

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Mr P. D. Purcell (Chair)	Mr G. E. Malone
Hon. J. Fouras	Mr G. S. Musgrove
Mr A. M. Grice	Mr L. J. Springborg

ATTORNEY-GENERAL, JUSTICE AND THE ARTS**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. M. J. Foley, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts

Ms J. Macdonnell, Director-General

Dr K. Levy, Deputy Director-General

Mr D. Schulz, Executive Director, Courts Division

Mr R. Newton, Director Financial and Asset Services

Mr K. Radbourne, Executive Director, Arts Queensland

Mr I. Catlin, Executive Manager, Industry Development Unit, Arts Queensland

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The Committee commenced at 9 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare this meeting open. The Committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 1998 for the areas set out in the Sessional Orders. The organisational units in the following ministerial portfolios will be examined in this order: Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts, Minister for Police and Corrective Services, and Minister for Emergency Services. The Committee has resolved that film coverage will be allowed for the Chairman's opening comments and at other times radio and print coverage will be allowed.

I remind members of the Committee and Ministers that the time for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. The bell will be rung once, 15 seconds before the end of those time limits and twice when the time limit is up. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. If the Minister or a department officer is answering and they want extra time, they should ask the questioner. Sessional Orders require that at least half the time is to be allotted to non-Government members. I ask witnesses to identify themselves clearly by name and position before they answer a question so that Hansard can record that information in the transcript.

I declare that the proposed expenditure of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts be open for examination. The time allotted is three hours. The question before the Chair is—

"That the proposed expenditure be agreed to."

Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement? If so, I would like you to keep it to a maximum of five minutes, please.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, Chairperson and members of the Committee. The budget in respect of the portfolios of Attorney-General, Justice and The Arts includes some substantial boosts in areas of need. In particular, the need for a boost to legal aid was apparent. Accordingly, the budget makes provision for an extra \$2.5m increase to the base funding this year and \$5m recurrent in subsequent years. This will help to deal with some of the urgent needs that exist in the area of legal aid. This is an area of particular need, having regard to the \$2m cut from legal aid funds from the Commonwealth for Queensland, which has caused significant hardship.

The budget in relation to Justice also gives a significant boost for victims of crime, in that an extra \$1m over and above that which was paid to victims of crime associations for counselling and support has been provided for in this budget. That is part of an attempt to ensure that the criminal justice system is more responsive to the needs of victims of crime. The budget also makes considerable savings by not going down the path of spending over three-quarters of a million dollars in political advertising as was done during the period of 1997-98 in what was a disgraceful waste of public money with significant political advertising campaigns being run by the former Government on the topics of law and order.

In the area of The Arts, priority has been given to regional Queensland and to stressing accessibility for Queenslanders from all walks of life. Funding for the Regional Arts Development Fund has been boosted from \$1.5m to \$2m. That involves a partnership with local government. Similarly with regard to the biennial, the budget makes provision to restore the biennial. The Queensland Biennial Festival of Music will be held in July next year in Brisbane, and also in Mackay and Townsville. That stresses the diverse regional nature of this State and helps to celebrate the unique diversity that we have here in Queensland.

For the benefit of the Committee, in response to earlier questions I present the programs of assistance from Arts Queensland, for which details were sought by the Committee. I also make available to the Committee material correcting some typographical errors with respect to the budget of the Anti-Discrimination Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. The first period of questioning will start with non-Government members. They have 20 minutes.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, with reference to employment within your portfolio, what are the details of any VERs for persons whose employment has been terminated, whether on a contract or as a permanent public servant, since the Beattie Government came to power?

Mr FOLEY: In the period 1997-98, there was one redundancy with an officer being paid a voluntary early retirement. In the period 1998-99, which is the financial year relevant to the current Government, there have been no redundancies. There has been one voluntary early retirement and one cessation of contract. With regard to the voluntary early retirement, the cost of that package

was \$29,529.63. In the case of the cessation of contract, the gross cost was \$126,854.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Will you be closing any courthouses as the Goss Government did?

Mr FOLEY: I have no plans to close any courthouses. The courthouses that we have are delivering a good service and we would seek to ensure that that service is delivered to people throughout the length and breadth of Queensland.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I note your failure to include a statement of social issues under Key Issues on page 1-1 of the departmental overview. What do you see as the major social issues confronting the Queensland justice system and what are you going to do to confront those issues?

Mr FOLEY: The key social issue confronting the justice system as part of the larger social system is the issue of unemployment. Chronically high levels of unemployment, such as we have suffered, cause enormous difficulties in the social fabric. They cause problems leading to crime and problems in families. For that reason, the overall structure of the Beattie Labor Government's Budget has been focused upon jobs and job creation.

With respect to the key issue of jobs, priority is, of course, given in a number of portfolios. However, I might just say that at page 1-33 you will observe that in last year's Budget \$500,000 was reallocated from salaries, wages and related payments to fund the political advertising campaign. That is something that I do not propose to repeat. I would much rather see that money spent where it should be spent—on jobs for people within the department, instead of going to advertising campaigns.

As to the social issues that flow from the issue of unemployment—it must be said that the burden of much unemployment and other social problems falls heavily upon Aboriginal and Islander communities and, accordingly, the programs of the department, for example, with respect to justices of the peace and so on, need to focus on that. It is important also with regard to the social issues of unemployment that we do what we can to ensure that people have jobs and job security.

Mr SPRINGBORG: On page 1-33 you raise some issues about the expenditure of moneys for a public advertising campaign. Surely informing the community about the great advances in the areas of enduring powers of attorney and serious violent offenders and educating the community that the Government intends to be tough on crime are important issues in respect of which the Government has a responsibility to address the community through an advertising process? Surely you will be running advertising campaigns on areas that you see as very important and in respect of which major policy and legislative advances have been made by your Government?

Mr FOLEY: I do not quibble with information campaigns with regard, for example, to the enduring powers of attorney. That was a reform which needed to be communicated. However, I take great exception to the expenditure of funds on transparently political advertising with respect to

issues of juvenile justice and issues of adult offending. For the benefit of the Committee, I table a breakdown of advertising which shows that \$766,700 was spent on that campaign. I table also a very revealing document which indicates that in the lead-up to the election last year selective advertising was undertaken in marginal seats, in particular Cairns, Townsville and Maryborough, on the topic of juvenile justice, for which little justification can be given. I refer the Committee also to the correspondence which the previous Attorney-General received from then Queensland Law Society President Dr Jeff Mann complaining that the advertisement in respect of juvenile justice which appeared in the Sunday Mail was inaccurate at law and misleading. I regard it as a moment of shame for the Department of Justice that it was involved in such a program.

There is a world of difference between proper public education campaigns such as that involving the enduring powers of attorney and the disgraceful waste of public money on campaigns such as those we saw on the sides of buses, on billboards and on television that cost the taxpayer, in the case of juvenile justice, \$305,617. If one goes to page 23 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements of the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, we see that that \$314,000 came out of the budget for juvenile justice. It is deplorable that that money was wasted in that way.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Surely those sorts of issues are matters of policy for Government to determine. Let us say that you were faced with the same sorts of issues, even though juvenile justice is not in your area. How would you go about educating the community as to what its responsibility is under the law? You have spent some time talking about the issue of juvenile justice. How would you go about educating younger people?

Mr FOLEY: The task of education involves the community, the Education Department and the Department of Training. Our responsibility is to administer the law and to ensure as far as possible that the administration of the law is done in a timely fashion. What I would not do is to engage political market researchers to undertake research, to engage advertising campaigns to focus on that research and to then communicate information which, according to the Queensland Law Society, was misleading as far as a matter of law was concerned. We have a responsibility to ensure that the pamphlet material and other information material that comes from the Department of Justice is accurate and is free from the taint of political bias. That advertising campaign, I regret to say, was anything but that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Surely if you are going to run an advertising campaign it is very important to know that the message is going to be effective in the community and in reaching the target audience? All Governments use consultants or other people with expertise to advise them on the best way to sell a message.

Mr FOLEY: That is true. However, the question is whether the message is that which is properly the business of Government to do as

opposed to properly a matter for a political party or for the political activities of the elected members of Parliament or for the responsible Minister at the time. One notes with great concern the extensive involvement in the planning of that advertising campaign of the former Minister's media officer. That episode, whereby we were faced on the buses of this city with statements such as "New bars for teenagers" and "No more kid gloves", did nothing to inform the community as to its rights and responsibilities. What it did was to target what was seen as a politically relevant issue of law and order and to use taxpayers' funds to do it in a way that was not the business of the taxpayers. It may have been the business of the political party in Government, but it certainly was not the business of the Government of the day.

However, when one turns to other things, like the enduring powers of attorney, it is a different matter altogether. I think anybody with any commonsense would accept and understand that. They are a group of people, often elderly people, who need to be informed properly about the changes to the law so that they can take advantage of them. But there is a heavy burden upon any department and particularly upon the Department of Justice to make sure that its information is accurate and free from the taint of political bias.

Mr GRICE: Minister, you would obviously be aware that parliamentary committees go out of their way to not discuss policy but rather to be bipartisan with regard to acts, facts and budgets. Do you not agree that the time for discussing policy is prior to elections and that the criticism of policy of a previous Government by you or any Minister who sits in your place from either side is merely taking a cheap political shot at somebody for their policy? I do not believe we are here to talk about the policy of the previous Government. I believe we are here to talk about this Budget.

Mr FOLEY: It is in broad terms a fair observation. However, it would be a dereliction of my duty as the Minister responsible for this budget were I not to give an account to the Committee of the way in which money has been spent and the way in which it is estimated to be spent. The simple fact of the matter is that over three-quarters of a million dollars was spent on those advertising campaigns—

Mr GRICE: Which was a policy decision of the Government of the day.

Mr FOLEY: In my view it was a gross waste of taxpayers' money and a gross abuse of the independence of the Public Service to fund such programs in that way, and through this Committee I want to make it clear that it is not my intention as the Minister responsible who has to account to this Committee and to the Parliament for the expenditure of public funds to proceed down that path. It is not contemplated that funds would be used in such a way in the Estimates of expenditure for the coming year. I accept that we are not here simply to discuss the pros and cons of my Government's justice policy verses the previous Government's justice policy, but in this case we are talking about three-quarters of a

million dollars; we are talking about something which actually involved a diversion of half a million dollars out of the salaries, wages and related payments to non-labour operating costs. That is a sizeable sum of public money.

I make this point. If it were not political, why did the previous Government withdraw those juvenile justice billboards from public display when the election was called? It did so, I suspect, because it knew that they would have to have been authorised for the purposes of the Electoral Act if they were to stay there and so to do would have produced embarrassment. The fact that there were billboards that had to be taken down or not proceeded with I think is a legitimate matter of concern with respect to public expenditure, but I do accept your broad proposition that we are not here to debate policy.

Mr SPRINGBORG: On page 1-1 with regard to the transfer of the Juvenile Justice Branch to Families, have you now conceded that juvenile justice will develop differently to the general criminal law and is this the start of a reversion to kid glove treatment of juvenile offenders?

Mr FOLEY: I am sorry, what was that last point?

Mr SPRINGBORG: With regard to the transfer of the Juvenile Justice Branch to the Department of Families, do you now concede that juvenile justice will develop differently to the criminal law and, if so, do you believe it will revert to kid glove treatment of juvenile offenders?

Mr FOLEY: The first point is this. The law with respect to juveniles is set out in the Juvenile Justice Act. It is a different Act from that which governs the administration of justice concerning adults. That has been the case ever since the great reform was introduced to have Children's Courts instead of requiring children to appear in the adult courts. It is a reform which has been embraced by all sides of politics, and there is very good reason for it. The good reason is that the law traditionally encourages rehabilitation in the case of juveniles with much greater emphasis than is the case with adults. However, to suggest that that somehow involves kid glove treatment is quite mistaken. The numbers of juveniles in detention centres now is approximately—I can get the figures more precisely—at double the level that it was five years ago. In other words, at a time of dramatically high youth unemployment, the justice system is incarcerating juveniles.

This is far from kid glove treatment. It is important that anyone who commits serious offences should understand that they face the punishment that will be administered by a court, and that applies in the case of juveniles just as it applies in the case of adults. But it is really quite misleading to say that the laws in place involve kid glove treatment. Indeed, the laws in place are those that were put there by my predecessor, the member for Indooroopilly. It really is nonsensical to speak of kid glove treatment. One would hope that at a time of record high youth suicide and record high youth unemployment one might see a more enlightened approach. Indeed, that is why through the Department of the Premier we are adopting an approach of crime prevention, of being

tough on crime but being tough on the causes of crime, and that involves particularly issues of employment.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for questions from the Opposition has expired. I would like to ask a question on Key Initiatives listed on page 1-2 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements. You have a very short statement there that another judge will be appointed to the Court of Appeal. I think most people realise that justice delayed is justice denied. Will one appointment be enough to cover the backlog of appeals we have now and what is the cost of the appointment of an Appeal Court judge and a Supreme Court judge? I notice there have been other appointments by the Minister of late.

Mr FOLEY: The reference in the future tense to "another judge will be appointed to the Court of Appeal" is simply part of a quaint form that is taken in the Budget papers, because they refer notionally to this as part of the Estimate for the year 1998-99. That extra judge has, in fact, been appointed. It looked quaint to me when I read it and it appears similarly quaint at other places where one uses the future tense to refer to the period 1998-99.

The position is this. For some years the former President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Fitzgerald in his annual reports to the Parliament has recommended another Court of Appeal judge. The Government appointed Justice Thomas to the Court of Appeal and also appointed Justice McMurdo as President of the Court of Appeal. That replaced the outgoing president, Justice Fitzgerald. I am just turning up the figures for the appointment of the judge. When one appoints an extra judge of the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal, it makes sense to put extra resources into legal aid and into the Director of Public Prosecutions, so that one gets the maximum benefit from having an extra judge, and that is exactly what we have done.

The CHAIRMAN: So he gets plenty of work.

Mr FOLEY: So he or she gets plenty of work. That is what we have done. One will observe in the figures, for example, for the Director of Public Prosecutions that there is—it appears in the Estimates—about an extra \$300,000 there. It involves an extra expenditure in the order of \$1.2m across the system. With respect to the Supreme Court itself, it is \$448,500. You will see also in the figures, for example, with respect to legal aid that there is extra funding out of that \$1.2m apportioned to legal aid simply because, if one wants to get the maximum benefit throughout the system, one needs to have extra prosecution staff, extra defence staff and so on.

Mr FOURAS: I want to refer to legal aid funding. You have led to that in pages 1-2 and 1-3 of your MPS. I note that in your Key Initiatives statement you talk about \$5m per annum, yet the estimated funding for legal aid of \$15.8m is only just \$1.4m up on the actual of last year. It is obviously because of decreased Federal funding, but can you give us a breakdown of that? And can you indicate to the Committee how Queensland fares with regard to

other States in the per capita funding that we may be giving out for legal aid?

Mr FOLEY: The detailed explanation is set out at page 1-23 in the second footnote No. 1. Basically, the position is this: there is an additional \$2.5m in 1998-99 over and above the 1997-98-based budget of \$12.8m. There is a further \$300,000 to fund the increased workload due to the appointment of a new Court of Appeal judge. Then there are some other increases of \$0.2m. That additional funding is offset to some extent by a one-off allocation of \$1.5m in 1997-98, which appears in the 1997-98 Budget. It was a one-off allocation that was held over from the previous year. It was not part of the base.

In essence, we are boosting legal aid funding by \$5m a year. That notionally kicks in from 1 January 1999. So that in this financial year there is an extra \$2.5m and then in each subsequent year there is an extra \$5m. However, legal aid faces enormous difficulties because of the cut of \$2m from the coalition Commonwealth Government. There have been a series of reports from the Criminal Justice Commission and, more recently, the Griffith report, which show that that cut in funding means that family law clients—predominantly women—miss out. Because of the large numbers of criminal matters that are dealt with, the net result is that there is an unintentional bias which disadvantages women using the system.

If one looks at the position with respect to family law clients, one finds that there is a very high level of rejection of otherwise eligible clients. Why? Because the Commonwealth cut funding. That cut of \$2m has meant that people facing disputes about the welfare and custody of their children all over this State have had to be knocked back by legal aid. Frankly, when that Griffith report came out recently, I wrote again to the Commonwealth Government to urge them to abandon their reduction of \$2m and to get serious about proper and adequate funding.

Mr FOURAS: I will just ask an extra question so that you can continue this answer. Do you have any breakdown of what the relative position of the States is on a per capita basis with regard to the funding? How do they compare?

Mr FOLEY: It is a bit hard to compare, because statutory interest on solicitors' trust accounts applies in some States and it does not apply in others. On a State Government funding comparison basis, including statutory interest, Queensland is funded on a roughly similar basis to most States. The national per capita average is 6.6 compared with 7.3 for Queensland. As you know, the source of funding for legal aid comes from the Commonwealth Government, the State Government and from interest on solicitors' trust accounts.

I think that the concern really is this: there are now many people going to community legal centres who simply cannot get the benefit of legal aid. There are many people, I know, turning up in the electorate offices of other members of this Parliament, including my own, who are finding that they have been knocked back. That is no fault of the Legal Aid Office; it is simply that the Commonwealth has responsibility for funding Commonwealth matters.

They have cut back, and the social cost is very considerable.

Mr MUSGROVE: Minister, I note on page 1-2 of the MPS that victims of crime have received an additional \$1m funding per annum. Can you inform the Committee on what basis this has been done? Is it because more people have qualified for funding? Is it because there is a lower threshold to qualify for the funding? Or are there other reasons?

Mr FOLEY: This funding for the victims of crime associations is different from the criminal injury compensation payments. That is a different matter altogether. This extra \$1m is funding to assist victims of crime associations and other groups working with victims of crime, such as victims of sexual assault, to provide counselling and support. For example, the other day I had the honour of attending, together with my predecessor, the member for Indooroopilly, with the Homicide Victims Support Group when they opened Solace House at Albion—a place which provides office and accommodation on an emergency basis for the families of homicide victims attending court or in crisis situations.

The expenditure by the previous Government in 1997-98 was \$400,000. We will boost that by an extra \$1m, and the reason is simply this: it is very important that victims of crime receive proper and appropriate support. I want to pay tribute to the Victims of Crime Association, to the Homicide Victims Support Group and to the range of sexual assault workers and agencies. Their work is absolutely vital. It is true to say that our criminal justice system has often marginalised victims and pushed them to one side. We need to ensure that they get a fair go, and we are looking at certain aspects of law reform in regard to that pursuant to the Criminal Offence Victims Act.

Over and above that, it is important that there be service and support. Basically, the department enters into service agreements with various victims of crime groups. There will be a series of advertisements placed in the newspapers throughout Queensland inviting people to apply. One of the things that has enormously impressed me as I have moved around the State is the formation of victims of crime groups in various towns and cities all over the State. Through self-help, they are achieving a lot. The purpose of boosting it with the extra \$1m is really to help those who are helping themselves—to help those groups provide the basis of counselling and support, a chat, some guidance, and so on. In fact, recently I asked my officers in The Arts portfolio to have a look at whether we should be doing more for victims of crime in that portfolio.

Mr MUSGROVE: Would the cost of that advertising be borne by that \$1m, or will it come out of other spurious sources, as under the previous Government?

Mr FOLEY: That is just an advertisement in the paper calling for people to put in applications. This is not a rolled gold TV campaign. This is simply a series of public notices to ensure that it is all done properly and according to Hoyle. Those costs will be quite minor.

The CHAIRMAN: Could I ask a supplementary question? Will that do when there has been a crime in someone's home and there may be a lot of mess and so forth to clean up? The crime centre is usually taken over by the authorities, and sometimes a family member can be badly injured or die; then when they come home, it is all there waiting for them. Is that part of the cleaning up and looking after and assisting those people in that situation?

