents as they pass from one unit to another. Ultimately they end up again in an assessment unit with nowhere else for them to go and restart the process again.
- It is my feeling that the Minister is open to legal action as it could be argued that he/she has not provided a caring, secure, nurturing environment and breaches his/her 'Duty of Care'. Some residents who are placed in a unit with no convictions or offences will leave them with criminal convictions, drug habits (glue sniffing, marijuana use and alcohol abuse) and sexual experimentation.

These are children who are contaminated by the hard core kids who reside in some resi care units. The units fail to give kids independent living skills and foster an institutional approach to care. They are run in an authoritarian manner, giving kids little input into their running. The atmosphere in the units is of 'them and us'. Where the staff running the unit should be seen as mentors, they are almost always in a confrontational mode. It is my opinion that a restructuring process should be undertaken ensuring a better outcome for the kids who look to the Minister for their care.

It is with great soul searching that I have drafted this letter. I realise that these children are the most difficult to deal with. They are damaged kids whose chances of making good are very slim. The reasons for them being placed in a residential care unit are varied but, ultimately, the department and the Minister have a duty of care to make sure that they have the best environment to grow, be safe and adjust to a society that finds it hard to except them.

I have brought these facts to my direct management and upper management, to be met with a wall of obstruction. The reasons given are:

- The inflexibility of both management and staff to change the approaches.
- Workers in the units are not thoroughly trained or qualified.
- Workers are at the end of their working life and do not relate to youth issues.

- Programming in units is poorly structured, resulting in small changes in kids.
- Residential care units are expensive to run and are not client/kid focused.

I hope this information is useful as I and others in the department are concerned about the care of these children and believe that change is possible. But there must be a will for change to help these kids.

These are very serious allegations and I ask the Minister: are there any problems with self mutilation amongst residents of the Sturt unit or any other State-funded residential care unit? Are there problems with bullying in residential care units that result, as the letter suggests, in residents absconding, rather than facing the torment of other residents and, if so, what is being done to redress this both in relation to counselling for residents and training and support for staff?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The first thing that I would say is that it is a pity that the person who wrote that letter did not have it is guts to write to the Minister on one of the numerous occasions that I have asked staff of the department whether they have any concerns and, if so, to make me aware of those concerns. All that person had to do was to write a confidential letter to me and I would have had the opportunity to take action in regard to the concerns that have been expressed. I would just reiterate that it was a lack of guts on the part of that person that she would write to the Opposition rather than to the Minister responsible for this issue, with the opportunity to do something about it. Having said that, I think I need to make a number of statements in regard to the issue that the member has referred to. The member might like to make that letter available to me so that I can take action in relation to the specific complaints that have been lodged, but I doubt that that will happen.

There is nobody who is more aware of the problems associated with a small number of the most vulnerable children who are under the care of the Minister. It is a matter of particular concern to me. Since I came to office as Minister in this department, it is a matter that I have raised at a ministerial level on each occasion that I have met with my colleagues from other States and the Commonwealth. It is of particular concern, because until now I have not been able to obtain from any of my colleagues interstate or from those who work within the agency any idea of how best to deal with the situation. I had hoped that the member for Elizabeth would recognise that for the first time ever in this budget the Government had put aside \$400 000 in order to provide one on one assistance to the youngsters whom the member for Elizabeth is talking about.

I have looked at a number of alternatives in considering ways to deal with these young people. I have considered the possibility, particularly with these kids who are at risk, of being able to put them behind closed doors at least to provide appropriate assessment. Under the various conventions that is not possible. I believe that the only way we can deal with these situation is to provide one on one consultation and assistance. That is what will now be able to be provided through the Youth Crossroads Fund, and that is the name that we have given to this particular program.

It means that a small but significant number of young people who are in danger of, let us say, falling through the cracks in our society or those who in the past, and particularly during the term of the previous Labor Government, were regarded as being in the too-hard basket, those kids with serious behavioural problems, will now be given one to one support to help them fit back into the community through the newly established \$400 000 Youth Crossroads Fund.

I am aware that these youths have often been severely abused either sexually, physically or emotionally. The majority of them, if not all, have no family type emotional ties with anyone. Many do mutilate themselves, sell themselves to paedophiles or live in an alcohol or drug induced haze because of what they have been through in their earlier lives. I am advised that in any one year there are between 15 and 20 of these young people who are known to most health and social service agencies, but until now existing agencies have not been able to cater to their individual needs. Frequently these youngsters are also known to the juvenile justice system because of offences that they have carried out. For the first time this Government has been able to provide \$400 000 to ensure that these adolescents are able to have one to one support, to help them choose a healthy and positive future. This fund is aimed at helping those youths at most serious risk to become functioning responsible citizens, and that is what I am eager to do.

I do not believe that the lack of training is the major issue in this situation. I believe that the vast majority of people in FACS who have this responsibility are well trained and are very committed to the work that they are doing. I do not think the staff should be blamed in any way for the difficulties that have been there in the past in dealing with these particular youngsters. The situation is that previous governments have refused to provide the appropriate funding to enable these youngsters to be dealt with appropriately. I am very pleased that we have been able to put aside \$400 000 for this purpose. When we look at priorities I guess it would be very easy to say, recognising that \$400 000 is a lot of money, that perhaps we could have spent it in a way that would have helped more youngsters than the 15 or 20 whom we are talking about.

However, the decision has been made, the need is there, we have recognised that need and we appreciate that something needs to be done urgently. We hear so much about microeconomic reform and all the rest of it, but as far as economic issues are concerned, apart from the wellbeing of those youngsters—and it has to be the first priority to ensure that those youngsters can grow up to be responsible and positive citizens—if we do not get it right they will move into a lifetime of institutionalisation that will cost the State a heap of money. It is about looking at prevention and assisting those kids at an early stage so that, wherever possible, they are able to fit back into society, make a positive contribution and be cared for appropriately.

Considering that positive action is now able to be taken to deal with these youngsters, I am disappointed that a person who works for the department—if this person does work for the department; otherwise they would not know what was happening in this area—would feel it necessary to go to the Opposition and write such a letter rather than take it up with the people in the department.

Ms STEVENS: As a supplementary question, I gather from what you have said that there is a problem with self-mutilation and bullying and that you are addressing it with the \$400 000 to provide one-to-one support. What sort of people are you looking at? Are they social workers? What will we get for \$400 000 in terms of one-to-one support?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will ask the Chief Executive Officer to provide more detail with regard to that. As regards the emphasis that has been placed on self-mutilation and bullying—and we could go on and talk about those kids who sell themselves for paedophilia and all sorts of matters—those problems have been around for a very long time, and the previous Government refused to do anything about it. I

would like the Chief Executive Officer to explain in more detail how the \$400 000 will be spent and the services that will be provided to those young people.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to restrict the line of questioning in any way, but I ask members to consider the implications of questions in sensitive areas and the impact that could have, or whether it is desirable to give public ventilation to some of these issues. The points have been made and I wonder whether we need to go into the depth of examples because, at the end of the day, we are talking about people in institutions, and the matter will get considerable publicity in the media. It is up to members to decide how much publicity they want to give to a very difficult situation.

Mr Deyell: This new fund will enable individual packages to be put together for children where the experience, skill and training of staff has not been enough for them. These packages will be built around individual needs, whether they be psychiatric, psychological, other therapeutic assistance, work related or family relationships. Whatever the problem of a young person, this fund will give us the opportunity in a cost-effective way to have purpose-built, specific programs to support individual young people.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: This is about providing funds for a resource pool from which the two relevant operational divisions will be able to broker specially developed packages to meet the needs of individual young people. Other initiatives are being taken, for example, the development of a joint Health Commission, DECS and FACS behaviour intervention service to work intensively with adolescents who have severe behavioural problems in partnership with their families. That will be in operation in the next few months.