Mr FOLEY: That is a difficult one. Certainly in some areas some victims of crime organisations are able to help out. It is pretty hit and miss. It often just falls on the shoulders of the family concerned. In the case of homicide victims, there is a \$5,000 payment, which can include a certain component for costs of clean up and so on. In the case of other victims of crime, the focus of the Criminal Offence Victims Act is on victims of personal violence. Some victims of crime organisations in some places are able to help out, but as often as not it falls on the shoulders of the family.

The CHAIRMAN: You know that I have a very special interest in the arts area. On page 1-2 of the Portfolio Statements I see that the Brisbane Biennial Festival of Music is reinstated and broadened to include the whole State. It will be called the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. \$2m has been set aside. What moneys were expended previously? Will that be enough money for the whole State, remembering that Queensland is a large State?

Mr FOLEY: We can check this, but my recollection is that the previous funding was \$2.2m. That included drawing upon an indemnity, so it actually lost some money. I think their budget was a little less than that. It is roughly the same amount of money. That is coming from the Government. We would hope that corporate sponsors would flock to this initiative, dig deep into their pockets and make this bigger and better. Is it enough? Well, how long is a piece of string? It is my assessment that this will be a very successful Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. It will be based not only in Brisbane but also in Mackay, picking up on the work of the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music and the Mackay Festival of the Arts, and also in Townsville, picking up on the great work that is done there by the International Chamber Orchestra Festival and the International Festival.

The CHAIRMAN: Will it go west of the Great Dividing Range? What sort of impact will it have, if any?

Mr FOLEY: At this stage, it is basically Brisbane, Mackay and Townsville. There are some people who have argued that it should extend all over the State. I can understand that point of view. However, we are talking of a major international music festival. I can inform the Committee that in the charter, which will become part of the constitution of the company, the object is to achieve international excellence and accessibility for Queenslanders from all walks of life. That board, I am pleased to inform the Committee, will be chaired by Mr Rob Kelly, a solicitor with Gadens Lawyers and a very prominent advocate for the arts. The deputy chair will be Associate Professor Helen Lancaster of Mackay, who

is the head of the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music. Of the nine persons on the board, four of them come from regional Queensland: two from Townsville and two from Mackay. The reason for that is to demonstrate that this is not just a Brisbane Biennial Festival of Music but that it is a Queensland Biennial Festival of Music.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for Government members' questions has expired. I will make one comment. Perhaps we could have a chat about a one-off performance at the Workers Heritage Centre. That would pick up a lot of western Queenslanders also.

Mr FOLEY: In principle that is an excellent suggestion. Whether it is able to be incorporated within this particular festival given the short time frame and so on, I do not know. I think it is absolutely imperative that we build on the regional diversity, not just from the point of view of giving people in the bush a fair go but also because it is that diversity which is the great strength of Queensland culture. The fact that the Stanthorpe Apple and Grape Choir, for example, from where the member for Warwick hails, got some funding through the regionalised development fund a few years ago helps to ensure that their voices are heard, if you will pardon the metaphor.

The CHAIRMAN: I am trying to get bands in my electorate out to the accommodation at the Workers Heritage Centre. We are going to do a bit more out there in the arts field.

Mr FOLEY: I look forward to your subtle persuasion.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, I should invite you to be one of the celebrity grape crushers in the Queensland Grape Crush Championship.

Mr FOLEY: I look forward to it.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I take you back to a question that was asked by Government members in relation to the appointment of the additional judge for the Court of Appeal. What provision do you intend to make now or in the Forward Estimates for the appointment of additional magistrates or District Court judges in an area where the bulk of the trial work is done? We all know that there is always a problem with regard to the requirement for additional judges and magistrates.

Mr FOLEY: At this stage, there is no provision in this year's budget for extra judges, nor is there provision in the Forward Estimates. The question of whether there should be extra judges depends to a large extent on issues of delay in coming before the courts. There has been some benchmarking done to look at delays in both civil and criminal matters throughout the State in the Magistrates Court, Supreme Court and District Court. The broad outcome of that was that the areas where the standard was not being achieved on a regular basis were in respect of civil matters in the Supreme Court here in Brisbane. Interestingly enough, in other parts of the State, they were being remedied. The appointment of the extra judge here in Brisbane in the Court of Appeal will assist in that regard, because it effectively means that there is an extra judge of the

Supreme Court because, without that extra Appeal Court judge, the positions on the Appeal Court were filled on a rotational basis by trial judges. At this stage there is no proposal for the appointment of extra magistrates or District Court judges.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Do you agree that that is an area that we will have to address?

Mr FOLEY: It is hard to find a lawyer in the State who will not argue the case for appointing more judges. I know how persuasive members of the Committee would find the opinion of lawyers. To be quite serious, it is difficult to make out a case at the moment, but it is always something that has to be monitored closely. For example, in Rockhampton there have been some serious problems with a backlog of criminal matters. As a result of that, the Government extended the appointments of a couple of acting judges who had been appointed pursuant to a decision of the previous Government. When that backlog arose, it appeared to be something that should be addressed by the extension of the acting appointments of those extra judges.

With respect to criminal matters in the Magistrates Court, at the end of the 1997-98 financial year 70% of the 30 major centres had projected times to hearing within the eight-week standard which is used. By way of comparison, at the end of the 1996-97 financial year approximately 63% of these centres had projected times to hearing within the eight-week standard. Looking at criminal trials in the District Court, at the end of 1996-97 there were 436 and at the end of 1997-98 there were 414. There is no room for complacency but, equally, having just appointed an extra Court of Appeal judge, there are no provisions in the Budget for the appointment of further judges or magistrates, apart from replacement of people who retire and so on.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I ask you to cast your mind back to one of the Government questions with regard to the additional funding for victims of crime. The previous Government also noted its intention for the additional \$1m. Does that mean in this coming year that \$1.4 or \$1.5m will be spent in that area for victims of crime associations?

Mr FOLEY: That is correct. The previous Government promised \$1m but in fact delivered only \$400,000. Accordingly, we have increased the budget from the \$400,000 which was expended last year to \$1.4m. As I indicated, the purpose of that is to help those victims of crime. My department advises me that it went from \$475,000 to \$1,475,000 this year.

That involves a considerable sum of money, but the work done by those victims of crime groups—the sexual assault groups and rape crisis groups—in providing assistance is enormously valuable. I think we should acknowledge that the vast bulk of the work that is carried out there is largely volunteer work. This money helps to provide some support and assistance, but the lion's share of the hard work is done on a volunteer basis by dedicated people throughout the State.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, I refer you to page 1-19 of the MPS and notes 1 and 2 under

"Variations between 1997-98 actual and 1998-99 estimate". It refers to the ILRO abolition. What proposals are now in place to protect the legal rights of people who may be subject or threatened to be subject to the extraordinary coercive powers of bodies such as the Criminal Justice Commission, the Queensland Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Commissioner, and also the Forde inquiry or any other commission of inquiry which might be set up in 1998-99? How much money have you set aside for those sorts of things and how do you intend to address this particular issue, considering the abolition of that particular arm of the department?

Mr FOLEY: The short answer is that the requirements of natural justice in the law are that in certain circumstances people should be legally represented before an inquiry. Now, the development of the law of natural justice as it applies to commissions of inquiry and similar standing royal commissions has gone ahead in leaps and bounds in recent years, not least of all as a result of the Supreme Court decision striking down the Connolly/Ryan inquiry which dealt with the other aspects of the rule of natural justice dealing with bias.

Let us take it one by one. The Act of the Crime Commission, introduced by the previous Government, authorises people to apply to the Attorney-General for a grant of aid for legal representation. That money actually comes out of the budget of the Crime Commission. In the case of the Forde inquiry, a sum of money—\$558,000, from recollection—was provided in the setting up of that inquiry for the purpose of legal and counselling services for people who come before it. The question then was whether it was more economical for that inquiry to use ILRO, for us to keep ILRO going, or to approach the private profession—what approach to adopt.

We took the view that keeping ILRO as a permanent bureaucracy was not justified. However, in the case of certain persons who had an expectation that ILRO would be of assistance to them, we have made budgetary provision for transitional arrangements so that they are looked after. In the case of other inquiries, we have had discussions with the Legal Aid Office. It is in a position to act, but basically it becomes a question for the inquiry itself to ensure that the provision of legal services to people who have an entitlement to them is done in a fair and cost-effective way. Our concern with keeping ILRO going as a permanent bureaucracy was that we thought it better to approach it on a case-by-case basis with respect to each inquiry.

Mr SPRINGBORG: By way of preamble, Minister, the Premier made some statements yesterday about the lawyers circling around these sorts of inquiries, which we know does happen, and we know that there is an opportunity there for certain amounts of money to be made. ILRO was very good because, as you are very much aware, a lot of that work was able to be done by people coopted from within Crown Law to assist in those sorts of areas. Have you done any work with regard to what this

might potentially cost? You did mention that some interim provision has been made through legal aid to assist people. What is that going to cost and is that going to come out of the legal aid budget for this coming year?

Mr FOLEY: No. With respect to persons who had some expectation that they would be appearing before the inquiry that the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner has proposed to undertake, a special budgetary provision, a Treasury special, was organised in the sum of \$150,000 by way of contingency arrangements, should it be necessary to cover their legal representation costs. In the longer term, however, legal aid is quite able to provide the service, but this would have to be done on a fee-for-service basis by the relevant inquiry. It is important really, just as—

Mr SPRINGBORG: Surely some of the issues there are different when you are dealing with coercive powers of inquiry—issues that inquiries deal with, compared with normal legal aid matters. Do you believe that it can easily make that transition?

Mr FOLEY: With respect, legal aid is simply a way of providing a legal service. It may choose to provide it through in-house staff or it may retain legal representation from the private bar or from private solicitors. That is a matter for legal aid, depending on the needs and expertise of the particular case. In terms of protecting the public purse, the Legal Aid rates are actually more modest than those that were being paid through ILRO. So this is really intended to ensure that we keep a tight hold on the public purse. The Connolly/Ryan inquiry became a spending machine out of control—an enormous expense to the taxpayer.

It led to the formation of what was going to be a permanent bureaucracy in the form of this Inquiry Legal Representation Office. The arrangements that we have discussed with legal aid would enable an inquiry to enter on a fee-for-service basis to legal aid either for it to provide the service or for it to arrange legal representation. That is what legal aid does, and it can do it on a fee-for-service basis, we believe, in a more cost-effective way than ILRO could. It avoids the problem of having a permanent bureaucracy, which then needs to justify its existence. The point about legal aid is that they have always got plenty of work to be going on with. They do not have to sit around waiting for the next inquiry to blow through to drum up business.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Further on that issue, do you have any costings or any projections about what the abolition of ILRO may save the State? Further again, you mentioned that legal aid was able to do the work cheaper—in-house or outsourcing.

Mr FOLEY: Yes.

Mr SPRINGBORG: When you made that particular statement, were you referring to the work that ILRO did or that the officers within ILRO did themselves compared to once they had got to that particular line, deciding then to contract maybe some of the direct representation work that might be happening in the commission? Was there a difference there?

Mr FOLEY: In 1997-98, the actual expenditure by ILRO was \$1,015,000. The expenditure for 1998-99 is estimated at \$244,000. In addition to that, there is that special sum of \$150,000, the Treasury special, that is there should it be needed. The reference to the greater cost effectiveness of legal aid really arises out of two things. Firstly, legal aid already has an infrastructure. It has an office, it has a bureaucracy, it has its own systems. You do not have to have a separate system in the way that ILRO had to have in order to maintain its independence from, say, Crown law. The second point is that legal aid rates are more modest than those that were paid by ILRO.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Is that once the work had been done behind the scenes within the office? Obviously with ILRO, the idea is to save the money with regard to a lot of the preparatory work and then you may outsource from there. So are you saying that it is still cheaper for legal aid to do the work at all stages than it was for ILRO?

Mr FOLEY: I think the short answer to that is: yes, because the in-house work does not need to involve the establishment costs and the running costs of a permanent bureaucracy specifically set up for that purpose. The second point is that if cases are briefed out and the private legal profession is retained, then legal aid rates are more modest than those that were paid by ILRO. Interestingly, I might say, within the past year the fees payable for counsel undertaking prosecutions on behalf of the Crown have been raised to the legal aid rate. That is a separate question. I think the problem—the policy; I am taking note of the member for Broadwater—the budgetary problem rather than the policy problem is this: we now find ourselves in an environment where we have a number of what are effectively standing royal commissions, the Criminal Justice Commission, the Crime Commission and the PCJC with its Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner. The thinking of the previous Government—the rationale for ILRO—was that, with all of these inquiries going, we need a permanent bureaucracy, or a permanent office. Their thinking was that that would be cheaper. However, our concern is that once one establishes a bureaucracy, they have a habit of justifying their own existence.

Mr SPRINGBORG: A bit like inquiries.

Mr FOLEY: Perhaps that is so, but I did not really want to accept too much responsibility for the setting up of the Connolly/Ryan inquiry.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Any inquiry can do that, Minister, you know that. It just goes on.

Mr FOLEY: To be quite serious, we do now have considerable amounts of public money invested in these various inquiries. The question is: do you then set up or keep going a body like ILRO? Frankly, I think that there is a lot to be said for trying to approach it on a case-by-case basis where these inquiries know that they have certain duties with respect to natural justice. That involves the expenditure of money to provide legal representation for people who are being compelled to appear before them, as you say, by significant coercive powers. We think that it is a more prudent use of

taxpayers' money to try to do that on a case-by-case basis rather than having a permanent bureaucracy.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Is it possible to provide some figures or estimates of savings for that?

Mr FOLEY: Yes. The expenditure on ILRO last year was \$1,015,000. The expenditure for this year will be \$244,000, putting to one side that \$150,000.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I mean the costs estimates—the comparison between ILRO and, say, legal aid doing it; that is all. I can put it on notice if you wanted. I do not want to hold up Government members.

Mr FOLEY: I am not sure how much further I can take the matter. The legal aid rates are more modest than those used by ILRO and the overheads will be significantly less because they do not have to have a permanent bureaucracy. I think that it is as simple as that, really.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for questions from the Opposition has expired.

Mr FOURAS: The capital budget for 1997-98 was underspent by about \$20m due to some construction delays in courthouses and other matters. With the new budget of \$91m, can you give any guarantees to the Committee that steps are being taken to make sure that this money is spent in this financial year or will it also be underspent down the road?

Mr FOLEY: The principal focus of the Government is on jobs, and the Capital Works Program is a central component of that job strategy. My directions to my department and the department's clear understanding is that I expect that capital expenditure to be undertaken not just because we have a need for the capital works themselves but also because of the important social object of ensuring that we get on with the business of generating jobs in the building industry, which I know is dear to the heart of the member for Bulimba.

My attention has been drawn to a sum of \$2m in respect of the arrest courts here in Brisbane, which is not expected to be expended in this financial year because of a delay in that operation. Apart from that, the clear expectation is that we have to get on with the business of ensuring that our Capital Works Program does its job.

Mr MUSGROVE: I share the Premier's concerns in relation to sharks circling legal inquiries, and I am glad that the member for Warwick does as well. Could you inform the Committee of the total cost of the Connolly/Ryan inquiry, which was closed down for reasons of political bias? How do you think that money may have benefited Queenslanders, say in the area of legal aid?

Mr FOLEY: Just dealing with Connolly/Ryan and not the Carruthers inquiry, in respect of which millions of dollars were wasted because it was effectively nobbled by the Connolly/Ryan inquiry—the Connolly/Ryan inquiry cost a total of \$10,527,000. I table a briefing note from the Department of Justice, ILRO, the Criminal Justice Commission and the Department of Police which sets figures out in some detail. It is a matter of concern to

everyone that this money was wasted at a time when legal aid and other costs of providing resources in the justice system were under considerable stress. I table that material. We not only made legal history in having the first commission of inquiry in the common law world to be struck down for political bias. Queensland taxpayers wasted an enormous amount of money in that inquiry, which ultimately proved fruitless and had to be struck down for political bias.

Mr MUSGROVE: In the absence of the documents that you have tabled, are you aware of whether the documents that you have tabled included the legal costs of the former Premier appearing before that inquiry or is that a separate item?

Mr FOLEY: They are not spelled out in the document that I have just tabled. They are included in the summary of costs to the Department of Justice, which were in the order of \$7.5m. I understand that they were tabled before Estimates Committee A yesterday.

The CHAIRMAN: The previous administration set up the Corporate Administration Agency, the CAA, to look after the Cultural Centre complex at South Bank. It was set up to save the taxpayer money. When that happened, one of the concerns that I had was that a number of workers involved in the maintenance of the complex were dismissed; they were sent down the road, and I have a further question on that. Has the CAA done what it said it would do and saved Queensland taxpayer funds? Has it done anything for the efficiency of the running of that whole complex, being mindful that Queensland taxpayers could have \$1 billion tied up in assets over there?

Mr FOLEY: The Corporate Administration Agency is problematic. The idea behind it on the part of the previous Government was to get cost efficiencies and to take corporate services from the Library, the Museum and the Art Gallery and centralise them. Proceeding on that basis, the then Government entered into—from the Arts Office, which is now Arts Queensland, to Treasury—a recoverable loan of \$6,123,000. The question is: are there savings from which that loan can be repaid? The answer is: I have seen no evidence of them to date. It is a case where there has been a considerable amount of public money spent on the dubious assumption that it would lead to cost savings. Those cash savings have not been forthcoming to date. The Corporate Administration Agency's expenditure against that fund of \$6,123,000 was \$2.44m, comprising labour costs of \$653,000, consultancies worth \$1,061,000, accommodation costs of \$410,000, and property, equipment and set-up costs of \$338,000.

The staff of the Corporate Administration Agency advise me that they have added significant value to the business of their clients by developing a pool of expertise and skills. They believe they have achieved economies of scale. To be fair to them, they have attracted some new clients in the area of supplying financial processing and payroll services, including the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning, the

Corrective Services Commission, the Pacific Film and Television Commission, the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. Those services are provided on a fee-for-service basis. However, I continue to have a real concern about the action of the former Government in making that money a recoverable loan, which will effectively have to come out of future Arts budgets.

The CHAIRMAN: From what I can gather, the CAA's business should be to look after that complex. It is a very valuable asset for Queensland. I take the Minister to some line items further on in the Budget papers, where \$42.5m has been allocated for ongoing maintenance. I take it that that program would be put in place and that it would be a very large maintenance program from the size of it?

Mr FOLEY: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: A sum of \$6.5m has been set aside for maintenance in the 1998-99 Budget. Why are they not going about the business of looking after the place, instead of worrying about running around and doing someone's payroll?

Mr FOLEY: I think the staff of the Corporate Administration Agency are doing their best. They are doing their best in the structure that was put in place for them by the previous Government. The problem is that the previous Government essentially proceeded on the basis of two conflicting propositions. The first was that if one centralised corporate services there would be a saving, and if one decentralised building services there would be a saving.

As recently as the Ministerial Program Statements of the former Minister for The Arts in 1998-99—in the Budget that was not passed—Mrs Sheldon said that the arts have been refocused through a review of the arts bureaucracy, with savings redirected to client services. The simple fact of the matter is that we are left with a very considerable debt to pay back to Treasury and not a lot of prospect of being able to see those cash savings. I understand the concern in respect of the building workers. There will, of course, be considerable employment generated through that maintenance program.

The CHAIRMAN: Would those maintenance people be re-employed through Q-Build?

Mr FOLEY: I do not know the answer to that, but I am happy to try to find out for you.

Mr FOURAS: I note that the number of mediations and facilitations held under the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program is increasing. Rather than looking purely at the number of mediations undertaken, the important issue is how successful this program is. Can you indicate to the Committee the success rate of these mediations in general terms?

Mr FOLEY: By and large, they are fairly successful. This was a great initiative of my predecessor Dean Wells, the Attorney-General who introduced the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program. Notwithstanding the considerable reduction in its staff during the term of the previous

Government, that program has been effective in helping in a lot of dispute resolutions. For example, victim/offenders conferences have gone from 18 to 44 in the last year. That still leaves a long way to go. They have been very successful in terms of neighbourhood disputes. While the figures for the south-east Queensland area are being turned up, it is my recollection that of those who actually attended mediation to resolve neighbourhood disputes, something in the order of 80% were successfully resolved. In so far as one can measure these things, some attempt has been made to measure the client satisfaction, and it is running in the order of 90%. In terms of first contacts, the number went up from 3,621 in 1996-97 to 7,242 in 1997-98. The total number of sessions held went up from 766 to 1,067. During 1997-98 the Dispute Resolution Centre of south-east Queensland achieved an 87% agreement rate for mediations conducted. I think anybody who goes to their electorate offices will know that in the handling of neighbourhood disputes this is a very useful agency and it can achieve some results. But, of course, it cannot compel people to attend.

Mr FOURAS: Most members of Parliament are very pleased when people involved in neighbourhood disputes make use of that program. I know it has been very effective. I just wished to underline my support for that program.

Mr FOLEY: It is a point very well made. It is one of the reasons why we changed the administrative structure of the program. During the term of the previous Government, it was put into the courts program. The thinking of the previous Government was to integrate it more closely with the court system. However, while there are some advantages in having good links with the court system, there was feedback from people that some people felt rather alienated and intimidated by its having some link with the court system. Accordingly, the administrative arrangements have been changed so that it does not get administered simply through the courts program.

While there are at the operational level good cooperative arrangements, that program is not accountable through the courts program. For example, take the Cairns situation. It is physically located in the courthouse, but it is at the front left-hand side as one looks at the building. One can come in from the street without entering into the main body of the court. That is helpful, because there are many people who would rather run a mile than come near a court.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that my colleague has a brief question.

Mr MUSGROVE: I anticipate that the Minister will have to take this question on notice. I wish to ask about the politicisation of your office under the previous Government and how that has impacted on the Budget. We have gone through Carruthers, Connolly/Ryan, political advertising and so on. Could you supply a figure for the net cost of the inappropriate politicisation and use of your office?

Mr FOLEY: I think I have already dealt with the specific matters that I regard as wastage of public money. The Connolly/Ryan inquiry is a spectacular

example. The costs of the political advertising are also an example. I do not particularly want to trawl through yesterday's business. However, I have made available to the Committee in what I think is a forthright fashion the areas where I think significant sums of public expenditure were wasted, and I would ask the Committee to have regard to that and to have regard to my indication that in the Estimates of expenditure in the forthcoming year we do not propose to embark upon political advertising of that kind, nor do I intend to set up a Connolly/Ryan inquiry.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for questions from Government members has expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If I can just open by saying that you would not have had the million dollars or so in legal fees if the CJC had not put in its safe vital legal information that indicated that the Premier at the time and the Police Minister had no case to answer and you would not have had a Carruthers inquiry and maybe not a Connolly/Ryan inquiry. You should be pointing the bone elsewhere.

Mr FOLEY: I am happy to take that as a question, and I will respond to it.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I am sure you will, Minister.

Mr FOLEY: I assume that is a question and not a speech?

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is an opening; I will give you something else to think about as well. What is your legislation program this year and what Bills do you intend to introduce?

Mr FOLEY: As far as the question of whether the wastage of money involved a legal error on the part of the CJC, they can speak for themselves and have done so. But the point is simply this: the expenditure of public money in the Connolly/Ryan inquiry and the wastage of that public money occurred simply because an act of appointment was made in respect of a person who was not appropriate to be appointed. That decision was taken deliberately by the Government of the day. It was taken in the face of a public warning from the Opposition and it led to a finding that resulted in the Supreme Court striking it down. This is not my opinion, it is the opinion of the Supreme Court, which struck it down. It held that it conflicted with the rules that govern natural justice, in this case with respect to the perception of bias.

I do not wish to enter into the debate on the merits between Mr Cooper and Mr Borbidge on the one hand and the Criminal Justice Commission on the other. However, I do say that the deliberate action in setting up the Connolly/Ryan inquiry to nobble the Carruthers inquiry led to the wastage of public money. That is simply a matter of record.

As to the legislative program—of course, there is the Attorney-General Bill which is currently before the House. I hope to put before the House amendments to the Coroners Act to give effect to the recommendation concerning coronial inquests arising out of the Cootharinga study. In respect of victims of crime, I will be bringing before the House certainly during the course of this financial

year—whether they appear before the end of this calendar year remains to be seen—amendments that arise out of the discussion paper on fact finding on sentence which may involve some amendments to the Penalties and Sentences Act or the Criminal Code and which go to the question of the process whereby a court finds facts upon a person having been convicted by a jury or upon the person having pleaded guilty. There was a recent decision of the Court of Appeal in Morrison's case which made that approach somewhat more legalistic, and the discussion paper looks at making it somewhat less legalistic and more user friendly for victims. I am happy to go on, but with your permission. I do not wish to break—

Mr SPRINGBORG: I would love to give you permission, but I just cannot; I am running out of time. I am sure you will bring it in later.

Mr FOLEY: A number of other things to do with the criminal law—things arising out of the women's Criminal Code review, also legislation with respect to guardianship—were the subject of discussion during the term of the previous Government.

Mr SPRINGBORG: You did mention the amendments which will need to be made to the Coroners Act arising from the recommendations out of the Cootharinga inquiry. As you are aware, there have been issues of discussion, consideration and review of the Coroners Act in general within your department. Do you not believe it would be far more appropriate that a general updating of the Coroners Act happen at the same time, considering that a lot of that work has already been done, instead of one aspect of it, that is, what is required as a result of the recommendations of the Cootharinga inquiry? Would it not be better just to bring the whole lot in and just deal with it, because a lot of that work has already been done and we do need to put a far more contemporary application on the Coroners Act?

Mr FOLEY: I think it is six of one and half a dozen of the other, frankly. There is a case for urgency with regard to the recommendations of the Cootharinga report. There is a clear public interest in it subject to whatever view the Opposition may have. The benefit of analysis to the legislation—there seems to be broad community support to do something, whether it is a post-mortem in every case, such as was recommended, or perhaps simply a requirement that it be drawn to the attention of the coroner for the coroner to exercise his or her discretion as to whether there is a post-mortem. There are a number of religious sensitivities in that area which perhaps suggest that the latter course might be the way to go.

With regard to the overhaul of the Coroners Act—it is a matter which has some budgetary implications because there is a case for overhauling that Act, and that goes back to the recommendations of the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody. It is a matter of record that no budgetary provision was made by the previous Government for the upgrading, as it were, of the Coroner's Office. It is a matter that I have had the department looking at because, if one is going to overhaul the Act, then

one has to think through the budgetary implications, whether you have more resources for a State coroner and so on. I would not really like to delay the Cootharinga matter. I think it is capable of being responded to promptly. I do not think it prejudices in any way the overhaul of the Coroners Act more generally.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I would encourage expedition, from my point of view.

Mr FOLEY: I take that on board, and I hope it is not an implied criticism of the member for Indoороopilly, who had a couple of years to bring it in and did not do so.

Mr SPRINGBORG: All I am saying is that the works are very well advanced, so the criticism may not be aimed at him.

Mr FOLEY: I am just trying to defend my predecessor in title.

Mr SPRINGBORG: It is a good idea to roll it all in together. Could we just turn back to the issues of mediation mentioned by Mr Fouras and turn to pages 1-8 and 1-11? You have made provision in there to train 1,500 students and 250 teachers in mediation. The former Government mentioned in its Ministerial Program Statements 3,000 students and 250 teachers. Turning to page 1-11, \$0.3m was expended last year on a mediation educational campaign. That is to be discontinued this year. Do you agree that that will impact on that program? What is the reason for the fewer number to be trained and how are you going to go about the proper resourcing with that money being taken out of it?

Mr FOLEY: A lot of the training that is done is actually done on a fee-for-service basis. I am told simply this: the officers in that program themselves reassessed their real capacity to deliver and they have expressed their targets more modestly. That appears to be the explanation. A number of those training programs are actually done on a fee-for-service basis and you will see there that they aim to increase revenue from training by 10%. You mentioned a figure on page—

Mr SPRINGBORG: On page 1-11, I think.

Mr FOLEY:—1-11. It is explained in footnote 2 that \$300,000 was expended on a mediation educational campaign in that financial year which was not expended in 1998-99. That is really the explanation for that variation.

Mr SPRINGBORG: So it is considered that we have done as much education as we need to do?

Mr FOLEY: There is always a need for more education, particularly in this area. I should say that it is a matter of regret to me that funding in this area was so heavily slashed by the previous Government. During the term of the previous Government, it reduced the number of training personnel in September/October 1996 from one training coordinator, one training officer and one part-time administration officer to simply one training coordinator. That was part of an overall downgrading of the resources available to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program. That was unfortunate. It is a

program that Labor introduced in Government originally. It was significantly cut back in its resources during the term of the previous Government and we regard it as a vital program.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, I refer you to page 1-3. There it is stated that planning will continue for a new Brisbane Magistrates Court building. Will you confirm the commitment of the former Government that this will be built on the Queensland Place site, which is owned by the Queensland Government and which was confirmed as the best site in a value management exercise undertaken by the Works Department? If not, what sites are you considering? If you are considering other sites, how are you going to pay for these sites? If Treasury will not finance the Queensland Place site, why do you not take up the private sector approaches previously made to build, own and operate that area and the Government can buy back over a period of time?

Mr FOLEY: I thank the member for Warwick for the question, because the member highlights one of the most extraordinary examples of misstatement by the previous Government. The previous Government announced that a new Brisbane Magistrates Court facility would be built on the western end of Queensland Place, which would allow for projected usage until 2025 and would have space available for the overflow from the District Courts to be located in the building as an interim measure. The cost of that is \$116m. The one thing missing from the previous Government's Budgets was the \$116m.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is why the end of my question is important—innovative ways of trying to finance it.

Mr FOLEY: With respect, what I am seeking to point out to you is that your use of the term "the previous Government's commitment" is a misnomer. There was no commitment. There was no money. There was no budget. There was a black hole of \$116m. All that was provided for was something in the order of \$2m for design. That is what was provided for in the Budget. We are providing in the Budget \$1,194,000 to proceed with design and the initial work. It is an utter nonsense to say that the previous Government was committed to that project. There was simply nothing there in the cookie jar to make it happen. What was there was an announcement of a major project without the wherewithal being put in place to make it happen.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Are you committed to it and are you going to fund it?

Mr FOLEY: We will proceed with the planning of the new courts complex in Brisbane. It has not been suggested to me specifically that we should change that place, nor has it been suggested to me that we should explicitly confirm it. What has been explained to me is that this project is in its very early stages and to speak of a commitment by the previous Government is, with respect, grossly inaccurate.

Mr SPRINGBORG: But it is very necessary. You understand that yourself, as a former legal practitioner. You know what is required, considering what people are working in at the moment and the expanding nature of the work required.

Mr FOLEY: I do not dispute the need for a Brisbane central business district courts complex. What I take umbrage at is the announcement by the previous Government of this project as if it were something other than a pipedream. The \$116m that is required was simply not factored in. It has left a black hole that we will have to address. We need to ensure that our courts are kept modern and effective, and the pressure on the Magistrates Court at North Quay is very real.

Mr SPRINGBORG: How are you going to address it and what is your time frame for addressing it?

Mr FOLEY: We will address it with the expenditure of \$1,194,000—

Mr SPRINGBORG: Which leaves \$114m.

Mr FOLEY: That is so. That will depend upon the outcome of the work done during the course of this year and it will depend upon the availability of Forward Estimates for which we will have to plan because of the gross negligence of the previous Government in announcing it without having made relevant budgetary provision.

Mr SPRINGBORG: With respect, we were trying to look at innovative ways of doing it, because you know as well as I do that the CBC process can be rather traumatic and it can be rather difficult to negotiate the necessary funds there. That is why you have to be sometimes a little innovative in the way you approach these things.

Mr FOLEY: I have heard the difference between \$116m and \$2m described in many different ways, but to describe the difference as innovative is, I think, a novel use of the language.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is not the issue. It is the involvement of the private sector in actually constructing and owning that in the interim stage and probably reducing the impost on the State, in particular your department, in the short to medium term.

Mr FOLEY: Well, it is not a matter to which I have given attention at this stage in terms of such a proposal to involve the private sector. I will have regard to your observations when the matter comes to be considered more fully, but it is at a very early stage.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Can the Minister advise what are the regional languages into which bail forms are to be translated? Do you mean indigenous or ethnic languages? What are the costs of and time frames for doing this?

Mr FOLEY: Apparently it is a reference to people from different regions of the world. It is a reference to different ethnic languages. I do not know which particular languages were contemplated. I am happy to find out and supply that information to the Committee if it has been decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The Opposition's time has expired. I would like to ask about another courthouse, at Roma. I draw the Minister's attention to the bottom of page 1-2. It states that we are building a new courthouse at Doomadgee for \$1.3m. I understand that there is a need for a courthouse

there, but we are spending \$1.1m on the courthouse at Roma and it is just being repaired. That money is not for a new courthouse.

Mr FOLEY: The problem is this: the Roma Court House has suffered considerable structural cracking due to shrinking in the soil, apparently brought about by prolonged drought. Although the building has not reached the stage of being unsafe, continuous monitoring shows that structural movement and cracking are continuing. It does cost a fair bit of money. I must say that, when it was drawn to my attention originally, I asked for a full explanation of it. However, the simple fact of the matter is that we have a courthouse there that is suffering structural damage, and we either try to stabilise it and repair it or let it get worse. I have to say that this funding will simply return it to an operational condition. This will not restore it to its original condition. It is an expensive exercise involving \$1,125,000.

The CHAIRMAN: And the new courthouse at Doomadgee for \$1.3m—it will be much more expensive later at Doomadgee, I can assure you.

Mr FOLEY: That is so, but I guess that we have a duty to the people of Roma and the region either to ensure that the courthouse has its structural problems rectified—well, we simply have a duty to do that, and we have to face up to it. As to the repair of this courthouse, I am told that structural stress has been occurring in the building over at least 40 years. I am reminded that it is a heritage building—or it has been preliminarily listed on the Heritage Register. This sum of money will not bring it to its pristine condition, but it will address the problem of structural damage.

Mr FOURAS: Minister, I note in your briefing paper the cost of the advertising campaign for juvenile justice offending of \$305,000. I note also the comments of the member for Broadwater, who was indicating that we ought not to be discussing these things because they are matters of policy. We have billboards that are produced to be set up in marginal electorates. We have complaints from judicial people that the political advertising was false. We have a political issue that is out there and being used—in my terms—for political advertising. So that we will not be having these debates in the future, is there a possibility for the Parliament at some stage to have some guidelines of what is truly educational? For example, I have no problem with people being told about things such as powers of attorney and whatever. But this is blatantly political. Could we have some guidelines or some way for the Parliament to decide as to how we can spend money, particularly prior to elections? I would like to ask another question later with regard to fixed-term elections.

Mr FOLEY: It is, of course, a matter for the Parliament.

Mr FOURAS: Would you be aiding that process?

Mr FOLEY: I helped the then Leader of the Opposition to draft the Government Publicity Control Bill, which was introduced as a private member's Bill during the term of the previous

Government, but regrettably was allowed to languish on the Notice Paper. That was designed to address this very problem and to have a parliamentary committee charged with the purpose of preparing such guidelines. That is probably more a matter for the Premier than myself.

The case of this expenditure certainly brings it into sharp focus. We have seen \$523,000 paid to AIS Media and \$243,700 paid to Mojo Partners for these campaigns. These are very considerable sums of money that are being paid. It is a matter of real concern to me as to how that money might better have been spent to deliver services in the justice system, particularly at a time when we learn from the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration that many people feel somewhat intimidated by courts and feel that courts are hostile places for them. Over three quarters of a million dollars has been spent on those advertising campaigns in circumstances where I fail to see any service being delivered within the administration of justice.

Mr FOURAS: With regard to political advertising, I note that the Premier has indicated that he would be interested in putting forward a referendum for four-year terms. This is simply an observation that I make, but if we did have four-year fixed terms, which I support wholeheartedly as the only way in a democracy that we should go about it—although apparently Premiers of the day, whoever they might be, like the power of going around saying, "You will find out when the election date is. I will let you know"—that would stop us having elections every two and a half years. Elections would be held every four years, and there would be a fantastic saving in that regard. And maybe we could stop this educative sort of advertising six months before that fixed term. I think that the public are heartily sick and tired of paying for this sort of nonsense. They are right up to their ears with it. The feedback that I get in my electorate is that they are sick and tired of people like the current Federal Government spending \$40m of our money to try to sell a GST to us just before they announced an election date. This has to stop and, somehow or other, as parliamentarians we have to find a way of stopping it.

Mr FOLEY: I respectfully agree with what the member for Ashgrove has said. I also respectfully agree about the desirability of four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly. I think the experience of getting things done within a three-year term, with the lead time up to an election and the settling-in period after a new Ministry is sworn in—let alone a new Government—are very considerable indeed. I certainly strongly support the idea of four-year terms. One hopes that it might be possible to achieve it.

Mr MUSGROVE: Minister, as the youngest member of the Government I have a particular interest in youth affairs and how they affect the people of my electorate, which also contains a very large so-called Generation X population. Could you inform the Committee of what initiatives your department is taking in relation to youth affairs?

Mr FOLEY: Some of the specific initiatives in the Arts area involve an attempt to reach out to

young people. For example, there is an extra \$1m a year from next year on—that is, half a million dollars this year—in youth arts, of which the lion's share will be administered through Arts Queensland. That includes the Tute Music Mentor Program; the Youth Radio Traineeships Program, through which we hope to provide traineeships for 30 young people over three years; the Youth Entertainment Scheme, which is particularly designed for young people in the regional areas; and the A Venue Initiative to assist emerging bands. In addition to that, there is a program administered by the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services called the Public Access and Youth Pilot Program.

The whole idea of those programs is to reach out to young people, to have a point of connection for them with the arts, and to help them get jobs. I met the other day with some representatives from the community radio sector who were quite excited about the radio traineeships. I know from my previous work as Minister for Training how important it is for young people, some of whom may feel a bit estranged from schooling, to be able to get a traineeship that gives them something to work for and to study for. We hope those programs will help to generate jobs and will help to send a message to young people that the Government cares for them and wants to see them involved in the arts. It goes without saying that we need the active involvement of young people in the cultural life of the State. They provide vigour and enthusiasm and help us to refocus and reinvent ourselves. We hope those program initiatives will enable us to touch base with them and to help them to get jobs in the arts industry, which is a very big employer and which has a promising future, particularly in the lead-up to the Sydney Olympics.

The CHAIRMAN: As I was sitting up in bed reading the Budget papers, as I often do, I saw on page 1-3 in the Key Inputs table, under the heading Total Inputs, the item Retained Revenue. It has \$2.209m shown in brackets for the 1997-98 budget, and over \$6m shown in brackets for the 1997-98 budget. The Estimate is \$6.4m, which is also shown in brackets. What does that mean?

Mr FOLEY: I am tempted to say that it means what it says and then move on.

The CHAIRMAN: Some explanatory notes would help.

Mr FOLEY: I think we owe a better explanation than that.