Another initiative includes the development of case management protocols across relevant Government agencies to improve services and, in particular, the speed of responses; and then there is the ongoing collaboration, which is essential between agencies, to achieve and maintain service relevance and effectiveness. So, a number of prongs are being used to work through some of these difficulties.

Ms STEVENS: I understand that between 100 and 150 residents per year are part of these units. What is the recidivism rate, that is, how many kids move out of this system into some other situation?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Are we talking about in detention or those in residential care?

Ms STEVENS: In residential care.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I do not know whether we have exact figures as to the recidivism rate: I will take that on notice and provide a response. I have spent some time looking at the recidivism rate for those in detention and for those who are in alternative care. It is of concern to me. This situation has been occurring for a long time: it is not a new situation. I will provide more detail with regard to this question.

Ms STEVENS: What training programs are currently in place for residents in residential care facilities? Are these programs client focused? Do residents in residential care facilities play a part in the running of those programs?

Mr Deyell: A range of programs are run for children in residential care. One should bear in mind that these young people come into care for a variety of reasons, not just as a result of the sort of behaviours described previously or because of family relationship problems. So, there is no simple solution or a single program that can be provided. As you will be aware, some of these people come under the guardianship of the Minister at school age, so basic schooling

programs are important. We work very hard to make appropriate linkages with the education system so that these young people, who have often been unsuccessful in the education system, get access to basic education and learning skills which are an important part of enabling them to move on from the situation that they are in.

Certainly, there is a range of programs which are designed around their psychological and therapeutic needs and which range from direct intervention by professionals from those services through to activity in the nature of giving those young people a positive experience and a positive view of themselves. The range of programs is quite extreme, from very professional and purpose focused around an individual young person, through to activities that engage these young people to develop social skills and through to basic education programs.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I want to reiterate that I think we are very fortunate in South Australia—I cannot speak for the responsibilities of those in other States—with the dedication that is shown by the staff who work in these areas. It would probably be one of the most difficult areas of the agency in which to work, yet we have extremely dedicated people who are carrying out those responsibilities and working with those young people.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer to page 428 of the Program Estimates where the links between poverty, family breakdown, abuse and neglect are acknowledged. It is interesting to note that the member for Elizabeth did not acknowledge that many of the problems for young people and families today are caused by the \$4 billion-plus State Bank debacle which her Government caused for South Australia—the tearing apart of the social fabric over 11 years, involving massive employment problems and a general lack of direction for the State. I believe there have been quite major achievements in helping families and young people. Recently, I visited Magill Training Centre, and I could not speak highly enough of the commitment and care of FACS workers. I was also able to say ‘Hello’ to a few of the young people and see how keen most of them were to get on with the job and to work with the departmental officers. Minister, what do you believe and what can you say this Government has actually achieved in helping families to cope with this enormous growing pressure, particularly with modern living as it is today? How do you see the achievements?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: As I pointed out in my opening statement, this Government throughout its first term of office has maintained a very strong commitment to helping families as the cornerstone of community life. The \$950 million allocated in the past four budgets has helped build an impressive list of achievements. Some of those achievements have been through the \$3 million Community Benefit SA Fund. We have been able to assist in child protection and alternative care with significant restructure of the alternative care system, which is a cornerstone achievement for this Government. It will provide us with a system which is attuned to today’s demand for placement of adolescents and children with complex problems and challenging behaviours. It makes the important link between placement prevention and placement services and sees for the first time in South Australia the funding of a family preservation service for Aboriginal families. I believe that helping those Aboriginal families in this State needs to be a huge priority.

In recognition of the ongoing challenges in the alternative care program, I am having discussions with my Federal counterpart in regard to the options for extending the funding

base in the future. I might also say that major reforms in child protection—responding to significant increases in the number of notifications and falling rates of investigation—has been given a very high priority. The reform includes a central intake in child abuse report line, risk safety and needs assessment tools, and new models of case management. One of the key features of that reform is a less intrusive response for families where the issues are of a child welfare-family functioning nature, and an initial package has been funded to support the reform, including \$400 000 recurrent funding for a service response for lower risk families.

During the term of this Government, there have been no funding cuts in programs delivered in the non-government sector, and in fact increased opportunities through the restructure of alternative care and gambling related programs have been put in place. We have begun the reorientation towards an outcome-output funding system based on more transparent accountability frameworks, and the movement to an awards base in both community services and the SAP sector has been strongly supported by this Government.

In regard to youth homelessness, the funding of two pilot projects in South Australia for a total of \$910 000 over two years has been introduced. They are designed to help young people and their families where there is imminent risk of the young person’s leaving home. I have already explained the \$400 000 program for care and support packages for young people at severe risk.

I am very pleased to see significant progress in the Parenting SA program which is ongoing funding for the innovative Parenting SA with the parents’ easy guide and parents’ helpline which receives over 2 500 calls per week, and we are now able to provide some \$90 000 in small grants for community groups as well.

I take this opportunity to reiterate what my colleague, the member for Mawson, said in the question that he asked. It is all very well for the member for Elizabeth in her opening statement to go on about the situations that many families face in South Australia at the present time. We are all concerned about the unemployment situation; and we are all concerned at the number of businesses that have gone into liquidation over a period of time and the lack of employment opportunities, particularly for young people. I think it is a bit hypocritical for the member for Elizabeth to be attempting to place that blame on this Government when many of the problems that we are now facing are as a direct result of the financial mismanagement of the previous Government and the huge problems that have confronted the people of this State as a result of that mismanagement.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 426 of Program Estimates and the strategic plan for Aboriginal services. The trend for Aboriginal people to be over-represented in every departmental service area is clearly a continuing chronic issue in community services. How would the proposed strategic plan address these issues?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: As I said in my opening statement, I am very keen to introduce initiatives which assist Aboriginal families in this State. Again, it is an area that has been neglected, I believe, for a very long time. It is a very difficult and complex area to know how best to help many of these families with the huge problems that many of them regrettably now face.

We have read and heard much over the past few weeks about the welfare issues facing Aboriginal people and the links to both reconciliation and past practice. Let me say at the outset how important I believe it was for community

services in South Australia and for the Government in a bipartisan way to respond with the statement of apology and regret in the House on 28 May. Fundamental to addressing the complex and chronic issues for the Aboriginal community must be a candid acknowledgment of the pain and suffering caused by past policies and practices and the fact that the damage persists today. However, the task for us now is to continue the reconciliation process and to build programs and services which will go on to raise the standards of living for Aboriginal communities and address the structural disadvantages that they face.

Community 21, the strategic plan for community services, focuses on the development of a new charter which will move the context of service delivery from a welfare to wellbeing framework for the future. I am very pleased that the department is now working on a broad based strategic plan for Aboriginal services entitled 'A Different Future'. The focus of the plan is on results and changing planning policy, funding arrangements and practice to achieve much better outcomes for Aboriginal families and their communities. The plan recognises that we cannot view Aboriginal communities as homogenous. There are different trends, different complexities and different priorities, particularly between communities which are remote or isolated compared with regional communities, such as those in the Riverland or the Adelaide metropolitan area.