The CHAIRMAN: While you are looking for that, I will put another question. Salaries, wages and related payments will rise from the 1997-98 figure of \$104m to \$117m. Have you found a way to get wages for people we do not know about? Can you tell us where the extra money is going? Is that money for wage rises? It would be handy if I could let my colleagues in the union movement know that you did that trick.

Mr FOLEY: I will seek some advice from my departmental officers. I think the answer is a little more mundane than that. I think the answer is that

Arts Queensland now comes into this portfolio budget. Accordingly, that figure reflects the extra staff from Arts Queensland. No, I am told that a large component of that is the enterprise bargaining agreement. I am also told that it does include a comparison with Arts Queensland from the year before. We will get you some further details on that retained revenue.

The CHAIRMAN: It is good to see people getting wage rises.

Mr FOLEY: We are able to spend a bit more on wages because we are saving on political advertising this year.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the retained revenue figure? What does that mean?

Mr FOLEY: I am advised that that is revenue that comes into the department from fees and charges. For example, the QGAP offices have certain fees which then come to the department. That is labelled as retained revenue for the purposes of the budget figures. We can get that information to you.

The CHAIRMAN: It kept me awake all night! I thought I should find out what it is.

Mr FOLEY: I thank you for your interest. I assume, without having it fully confirmed, that that would also include revenue obtained by Crown law. I am sorry, that goes into a trust fund. Another example is revenue from the State Reporting Bureau for transcripts provided. They sell those and get certain funds from doing that, although they now have to sell them for \$2.40 a page and not \$6.50 because the then shadow Attorney-General was successful in moving a motion of disallowance of that extra fee increase under the regulation early this year in April. We believe it also refers to fees for birth, death and marriage certificates and also revenue of the Corporate Administration Agency for services provided to clients under service level agreements. We will get some further information on that.

The CHAIRMAN: Births, deaths and marriages must be going up, because revenue from those fees is going up. As the time for Government members' questions has expired, I invite Opposition members to ask some questions.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer you to 1-2 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements under the heading Key Initiatives, subheading Legal Initiatives. When and how do you propose to review freedom of information legislation?

Mr FOLEY: My proposal is in two parts. I propose to refer to the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee the task of reviewing that legislation. I also propose, while that is being done, to ensure that ministerial expenses cannot be hidden by way of the Cabinet exemption. As to the general review of the legislation—it was originally recommended by the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. That was considered by an all-party parliamentary committee of which I had the honour of being the Chair. EARC recommended that it be reviewed from time to time. We undertook to do that prior to the election. The advantage of trying to do it through an all-party committee is that these areas involve questions of

judgment and balance. The arguments are easy to mount either way. If it is possible to obtain bipartisan agreement, tripartisan agreement or four-party agreement, as the case may be, that is the desirable way to go. The other useful aspect of proceeding down that path is that it is seen to be action by the Parliament rather than the Executive of the day.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I also refer you to the same area on that page. I note that you intend to review de facto property rights. Will that extend to same sex de facto couples?

Mr FOLEY: That is a matter of policy for the Government. Basically, the review of de facto property rights is along the lines of that envisaged by the Queensland Law Reform Commission. That report recommended a reform to the law involving both opposite sex and same sex de facto couples. That is the report that was presented some time ago. That is the report on the basis of which legislation would be brought forward. That is complicated a little bit by the fact that it would be desirable as a matter of general principle if one could have legislation that was uniform throughout the entire nation and have it administered, say, through the Family Court in the way that property disputes for married couples are resolved and in the way that disputes about the welfare and custody of children are resolved in the case of both married and non-married spouses. A great deal of that work has already been done by the Law Reform Commission.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Further, Minister, I refer you to page 1-11 of the MPS with regard to judges' salary increases. I would just like to know what ongoing amount has been set aside for the additional moneys to be paid to judges and to the staffing budget, or the administrative budget that is made available for judges' support and for the administration of justice in Queensland which is, obviously, a service to the public. Have you any idea how that budget will actually transpose into actual people on the ground servicing judges of the District Court and justices of the Supreme Court?

Mr FOLEY: The Estimates of expenditure are set out in the table at the top of page 1-11. The amount of money paid to judges depends upon an independent process. It depends upon a salaries and allowances tribunal. They reported some time ago and that report was tabled a week or two back in the Parliament. That is done in that way, obviously, to keep it independent of Government; it is done by an independent process. As a result of the approval of the tribunal to increase the entitlements of judicial officers, there was an additional \$4.1m expended in 1997-98. The salary increases as recommended or as determined by the salaries and allowances tribunal will be paid, in effect, automatically unless there was some resolution of the Parliament to the contrary, which I would not expect that there would be.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Right. Minister, I refer you to page 1-1 of the MPS. There is a reference there to the high cost of litigation for Queensland consumers of legal services, and I ask: how do you propose to further remedy that particular problem which, no doubt, has been around for some time? Also, how do you further propose to reduce court delays?

Mr FOLEY: I think that there are a couple of ways that one needs to tackle this. Firstly, one needs to ensure that there are alternative methods, such as the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program. Secondly, one needs to support those initiatives in the courts that make for a more streamlined system. In that respect, we have continued the process that was commenced during the term of my predecessor, the member for Indooroopilly, for the uniform court rules. The object of that initiative was to get uniformity across the courts and to simplify it. That is a process that has taken quite some time. Also, there has been considerable money, and money spent in this budget, on the courts modernisation project, which involves a major computer installation throughout the court system.

It is interesting to note that, in the Ministerial Program Statements for last year, reference was made to the examination of alternative strategies to more effectively manage higher court matters, but little seems to have come of that. I think what is important is to ensure that, where there are some alternatives, they are supported. For example, victim/offender conferencing can be a useful way, in the criminal arena, of breaking the cycle and avoiding people going back to a career of crime and, in the case of the victim, hopefully having a resolution of the matter, which has caused them considerable trauma. With respect to the costs incurred through the engagement of solicitors, I think that it is also important that there be some strengthening of consumer protection for consumers of legal services so that they are in a more equal position of bargaining power with respect to the engagement of solicitors. As I indicated to the Parliament last year during the course of the debate on amendments to the Queensland Law Society Act, there are a number of areas where I believe that the legislation needs to be somewhat strengthened in order to provide better cost protection for consumers of legal services.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, in relation to page 1-2, I ask: are you going to change the right of the legal profession to maintain a monopoly on conveyancing? Will you also enable Government legal agencies such as Crown law, Legal Aid Queensland and the Public Trust Office to compete with the legal profession, as would be expected under the National Competition Policy?

Mr FOLEY: On the question of the legal profession's monopoly on conveyancing, we have committed to undertake a review of that. The argument has been mounted by conveyancers that they should be entitled to compete with the legal profession. It is not my intention at the moment and nor do I have any particular desire to have the Public Trustee and legal aid competing in the marketplace for conveyancing. They have their jobs to do. There will, of course, be property matters that arise in the administration of estates administered by the Public Trustee, but that is a different matter.

The arguments mounted by the legal profession, or by the solicitors, are to the effect that to take away the monopoly on conveyancing might imperil the viability of solicitors firms in regional areas. It was because of a hesitancy on that issue

and on others that in 1994 the Goss Government announced a two-year moratorium on that. But we will review that. It is not so much a question of competition policy in the abstract but it is a question of ensuring that the ordinary consumer has choice. If it is undertaken, of course, it would have to be undertaken on the basis of a level playing field. There would have to be adequate consumer protections built in, such as indemnity insurance and protection to ensure that people are not ripped off by conveyancers.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, I refer you to page 1-6 of the Ministerial Program Statements, and I ask: how many Justices of the Peace (Magistrates Courts) are you planning to train this year? What will be cost of that? Also, how will you be meeting your desired goal of providing greater degrees of information to people in the community about the whereabouts of JPs so that they can access them? How are you going to do that, and what is your time frame?

Mr FOLEY: While that is being turned up, the issue of the future role of JPs is currently before the Queensland Law Reform Commission. That was referred to it by my predecessor and the outcome of that review will help provide some guidance as to the future. A discussion paper was released in March of this year and it is expected that JP training will be an issue that the commission will consider during the review.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I understand that something like 30-odd JP magistrates were trained last year?

Mr FOLEY: I am trying to look that up. I think there may have been a few more than that. Twenty-six indigenous community members were trained as Justices of the Peace (Qualified) at Keriba Warngun, a community meeting place in Brisbane, in August of this year. Justice of the Peace (Magistrates Courts) refresher training will be conducted on Thursday Island on 6 October for those justices who have recently begun constituting the court. I am advised by the department that it is proposed to train approximately 50 candidates for appointment as Justices of the Peace (Magistrates Courts) during the course of this financial year. In February some training was undertaken at Thursday Island, five persons were trained at Injinoo in April, and some further training was offered at Kowanyama.

Mr SPRINGBORG: And regarding ready access for people to the whereabouts of JPs?

Mr FOLEY: I am informed that they are on the Internet site and that arrangements are also being made for them to appear in the Yellow Pages. It is a matter of some concern because while there are large numbers of JPs, it is not uncommon for people to find it hard to track them down. When JPs are appointed, there is a process whereby they are asked who they are going to notify and so on. They are encouraged to notify the local police station and that sort of thing. It still remains an issue when trying to find a JP.

Mr SPRINGBORG: It is on the web site as from now and in the Yellow Pages as from next year?

Mr FOLEY: They are not on the Internet yet, but it is proposed that they be placed there, and they will be in the Yellow Pages as from next year.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer to the issue of criminal compensation, which has been mentioned this morning, page 1-25 of the Portfolio Statements. You have expressed a view that maximum criminal compensation should be awarded, and that is something that we all probably agree with, although obviously there is an implication with regard to budgetary matters. You have set money aside for what you believe will be the situation this year. Obviously a fair bit of money will be required to be expended in that area over the years, probably going up exponentially. Have you any figures for this year and beyond for what you believe this will cost? Do you have any other ways of addressing the whole issue of criminal compensation further down the track, because it is a matter that gets airplay from time to time?

Mr FOLEY: The total amounts of criminal injury compensation have increased considerably in recent years. It is expected that the administrative costs and the administrative procedures for processing them should be able to be streamlined. The policy of the Government is that where an order is made by the court against an offender, provided the victim has taken the relevant steps to try to enforce against that person, which usually involves checking whether they have any property or vehicle that it could be enforced against—but of course the vast majority of offenders do not—in the case where an ex gratia payment is made, it is made in accordance with the terms of the order.

The budgeted amount for this financial year is \$10.5m, last year it was \$8.25m and the year before it was \$7.2m. We will have to monitor this closely because, while it is very important that victims of crime are fully and properly compensated, one can see that there is a significant and rapid increase. Indeed, depending on other factors, it could even go higher.

Suggestions have been made from time to time that there should be a separate tribunal established to deal with these matters, as is done in some other States. We have not gone down that track, but all options are being examined. Originally it was considered desirable to have it all dealt with by the court that heard the initial trial or plea. While at face value that seems commonsense, there are some good arguments as to why a specialist tribunal could be more effective.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Minister, I note that at page 1-2 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements you deal with the issue of the consideration of joint admission. Can you outline to the Committee what you believe the benefit of this is to the legal profession and, importantly, legal consumers in this State and what, if any, time frame you have for this reform?

Mr FOLEY: The benefit of it is simply that it avoids what is an essentially archaic distinction between solicitors and barristers. I think that what should happen is what happens in most other places, namely, that a person who has undertaken the

relevant training and the relevant practice requirements is admitted as a legal practitioner. At the moment, there are separate admission rules as to whether one is admitted as a barrister or a solicitor. I think that is just an archaism. It has come about because in English history there were attorneys and counsel, and they had different roles and functions. In modern times, the training of people to be solicitors or barristers is virtually identical. There is a lot to be said for having the joint admission rule. It also makes it a lot easier in terms of establishing a national market for legal services, because if one is admitted in, say, New South Wales as a legal practitioner, getting reciprocal arrangements to practise here and vice versa is that much easier.

In terms of the time frame, it is something that we will do during the term of the Government. It is probably not something that we will do during the term of this calendar year, but I hope to move on it next year.

The experience in other jurisdictions has been that even where one has a common admission, some people wind up practising as trial lawyers, advocates or barristers, other people wind up practising as solicitors effectively and some people do a bit of both. Some indemnity insurance provisions have to be sorted out to make sure that, if a person is practising in a way that involves that person handling a client's money in a trust account and so on, the indemnity insurance required is considerably higher than it is in the case of someone who is practising as a trial lawyer because his or her exposure to liability for negligence is different. Those issues have to be worked through, but they have been worked through in other jurisdictions, such as New South Wales. Having the joint admission seems like a sensible way of brushing aside what is an unnecessary and out-of-date restraint of trade.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for questions from Opposition members has expired.

Mr FOURAS: I turn to the policy of allocating 2% of project costs for public art in Government building projects. To what stage has that program been implemented?

Mr FOLEY: We are at the stage of setting up within Arts Queensland a Public Art Agency. The job of that agency is to put together the policy guidelines, to undertake the consultation with the Department of Public Works and Housing and with the other client departments to make it happen. The idea is that 2% of capital works building project budgets would be expended on artworks that would be integrated with the building. That involves not just paintings and sculpture; it could involve specially designed ceramic tiling and carpet. We need to take a whole-of-Government approach. The first step is to set up within Arts Queensland this Public Art Agency to administer the policy and to advise and assist Government departments on implementation matters. That agency is in the process of being set up and it will be functional by October—in the coming weeks. What it then has to do is work through with other agencies and other departments the process of building that into the capital works project.

The essential point is that this involves changing the standard. It involves an approach where art is not simply tacked on as an afterthought. Public places ought to be places where ordinary people can feel proud to be there. In a sense it is like the railway stations of the last century, when people felt proud that these were public facilities. By contrast, for example, the Roma Street Transit Centre is not a place where people feel comfortable. It is more in the Darth Vader school of architecture than in an environment that is welcoming.

Through the establishment of the Public Art Agency and through a series of consultations with other major departments, including, of course, Public Works and Housing, we seek to adopt a whole-of-Government approach with a view to integrating that into next year's Capital Works Program. It is, of course, the case that there are some projects already that involve a component of public art. I think I have set that out in my answer to one of the questions on notice—75 William Street, the Cairns Convention Centre, old Transport House, and the Empire Contemporary Arts Centre.

Mr MUSGROVE: I have a couple of questions in relation to the Electoral Commission, the first dealing with the forthcoming redistribution and the second dealing with the last election campaign. What will be the anticipated timing and cost of the forthcoming State redistribution?

Mr FOLEY: It will take about 12 months or so. As you know, the Redistribution Commission has been put in place following a process under the Electoral Act, which I am very pleased to say involved the cooperation of all of the political parties, had the unanimous support of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee of the Parliament and also involved consultation with the party leaders. There will be half a million dollars this financial year and up to \$250,000 next financial year, so the Electoral Commissioner tells me. I am sure that is right.

Mr MUSGROVE: I am sure he is correct. During the last State election you would recall that an education campaign was conducted by the Electoral Commission during the campaign. There was some criticism in the media that that was too little too late in terms of voter education. In my electorate I anticipate that the incorrect enrolments are somewhere in the order of 5%, given the subsequent enrolments since that time of 300 to 500 a month. I note on page 2-7 of the MPS that the estimate is that 49c per elector was spent on electoral information campaign costs. What are your thoughts about that estimate? Do you think it is enough? Do you anticipate that in the event of another State election there will be a higher level of public awareness of the importance of voters being correctly enrolled? Also, will the Federal Government assist in meeting that cost?

Mr FOLEY: The question of whether there is sufficient funding for the information campaign depends a bit on how you measure outcomes. I am advised by the Electoral Commissioner that the last election showed the highest turnout since 1966 and the lowest informality rate since 1962. From the point

of view of the Commissioner, the Commission regards that as indicating some success. But in this area there is, of course, no room for complacency. I am sure that if you have any suggestions that you would wish to put to the Commissioner they would be taken on board. It is true that I had a concern in relation to a number of Aboriginal persons who were employed previously in the Electoral Commission. My recollection is that during the term of the previous Government they were not employed. It is quite important in terms of assisting everybody to get on the roll that there is good communication. I am sorry. I stand corrected. I am advised that that was a Commonwealth Government matter, but there are some Torres Strait Islander people employed in the Torres Strait.

The CHAIRMAN: In the second paragraph on page 1-3 of the Budget papers, there is a list of moneys set aside by Arts Queensland—and that is good to see—for projects to be completed, for example, the South Bank Playhouse and the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville. There will also be funding for some building refurbishment at the Empire office and also maintenance at the Cultural Centre. Firstly, what level of employment will that generate for the building industry in man-hours? Secondly, will you employ your own staff, or will any staff be employed by your department to do that work?

Mr FOLEY: In terms of how much employment will be generated—quite a lot. As to the constructing authorities for each of those, I will see if I can get that information. The South Bank Playhouse was, of course, undertaken through the Department of Public Works and Housing. I think the Abigroup did that project. That has now been completed and the playhouse is open. \$16.4m is to be spent on the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville, and that will be particularly helpful for generating work in regional Queensland.

Similarly, the other items mentioned there at page 1-3 indicate a very significant capital works program in The Arts. I am not sure that Arts Queensland will be in a position to specify the number of jobs, but basically we are dealing here with very considerable building projects, particularly the \$16.4m in the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville, which will be a very significant boost to the jobs in the building industry throughout Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: I propose to split the time now. I notice that the member for Indooroopilly would like to ask some Arts questions, and I am not going to stand in his way. I would like to see those questions asked. So I propose from here we will roughly split the time which will leave about nine minutes each.

Mr BEANLAND: I refer to the Ministerial Portfolio Statements on The Arts page 1-36 where you indicate that an additional \$1m is allocated for Opera Queensland and ask: what are the conditions for the additional \$1m and when will the strategic review be completed and acted upon?

Mr FOLEY: The \$1m has been provided in order to deal with a funding crisis at Opera

Queensland, but it is provided to allow Opera Queensland sufficient time to implement programs to increase revenue through increases in patronage, sponsorships and donations. The funding is subject to a number of conditions, including the undertaking of a detailed financial and strategic review of operations with the aim of reducing its reliance on Queensland Government grant funding. The review will be undertaken jointly with Arts Queensland and it involves Opera Queensland having a really good look at itself—looking at its future and in the way that it is going. It starts next month and is expected to be completed by the end of January.

Mr BEANLAND: But who is actually undertaking the review? You mentioned Opera Queensland and the Arts Queensland Office, but who is actually undertaking the review? What is its cost?

Mr FOLEY: It is proposed that it be done in house through Arts Queensland itself together with officers of Opera Queensland. At this stage it is not proposed to contract it out to a consultant. This would involve the executive director and the program managers of Arts Queensland in consultation with officers of Opera Queensland.

Mr BEANLAND: I just refer to dot point two on the same page—page 1-36—which refers to \$2m being allocated to the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. When will the first festival be held and what is the future of the Brisbane Festival?

Mr FOLEY: The future of the Brisbane Festival is secure. It is a terrific festival. It has just completed a very successful series of events. The first Queensland Biennial Festival of Music will be held in July of next year and it will be held in Brisbane, Mackay and Townsville. As I indicated earlier, it has a charter to achieve both international excellence and accessibility for Queenslanders from all walks of life. I informed the Committee a little earlier that the new Chair of the Biennial is Mr Rob Kelly. He is a solicitor of Gadens Lawyers and is a very prominent arts advocate. The deputy chair is Associate Professor Helen Lancaster, who is the head of the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music at Mackay. The artistic director will be Professor Simone de Haan of the Conservatorium of Music.