This plan will form the basis for a consultation process with Aboriginal communities. However, advocates in Government and the communities have been clear that they want focused and strategic consultations, and certainly not a blank page approach. They want to see that we have developed some draft action plans based on what they have been saying continually to Government agencies over a very long time. They want to see the issues and the proposed responses for their communities profiled. It is important that every opportunity be provided to enable those communities and the people within those communities to speak for their own people.

It is also important to point out that the plan acknowledges and includes positive programs and changed agendas which are happening on the ground. In our concern about the problems, it is very easy for us often to forget to acknowledge the progress which has been made and the successful initiatives which have been crafted already, often by Aboriginal people themselves working from within the department or the community sector.

The Aboriginal Child-care Agency, the Aboriginal Family Care Program, the Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth Team and the Doing It Differently project in the northern suburbs have made significant and important and lasting contributions to a more culturally sensitive service system. Most recently, we can point to the Aboriginal Child Protection Team as a significant reform in responding in a culturally appropriate way to notifications of child abuse and neglect.

With this strategy and the dedication and commitment of the Aboriginal Services Division of the department, I am confident that we can turn the corner over the next couple of years. As Aboriginal people and families continue the process of rebuilding their identities, their family connections and their functioning, I am sure that many will experience a community services system working from a different framework and charter which can only be of significant help to those people.

Mr CAUDELL: My question relates to the alternative care system to be operational by 1998. I understand that the

restructure has seen the contracting out of these services to the non-government sector. I am sure the Minister will appreciate the concern in the community to ensure that changes in foster care arrangements does not result in trauma for children or the loss of experienced and committed foster families. What are the arrangements for implementation, and how will these arguments address any community concern?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The new services and funding plan for alternative care services in South Australia, which I have endorsed for implementation, was driven by a very strong policy position. It was the subject of extensive consultation across the State with foster children, carers, foster care agencies and other interested groups. In introducing the new plan, an additional \$500 000 per annum has also been committed towards the operation of alternative care services, and I will be seeking, through discussions with the Commonwealth Government, to further expand the funding base for alternative care.

It is also important to be clear on the public record about this question of contracting out. The fact is that the community sector has, since I can remember, been an active service provider in foster care. In other words, government has a history of contracting with community agencies: it is not a new direction, by any means. The difference in this current restructure is that there is more clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of the department and the sector, and where there was no reason for services not to be contestable they have been made so.

I assure members of the Committee that the new system is designed to be more child and family focused, and I feel very strongly that that is appropriate. It is also, I believe, much more efficient. It is based, first and foremost, on meeting the individual needs of children in need of care and families where children are at risk of entering care. In particular, the changes will deliver increased flexibility in capacity to place children and adolescents with challenging behaviours. There will be structural efficiencies through reduced management and administrative infrastructure. It will provide better monitoring and data collection systems, clearer lines of responsibility and accountability for all parties involved in alternative care, and it will also provide a better spread of family preservation services across South Australia, including funding, for the first time, of Aboriginal family preservation options.

The restructure of alternative care is, I believe, an opportunity to achieve substantial change and, most importantly, to achieve service improvement. It is also an extremely delicate matter, due to the complexities inherent in the system, the personalised nature of the services and the direct impact on the lives of many vulnerable children and their families. I have indicated, therefore, that the restructure must be undertaken with enormous care with adequate time allowed for transition to ensure the optimum possible benefits from change and to minimise any adverse disruption to children, foster parents and birth families.

I believe that the planned restructure of alternative care is a cornerstone achievement for this Government in its first term of office, but there can be no room at all for complacency. In fact, a recent research paper commissioned by the department demonstrates that there is only a limited number of families willing to become foster families under the present arrangements, and the challenge for the next century is to develop new models to ensure that we can provide children and young people coming into care with the nurture and support they require to develop to responsible adulthood.

Ms STEVENS: My question relates to page 427—‘Services for young people who offend or are at risk of harm’. Has the Minister or his department had discussions with the police in relation to the difficulty in housing the number of young people with orders requiring their detention in secure care? Before the Minister answers, I would like to put on the record a copy of an unsigned letter that was handed to us, to back up what I have just asked. This letter dated 22 May 1997 to Mr Malcolm Hyde, the Commissioner of Police, from Mr Richard Deyell, the Chief Executive of the department is headed ‘Re: Magill Training Centre Overflow’. It states:

The Magill Training Centre is currently experiencing difficulties in housing the number of young people with orders requiring their detainment in secure care. Consideration needs to be given to the exploration of options for housing these young people safely, particularly those on short orders pending their appearance at the Youth Court.

Background. The Magill Training Centre has a maximum capacity of 68 beds. The Cavan Training Centre has a maximum of 36 beds but has been taking up to 40 young people to absorb some of the overflow from Magill. The presenting overflow problem is predominantly made up of males between 15-18 years who are either on warrants, police custody orders, or first instance warrants.

Critical periods tend to peak on weekends and long weekends, since the Saturday Magistrate Court was closed. The home detention program provides 15 beds for young people on detention who would otherwise be placed in secure care. The Department for Family and Community Services is currently instigating a rebuilding program for the Magill and Cavan Training Centres which will in time provide 120 secure beds in this State. The Department for Family and Community Services provides a range of diversionary programs aimed at keeping young people out of secure care but we are still experiencing consistently high numbers. As the Chief Executive of the Department for Family and Community Services I have the delegated authority to refuse the admittance of young people into secure care. We have been able to avoid this option but are concerned that the situation as it currently stands may not be sustainable in the future.

Steps taken so far. Paul Mackowski, a supervisor from the Magill Training Centre, has done some initial exploration of the option of utilising a number of cells at the watch-house to detain ‘low risk’ young people under the joint supervision of FACS youth workers and the police when the Magill Training Centre is full. Mr Mackowski has undertaken initial informal consultations in regard to this proposal with Sergeants Hill and Sachse, who are duty sergeants at the watch-house. These initial discussions, which were held in April this year, appeared to meet with a favourable response on the proviso that police staff are not solely responsible for the supervision of juveniles detained under this program.

Recommendations.

1. That the Department for Family and Community Services and the South Australian Police work in partnership to develop an interim interagency response for the management of the overflow until the rebuilding program is complete.

I understand, according to the capital works program, that that will be 1999—two years—

2. That an interagency work group is established to develop a joint position paper and action plan for consideration.

3. That the South Australian Police provide two staff to participate in the working group who are of an appropriate level to develop a joint position paper and action plan for consideration.

4. That the Department for Family and Community Services will provide two staff at the supervisor level, a PSA representative and project support for the working group.

The Department for Family and Community Services is keen to work in partnership with the South Australian police to develop this initiative and I look forward to your prompt response to this request.

Has the Minister or his department been having discussions with the police in relation to difficulties with housing the number of young people with orders requiring their detention in secure care?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Obviously the department is, because the member has just referred to a letter written by the

Chief Executive Officer. There is nothing to hide as far as that is concerned. The number in detention is of significant concern to me and to this Government as it was to the previous Government. There has been a significant increase in the number of youths being held in secure care. This has been attributed to the increased length of detention combined with the increased number of youths on remand orders for increasing lengths of time. We are taking action in that we are further advanced now in regard to the rebuilding program at Cavan and the construction of a new facility to replace Magill.

It is interesting that I just happen to have a minute signed by Martyn Evans (the former member for Elizabeth and then Minister of Health, Family and Community Services) on 16 June 1993. In a letter to the Treasurer he indicates his concern about issues relating to detention and makes the point that SAYRAC has a capacity of 35 residents, that it has operated at almost that number for several weeks, that there are no plans to increase the capacity of the centre as its ownership is planned to pass on to the Housing Trust in September with the opening of Cavan. He states that SAYRAC has a current capacity of 48 although the occupancy for the past few weeks has been in excess of 50, and that this has been achieved by the use of makeshift measures such as mattresses on the floor and the opening of units that do not meet occupational health and safety standards.

That was in the middle of 1993. It is of major concern. It is prudent for the department to plan what alternatives might be available if required and, as I said earlier, we are fairly well advanced as far as a replacement for Magill is concerned. Certainly the funding is there for us to commence that project and also the rebuilding program at Cavan. It is fair enough to say that this is of major concern. The combined average daily number of youths detained at the Cavan and Magill Training Centres for the period July 1996 to May 1997 is 95. This figure represents a 9 per cent increase on the average daily population for 1995-96. These increases have led to increased costs as well. Increased staff numbers, overtime payments and program costs have resulted in costs increasing by more than \$1.7 million over 1995-96. The percentage of Aboriginal youth offenders detained at both training centres is 25 per cent of total occupancy levels to March 1997. This represents a slight decrease on the 1995-96 level of 27 per cent.

I will refer briefly to the range of alternatives to detention which have been developed during 1996-97 and which are being fully utilised by the courts and other justice agencies. Those alternatives include: home detention, which involves intensive face-to-face supervision, electronic monitoring and program participation involving family and community members, as appropriate; and the program for advocacy, challenge and the environment (PACE)—participants complete 200 hours of environmental community work combined with support for up to 12 months to challenge offending behaviour and develop viable alternatives. Accredited vocational skill development and the establishment of positive recreational habits are featured. Dukes Plus, the special Duke of Edinburgh award program, aims to establish long-term personal development through learning by successful achievement reinforced by positive adult and peer relationships.

I will not take up the time of the Committee to refer to other alternatives that are being considered. This Government will continue to have a strong focus on the provision of alternatives to detention. It is important that that should be the

case. It is vitally important, as far as I am concerned, that we look at any alternatives that are appropriate rather than locking kids up behind bars. We have a major problem with a number who are in there at the present time, and that is a matter that we need to work through.

Ms STEVENS: Is the Minister concerned about holding low-risk individuals in a police watch-house? Does this not contradict the policy of keeping juveniles away from what are essentially institutes of higher learning in terms of criminal behaviour?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Of course, I am concerned about that as was the Minister of Health, Family and Community Services under the previous Government. That is what this statement to which I referred is all about. I will ask the Chief Executive Officer to provide details, but of course it is undesirable. As far as I am concerned, we are in a situation where we have not had to consider doing that at this stage, but I would like the Chief Executive Officer to respond to the question in detail.

Mr Deyell: I can confirm that discussions are taking place, but very much with an eye to being prepared in case we need to look for such a capacity rather than as a matter of course. Such alternatives from the department's viewpoint are very much options of last resort and I am pleased to be able to report that in the past couple of weeks numbers in secure care across both detention centres in South Australia have somewhat stabilised in the high 80s. We have 86 people in secure care today. That number means that we do not have to look for these sorts of options. We have not yet finalised discussions with the police and are currently not using that alternative.

Ms STEVENS: By way of supplementary question, the Minister mentioned the former member for Elizabeth (Hon. Martyn Evans) and his concern in relation to the same matters. Does the Minister have any knowledge that the Hon. Martyn Evans was considering an option such as placing young offenders in the watch-house?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The minute to which I referred looks at canvassing different opportunities that may be available and we are continuing to canvass all of these alternatives. Once we are able to provide a new facility as a replacement to Magill, and once we are able to complete the rebuilding program at Cavan, I would hope that we would not have to consider any of these alternatives.

Ms STEVENS: So, to your knowledge, no such option was canvassed by the previous Labor Government?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Either that is the honourable member's next question or it is a supplementary.

Ms STEVENS: I will go on to my next question, Sir. The Minister mentioned in his answer to my original question that he has put in place a number of alternatives to home detention.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Alternatives to detention or to home detention?

Ms STEVENS: I meant alternatives to detention, home detention being one of them, along with others the Minister mentioned. However, I notice in the Minister's Program Estimates—and the Minister backed it up with his own statistics—that there are increased trends in occupancy rates in secure care and in the proportion of young people on remand. The Minister also mentioned, in answering a question, that this alternative would be considered up until the building of the new facility, which will be anything up to two years. The capital works program says that the completion date is two years away, not allowing for any slippage. I put

to the Minister that the alternatives to detention, even though he has some in place, certainly are not keeping up with numbers of young offenders who, for whatever reason, are not being dealt with outside detention but are in fact going into a lock-up situation.

The CHAIRMAN: That is purely comment. Will the honourable member frame it as a question?

Ms STEVENS: I would like to hear from the Minister what are the specific outcomes to his alternatives to detention over the past year and what are his projected outcomes specifically for next year so that we can look to some reduction in the numbers of young offenders going into secure care.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I have already referred to at least three of those programs: the Program for Advocacy Challenge and the Environment is one area, the Dukes Plus is another and home detention is yet another. Once the matter of the appropriate site for a new facility is determined, I will do everything I can to ensure that the completion date is brought on as quickly as possible.

We are in a situation where the Magill Training Centre has been recognised for a very long time—certainly for a lot longer than this Government has been in office—to be totally unacceptable for the purpose. I know that when I was in the situation in which the member for Elizabeth now finds herself and was questioning previous Governments during Estimates, year after year I referred to the lack of suitable accommodation through the Magill Training Centre and nothing was done. When we came to office we realised that it was a high priority and I regret that it has taken three years to get on with the finalisation of that issue.

Ms STEVENS: You under-spent your capital budget.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: That is one of the reasons: the funding was there, but we were not in a position to get on because of site considerations and all sorts of things. That is behind us.

Ms Stevens interjecting:

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: That is now a very high priority. I do not know what the member for Elizabeth is getting at. I have indicated what alternatives are currently in place. The Chief Executive Officer has provided information to the Committee which indicates that the numbers are down, fortunately, at the present time and I hope that they continue to decrease.

Mr BROKESHIRE: I refer to page 431 of the Program Estimates, which refers to the growing recognition and response in planning at the interface between service systems. After listening to the member for Elizabeth and her negativity—her lack of positivity—I can understand why in some sectors of community services there appears to be a perception that this Government lacks commitment to areas like social policy and social issues and, in particular (from what I have heard tonight in this place) to social policy framework. What would the Minister say in response to these negative criticisms?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is of concern that there is a perception in some sectors of community services that this Government's record in social services is not what it should be. This Government has demonstrated through its delivery of services in education, health and welfare a clear commitment to meeting its responsibilities and obligations. At the same time we have always made clear that this must be balanced with the objectives of economic development and job creation and an efficient and effective public sector.

We live in times where the role of Government is changing dramatically. The tools of policy and planning also have to change. We know that the old social development framework that consisted largely of motherhood statements about social goals, with which everyone could identify but nobody really owned, are now redundant. I suggest that today we desperately need new tools and need to refine those tools to ensure that they deliver the social services that the community expects from Government as we move towards the year 2000.

Work is progressing across Government, which will result in a management framework focused more clearly on outputs and outcomes. It is that sort of framework that will deliver the accountability and transparency which the community is demanding of Government. We also need to remember that human services in particular are facing unprecedented challenges. There are strong expectations in the community, particularly about the quality of services and accountability for the use of public resources.