What is being sought is to take the best of the Brisbane Biennial but to take it the next step and to try to celebrate the regional diversity of Queensland—our music and Queensland culture—and to help build upon the Mackay Festival of the Arts and the festivals already operating in Townsville, namely, the Chamber Orchestra Festival and the International Festival. But as to the Brisbane Festival, I believe it was an outstanding success and I think it is a great credit to all involved including, of course, the artistic director, Tony Gould, who produced a stunning Brisbane Festival of which I think we can all be proud.

Mr BEANLAND: Is there an allocation for the Brisbane Festival in this year's budget and what is it if there is?

Mr FOLEY: Because it is held every second year—there is \$1.5m in this year's budget for the

Brisbane Festival. That is in the off-year as it were. Obviously, they need to be getting on with the business of planning for the next time around. In fact, this biennial is a big challenge to put on in July because it is an international music festival and we have only 10 months to put it together. There are some enormous challenges there, but we believe that it can be done and it will be a great success, we hope.

Mr BEANLAND: I just refer to page 1-40 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. In item 5 in the notes attached for the variations for the 1998-99 Estimate, \$900,000 is allocated to the Orchestral Services Task Force readdressing the future of Queensland's two major orchestras. How much longer before this task force reports and what are the details of the fees that have been paid to task force members? When can we expect a decision?

Mr FOLEY: The task force is, as you may know, looking at the future of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra. The members of the task force do not receive fees for attending. The travel costs are met in the case of one of those persons who comes from regional Queensland, but there are no fees paid to the task force.

As to this matter, I share the concern about the process. In fact, when I was Arts Minister previously, at the end of 1995 I set in place a process to look at this issue. That process involved Associate Professor Lancaster having a look at it and working through. In the event, during the term of the previous Government Arts Minister Sheldon set up another process through this task force or working group and the benefit of the earlier work was to some extent lost. In order to try to remedy that, I have put Professor Lancaster back on that task force. I am told that it is due to report at the end of October.

I must say, though: it is a matter that I would also be looking for the Commonwealth Government to come to the party on. It has changed the traditional arrangements with regard to the symphony orchestra by their no longer being part of the ABC but being part of Symphony Australia. I believe the Commonwealth Government has a very important role to play in charting the future of orchestral services in the State.

Mr BEANLAND: Have there been funds allocated in this financial year's budget to carry out the recommendations of the task force? If so, what are they?

Mr FOLEY: That \$900,000 has been, as is indicated there at page 1-40, to continue the work of it. The question is: how much will it cost? The answer is: it depends on what it recommends. We have made some budgetary provision there which relates to that issue. There are already considerable costs borne by the Queensland Performing Arts Trust because of the transfer of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra to it. Those significant financial costs are part of the equation to be sorted out.

Mr BEANLAND: On page 1-41, which refers to staffing resources for Arts Queensland, I notice that

there have been increases of 12.5% in the staffing numbers, from 40 to 45. I also note that, in reply to question No. 8 on the Notice Paper, operational expenditure for Arts Queensland is decreasing from \$10.16m to \$8.06m. How does that correlate, because we have an increase in the numbers but it appears there has been a decrease in the funding. There must be an explanation for it.

Mr FOLEY: Yes, there is. I think the short explanation is that there are three positions for the Public Art Agency and there are two positions in part-time equivalents—two permanent and two part-time in the Public Art Agency. There are extra staff required to constitute this Public Art Agency.

Mr BEANLAND: And the funding for that is not included? Administration costs for arts are down from \$10m to \$8m.

Mr FOLEY: In the longer term, it is proposed that the administrative costs for the Public Art Program would come out of the 2%, but in the initial stage we have to set it up out of the resources of Arts Queensland, and that is what we are trying to do.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for Opposition questions has expired.

Mr FOURAS: I think there is a fair degree of pride in Queensland about the fact that the Queensland Art Gallery is a centre of international standing and it has gained that reputation because of the exhibitions it has been able to put on and also because it has been able to improve its collections. Is there any impact on the exhibitions and the collections, having regard to the substantial devaluation of the Australian dollar? Will that impact on its ability to continue this? There does not appear to be a very big increase in funding for this year's budget.

Mr FOLEY: There is some increase. It has gone up from \$9,248,000 in last year's budget to \$9,595,000 in this year's budget, so that is an increase of \$350,000-odd. Obviously the acquisition of artworks from overseas involves problems with the currency. On the other hand, there is a strong focus on the part of the Queensland Art Gallery in the Asia-Pacific region and a number of economies in the Asian region have themselves suffered at the hands of the marketplace, so I cannot say with precision whether those artworks acquired from Asian countries where there are currency fluctuations will to some extent offset the currency fluctuations in the Australian dollar.

I respectfully concur with your view about the Art Gallery. It has established itself with an enviable international reputation, particularly through the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Art, which was a great initiative of former Arts Minister Wayne Goss, who helped to position Brisbane, and Queensland generally, as the cutting edge city for art in the Asia-Pacific. People who want to learn about the achievements in Asia-Pacific art come here from all over the world. Certainly, we remain strongly committed to assisting it in those endeavours.

Mr MUSGROVE: I refer to the bottom of page 1-37, which talks about the increased domestic film

production in Queensland, how expenditure will increase from \$31m to around \$40m in the current financial year, and about international film and television production being expected to total \$60m in the current financial year. What is the Government doing to encourage that growth and to achieve those very impressive figures?

Mr FOLEY: The Government, through the Pacific Film and Television Commission, tries to do essentially two things. Firstly, it tries to sell Queensland as a good site to come and make movies but secondly, and I believe more importantly, it tries to nurture local, home-grown film-makers. Through the Pacific Film and Television Commission it supports the development of film culture through bodies such as QPICS and it in turn supports bodies such as Women in Film and Television and other community groups. I think it is particularly important that Government funding in this area supports local film-makers, particularly at a time when the information superhighway threatens to turn our culture into internationalised schmalz. It is very important that we support our artists and film-makers, who articulate the way the world looks from Queensland's point of view. For 1998-99, the Pacific Film and Television Commission has successfully negotiated production for a couple of features. For example, Flipper, series four, will have a production value of some \$22.5m. Those initiatives are really designed to help generate jobs, and the film industry is a very important source of jobs for Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I would like to get some comment from you, if I possibly could, with regard to the Film Festival at Warwick. I know that my colleague here would like to know about this. I had the privilege of representing you at that festival recently. What sort of funds come from your department for that festival? Are there any other plans to see that anywhere else throughout regional Queensland and certainly in the west—looking at Barcardine or somewhere like that? The Workers Centre would be a good place to look at putting something like that.

Mr FOLEY: We are always open to suggestions. I cannot say how much the Warwick Film Festival received. I will see whether I can get that information. I am told that they received something in the order of \$18,000.

The CHAIRMAN: Well spent.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the member for Bulimba for his involvement with that.

I think that the general point that I would reiterate is simply this: investment in the arts is not just about giving people throughout the State a fair go and fair access. It is about that, but it is also about celebrating and recognising the diversity and the fact that we are a State that has people coming from different cultures and different points of view. The world looks different in Warwick from the way it does if you are in the Torres Strait or in Clermont. We need to try to encourage cultural diversity and regional diversity. I am sure that we would be happy to receive any submissions, but whether there would be any specific funding for other film festivals is a matter that would really have to be considered in the first instance by the PFTC.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for consideration of the Estimates of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts has expired. I thank the Minister and the portfolio officers for their attendance and any staff who have been here with us. They have waited very patiently for our questioning. I also thank my colleagues for the manner in which they questioned the Minister. The hearing is now suspended.

Mr FOLEY: Through you, Mr Chairman, I wish to express my thanks to the officers of my department and the various statutory agencies who have put a great deal of work and effort into preparing material with a view to being of assistance. I also thank the members of the Committee.

Sitting suspended from 12.03 p.m. to 1 p.m.

POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. T. A. Barton, Minister for Police and Corrective Services
 Queensland Police Service—
 Mr J. P. O'Sullivan, Commissioner
 Mr W. Aldrich, Deputy Commissioner, Executive Director, Operations
 Mr R. Warry, Executive Director, Corporate Services
 Mr J. Just, Director, Finance Division
 Crime Commission—
 Mr T. Carmody, Crime Commissioner
 Mr B. Hodge, Executive Officer
 Mr I. Thomas, Corporate Services
 Queensland Corrective Services Commission—
 Mr B. Apsey, Director-General
 Mr P. Rule, Executive Director, Contracts and Audit
 Mr R. Pulsford, Principal Advisor, Finance

The CHAIRMAN: The next Budget Estimates to be examined relate to the portfolio of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. I remind members of the Committee and the Minister that the time allotted for questions is one minute, and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A bell will be rung 15 seconds before the end of these time limits and twice when the time limit is up. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. So if the Minister or any of his departmental officers want a little more time, they may get it if they talk to the questioner. The Sessional Orders require that at least half the time is to be allocated to non-Government members. Witnesses are to identify themselves clearly by name and position before they answer a question so that Hansard staff can record that information in their transcript.

I declare the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to be open for examination. The time allotted is three hours. The question before the Chair is—

"That the proposed expenditure be agreed to."

Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement? If you do, you can take five minutes.

Mr BARTON: I am pleased to report that the 1998-99 Budget puts the safety and security of Queenslanders first. This Budget clearly shows that the Beattie Labor Government is serious about not only fighting crime but tackling the causes of crime. For a start, the Government has allocated a record expenditure in 1998-99 of \$706m for Police. This represents a 10.6% increase over last year's budget.

I know that Opposition members have said that Labor's Budget is just a repeat of their Budget, which

was released in May of this year. In many aspects of the Police budget this is true, except that Labor has been able to further boost the coalition's Police budget by an extra \$8m. The increased expenditure ensures that the Queensland Police Service continues to lead the rest of Australia in law enforcement. When many police forces in Australia are contracting in size, Queensland's is expanding. I am committed to ensuring that the police have the personnel and equipment to do their job properly. This budget is the first step in delivering that commitment. Queenslanders want more police on the street, and this Government is delivering on that promise.

The target strength for the end of the 1998-99 financial year is 7,132 and, in line with the Government's commitment to jobs, the civilianisation program is continuing to free up positions previously held by police. This financial year, police numbers will increase by at least 317 officers. However, increasing police numbers is only part of the job. It is essential that Queensland supports its police and staff with basic equipment and adequate work conditions. To achieve this aim, an extensive capital works program is targeting a number of areas across the State.

The Budget also reflects a commitment to implementing strategies to further enhance police responses to the community. This includes a focus on problem-based policing and improved public access to police. This is being achieved in part through additional police shopfronts and new Police Beats. Labor went to the June 1998 election with a commitment to provide an additional 10 Police Beats and an additional 10 police shopfronts over the next three years.

I am pleased to tell the Committee that, in this Budget, the Beattie Labor Government will not only honour its 10 Police Beats promise but will exceed the promise by two beats in our first year. \$700,000 has also been allocated this year to establish six police shopfronts, and the remaining four shopfronts will be established next financial year. The Police Service and the Crime Commission are engaged in a number of joint activities which target in particular major and organised crime and criminal paedophilia. The Crime Commission has been allocated a total budget of \$3m, which is the same as that allocated under the coalition's May Budget.

The Beattie Labor Government inherited a prison system in crisis due to significant overcrowding. The Borbidge coalition Government utterly failed to implement an appropriate capital infrastructure program. The previous Government wanted to sell off the Borallon and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centres to fund its capital works. In addition, the coalition wanted to privatise the replacement Rockhampton Correctional Centre. Unlike the coalition, it has not been necessary to sell the family silver or privatise other prisons in order to meet Labor's policy objectives in this important area of human service delivery. Labor's budget in Corrective Services will contribute directly to more than 400 jobs throughout the correctional system in this financial year.

Additionally, the QCSC capital works program of \$178m will generate over 2,000 job-years. This capital works program will produce an additional 1,093 cells this financial year. This capital works program is \$60m more than the coalition was willing to spend and keeps all those cells in public hands. This represents one of the largest expansions of a prison system in Australia's history. Despite having to fully fund this expansion without privatising prisons, we have been able to deliver Labor's election promises of 50 extra prison officers and \$1m worth of new and essential equipment. Compared to the coalition, under this Budget Labor delivers more prison officers and more prison beds to lessen overcrowding and make Queensland's prisons easier to manage and more secure. Queensland also gets more police on the streets, with more Police Beats and shopfronts than ever envisaged under the coalition. Labor has also been able to deliver on its election promises, some well ahead of schedule. All this has been achieved in a record Police and Corrective Services budget without selling off assets.

The CHAIRMAN: The first 20 minutes will be allotted to the Opposition.

Mr GRICE: Are you aware of a current Criminal Justice Commission investigation involving three senior police and the investigation of paedophilia being closed three years ago? The subsequent reopening of the investigation has caused a person to be charged with a paedophile offence in another jurisdiction. If you are aware, what are the implications for the performance of the then Labor Minister Paul Braddy? What, if anything, are you going to do about it?

Mr BARTON: I might let the commissioner answer that one, because you are asking about an operational matter. I must admit that I am a little bit nonplussed as to what it has to do with the Budget expenditure.

Mr GRICE: The question was simple: are you aware? I am not even asking for comment.

Mr BARTON: I am not aware of the specific details of that operational matter, Mr Grice.

Mr GRICE: In the Labor Party's New Directions statement there was a commitment to establish a Crime Prevention Task Force under the Premier. Will any police resources be directed to that task force? If so, what resources and where will they be taken from?

Mr BARTON: Certainly there will be some police resources attached to the Crime Prevention Task Force. The task force is in the process of being set up. It has been approved by Cabinet. There are a number of specific measures associated with the task force that police will be involved with. The whole range of issues that it is involved with will be put together after the task force has been finalised in the Premier's Department. I will be a member of that task force. Of course, in terms of our crime prevention strategies, we have put into place the Police Beats, which are a key part of that funding. We have put something like \$1m into that program. We also have

\$700,000 this year allocated for additional shopfronts. More specific measures will be provided in terms of the decisions once we have the task force into place.

In terms of improved police practices, \$1m has been allocated for Police Beats. \$729,000 has been allocated for police shopfronts. \$143,000 has been allocated for improved police practices to address at-risk premises. An additional \$240,000 has been allocated for training to ensure police practices and police training are up to speed to address crime prevention measures. The crime prevention strategies are a centrepiece of this Government's law and order policy. Unlike the previous Government that had a position—I forget its title—with Mr Tony Hill working directly under the direction of my predecessor expending funds from the Police Service and from Corrective Services that were not directly going through the proper financial structures of a Westminster Government, ours will be a whole-of-Government approach that involves something like eight different portfolios, including mine. I am sure that you will be very confident to know that we are making a genuine effort to address crime prevention across the whole of Government rather than leaving that responsibility to one Minister and expending the funds in a most inappropriate way.

Mr GRICE: I did not seek to criticise the Crime Prevention Task Force, but you probably assumed that I did.

Mr BARTON: I just thought I would give you the full story as to how good it will be.

Mr GRICE: As it is set up under the Premier, is there not a danger of duplication in the facets of that task force?

Mr BARTON: No, I am sure that it will achieve less chance of duplication, because we know that we have to address crime at a very early stage. It is not just a question of reactive policing. We are putting the Police Service in a better position to address that. We also know that the Education Department has to be involved. We have to address offending behaviour in young people. We are seeing that currently young people as young as eight are involved in some of that offending behaviour. There will be support for programs in the schools. There will be support through the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. There will be the involvement of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. I think I have mentioned Education. Perhaps I should have pulled the brief out and considered the full gamut of the departments that are involved. If you have only one Ministry involved in crime prevention, there is always the risk that that Ministry will look at its end rather than the broader picture. Putting it underneath the Premier's Department means that it has the imprimatur of being led by the leader of the Government within his department. It means that every other Ministry that is involved in the crime prevention measure would have to give it a top priority in terms of answering to the Premier personally and to his department. I am very sure that there will be less chance of duplication if it is done in that way, because it will be a fully coordinated approach.

Mr GRICE: I am not criticising the overall approach. Do not misunderstand me. I would have to wish you well in introducing all of those different and separate bureaucracies to each other in the one room and getting a substantive cooperative effort.

Mr BARTON: You do not know the Premier very well, Mr Grice. He will achieve it.

Mr GRICE: In the Labor Party's New Directions statement, a commitment was made to establish a Juvenile Crime Prevention Grants Scheme to support crime prevention initiatives run by community-based agencies. Where does one find the funding for that program in the MPS? What allocation has been made for it?

Mr BARTON: I do not think that you will find it in my MPS. I think that you should have asked the Premier about that one yesterday morning. It is in the Premier's.

Mr GRICE: Similarly, in the New Directions statement a commitment was made to develop Statewide initiatives to curtail violence in pubs and clubs. What funding has been allocated to adopt these initiatives? Who will be developing them and when do you expect the initiatives to be completed?

Mr BARTON: I think you might like to show me where that is in the MPS so that we can have a look at that issue.

Mr GRICE: Yes. I will come back to that. It is your Portfolio Statements, though.

Mr BARTON: I think that you were referring to a policy document from the election.

Mr GRICE: The New Directions statement.

Mr BARTON: Of course, the major funding for crime prevention is with the Premier's Department. I think that we would need to have a good look at those particular sources of funding. We have certainly the major funding for the initiatives that I spoke of in answer to the second question, but many of those other funding sources will be coming through funding that is, in fact, in the Premier's budget under the Crime Prevention Task Force. That forms part of his budget, which is a part of why there is such a big increase in the Premier's Department expenditure.

Mr GRICE: Okay. I will not come back to it, then. There were eight police liaison officers appointed in the last financial year of the previous Government. You have made the decision to appoint a further four. What is the basis of limiting that growth? Is it your advice that the number of police liaison officers is sufficient at this time?

Mr BARTON: The police liaison officer scheme is a scheme that we are very committed to. I am just looking to see that four positions have been created since 30 June 1998—two in Charleville and two in the Metropolitan South region. That has taken the number to 108 all up. You are correct in that there had been an increase of eight in the previous financial year. I do not believe that I have the number that we intend to put in additionally, but the police liaison officer scheme is very strongly supported by us. I attended a graduation of a number of new police liaison officers at the Oxley academy several

weeks ago. I might ask the Police Commissioner or one of his colleagues to comment in terms of the number of the increase.

Mr GRICE: It would be sufficient, Minister, if we could put on notice just how many you plan to—

Mr BARTON: I will just check first to see if we are aware of it here.

Comr O'SULLIVAN: Not specifically.

Mr BARTON: It is a question that we need to work through. You can put it on notice and we will give you an answer.

Mr GRICE: We are aware of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community liaison officers. What other specific ethnic communities will you be targeting with the police liaison network?

Mr BARTON: I am aware that we already have police liaison officers in the Vietnamese community. There are two located in the Metropolitan South region and, in addition, there is now one Samoan officer appointed in the southern region. So in terms of the PLOs, we are aware that they are predominantly in the ATSI community. They are mostly Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, but there are some Vietnamese. In fact, I think that one of the new people who just recently completed the PLO course is Vietnamese. So there are several in the Vietnamese community and one in the Samoan community. They would typically be the areas that we will continue to target in the foreseeable future.

Mr GRICE: I refer to my question on notice No. 2 in relation to the appointment of civilian staff to replace police officers who are currently undertaking essentially administrative duties. You provided me with a breakdown of where the 31 officers would be replaced and said that the QPS plans to have completed the civilianisation program by 30 June 1999. When will the civilian positions be advertised? When do you anticipate that appointments to those positions will be made?

Mr BARTON: I am advised that they will be advertised progressively through the year. There is no particular program. As those positions are being addressed, we will progressively advertise and we will progressively fill them over the course of the 12 months.