In this environment, it is essential that community services not only contributes to the development of whole of Government planning tools but also works on responding to the new challenges within its own constituency. It is for this reason that I have been working with my advisory committee, the department and the sector on an industry plan. I am hopeful that this will evolve to the point where it can advance the Government's broader social policy and the planning agenda. I might also say that I have asked through the Department of Premier and Cabinet that we put together all the initiatives under a social agenda in all agencies so that the priority that we are giving as a Government to a number of these issues can be seen very clearly, as so many of them are so important at the present time.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 429 of the Program Estimates and the target for completing the reform to services for women and children escaping domestic violence. This is a very important area of community welfare. At what stage is the reform plan, and how has the process been managed to address the issues which have been raised by some sections of the women's services sector?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: There certainly has been intense interest in this matter for some time and in particular the last few months. It is evident that many people support changes to ensure services respond better to the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence. The review report by Thompson Goodall and Associates was released for public consultation. As a result of that, I have received many responses which comment on the findings and some of the specific recommendations.

I have convened an implementation advisory committee which has broad representation from a number of Government agencies and representatives from service providers, and I can table the detail of that representation for the record. The committee has been asked to consider the report and in particular all the feedback to determine the future shape of services that are required in the community at the present time. I am advised that the committee has been meeting weekly since April to consider changes to the service system. It is expected to produce a final report very soon.

I understand that the task has been extremely complex and the committee is thoroughly considering a number of factors, including industrial issues which may arise out of a change of process. In fact, that process has now moved on and because it was a SAAP program, it is a matter of seeking the Federal Minister's concurrence with the recommendations

coming out of that report. The broad representation on the committee has served to strengthen the relationships between the sector and other key service providers, and I am hopeful that the recommendations coming out of that report will ultimately benefit the women and children who need those services.

I have certainly given a commitment to maintaining a specific service dedicated to meeting the needs of migrant women and children, and to the maintenance of funding and staffing levels across the sector. The timing for implementation has also been discussed by the committee as part of the overall plan. It is important, because of the interest that has been shown in the community, that this whole area and the recommendations coming out of the report are made public. There has been much speculation. There has been a lot of uncertainty in regard to this issue, and it is vitally important that, as soon as the Federal Minister has signed off on this report, those recommendations be made public.

Mr CAUDELL: The Opposition spokesperson on these matters has tried to paint a variety of pictures and perceptions in relation to secure care. I refer the Minister to page 427 of the Program Estimates and Information booklet regarding the project to replace the Magill Training Centre. Will the Minister provide the Committee with some background on the replacement project, including the need for such an undertaking and the progress made to date and the location of the proposed new centre which I understand has been included in the budget at a cost of \$2.35 million?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I am pleased to be able to provide further information on this matter. I do not think I need to go through the detail that has already been provided regarding the pressures that are on Magill. Reference has been made by both sides of the Committee to the need to get on with this development as a matter of priority. The development of proposals for a new site is being overseen by a steering committee convened by the Department of Family and Community Services with members from Treasury and Finance, Services SA, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Economic Development Authority.

A possible site—and I would hope it would be the ultimate site—has been identified in O'Halloran Hill, and negotiations are under way for approval for its purchase. I have been very pleased with the positive response that has been received from the Marion council. It is not always easy to have the community on side on these issues, but certainly since this option has been placed before the community through a couple of articles in the media, there has not been much negativity. In fact, the member for Mitchell (who asked the question and in whose electorate this site is located) tells me he has only received one letter that is negative to this site.

I would be very pleased to see the centre placed on the O'Halloran Hill site. I am very keen to ensure that there are appropriate training opportunities associated with the new facility. The site is close to Adelaide, it is in a relatively open area and adjacent to the O'Halloran Hill TAFE. I think it is an ideal site. I would hope that negotiations will be positive so that we will be able to move on the construction of the new centre as soon as possible.

The member for Elizabeth referred to the two year period. As I said earlier, I will do everything I can to ensure that it is not a two year process. I think the urgency of the situation demands that we do everything we can through the Government and the agencies that have a responsibility in this area to ensure that the new centre is completed as quickly as possible. I would hope from what has been said tonight, and

recognising the difficulties that are present, that we would have the support of the Opposition in the construction of this new facility.

Ms STEVENS: My next question relates to emergency assistance and I refer to page 243. Welfare agencies report a growing demand for emergency assistance as more families struggle to make ends meet, yet in 1996-97 \$1.821 million was allocated to the department's emergency financial assistance program, of which \$1.72 million was actually spent. The allocation for 1997-98 is \$1.759 million. How can FACS justify an under-spending of emergency financial assistance funds in 1996-97 when many low income people were denied assistance? Noting the growing demand for emergency financial assistance how can the allocation for 1997-98 be below, particularly in real terms, the 1996-97 allocations?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will get the Chief Executive Officer to provide some detail in response to that question. Can I say that the variation between actual and that estimated for 1996-97 reflects the demand for emergency financial assistance payments during the year. Initiatives aimed at preventative measures to reduce repeat applications such as loan schemes and white good purchase have had an impact, as reflected in the constant level of expenditure. I also need to make the point that emergency relief is something that has been recognised for sometime as a Commonwealth responsibility. The emergency relief program is essentially a safety net under the social security income support system, and therefore is quite clearly a Commonwealth responsibility. It is quite distinct from the payments made to individuals in the Department for Family and Community Services' financial counselling and support services, where those payments are part of a more comprehensive problem solving, case work approach to assistance.

Emergency relief really is a very small Commonwealth program of about \$23 million nationally and \$2 million in South Australia. It is unlikely, even if the Commonwealth intends to devolve it, that it will attempt to devolve it on its own but rather will roll it up with an array of other programs. In any event, I do not expect any movement on this topic in the near future, and we need to work through this particular issue. I ask Mr Deyell to respond in more detail.

Mr Deyell: There have been significant moves in the past two or three years to clarify the responsibilities in this area between State Governments and the Commonwealth Government. The department has retained a residual emergency assistance capacity but there is now a much stronger focus in the department on counselling families who come in with short-term financial needs, in an endeavour to address the fundamental problem that the family has come in with rather than setting up a process where they come back to us time after time for a residual top up. What it has meant is that we have strengthened our capacity in financial counselling and are working with families in a proactive way with budgeting and other support services to address the fundamental problem that the family faces and establishing a clear link with the non-government agencies who receive emergency relief funding from the Commonwealth where material assistance is more appropriately provided.

Ms STEVENS: To be quite clear, essentially you are saying that it is not your problem; it is the Commonwealth's responsibility.

Mr Deyell: I am saying we share the responsibility between both jurisdictions, with the State providing construc-

tive and proactive counselling support while the Commonwealth funds residual emergency need.

Ms STEVENS: I follow on by talking about financial counselling services. Minister, I must say that in talking with leaders in the social welfare sector before these estimates the first thing they talked about to me was the lack of adequate financial counselling services, so it is interesting that we should move on to this, following your response to my last question. The area of financial counselling has proved to be a highly successful poverty alleviation service over many years, a preventative measure, yet allocations to this important preventative service have been reduced over recent years. It appears that FACS has reduced its commitments to the provision of this service by both community organisations and the department itself. A couple of years ago, the Debtline phone service offered by the department in providing back up to financial counsellors was also closed down. Why has the department scaled down its provision of financial counselling services, and what have been the effects on service delivery and service accessibility following the closure of Debtline?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The first thing I want to say is that there have been no financial reductions to financial counselling in the non-government sector in South Australia, so I not know where the member for Elizabeth is coming from. In regard to financial counselling practice, not all community support workers undertake case work and only those who are trained financial counsellors are assigned cases. There are different procedures, but the fact is that there has not been a reduction in funding. I can provide some detail regarding the funding and I would be prepared to take that on notice.

Ms STEVENS: I would appreciate that and I would also ask the Minister whether he could address the other part of my question in relation to what have been the effects on service delivery and service accessibility after the closure of Debtline?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I will need to get some more detail in regard to that. While we are on this subject, I think it is important to consider the skills of FACS community support workers in this area. As I said earlier, in regard to financial counselling practice not all community support workers undertake case work and only those who are trained financial counsellors are assigned cases. Financial counselling training for untrained community support workers has been identified as a priority for all financial support teams across the State and resources have been allocated to purchase this training from the Para Institute of TAFE and 11 such staff are doing modules currently.

FACS senior financial counsellors on each team also work with our training and development staff to ensure that the training needs of staff are continually assessed and, importantly, are met. All of them have been trained in workplace assessment in a course in which FACS also subsidised the training of a financial counsellor from the community sector. Training and development staff subsequently located a considerable number of training places at a greatly reduced rate for other community sector financial counsellors, but only four took advantage of that particular offer. All financial support team staff also periodically receive other relevant training to keep them up to date, and I refer to a recent example. This involved two seniors becoming qualified trainers in the Consumer Credit Code, who are now providing this training to other staff in-house, and I think that is good. I will ask the Chief Executive Officer to expand on that answer.

Mr Deyell: Specifically in relation to the question about the impact of Debtline, a strategy about strengthening the skills at the local office with this comprehensive training has meant that we now have a capacity at local offices which we did not have previously and which is able to respond to the demand formerly met by Debtline.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer to page 431 and the department's position paper on contracting. Recently a few organisations in my electorate indicated that they were keen to get involved in tendering opportunities and that they saw it as a possible way of being able to expand their community development programs. How do you align that with the argument that the move towards contracting and tendering has damaged the relationship with the community sector?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I need to make the Committee aware that over one-third of the allocation to my portfolio of Family and Community Services represents funding which is contracted to services outside the department, and in that context contracting as a process and an outcome is a very significant issue. While I am aware that some sections of industry are ardently opposed to contracting in any form, I believe that there is a recognition now by the sector that going back to the submission-driven grants type arrangements of the past are not an option.

The reality is that relationships change and mature, the context changes, the demands change and expectations change and, as a sector, we need to adapt. With no option to go backwards, this leaves us with the department's position paper which ensures that competition and the tools of contracting are refined to achieve the outcomes which we are seeking in Community Services in South Australia. The paper to which the honourable member referred proposes a set of principles as the underpinning philosophy for contracting. Because of the shortness of time, I will provide those principles to the honourable member later.

I believe that we have made a good start in South Australia, more than any other State I suggest, in developing a new framework which picks up the imperatives of the 1990s but retains a strong focus on the foundation principles of Community Services, its uniqueness as a sector and the vulnerability of many of its client groups.

The use of the FACS reform as a case study (recently published by the Productivity Commission) reinforces the balanced and phased approach that we have taken in this State to address the challenges of the 1990s and the provision of Government services. We are subjecting ourselves to critical analysis so that we can progress. It is my understanding that the next evolution of the position paper on contracting is on the drawing board: the department is working with representatives of SACOSS to develop joint project work which will be provided in the next paper.

One of the issues that this process will address is the situation of the small agencies in the sector, and that has been brought to my attention by SACOSS on a number of occasions. It is well known that the strict application of purchasing regimes can favour the large agencies and their economies of scale. SACOSS has a project running which looks at the northern region specifically, and while I have not seen any outcomes as yet I am sure that it will provide interesting information for the next step.

We cannot afford to forget that change is unsettling and that the instability which the sector has been feeling is a result of coming to grips with the changing relationship. On coming to office I was keen to ensure stability within the department because I was aware of the many changes in senior personnel

and policy direction that had occurred over a period of time. Standing still is not an option in an environment where portfolios and agencies are competing for limited Government resources, and I am very supportive of the initiatives that are currently being taken by the agency.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: As a supplementary question, I gather from what you have said that contracting and tendering is not unique to South Australia or indeed to Australia.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: It is certainly not unique to Australia. As I said earlier, I think we in this State are as advanced as—if not more advanced than—some of the other States. The opportunity that is provided in asking for a registration of interest in a number of these areas is an important way to go and does not have the tied technicalities that contracting out might have.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to page 429 of the Program Estimates and the initiatives of the Office for Families and Children. This time last year the Opposition described the office as a publicity machine for the Government. I am aware that the office continues to address its critics by pursuing a family centred agenda across Government. Can the Minister elaborate on the achievements of the office for this year and its future goals?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: The Office for Families and Children was an initiative of this Government and part of its Family and Community Services policy, and I am delighted with the progress that has been made with that office. The office now comprises the Office for Families, Children's Interest Bureau, the Domestic Violence Unit and Parenting SA. The office works across Government and the community services sector to improve understanding of families' and children's needs and responds to those needs.

The office has provided, I suggest, a very important role in keeping families and children on our agenda. The office monitors the wellbeing and changing nature of families and their needs and advises Government about these on an ongoing basis.

Some key achievements in this office have been Parenting SA, an initiative to coordinate a multi-agency approach to improve the quality of parenting in South Australia. More than 1 million Parent Easy Guides (or tip sheets) have been distributed to the community as a reference for parents; there is also the parent help line to which I have referred; and I have also referred to the \$90 000 in small grants that have been made available to community groups. It is interesting to note now that other States have sought access to Parenting SA resources. I am pleased to advise that Parenting SA has been re-funded in 1997-98 and has received added financial assistance from the Commonwealth.

We also have the violence intervention program (VIP). The Children's Interest Bureau is playing an active role in raising the status of children. We had the family summit in November last year involving 150 community leaders and over 500 community submissions. For the first time, some of the issues that have been of concern to a number of individuals and organisations in this area have become transparent, and the Government has been able to respond to the vast majority of the concerns that were expressed.

The office is currently in discussion with key stakeholders within and outside Government to establish what can be done to meet the outcomes of that summit and will report back to the Human Services Cabinet Committee on the outcome of their consultation. I am delighted with the progress that has been made with the Office for Families and Children, which I believe is a very important initiative of this Government.

Mr CAUDELL: My question is in relation to alternative care and Future Echoes. I refer to page 431 of Program Estimates and the reference to consumer satisfaction pilots. The most important customers of the department must be the young people who are under its protection and care. Will the Minister outline his support for young people in care and their involvement in the work of the department?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: One of the most fantastic opportunities that I have had as Minister for Family and Community Services is to work very closely with a group of young South Australians who call themselves Future Echoes. They form the South Australian branch of the Australian Association of Young People in Care. They are young people who themselves have been in care and who are now dedicated to helping others who are currently in care or who have come out of care. They are active in raising community awareness of the circumstances of children in care, promoting the voice of the child or young person in care, and advising on relevant policy and best practice.

The department remains active in its commitment and support to Future Echoes and considers them a key voice for young people in care. I am very keen, as is the agency, to ensure that we listen to those young people and that the formulation of policy is assisted as a result of input from those people. In recognition of this and in line with the reforms to alternative care, Future Echoes is receiving funding and in-kind support to provide advocacy and advice on behalf of young people in care and for other core functions including training and support programs for those in the care system.