Mr GRICE: In relation to the 10 new Police Beat programs, how many are based in coalition seats?

Mr BARTON: Let us have a look at the list.

The CHAIRMAN: If you have one spare, I will have one.

Mr BARTON: I would have to count them. We have a list of them here. When you say "coalition" seats, let me have a look. Certainly, some of them would be in One Nation seats that had previously been held by other people. Actually, nine of the 12 are in Labor seats and three are in others. I think that they are in One Nation seats, to be perfectly honest with you.

Mr GRICE: They are One Nation, recently Labor.

Mr BARTON: They may have been. Let us have a look. These are a result of very firm election commitments that we gave. We have stepped very quickly to process those election commitments. Where we have promised others, seats did not come to us, I dare say. These have been election commitments that we gave and we are undertaking those election commitments. Several of them are a result of steps where the Police Service already had planning very firmly in place. We agreed with that planning and, as a result of that, that is part of the reason why there are 12 rather than 10, because we felt that it was important to follow through on planning that was already in place where they were needed.

Mr GRICE: I think that it is probably appropriate at this time to ask a question suggested by the member for Mooloolah. With reference to continuing community consternation as to the future of law and order in Landsborough, Mooloolah and the Glenview and Palmview areas, can the Minister provide detailed information and reassurance as to the continuation and manning of the Landsborough Police Station?

Mr BARTON: Yes, I can. The Landsborough Police Station will remain open. I have made that very clear on a number of occasions, yet it seems to me that some people in that area need a little more reassurance, and I can understand them being concerned.

The police planning has been continuing for quite some time. It was in place, in fact, under the coalition Government for a new police station at Beerwah. That is a police station that is now coming to fruition. We have provided for that in the Budget. The growth in that immediate area is such that Beerwah is the best location to put a new police station rather than expanding or replacing the Landsborough facility, simply in terms of what is best needed from a policing perspective. We have made it very clear in terms of discussions with the local community and the Police Service's own planning that the Landsborough Police Station will be retained.

The major numbers in the Police Service will be at Beerwah, but we have given a clear commitment in writing to the various people, in a press conference that I held in Beerwah and in meetings and deputations I took at the recent Community Cabinet meeting at Nambour, that the Landsborough Police Station will remain open and it will have a police presence that involves police officers and administrative support staff. In terms of the actual numbers, that will be worked through as we get closer to the opening of the Beerwah Police Station, which is scheduled to be by July 2000. So there is an ironclad guarantee from me and the Police Service that Landsborough will still have a police station that is open and functional. The actual numbers will be determined closer to the event, because we are talking about almost two years away.

Mr GRICE: Will normal police hours apply at Landsborough and Beerwah?

Mr BARTON: When you say "normal police hours"—

Mr GRICE: Front desk?

Mr BARTON: It is my understanding that Beerwah will certainly be a 24-hour police station. As to the hours at Landsborough, that will be determined by the need at that point in time. As you are aware, we have a mix. For example, one of the police stations down in your patch is not a 24-hour station. Some are 24-hour operations and some are not. It depends on the need, the mix and the location in relation to nearby police stations.

Mr GRICE: That one on my patch was tested, thank you, Commissioner. It did not warrant it, and that makes the argument very easy. Could you give me the existing police strength currently, as accurately as you can?

Mr BARTON: We will get you that exact number in a second. We need to find it so that we do not mislead you by possibly giving you the wrong number. I will provide you with the numbers for 1 July 1998. We do have changes on a day-to-day basis, as you would appreciate, and you have to pick a point in time. As at July 1998, the number of sworn police was 6,833.

The CHAIRMAN: As the time for Opposition questions has passed, I will ask a question of the Minister on behalf of the Government. Minister, you have partly answered this question. Funding allocated in the June 1998 Budget for two crime prevention partnerships does not appear in the September Ministerial Portfolio Statements. Can you explain why this is and give us some detail in that regard?

Mr BARTON: We are talking about the crime prevention partnerships that the coalition put into place. Initially, what the coalition put into place were called community policing partnerships, and there were a number of them. The coalition had funded them to the tune of \$550,000 in the last Budget—not the May Budget but the one for the last financial year. When we were in Opposition, we said very clearly that we would allow those trials to be completed before we made any decisions on their continuance. In fact, I attended the launch by my predecessor of the first of those in Logan City, which is partly in my electorate. At that point in time, he made it very clear that they were being set in place for a trial period and would then be re-evaluated. I gave the same commitment that, if in fact we won an election this year and became the Government, we would allow those trials to be concluded and then we would also evaluate them. In its May Budget, the coalition in fact allocated \$1m and was proposing to continue the crime prevention partnerships, which were renamed some months before the State election.

We want to ensure that the public is getting good value for money from those crime prevention partnerships. Some of them have concluded and some are continuing. We have allocated \$200,000 to complete the trial. If, in fact, the trial shows that they have been successful, then it would not be totally my call as to whether we continue with them, re-establish them or do it in a different way. That will need to be considered by the Crime Prevention Task Force under the Premier's Department. We provided funding to allow that trial to be concluded.

All of that got a bit messy, and you mentioned that I partly answered the question before. Public money was being expended by someone who was working directly for my predecessor. He was operating out of an office in the same building as my officers, several floors down. Could I have more time to complete the answer?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr BARTON: Some of them were being run under an ACRO scheme, which they were all supposed to run under initially. Some were being run directly by the gentleman, who was coordinating them under his model. Yet another one was recently put into an Aboriginal community and was being run on a different basis again. We felt that it would not be appropriate to have ACRO, which was involved in developing the initial program and which had got into some arguments with the coordinator of the program as to what worked and what did not, evaluating itself. We thought that we could only get an evaluation that said that one is good and the rest are crook. Therefore, we have arranged for the Research Division of the Criminal Justice Commission to do the evaluation. That evaluation should be concluded in November. Already some cities, including Logan and the Gold Coast, have decided that they will shut them down. Several report to me that they are going well. We will get the evaluation and then it will go to the Crime Prevention Task Force within the Premier's Department to determine what has worked and what has not worked, and whether or not those programs should be continued.

To ensure that there is not a vacuum, we have put a big effort into ensuring that community consultative committees are formed where they do not currently exist. That is the road that Logan City is going down currently. I know that the Gold Coast City is also maintaining the position of the coordinator, notwithstanding the fact that it has done away with the crime prevention partnership as such, to coordinate crime prevention activities. It is keen to work with the new Crime Prevention Task Force, once it is up and running, which will be in the immediate future.

The CHAIRMAN: When will that be finished?

Mr BARTON: The evaluation is scheduled to be finished by the end of November.

Mr FOURAS: I refer to the escape of five dangerous prisoners from the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre on 5 November last year. At page 1-22 of the portfolio statements, reference is made to Operation Korn, which resulted in the capture of those prisoners. Those escapes caused widespread community anxiety about the state of Queensland's prison system. However, what has been forgotten is the impact that the escapes had on the Police Service and the resources used in the recapture of the five escapees. Can you detail what the impact of this mass break-out was on the Police Service?

Mr BARTON: I certainly can. Firstly, I want to commend the Police Service, the prison officers and the police officers who were involved for their diligence and courage that, at the end of the day, has

meant that those people have been put back where they belong, which is behind bars. The police immediately organised Operation Korn in order to recapture those prisoners. The total cost of that recapture was \$388,361, which is a significant amount of funding. That does not include the cost of the investigations into the alleged crimes that they committed while they were on the run, nor the expenditure of other jurisdictions such as the National Crime Authority and the Northern Territory prison service, were Abbott was eventually recaptured. When those costs are taken into account, it is our estimate that the true expense of this break-out could go into millions of dollars, not just the hundreds of thousands of dollars—that is, \$388,361—that Project Korn cost to recapture them.

Of Queensland's expenses alone, that \$388,000 could have employed eight additional police officers, purchased 15 police cars or purchased 100 fax machines for the smaller stations that do not currently have them, and we need to correct that position. Alternatively, it could have paid for eight prison officers or 320 bulletproof vests. It was certainly a very significant cost to the Queensland community and it was just the cost of police expenses expended in tracing those criminals while they were on the run. Sadly, I think that they escaped because some systems were not put in place by the previous Government.

Mr MUSGROVE: Throughout the 1997-98 Budget MPS and the 1998-99 Budget MPS the terms Police Beats, Beat Patrols and Police Beat Shopfronts are referred to. Could you explain to the Committee what each of those terms means and briefly explain what the Police Service and the Government have done to provide Police Beats and other forms of community/police contact?

Mr BARTON: Police Beats are generally established in a relatively small geographic area. They are traditionally where we have a police officer responsible for delivering the primary policing in an area. I frequently liken them to having the old small-town country cop in that there is one person who lives in the community who knows the community and is responsible for primary crime prevention initiatives. The community gets to know them and they get to know the community. Basically, they operate like the small-town police officer. There are a number of different approaches within that. Some are residential, whereby they live in the area. In others, such as in one of the early trials which is still continuing in West End, you can have multi-officer approaches. They do not necessarily live in the area but walk a beat or ride a bike around that beat area to keep tabs on it.

The other well-known initiative is Police Shopfronts. In recent years, society has changed quite considerably. We used to have police stations and a lot of small shops on street corners. That is where people shopped. These days the major shopping centres are where people go to shop and to interact with others. They are the big crowd areas.

The CHAIRMAN: Not in all suburbs.

Mr BARTON: Not in all suburbs, but I am sure yours will be well and truly looked after. Major

shopping centres are one of the major areas where the community interacts. For example, at the Logan Hyperdome, which you would know well, Mr Musgrove, because it is near your electorate and mine, there are picture theatres, major department stores, a lot of specialty stores and a Police Beat with several officers attached to it. The police are there preventing crime, whether it is around the car parks or those shops. It provides an important link and liaison between the community and the Police Service. Again, I make the point that we will be putting into place this year 12 additional Police Beats. Those might be either residential or involve police walking a beat in the area. We will also put into place six new shopfronts. I have had the pleasure of officially opening several new shopfronts in the three months that I have been the Minister.

We also have Beat Patrols, such as the ones that are in the Queen Street Mall or the Brunswick Street Mall, which is now the largest Police Beat in Australia. It can have up to about 55 officers attached to it. There is a range of them, but they are designed to meet the needs of that particular community.

If I could have your indulgence—I answered a question earlier of Mr Grice. I know we are picking into your time a bit, but the actual strength of the Queensland Police Service—this is a later figure—at 23 September was 6,949. We have some graduates coming through the system right now. In December 1998, when we will see a group of I think 140 graduates, for the first time the Queensland Police Service's strength will exceed 7,000.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I refer to page 1-40 of the Budget papers and in particular to a line item which refers to the watch-house upgrades. It is about six lines down from the top. I refer also to the commitment made by you in Opposition that you would ensure funding for an upgrade of the Coolangatta watch-house. Has that funding been allocated in that \$1.7m that is for upgrades across the State?

Mr BARTON: Yes, it certainly is. The short answer is: yes. Around \$600,000 has been provided to upgrade the Coolangatta watch-house out of the funding included in that line item in the MPS. The existing Coolangatta watch-house was decommissioned. Once this expenditure is finished it will be recommissioned and upgraded to include two covered exercise areas, and five cells with overnight accommodation for seven detainees. This will assist in effectively processing prisoners arriving at the watch-house. The charging area will also be upgraded in the watch-house facility. It enhances the safety of the public, employees and persons in custody. As part of that, because we need to ensure that watch-houses are right up to speed, it will have the necessary duress alarms and surveillance systems to make sure that if anybody is in trouble they can get the attention of the watch-house keeper. The watch-house keepers can also ensure by monitoring video surveillance systems that people are safe and secure while they are there.

The upgraded facilities are also in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into

Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The watch-house is co-located with the Coolangatta Court House. An important aim of the upgrade program is to seek co-location with the courts to ensure that we have safe transfers of prisoners from the watch-house to the courts. The Coolangatta watch-house achieves that aim at no extra cost because of its proximity to the courthouse. It also eliminates the duplication of holding cells, vehicle locks and so on that would otherwise be necessary so that people can be transferred safely into and out of vehicles. One of the problems that we have with transferring prisoners is a high very cost on the Queensland Police Service. We want to make sure that we have good conditions for the members of the Police Service who work in watch-houses. The other watch-houses that are priorities for this year are Ayr, Beenleigh, Cairns, Coolangatta, Inala, Innisfail and Maroochydore.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for questions by Government members has expired.

Mr GRICE: Minister, I refer to your embargoed press release that I have been able to get hold of since 1.30 this afternoon. This predates the Dorothy Dixier that enabled you to give the figure of \$388,361 in your answer. As you have set the precedent by providing to the public the costing of the escape of Brendon Abbott, I would ask you to detail the individual costs to police of all escapes between December 1989 and February 1996.

Mr BARTON: I do not think I am going to get into that game.

Mr GRICE: You started it.

Mr BARTON: I do not know that I started anything. We have prepared a press release for release to the media. We have detailed a cost that is associated with material that is before this Budget Estimates Committee this year. The costings associated with the period 1989 through to 1996 have so many whiskers on them. I would not possibly have that detail here with me today, nor would I be expected to have it here.

Mr GRICE: No, but it is about as relevant as the cost of returning an escaped grub to justice under the previous Government. That is the point I was making.

Mr BARTON: You are entitled to your view, Mr Grice.

Mr GRICE: I always have one. I refer now to the Labor Party's previous opposition to the construction of the Townsville Police Academy. Can I ask your opinion now about what the future of this academy is under your Government?

Mr BARTON: My opinion about the Townsville Police Academy is precisely as it was at the time when the academy was initially opened. My view, as I publicly expressed at that point in time, was that we should not have seen that academy rushed into service in a second-best way. It was rushed into service by my predecessor and your colleague, Mr Cooper, as a political decision, because he had made that promise at the Mundingburra by-election and possibly at the earlier State election in 1995. It was

put into service without residential accommodation—

Mr GRICE: You have just been telling us how you rushed into Police Beats and you are ahead of program with that. If some things are the right thing to do, you do them.

Mr BARTON: You ask the questions, Mr Grice, and I answer them. The question I am answering is with regard to the Police Academy in Townsville. My public view at that point in time was that any academy in Townsville should have been properly planned. It should not have only had a capacity to have training rooms to train police recruits. There should also have been a residential academy. I will not go into the recent experiences which are a good reason for why there should be residential academies. We are now working towards a program to upgrade the Townsville academy as well as the Oxley academy. We will ensure that accommodation for recruits in Townsville is put into place as soon as possible and that it is not at a resort hotel at very high costs to the Queensland Police Service. My view is precisely the same as it was then. I support having an academy in north Queensland.

That academy is training at least 40 recruits per year and I think every second year there is a second group of 40. In effect, each second year 80 recruits go through. There is a need, particularly if we are going to get the sort of numbers through that we have promised, and we are delivering. There will be 317 additional recruits this year, which is a lot more than the 252 last year and the 160 from the year before. It is more in line with the sort of numbers that were achieved during the early years of the Labor Government of Wayne Goss. I support the Townsville Police Academy, but the difference between us and the previous coalition Government is that we are going to get that academy right.

Mr GRICE: You will tempt me if you keep comparing one to the other. A lot of work has been done by the Queensland police force with the homosexual community in recent years which is helping to overcome some of the traditional hesitations, if you like. How do you intend to progress this work? Is there an intention to expand on it?

Mr BARTON: I think I will detail that. I should indicate at the beginning that I applaud the work that has been done because there does need to be a good relationship between minority groups of whatever type and the Queensland Police Service. In terms of progressing that in the future, I do not envisage that we will be reaching the situation of New South Wales where police officers are marching in uniform in the gay mardi gras, but there are certainly very good relationships between the Queensland Police Service, all the various ethnic groups—the ATSI groups—and the homosexual community because we have all reached a position at which people are not homophobic about those issues any more as they were in coalition Governments prior to 1989. I will ask the commissioner or his deputy if they are able to add to that issue in terms of how the relationship is.

Comr O'SULLIVAN: We have liaison officers in every region and district. I will ask the deputy commissioner to enlarge on that.

Dep. Comr Aldrich: We have for some years had a service liaison officer with the gay, lesbian and transsexual community. In the last 12 months we had established at least a liaison officer in each region and also in addition to that in many districts. We have had a number of acknowledgments of the work we are doing in that liaison. That is what it is; it is a liaison with that particular section of the community in the same way as the Minister indicated we are trying to develop liaisons or partnerships with other sections of the community. That is about the extent of our activity in that area.

Mr GRICE: I refer now to a comment made on 25 May by the then Opposition Leader, Mr Beattie. He pledged to replace and upgrade forensic science equipment for DNA identification. What funding has been allocated for this equipment, and where and when will the replacements and the upgrade occur?

Mr BARTON: I am just looking for that detail. It is my understanding that we have provided the funding for two extra scientists for the John Tonge Centre and also some additional funding for equipment and I think a building for the John Tonge Centre. It is under design at this point. That is a centre that is under the control of the Department of Health, which does the DNA testing for the Queensland Police Service. We have been interacting at Minister to Minister level between the Minister for Health and me both about that funding and about that support. The building is now under design but, as I understand it, we have funded two additional scientists in there to ensure that we do keep that centre right up to speed in terms of providing for the DNA testing that the Queensland Police Service requires.

Personnel from the scientific section of the Queensland Police Service have also received training and provided advice to the National Institute of Forensic Scientists concerning the Queensland perspective on the establishment of a national criminal investigation DNA database called NCIDD. This subject was initially discussed at the Australian Police Ministers' conference in March 1990 because DNA testing does hold great potential as a means of facilitating identification of offenders and reducing the costs associated with the investigative process. That is something that we have been working through.

Quite a lot of funding is also being expended in terms of scenes of crime officers and scientific equipment that I know I have been looking at as I move around police stations in this State. I am sure that people would agree that, in one current trial in which someone has been charged—they have not gone before the court yet—DNA was certainly what led to that charging. We are very supportive, and the Queensland Police Service is working very solidly in terms of providing that additional capacity through the Health Department and through scenes of crime officers within the service itself.

Mr GRICE: I am aware of some time difficulties with regard to some of the personnel from the Crime

Commission. Would anybody have any objection if I asked some of those questions now and perhaps we can dispense with the Crime Commission?

Mr BARTON: Do you want the Police Service people to come back?

Mr GRICE: No, I would think not. I do not expect this to take very long at all.

Mr BARTON: You will just have to give us a few minutes for the changeover.

Mr GRICE: I heard you earlier mention a \$3m figure. Can you advise if any other resources would be diverted to the Crime Commission during the balance of this budget year?

Mr BARTON: I have to put it in the context of the budget. In terms of the budget, we have applied to the Queensland Crime Commission exactly the same budget level as was provided by the previous coalition Government for this financial year, and that is the provision of the \$3m budget. I make that point because it is exactly the same figure. In terms of reviewing that, here we are at Budget Estimates. I do not anticipate and neither does the Government that any additional funding in terms of the budget will be provided to the Queensland Crime Commission for this financial year. The Crime Commissioner is here with me. He is very aware that it is \$3m. That is precisely what was advised to him by my predecessor and the previous Government, and that is what has been advised this time. I dare say it is like anything. We would all like to have bigger budgets than we have and we all look at what can be done with bigger budgets—whether it be the Queensland Police Service budget, the Crime Commission budget or your home budget or my home budget—but \$3m it is.

There are some arrangements in place for corporate support arrangements with the Queensland Police Service—and this is being done, as I understand it, on a cost basis—but the higher level financial management, human resources management, administration and logistics and information management are being provided on a fee-for-service basis by the Queensland Police Service to the Queensland Crime Commission. That allows the Queensland Crime Commission to have an operational focus rather than an administrative focus, because it is important, with the very important role that the Crime Commission has to play in relation to organised crime and paedophilia within the structures as they exist right now, that they be free of having to get too bogged down in administrative arrangements of that nature.