In April this year, Community Benefits SA approved one-off project funding of \$22 790 to Future Echoes for the establishment of a statewide after-care support program for the more vulnerable young people leaving care. The development of the charter of commitments for children and young people in care is, in fact, a joint venture between Future Echoes and the Children's Interest Bureau, and I am very pleased that that is consistent with national best practice standards for out-of-home care. South Australia will be the first State to have both a charter for care givers and a charter for children and young people to underpin the alternative care system. Apart from the fact that they are a delight to work with, they are totally committed and, for that reason, I am looking at providing additional funding for educational scholarships through Future Echoes to assist those young people to improve their opportunities in the future.

Ms STEVENS: I understand that staff at Family and Community Services are currently the lowest paid welfare workers in Australia and are seeking a 17 per cent increase in salaries to bring them into line with departments in other States. What is the dollar impact if this is successful, and has money been set aside in the budget to accommodate this?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Money has not been set aside at this stage. I am very much aware of the feeling of those in the department regarding this particular issue, but I think it is appropriate that the Chief Executive Officer respond to that question.

Mr Deyell: The Government's enterprise bargaining policy requires us to engage with the union through the single bargaining centre to negotiate an agreed wages outcome. The PSA has indicated that it will seek a 17 per cent increase. The Government's enterprise bargaining policy requires us to negotiate a solution, the funding for which is achieved through reforms made in the agency. As the Minister said, the Government has not provided funding for agencies at this

stage. The department has been asked to work with the SBC—which is what we are doing—and take a case to the Government for the wages outcome that we believe is appropriate for staff in the department. In producing the case to take to the Government about an appropriate wages outcome, we are taking into account the fact that there are wage differentials between States, and we are reporting to the Government the effect that wage differentials have on our ability to recruit and retain staff in the department.

Ms STEVENS: Will the Minister indicate when he expects this decision to be made? In clarifying what you have said, I understand that whatever the increase (between zero and 17 per cent) it will therefore come from within the department's own resources.

Mr Deyell: There is no money provided at this stage. The Government has asked us, after working with SBC, to present a case to the Government for consideration. I will have a meeting next week as part of that process to present the department's case to the group of officials who then advise Ministers. We are due to advise the Industrial Relations Commission on 4 July of what progress has been made, so we are moving along quite quickly at this stage.

Ms STEVENS: My next question relates to stress levels amongst FACS staff. I understand that a report exists called 'Workplace Strain'. When will this report be made public, and what are its findings and recommendations?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I understand that this report is available in the library. It is an internal document, but I will ask Mr Deyell if he wants to add to that.

Mr Deyell: It is true that the department did commission a report on workplace strain in the department to address what we see as an important issue for our staff. The report is extensive and has now been with the department for a couple of months. The report is available in the library. There is no restriction on people accessing it. We are currently working on a strategy with staff to come up with what we hope will be quite creative responses to the sorts of issues that staff have now flagged to us through this report, because the findings of the report and the recommendations are based on extensive surveys with our own staff. I was very pleased that our own people took this topic very seriously and, in fact, the researchers tell us that we got a very high response rate from our people, which tells us that this is an important issue, and that is why we commissioned the survey in the first place.

The recommendations range from very broad strategies, such as creating a healthy work environment and removing some of the violent issues—that is very difficult for us but, understandably, staff were keen that we pursue that option—through to very practical down-to-earth measures, such as implementing hazard management policy equivalents in the area of workplace training. We have been very successful in the department in relation to accident and hazard management and, at a more practical level, we are looking at some of the measures that we might take in relation to workplace training that are similar to some of the other successes we have had in that area of occupational health and safety.

Ms STEVENS: My next question concerns services for domestic violence victims in rural areas. In 1996-97 a domestic violence service for women in rural and remote areas existed with \$273 000 being spent. This has been reduced to \$140 000 for 1997-98. I note that this was a joint Commonwealth-State program and that the Commonwealth has also reduced its commitment from \$166 000 down to \$71 000. Why has the State Government almost halved its commitment to supporting the victims of domestic violence

in rural communities, and what specific programs will now disappear as a result of these changes?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I understand that this was a three year program. It was totally funded by the Commonwealth and it is nearing the end of that three year cycle. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services committed funding to the remote services in the Far North only until the end of December 1997, pending the results of a review of its funding of domestic violence services. The 1997-98 funding figure reflects this half year funding. The Government recognises the significant difficulties and issues, particularly for women and children experiencing domestic violence in rural and remote areas. Whilst travelling around the State, particularly in those areas, this matter has been brought to my attention on numerous occasions.

The Government has recently raised the focus for rural South Australia through the establishment of the South Australian Rural Community Services Office. The Domestic Violence Unit within the Office for Families and Children will work with the South Australian Rural Community Service Office to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention initiatives in rural and remote areas of South Australia. A review of services to women recommends an increase in the options available to women and children living in domestic violence, and the domestic violence unit is involved in supporting services by providing accredited training for those who work with these families and by helping to establish local domestic violence action groups to provide community education strategies.

Mr SCALZI: I refer to the additional funds provided for the child protection system. How will this funding, rather than an investigation style response, benefit families who need positive assistance?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: One of the central pillars of the reform in child protection is to ensure that the appropriate response is targeted to notifications where the issues are more about family functioning and child welfare than about safety or ongoing risk of abuse and neglect. The differential response model identifies three tiers. Tier three refers to those cases where a more supportive and less intrusive response is deemed to be most appropriate for child and family welfare, and in the 1997-98 budget there is a commitment to \$400 000 recurrent funding for a Strengthening Families program targeted to tier three families.

In addition, there is \$100 000 one-off funding from the Commonwealth for home visitation services which can be specified alongside the tier three service response. That initiative is to occur in the southern districts, and it is one that I will watch very closely. The Child Protection Reform Task Force has investigated a model from the United States which diverts low risk cases to specially funded community agencies. Again, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand some of the initiatives that are part of that program. We are also looking at the possibilities for adapting a coordinated care style model to tier three.

One of the inherent difficulties is that tier three families will not be a homogenous group. There will be a wide range of families with different circumstances and needs which need to be addressed. The service models clearly must have the ability to respond to the assessed needs of individual families—and it is pretty easy to understand why. The additional funds from the Commonwealth will be targeted towards home visitation. It should fit well into the model, in terms of low risk families, where an early intervention-parent education response is appropriate.

Last year I had the opportunity of learning something of some of those home visitation programs in Scotland and I came back very enthusiastic about that concept. I am anxious to see the results of that trial. A number of issues will need to be resolved as the reform model becomes fully operational in October, for example, the status of clients, referral protocols and feedback loops to the statutory system to manage the risk for children. In closing, I am pretty confident that we will be able to move sufficiently quickly on tier three specifications to have a trial service response in place to complement the reforms in internal operations later this year and I think it is important that should be the case.

Mr CAUDELL: I refer to page 426 of the Program Estimates—increased supports for Aboriginal families and children—and to page 429—reform of alternative care system to be operational by 1998. It has been apparent for some time that Aboriginal families and children have been in proportionately greater need for services in the area of alternative care and there have been cultural, geographic and other constraints in meeting these needs. What is being done to address these matters in the alternative care reforms?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: This has been partly referred to previously in responses, but it is true that in South Australia and nationally Aboriginal children and young people are certainly over represented in the alternative care system, as they are in the child protection and justice systems. Research carried out has indicated that South Australia has a low number of Aboriginal children and young people in placement with Aboriginal families, even though the Aboriginal placement principle is enshrined in the Children's Protection Act 1993. There are insufficient Aboriginal families available to foster children and care for children with disabilities in South Australia and that is a major problem that we have. A 1996 review of the Aboriginal Intensive Neighbourhood Care program recommended broad based family care focusing on reuniting young people with their families, as well as diverting them from the juvenile justice system, with particular emphasis on supporting Aboriginal families to care for their children in their own homes.

These recommendations have been incorporated into the changes currently being implemented as part of the restructure of alternative care services in South Australia and all possible options to maintain children and young people within their family and cultural environment are being explored and supported before placement with a non-Aboriginal family. It is important that should be the case and that emphasis should be placed on the need wherever possible to have these Aboriginal youngsters placed with people in their own community. The current restructure of alternative care services incorporates innovative changes for Aboriginal children and young people and focuses on providing more culturally relevant services. In particular, Aboriginal families are able to self refer for emergency placement and family preservation services in recognition of the need for more open and culturally relevant access for the Aboriginal community. As part of the restructure of alternative care services, placements and family preservation services for Aboriginal children and young people, including the recruitment, training and support of foster parents, will largely be provided by the Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Aboriginal family care groups in some country locations. The Aboriginal Child Care Agency (ACCA) will receive an additional \$215 000 from 1997-98 for placement and family preservation services and the Aboriginal family care groups will receive an additional \$46 000.

Finally, a more holistic approach to support and intervention with Aboriginal families is planned in the restructure, which will ultimately result in broader, more culturally relevant and integrated service responses for Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Mr BROKENSHIRE: I refer to page 429 of the Program Estimates and the reference to women and children escaping domestic violence. Will the Minister tell the Committee what the department is doing about domestic violence outside the child protection area?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Responding to domestic violence is an extremely complex matter because facets of the problem need to be addressed by a number of agencies across Government, including health, justice and corrections as well as family and community services. Developing effective responses requires a significant level of cooperation and the Department for Family and Community Services, apart from providing services through numerous in-house and funded programs, is working closely with the Domestic Violence Unit in the Office for Families and Children, which plays an important role in developing coordinated responses.

The Violence Intervention Project (VIP) is a recent example of coordinated service development. It is a collaborative interagency project aiming to provide a comprehensive intervention process to families experiencing domestic violence in South Australia. It is a 12-month pilot project based on the northern suburbs, and the Department of Family and Community Services contributes two project officer salaries to the project.

The Violence Intervention Project involves collaboration between the Northern Metropolitan Health Service, the Department of Corrections, the South Australian Police and a number of non-government agencies. At the end of the project there will be an evaluation of its effectiveness in intervening in family violence and in preventing revictimisation. If successful it is hoped to reciprocate the model throughout the State. I was very pleased with the positive support provided to VIP at its launch at Elizabeth recently. It has huge potential in this area and is a program that I will be watching closely.

Mr CLARKE: I refer to Hope Haven, which is a women's refuge in my electorate. A review was done at the beginning of the year which looked at not only Hope Haven but at other women's refuges and the recommendation was that Hope Haven was to operate but without staff. I fail to see how that would be possible, given the type of distress experienced by many women going to Hope Haven with young children. There are urgent and pressing domestic necessities for a number of these women who are in distressing circumstances. They need staff on hand to look after their children whilst they go out and attend to such things as visiting the local Department of Social Security or registering with the CES, which does not happen in five minutes, as the Minister is probably aware. There are such things as having to buy personal necessities, clothing or whatever for their children or enrolling them in schools.

There are a whole host of circumstances in which these women find themselves when they front up at a women's refuge. They need a sympathetic ear, somebody who can get things organised for them and who can look after their children while they try to get their own lives back into some sort of order. Even for attending job interviews they need a staffed centre. Will the Minister give a report on the status of Hope Haven in terms of its ongoing function and, in particu-

lar, whether it will remain to be funded by the department with respect to the existing complement of staff?

The CHAIRMAN: In calling the Minister, I draw members' attention to the time. There is only about five minutes left to give a reply.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I suggest that the Deputy Leader look at *Hansard* tomorrow. I have spent a fair bit of time tonight talking about the status of that report and how it came about. Particularly with respect to Hope Haven, the draft implementation plan does not recommend the closure of any shelter. Also, I have repeatedly assured concerned parties that there will be no reduction in staff numbers or beds. As to the status of that SAAP report, it is a Federal-State report, and it is currently being considered by the Commonwealth Minister (Minister Moylan), and the final outcome is not yet known.

I was disappointed to hear that Hope Haven had themselves decided that they could no longer operate. Indeed, I have asked the department to discuss possible options with other women's services which are funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). However, the Hope Haven administration decided to cease operating due to some staff having left and the remaining staff feeling unable to continue with depleted resources. They also felt that the administrative time and energy required to replace staff was considered beyond their capacity at that time.

Plans are currently being considered to ensure that the service gap created by Hope Haven's closure will be filled. I understand that a very positive meeting was held this morning with the administrators of the existing women's shelters, Domestic Violence Outreach Service, the Migrant Women's Service and the staff from the Community Services Division to discuss the best possible arrangements that need to occur now that Hope Haven has determined that it will close.

These arrangements take account of the fact that during the review of the services for women and children escaping domestic violence the women have said that they require different types of accommodation without being excluded from receiving support. The choice of accommodation type that is safe and secure is also required. As I say, there was a very positive meeting today to consider options that are available, but the decision to close Hope Haven was made by the administration themselves.

Mr CLARKE: The Minister says that the decision was made by the administrators themselves. Obviously, when they have the sword of Damocles hanging over their head in this report, and not knowing what their future funding will be and whether or not staff will be there, it is no wonder that staff leave. They have to look for alternative employment. No wonder it is closing. I do not think it was a question of choice on their part.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a statement and not a question.

Mr CLARKE: The Minister phrases it as if they have voluntarily without any pressure or problems whatsoever decided they will just close up.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the question?

Mr CLARKE: Surely the Minister recognises the pressure which they are under and which has been caused by the fact that his department has not yet made up his mind.

The CHAIRMAN: It is still a statement. There is no question there yet.

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: I just say again that this has been a long process. I explained that I would put in place—

Mr Clarke interjecting:

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: Just listen—an independent group to assess the report for me and to take into account the recommendations coming from various sectors within the community. That is exactly what I did. That report has now been brought down by that independent committee. I have considered that. Because it is a SAAP program (a Commonwealth-State program), it has to be approved by the Federal Minister. That is exactly where it is. I should hope that within a couple of weeks I would be in a position to announce the final recommendations, and I am disappointed that the people from Hope Haven were not able to wait until that report was released. I would suggest that it would have been totally appropriate for them to do so.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the member for Elizabeth that there is an opportunity for about three minutes to put questions on notice if she wishes. She has the alternative of putting them on the House of Assembly Notice Paper later. What would you prefer to do?

Ms STEVENS: I shall quickly ask one final question and put the rest on notice. Minister, what happened to a report commissioned by you, I believe, to the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies called ‘The Quality of Life Project’?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: That report has been considered by the Human Services Committee of Cabinet. It has been given considerable consideration. A process is being worked

through whereby the Chief Executive Officer of the agency is discussing that report with other agencies, and I understand that the matter is also being considered by Premier and Cabinet in determining a way in which the report can be released. It is a situation that I think has been very positive as far as South Australia is concerned, and I think there is a lot of positive information in that report which the people of South Australia should know about.

Ms STEVENS: Publicly available, Minister?

The Hon. D.C. Wotton: No, it is not publicly available at this stage.

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

Minister for Family and Community Services—Other Payments, \$2 650 000—Examination declared completed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9.57 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Thursday 26 June at 11 a.m.