The fee-for-service levy is yet to be finalised between the Queensland Police Service and the Crime Commission, but if I have understood the question correctly, if we are looking at what is the budget funding level—and, of course, there are Police Service members attached to the Crime Commission as well who have to work within budget—Mr Carmody has a \$3m budget, and Mr Carmody is busily and effectively cutting his suit with the cloth that he has available.

Mr GRICE: Minister, do you have a criterion or a group of criteria that will be used to judge the success or otherwise of the Crime Commission and,

one would therefore imagine, the continuation of the Crime Commission?

Mr BARTON: That is very difficult to lay down at this point, but certainly the Crime Commission is a new organisation within the existing structures. It has a huge responsibility. I am not going to speculate about what that future may be. The law as it stands in this State provides for a Queensland Crime Commission. It provides for me to be the line Minister, but as you would be aware from the debate on the Crime Commission Act last year, the Crime Commission is, on a day-to-day basis, managed by the Crime Commissioner, Mr Carmody, in whom I have great faith—I was on the selection panel for his position at that time—and there is a management committee that the Crime Commission answers to.

I am its budget Minister, but in a similar way to the Criminal Justice Commission I do not have a role in the day-to-day management of the Crime Commission. I think we will have to sit back in this intervening period and have a good look at just what the performance and successes of the Crime Commission are, knowing full well that it is a new organisation with responsibilities in areas that are very sensitive and in some ways could be described as awesome, if we are looking at the criminal paedophilia area and the organised crime area. We will make value judgments somewhere down the track.

Mr GRICE: As everybody would be aware, both of those targets are very difficult to judge in terms of success or otherwise because of the required confidentiality.

Mr BARTON: I am not trying to jump into the CJC area, but I know it is a parallel that Mr Grice and I share. We have both been members of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. The need for confidentiality is paramount. That is the only word to describe it. The Crime Commission deals with the pinnacle of issues that one has to be confidential about. I know that that does make it very difficult to go out and in a broad sense have the public debate about what is successful and what is not. I have had the opportunity on several occasions to have a good look at the work of the New South Wales Crime Commission and to talk to senior members of the Police Service, at the time at least, about whether it was successful or not. It is an area in which it is very hard to make value judgments and go out and justify them publicly one way or the other.

As Mr Grice is aware, the Labor Party had a policy before the election that said we did not believe that there should be a Crime Commission, but there is a Crime Commission. While there is a law saying that there is a Crime Commission, I will be ensuring that we have the best Crime Commission we reasonably can, which is something that I told the Parliament last year when Labor was in Opposition. We will just have to wait.

Mr GRICE: But you are not prepared at this point to guarantee that the Crime Commission will appear in next year's Budget papers?

Mr BARTON: I am not going to speculate about what may or may not occur somewhere down the road, any more than Mr Grice is going to tell me

what the Opposition's tactics are over the next 12 months.

Mr GRICE: You will be a moving target.

Mr BARTON: I would want to make it very clear, though, that I do not have the Crime Commission as a target at all. We have a Crime Commission and currently the structures are set. It is important that we all understand that the primary responsibilities for criminal paedophilia rest with the Crime Commission—not with the Police Service and not with the CJC—and that the primary responsibilities for organised crime rest with the Crime Commission.

There are alternatives available which in my party's view, as we expressed prior to the election, were better ways to address those very significant problems. But while we have the laws we currently have, it is also paramount that we all support Tim Carmody and his team at the Crime Commission to address the criminal paedophilia issues and the organised crime issues, as I know the Police Commissioner and his team and the CJC are at this point. That is what the current laws of this State say is the method we are going to use to address those issues, and Tim Carmody and his team will have my strongest possible support to effectively address those issues.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for Opposition questions has expired. I would ask members of the Committee from the Government side to proceed with some questions. We will stay with the Crime Commission.

Mr FOURAS: What are the key aims and objectives of Project Axis and how does it link with the Forde inquiry and Task Force Argos in the Queensland Police Service?

Mr BARTON: Project Axis is the strategic project aimed at evaluating risks for dealing with criminal paedophilia so that future investigative outcomes, especially in relation to organised, serial or systematic offending, are significantly improved and so that we also address the incidence and impact of child sex offences within Queensland to ensure that they are minimised. The key objectives of the project are to determine the proportion of child sex offences committed by family members, as opposed to those committed by people outside the family.

This might sound a little clinical, but I think we are all aware that this is the first very solid look at paedophilia issues in this State. We need to identify a process and techniques for targeting child sex offenders and bringing them to justice. The project also is set to establish intelligence and investigative indicators for identifying offenders. It is looking at worldwide initiatives for rehabilitation of child sex offenders. We need to also assess the programs that are currently out there as to whether they are actually working, and that is something that is of interest to me, wearing my Corrective Services hat.

The project is identifying the adequacy of existing oversight and accountability systems with institutions for prevention and reporting of sexual

abuse of children in care, identifying options for minimising harm to that group and identifying which legislation and guidelines are most effective for doing that. Another of its objectives is to identify both new and old methodologies for recruitment, seduction, offence concealment and networking. There is a great concern that there are paedophile networks. We have seen that with the inquiries in New South Wales in recent times. This project is also looking at that in a Queensland context.

Other objectives include: determining the level of recidivism amongst people who have convictions, and not just those who have convictions, but people who are known sex offenders or child sex offenders; valuing and monitoring recidivists; assessing the nature and extent of criminal paedophilia in Queensland; and assessing the relationship between child sex offences and other criminal offences. I could go on for quite some time, but I think I have given you an overview of the relevance of the project. There has been a great deal of hysteria and paranoia and a lot of misinformation about paedophilia in this State. This project aims to get a real handle on what is actually occurring out there and what are the practical methods to address it.

Mr FOURAS: The link to the Forde inquiry was the other part of my question.

Mr BARTON: The Crime Commissioner, Tim Carmody, recently met with Mrs Leneen Forde to ensure that there is no duplication of effort and that any confusion between the roles of those two inquiries is avoided. There is always the potential for that to occur. They are in the process of developing agreements on how relevant information is exchanged. The Axis Project Team is currently formulating a collection plan to ensure that relevant information is collected and managed in the best possible manner between those two inquiries. Recent publicity concerning Project Axis attracted telephone calls, including one from an Internet user, resulting in two sites containing child pornography being uncovered. Investigations into the originators are continuing.

There are also a lot of investigations that are being passed to New South Wales because of their recent experience, and they are providing information. There is a real consciousness that the Forde inquiry is picking up and looking at past experience in one of the key objective areas of the Crime Commission with regard to Project Axis and criminal paedophilia. That should not be duplicated. The Forde inquiry is looking at that past, and it will ultimately be making recommendations on legislative change. The worst thing that we could have happen would be a waste of resources if the Forde inquiry was reinventing a wheel that the Crime Commission had already built, or vice versa.

Mr MUSGROVE: As you would be aware, accountability and ethical practices are critical for any public sector agency, particularly in relation to agencies dealing with law and order. I am wondering what steps have been taken by the Crime Commission to ensure that it accords with the community's expectations in relation to ethical standards and accountability.

Mr BARTON: You are dead right. As a public sector unit, the Crime Commission has a key responsibility to set and maintain the highest level of public accountability and ethical practice. It is currently in the process of documenting its own strategies to meet the requirement of Government policy and the expectations of the community. They are being assisted in this task by both the Queensland Police Service and the Criminal Justice Commission, who have significant experience in those areas. In the interim, the Queensland Crime Commission is observing the Queensland Police Service's directives and guidelines on ethical standards.

The current measures that are being put into place are a code of conduct being drafted to complement the induction manual for staff of the QCC. Security clearances are being required for all staff, and they are set at a higher standard than the requirement for routine public sector employment. So things that might be considered appropriate for a normal member of the Public Service are not necessarily appropriate at the QCC. The QCC's security system allows for checking of access to Queensland Crime Commission premises at all times. Regular audits are being undertaken of information management systems so that people know there is an audit trail. Risk management arrangements and anti-corruption strategies are currently being developed with the expert assistance of the Criminal Justice Commission and the Queensland Police Service. Staff recruitment and employment is based on a limited tenure policy. They are very keen to ensure that we do not get people staying there for long periods and becoming the place rather than employees being a key part of the place.

The legislative provisions of the Crime Commission Act require the management committee to receive and investigate complaints against Queensland Crime Commission officers. The Crime Commission Act also requires incidents of official misconduct to be referred to the Criminal Justice Commission. So the accountability measures also have an impact from the management committee point of view. Accountability measures constraining the Crime Commission's use of hearing and investigative powers include investigations mounted on a strictly referral basis only from the management committee. So even the Crime Commissioner does not have the capacity to determine to start individual investigations; it is on a very strict referral basis from the management committee. The management committee has the power to give binding directions in relation to the use of investigative powers. The management committee is inclusive of community representatives with demonstrated commitments to civil liberties.

The CHAIRMAN: I think you have partly answered this question in response to a previous question, but in terms of corporate support I understand that the Queensland Police Service has agreed to provide the corporate framework for administration and information management, and that is a cost saving. How does it work in practice, though, and how does it assist the Crime Commission? More importantly, does it impact on the

Crime Commission's independence—any of that support? Do they feel that they are being impinged upon at all?

Mr BARTON: I am fairly sure that the Crime Commission does not believe they are being impinged upon. This is very much a matter of practical assistance in areas where the standards are essentially the same. I will try not to draw parallels and paint pictures, but if people have the same needs and essentially the same standards, then there is no need to reinvent the wheel to make that a reality.

Certainly I had spoken up to the point before of talking about various support mechanisms being provided on a fee-for-service basis. That is not yet totally finalised, but it is tentatively running at around 10% of base salary. So the Police Service is providing support. The Police Service has costs in terms of that high-level financial management, human resources management, administrative support and information management systems. The Police Service and the Crime Commission will reassess the impact on both their organisations' budgets once the level of activity and interaction between the two organisations has been assessed over a period. We are all appreciative that the Crime Commission is a fledgling organisation at this time.

A memorandum of understanding covering the functions, activities and tasks that will include responsibilities and obligations of each agency is being developed to cover the support arrangements. During this year, that MOU will be finalised—although I sometimes shudder when I hear the term "memorandum of understanding" or "MOU" these days. The Crime Commission will reach agreement on fee for service in line with the functions, activities and tasks with the QPS and review at year's end any required modifications or enhancements.

They are probably, in the sense of your question, the practical ways it is being achieved. The Crime Commission's budget does, in fact, also flow through the Police Service. Much of the role of the Crime Commission rested with the Police Service up until the point of the formation of the Crime Commission. It is most appropriate for a small organisation to be able to get those services in the most cost-effective way that it can.

If there are shortcomings in that, I would expect the Crime Commissioner and/or the Police Commissioner to come to me and say "We need to relook at this" when we are framing the budget next year or if there need to be changes in legislation to make the fit better. Both agencies are crucial to ensuring that we address the crime levels, particularly the interaction of the Police Service's support for the Crime Commission and vice versa. Subsection 2 of section 4 of the Crime Commission Act states that it is the Parliament's intention that the investigation of criminal activity be conducted by the Crime Commission and other law enforcement agencies working cooperatively as partners to achieve optimal use of available law enforcement resources. That is a part of the Act that was brought forward by the previous Government. We fully support that in reality, because that is all about getting the best

bang for our buck in terms of addressing those crunch law and order issues of organised crime, criminal paedophilia and major crime.

Mr FOURAS: How is the Crime Commission ensuring that it can produce timely and accurate strategic intelligence assessments as required by their Act?

Mr BARTON: The Crime Commission's Intelligence Section has been staffed by personnel who are very experienced in the completion of complex and timely strategic intelligence assessments. The Crime Commissioner has brought in the best people in that field. They have a specialised Information Retrieval Centre called the IRC. In our past lives, Pat Purcell and I would refer to the IRC as the Industrial Relations Commission. That centre assures timely access for the retrieval of relevant information. The IRC is a central point for obtaining that information. The profile information it holds contributes to strategic projects, many of which are complex profiling exercises. It also provides a central point for liaison with external agencies to cut down on duplication. When new agencies are holding intelligence information, there is always a risk of a massive duplication instead of a sharing of information. Liaisons have been developed with local and interstate law enforcement agencies, building contacts with a cross-section of potential clients to ensure that assessments are founded in the broadest possible knowledge base.

The completion of one of their projects, Project Krystal, is aimed at assessing the current criminal environment in Queensland and developing a methodology for the determination of priorities through the application of a risk assessment matrix. Project Krystal embodies methodology that will provide a mechanism for continually generating future focuses for strategic intelligence projects. The IRC constantly monitors the developments and changes in the Queensland criminal environment. The Queensland Crime Commission Intelligence Section maintains flexibility to react to its priorities whether they are short-term tactical or long-term strategic projects to exploit opportunities as directed by the Crime Commissioner. They are also developing mechanisms so that intelligence generated in the course of tactical operations feeds directly back into their strategic projects so that they increase the pool of knowledge that they have on crucial intelligence areas.

Mr MUSGROVE: With respect to the energies of the Crime Commission in gathering information, one aspect is the exchange of information between the different law enforcement agencies and the other relevant entities. Has the Crime Commission experienced any difficulties with that exchange of information?

Mr BARTON: I understand that they have had some concerns about delays in some areas. The Federal election delayed finalisation of many arrangements, because they are still progressing arrangements with some Federal agencies to address the requirements for changes to Government legislation which governs the release of information. I might be a little rusty on this. I will ask the Crime

Commissioner to answer. In relation to the Taxation Administration Act, the Telecommunications Act and the Telecommunications (Interception) Act, there need to be changes to the Federal legislation to list new organisations that are going to be able to have access to various pieces of information. The Federal election has caused some delays in that regard. Of course, we all have to have elections. That is one area where we have some delays. That has created some problems. I will ask the Crime Commissioner to add some specifics from his experience.

Mr CARMODY: There have been some obstacles because of the timing of the calling of elections, both State and Federal. The Acts that the Minister has mentioned require a law enforcement agency to be defined as an eligible agency to receive information directly. In conjunction with every Act of Parliament, as you know, there is always the "Ways and Means Act". We use that often indirectly to obtain authorised dissemination of information from other law enforcement agencies that have direct access. Because we are a member of the National Task Force of the National Crime Authority we are entitled to receive information that they could obtain directly until such time as we have direct access ourselves. Those arrangements are put in place as a stopgap measure to ensure that we do not fall through the cracks and miss out on vital information. That is one example of how law enforcement agencies at both State and Federal levels now work much more cooperatively in partnership to achieve common public interest objectives. We have good working relations with all the law enforcement agencies. The Queensland Police Service helps to fill in information gaps because of some legislative delays or efficiencies.

One of the difficulties that we experience with the Crime Commission Act itself is that we require permission from the management committee to receive information from non-law enforcement entities. Entities could be very wide-ranging. That sometimes causes delay for me to get specific permission in between management committee meetings. That is all it is; it is a question of delay. There is provision in the Act so that if I need something urgently from the management committee I can get it by flying minute, which we sometimes resort to.

The CHAIRMAN: That ends the Government members' 20 minutes. I understand that the Opposition does not have any further questions for the Crime Commission. We would like to thank you for coming up to the table and answering the questions. We release you for the duration of the rest of the hearing. As we have further questions about the Police portfolio, would the Police team please return to the table.

Mr GRICE: I notice in the 7th paragraph of page 1-8 of the MPS that this Government has reversed its opposition to school-based policing programs. What can you say—generously—about the achievement of the coalition initiative that forced you to change your mind? Be generous.

Mr BARTON: I would not like to give you too many pats on the back. I should not be too generous

here today. The school-based policing initiatives are ones that fall within the broad support that we have for our Crime Prevention Task Force, which I have already mentioned. We know from our experience and from our development of our crime prevention policies that there are many problems with young offenders, some as young as eight years of age and some younger. That is why we have been very supportive of groups such as the Peacemakers project, too. We have already determined to provide some additional support for that out at Goodna State School. It is doing an excellent job. So it will not be any surprise to you that we have, in fact, not only kept the school-based policing but also in our Budget we have enhanced it. In fact, we have matched the additional funding that was being put into school-based policing by the coalition in its May Budget, which fell over when the House was prorogued, because of the very fact that we know that you have to reach offending people at that early age and take some positive action to change their views.

There was \$250,000 allocated in the 1997-98 Budget towards that expansion of operational costs associated with school-based policing. In terms of this year, \$118,000 is the additional funding that we have matched. Frankly that was an area that, if it had not been in the coalition's Budget, we would have had to invent it, anyway, or would have had to pull in funding for it through the Crime Prevention Task Force at a later date.

The Police Service is running an excellent program in that regard. I have spoken to a number of people who have been involved in the school-based policing initiatives. In fact, quite by accident, when I was campaigning in north Queensland during the election campaign I rolled into the hotel at which they were having their annual conference. The police officers who were then, and still are, the school-based police officers, their supervisors within the Police Service and the principals of those schools were present. I had the opportunity to have a good discussion with them about how it was working in reality. Frankly, we believe that that is a good program. Full marks to the Queensland Police Service in terms of the role that they have performed. Those additional five positions at a cost of an additional \$118,000 is for something that we believe is worth while continuing.

It is a key partnership. It is not just the Queensland Police Service; it is Education Queensland as well. Going back to my comment about having had that opportunity to talk informally about the experience with the principals of the schools, along with the school-based police officers and the supervisors within the Police Service of those school-based police officers, I give full marks to the Police Service for an excellent program, which we are supporting.

The CHAIRMAN: Next question, Mr Grice.

Mr GRICE: Thank you. You have decided to axe the proposed funding by the previous Government for a new water police vehicle for Pormpuraaw. What implications will this decision have for police effectiveness in the far north,

particularly considering the great degree of collusive agency comment with regard to the difficulties of policing correctly the far-north islands?

Mr BARTON: You have us a little bit nonplussed. I can assure you that we are very supportive of the enhancement of policing in the north, and water police generally. I know that vessels were ordered before I got here. I have also participated in the naming of two new, significant water police vessels since I have been in this role. The commissioner and I travelled to Cape York and Thursday Island and while we were there we looked at the role of the water police on Thursday Island. We want to go back and have a closer look when we can, because we were doing a run through police stations in the far north and Cape York and on Aboriginal communities to talk to them about their problems.

Mr GRICE: Is that funding still in place as far as you are aware?

Mr BARTON: We are just trying to track it down. Where was the location proposed for the vessel that is supposed to have been cancelled?

Mr GRICE: Pormpuraaw.

Mr BARTON: My understanding is that it is still intended to put that vessel in there. I know that when the commissioner and I were at Lockhart River, a police vessel had been delivered recently. When we were at Bamaga, a police vessel was scheduled to be delivered. Bamaga was most anxious to get their hands on it. It was at Cairns, because they wanted to run up the hours to do its first service—it is a short period before the first service—before they delivered it to Bamaga. My understanding is that if Pormpuraaw is scheduled for a vessel, it will be getting the vessel—if it has not got it already in that intervening time. That may be the problem.

Mr GRICE: I can find no trace of it.

Mr BARTON: We have maintained that funding. That is what we might need to check. I cannot give you the answer off the top of my head. The coalition's last Budget was put into the Parliament in May. This one has been put in in September. It just may well be that that vessel had already been provided in that intervening period, because Pormpuraaw is not one of the locations that the commissioner and I visited.

But I can assure you that we have not cut this program at all and any vessels that were already programmed to be followed through will certainly be followed through. We agree with you fully. We have talked to people in the cape about the need for those vessels, and we are fully supportive of it.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I think what may be a bit confusing is that on page 1-3 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements—and I have marked it—about halfway down there is information in regard to vessels and where they have been supplied. The place that Mr Grice referred to is not included in that. It says, "Water police assets have been upgraded in line"——

Mr BARTON: Upgraded, yes. I can assure you that there is certainly no change to the program. In

fact, we will be opening the new Whyte Island Water Police facility in the next week or so. In terms of replacement vessels for the Gold Coast, Hervey Bay, Cooktown and Redland Bay, we are proceeding with those. The program is proceeding as it was originally designed.

It is a 15-year rolling plan of progressive replacements or additions. That is still in place. We have not interfered with that at all. The Police Service has not changed it, and I certainly have not made any cuts.

Mr GRICE: Now that we have mentioned that, it may have slipped the printer's notice or something. At least it has been brought to your attention.

Mr BARTON: It may be that. We will check that. As I say, we need to check because it may well be that it has been provided in that intervening period. That may well be the case, too. We are following that through.

Mr GRICE: I refer to a comment of 16 May 1997 where the Labor Party promised a community-based Police Beat at Strathpine and Bray Park. It also promised to establish a Police Beat shopfront at Strathpine as well as looking at the need for another shopfront at Eatons Hill/Albany Creek. While I see that Bray Park is to get a Police Beat, what funding has been allocated for the Police Beat shopfront at Strathpine? How are investigations progressing for the Eatons Hill/Albany Creek shopfront?

Mr BARTON: It is my understanding that the Police Beat shopfront is already out there.

Dep. Comr ALDRICH: At Strathpine.

Mr GRICE: At Strathpine.

Mr BARTON: That is one that we had promised during a by-election initially. My understanding is that that is there. The Bray Park one is there. In terms of Strathpine, I would need to go and find my list again. There is another one in that area. I do not think it is called Bray Park; the Police Beat shopfront is at the Westfield Strathpine Shopping Centre.

Mr GRICE: You were to look at the possibility or the feasibility of one for Eatons Hill/Albany Creek.

Mr BARTON: I do not have that in front of me and I am not immediately familiar with it. It sounds like one of Russell's promises to me.

Mr GRICE: No; 16 May 1997.

Mr BARTON: I am assured by Dick Warry that they are all being looked at. It is not one of the 12 that we have announced at this point in time. As you are aware, we have promised 10 additional Police Beats. The new Police Beats that we have announced are at Kallangur and Bray Park—it is Kallangur instead of Strathpine. There has been a fair bit of agitation and lobbying for a police station in the Eatons Hill/Albany Creek area as well. All of the Police Beats and Shopfronts are being looked at and assessed. We promised an additional 10 and in this Budget we have provided funding for the additional 10. From my perspective, I would expect that the Police Service already has the capacity to put some additional in there within its budget. I do not expect that the 12 that we have announced as part of this

Budget will be the only 12 Police Beats that will be put into place during the three-year term. It is something that is under continuous evaluation.

Mr GRICE: I now refer you to page 1-14 of the MPS. The number of motor vehicle theft reports taken is expected to be between 16,500 and 20,000. Why do you expect that increase in motor vehicle thefts, which is up from 16,336 in the previous year, in light of your Government's enlightened planning for the Police Service?

Mr BARTON: I might have to defer to the Police Service to give you the detail about why we expect there to be such a significant jump. I am very sure that their predictions are based on trends, that is, a prediction based on operational experience.

I have not been to my first Australian Police Minister's Council meeting yet, but I can say that we are also part of a national motor vehicle theft task force that was established by the National Anti-Crime Strategy. The task force has published a report, National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Plan, recommending, amongst other things, the establishment of a national motor vehicle theft prevention council. That is an area that the Police Service is taking very seriously and the Government is taking it very seriously as well, in terms of providing support for the Police Service. If you talk about the normal person, particularly the normal working person, a motor vehicle is the second biggest investment that they make. They have a house and they have a motor vehicle.

It has just been drawn to my attention that the unofficial statistics indicate that Queensland has recorded a substantial reduction in motor vehicle theft for the 1997-98 financial year, on top of the 6% reduction in the previous year. What were you referring to?

Mr GRICE: If there were two reductions, why are you predicting that they will be higher?

The CHAIRMAN: It is page 1-14, at about the second last line in regard to the Performance/Activity Indicator in that table.

Mr BARTON: They are not going up. I have just looked at that line. The prediction for 1997-98 was that it would be between 16,500 and 20,000. The actual measure was 16,336, which is right at the bottom of the prediction area. We will not quibble about 164 cars among 16,500. There has certainly been a reduction trend. The Police Service is putting a big effort into that area and we are part of a national program to put a big effort into that area. I dare say that that level of good work has caused the reduction, but we do not intend to be complacent about it. The prediction for 1998-99 is precisely the prediction that it was for the last financial year. In other words, we are not going to rest on our laurels, but it is a line-ball prediction. It does not look like a big issue to me.

Mr GRICE: Turning to page 1-17 of the MPS, the second last paragraph mentions that 260,130 vehicles travelling over the speed limit were checked by cameras. The MPS further states that there was a percentage of infringement detections that were not clear enough to proceed with prosecution. What

percentage are not clear and what action is being proposed to alleviate those identification problems? In other words, is it an equipment problem or a condition problem? What is the problem?

Mr BARTON: I will see if we have some hard information on that. The difference between the number of vehicles detected and the number of notices issued is the result of an adjudication process that eliminates some vehicles for reasons such as the number plate being unclear or more than one vehicle being within the radar beam. The Traffic Camera Office conducts the adjudication. I do not know whether you need more information than that.

Mr GRICE: The thrust of my question was, are you having problems with the equipment?

Mr BARTON: No. I think it is fair to say that the equipment has had a lot of use and we do need to enhance that. There has been a particular problem with speed cameras, where people going in the other direction get in the beam. Despite the campaigns of the Transport Department and the Police Service to get people to change number plates that are not really clear, that is part of the problem.

Mr GRICE: I am pleased that we provided you with the right equipment in this particular case.

Mr BARTON: It has been pointed out to me that new equipment is in the process of being introduced, which is the new laser radar speed equipment, which will eliminate all of those problems. The laser can pick up the well-known leadfoots. It will pick you up in an instant—zap—when you are 600 metres away and it will get the number plate clearly. That is why I like my car having a cruise control, although at the moment I prefer to have a driver. I was going to say "well-known leadfoots like Allan", but I am not sure what his traffic record is like.

Mr GRICE: Only on the racetrack. I refer to the bottom of page 1-18, which states—

"To support the effectiveness of the RBT program, an evaluation of roadside breath-testing equipment was conducted and new technology identified that is capable of data storage."

What new technology has been identified, what funding has been allocated and when do you intend for its purchase and implementation?

Mr BARTON: I am trying to be specific in answer to your question. The planned performance for this financial year is aimed at improving the coordination of RBT activities throughout the State. The service aims to achieve a breath-testing ration of 0.85 tests per licensed driver in Queensland during 1999. Therefore, next year virtually all of us can expect to be breath tested once in the year. I must admit that I have already been tested twice this year. That frightened the living daylights out of the young constables who stuck their heads into my car window and told me that I had to blow in the tube.

Mr GRICE: Can I interrupt for a second, in a positive manner: page 1-19 states that 1.326 million people were random breath tested and for the forthcoming year it is anticipated that between 1.1 million and 1.3 million will be, which is a slight reduction.

Mr BARTON: Again if we are looking at that line, the estimate for the total random breath tests conducted in 1997-98 was between 690,000 and 710,000, and the estimate for 1998-99 is between 1.1 million and 1.3 million. Certainly, the actual measures figure for 1997-98 is \$1.326m.

Mr GRICE: So the projection is less?

Mr BARTON: The projection is based on weather projections, changed enforcement ratios, the tactics based on research and intelligence—

Mr GRICE: Does that not give the impression that there will be fewer RBT tests?

Mr BARTON: There will not be. You have to compare estimates with estimates. It may well be that we got the \$1.326m in the past financial year because the weather was brilliant most of the time.

Mr GRICE: We had a lot of rain.

Mr BARTON: It did not rain that much. You also asked me about high technology. I had not finished addressing that area before you raised this with me. An additional 228 state-of-the-art line alcometers have been purchased and will be distributed to the northern and far-northern regions. So that there will be no arguments, these new devices have the capacity to store data, including readings, dates and times. We have all seen them. I am sure you have seen some of them. I have seen a lot of them. When I am sent tickets that do not give a location, date or time, those really are flawed tickets.

The Police Service is continuing the evaluation of new breath analysis instruments and equipment using state-of-the-art technology. The aim is to improve the accuracy and recording of data from breath analysis. It is expected that the evaluation of newly purchased devices will allow further equipment acquisitions to be considered in 1998-99. The Police Service is also considering the purchase of conventional and four-wheel-drive mini booze buses during this financial year. Queensland Transport and the Police Service are currently considering Travelsafe recommendations dealing with compulsory blood testing and roadside drug testing. The service is considering the infrastructure necessary to address those recommendations, including the provision of blood safes in hospitals and the purchase of blood safe sampling kits. The Police Service is being very proactive in terms of purchasing the latest state-of-the-art equipment and evaluating even newer technology that is coming on line. Instead of the huge booze buses that we have all become used to seeing on the roads, we are looking at smaller ones that can get into other more difficult locations as well.

Mr GRICE: Just as you have appreciated the handing on of good quality equipment to your Government, we will be very receptive and appreciative of the good quality equipment handed over to the next Government.

Mr BARTON: I can assure you that we will buy the best quality equipment. But I am sorry to disappoint you, Allan; we intend to be here for a long, long time.

The CHAIRMAN: That concludes the questions from Opposition members. You are not

giving drivers much of a sporting chance. You are making it very tough.

Mr BARTON: I have even thought about just buying a six-cylinder motor car next time instead of a V8; I can never get to use it any more.

Mr FOURAS: I refer to page 1-34, which mentions the development by the Police Service of strategies to recruit Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Can you explain these strategies and also highlight how successful the Police Service has been in this recruitment drive?

Mr BARTON: We have a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the Police Service. They include the Associate Diploma in Justice Studies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Strategy, which is part of the Police Service's equal employment opportunity management plan from 1996 to the year 2000. Those schemes continue to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the service and they also enhance police awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The traineeship was established in February 1997 and was designed to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to qualify for selection as police recruits. Of the 20 original trainees, 10 were enrolled at the Far North Queensland Institute of TAFE—I think that is the one at Innisfail—and 10 at the Southbank Institute of TAFE. Those trainees undertook the Associate Diploma in Justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Of the intake in January 1998, six members of the trainee program commenced as recruits at the Oxley Police Academy. In addition, three trainees commenced recruit training at the north Queensland campus of the academy. I know how proud the Police Commissioner is of the fact that one trainee—I think he was an ATSIC officer from the Torres Strait—was the dux of the course of the last group to graduate from Townsville. He not only won dux of the course but also just about every other prize on the way through as well. He is a fine example to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that those who wish to join the Police Service can not only get there but be the best of the best if they put in the effort.

We have had two other students from the course who did not hold a traineeship also commence recruit training—one at Oxley and one in Townsville. In February 1998, 13 trainees commenced studies in the associate diploma course at the Southbank TAFE. An additional five trainees commenced these studies at the Far North Queensland Institute of TAFE at Innisfail. In addition to those trainees, there are 34 students currently enrolled in the associate diploma course at Southbank, and 49 are enrolled at the Far North Queensland Institute of TAFE. This really demonstrates that this initiative is an effective tool for increasing the pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruits.

At 30 June this year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprised 3.06% of staff

members and 1.42% of police. I know from my travelling with the Police Commissioner just how committed he and the service are to ensuring that we do get the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Police Service up to much higher levels. We do not just have the police liaison officers who are performing a great role. Also, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police officers are doing a very splendid job wherever they are. We have been saying that to people such as the Police Commissioner's adviser, Coralus Isua, who has been giving the Police Commissioner very good advice on Torres Strait Islander issues. The Police Service is very committed to increasing those numbers, and we will achieve that.

Mr MUSGROVE: Minister, I draw your attention to the major capital works program in appendix A on page 1-39 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. Comparing this program with a similar program in the coalition's Budget released in May of this year, there seems to be a discrepancy regarding the construction of the Roma watch-house. In the coalition's Budget of May the estimated expenditure on the Roma watch-house for this financial year was estimated to be \$724,000. Let us compare apples with apples. In your Ministerial Portfolio Statements the proposed expenditure for this year has been reduced to \$404,000. Could you explain to the Committee the difference of some \$320,000?

Mr BARTON: In reality that discrepancy is not there, if people analyse the Budget. But it certainly confused the member for Western Downs, in whose electorate the Roma watch-house is. He has been publicly attacking me about this difference of \$320,000. But what he failed to do was to have a look at the total cost of construction in both Ministerial Portfolio Statements—the one brought into the Parliament in May and mine. The total cost of construction is exactly the same. It is \$1,134,000. But this is one of those differences that arises simply because the police were able to expend more than was originally allocated during the last financial year. That means that at the beginning of this financial year we need to spend only \$404,000, because the rest of it, including that \$320,000 difference, has already been spent. It was spent before the end of the financial year.

I am sure that Brian Littleproud, the member for Western Downs, will be delighted if he goes for a wander down to the Roma watch-house in his electorate, because that watch-house is expected to be completed at the end of this month—and the end of the month is today. I am a little disappointed that the member has issued useless press releases and made comments in the press. Had the member for Western Downs gone for a walk down the road in Roma in his own electorate, he would have found that there is a brand spanking new watch-house there ready to be opened.

Again, the member for Western Downs has been saying it is a cruel blow if the Government did not go ahead with the new Roma district watch-house. I would like to reassure him. He said that he is relieved that we are continuing with the replacement headquarters. What he did not say is not only are we

going ahead with it, but we are going to spend \$500,000 more on the replacement headquarters at Roma than what the coalition was going to spend. It was going to give him a \$4m replacement headquarters in his electorate; this Government is going to give him a \$4.5m headquarters. That is more jobs for regional Queensland.

I had a good look at the Roma watch-house and police station early last year. At that stage my predecessor had been promising a new Roma headquarters. I know that it was not in last year's Budget, but this Government does not differentiate. We build the replacement facilities where they are needed whether they are in coalition seats, One Nation seats or Labor Party seats. There are going to be jobs in there. I will be only too happy to advise the member for Western Downs of that detail when I go out there in the not too distant future to open his brand spanking new watch-house that we did not dud him on. We have spent the full weight of money on it and we are going to give him another half a million dollars worth of expenditure so that we can create some jobs out in Roma. I have been visited by the council in recent months about the need for support for jobs in their area. This Government is certainly getting on with the job of doing that to look after the interests of Roma even if its local member does not have a clue what is going on in his own electorate.

Mr MUSGROVE: Perhaps you would like to invite him to the opening and show him around.

Mr BARTON: We will invite him to the opening and show him around. You might like to come out with me as well when we go.

The CHAIRMAN: Reference is made in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements at page 1-3 to the capacity of the Police Airwing being significantly enhanced. The service has allocated more than \$10m to the Police Airwing for replacement of an aircraft and for hangar accommodation. Can you explain to the Committee why this expenditure is necessary? It is a fairly large amount of money.

Mr BARTON: It is a pretty significant amount of money but a very necessary amount of expenditure. There are two parts to the answer. The first part is the purchase of a new Cessna Citation Ultra fan jet at a cost of \$9.7m and the second is the purchase of a hangar facility at the Cairns Airport at a cost of \$1.1m. The purchase of the new aircraft is a very cost effective way for the service to operate. It does need to operate its own aircraft and currently the service does have four aircraft. In the last year, 1997-98, the Air Wing flew 2,400 hours, carried 7,150 passengers to a total of almost 900,000 kilometres and moved about 34,500 kilograms of freight. That is a pretty significant airline in terms of air services around this State.

The new Cessna Citation will play an important role in the busy schedule flying between Brisbane and Cairns three times a week. As well as that, it is used to extradite prisoners from interstate and transport specialist services to and from operations. It is also used for emergency situations, including organ transplant flights. Its schedule demands reliability and the new Cessna Citation Ultra will give

the service that reliability. It replaces an existing Cessna Citation II which was purchased about 10 years ago and which has now reached the end of its operational efficiency. The new aircraft will be delivered in April of next year following the final payment. We have identified a buyer for the existing Citation II. The service has also arranged for the engines in it to be overhauled because they have reached the end of their service life.

The CHAIRMAN: How many engines on it? Two or four?

Mr BARTON: Only two, but they are pretty powerful little units. Those overhauled engines will certainly more than take the aircraft through till April next year when the changeover takes place. The engine overhaul is costing approximately half a million dollars, but that has certainly enhanced the value of the trade-in. We have identified a buyer and the trade-in price is expected to be about \$2.1m. The new aircraft will carry 11 passengers compared with nine in the aircraft it replaces. It is faster, more economical to operate, has twice the range and can land at strips that even aircraft such as a Beechcraft King Air cannot get into despite the fact that it is a pure jet. That is needed particularly when you need to lift police officers somewhere in a hurry.

I will try to answer the other part of the question in 15 seconds. A hangar has been purchased in Cairns. In the past the aircraft were parked out in the tropical sun in tropical conditions. That meant that they deteriorated, particularly paintwork and instrumentation, in that type of climate. Putting them in a hangar facility will reduce maintenance costs. Can I just get a 10 second extension?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr BARTON: Purchase was finalised in August this year. I have inspected that facility. It is a great facility and the Police Service did very well to be able to purchase it at that price. It will house two aircraft: a Beechcraft Super King Air 350 which undertakes coastal transport between Cairns and Brisbane and one of the two Cessna Caravans that are capable of carrying 13 passengers and which services the Cape York and Thursday Island area. The other Cessna Caravan is based out at Mount Isa, but that is what that major capital cost is.

Mr FOURAS: I refer you to page 1-40 of the MPS, particularly the line item which refers to the watch-house upgrade program. A report by the Australian Institute of Criminology titled Australian Deaths in Custody and Custody Related Police Operations stated that nationally the total number of deaths in custody was the highest reported since 1980. Can you give the Queensland figures for deaths in custody in 1997 and explain what is being done in Queensland to address this issue?

Mr BARTON: Certainly. A lot has been done in Queensland and there is a lot more being done. It has been recognised by the Australian Institute of Criminology in its report on this issue which says that absolutely no Aboriginals have died in police custody in Queensland as a result of hanging during this period—their latest report was 1996-97. It goes

on, in fact, that the last indigenous hanging was reported back in 1989. The last indigenous death in a police lock-up in Queensland occurred in May 1992 when the female concerned died as a result of a heart attack. The report states that only two States—Queensland and Victoria—recorded fewer deaths than in any other year over the seven-year period 1990-97. Sadly, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory recorded their highest figures in the same period. The report commented that Queensland and Victoria had reversed the trend.

The Queensland Police Service has put big efforts into addressing the issue of deaths in custody. The Queensland success is further supported by the Australian Institute of Criminology in its trends and issues publication No. 80 which recorded 28 deaths in police custody or police operations across Australia. Of the 28 deaths, six were indigenous and 22 were classified as other or non-indigenous, but none of those six indigenous deaths occurred in Queensland. The only death in Queensland in 1997 was from natural causes.

In 1998-99, \$1.7m has been allocated to those watch-house upgrades and I think I gave those figures earlier, but I will repeat them because they bear repeating. There is a \$1.7m figure to upgrade watch-houses at Ayr, Beenleigh, Cairns, Coolangatta, Inala, Innisfail and Maroochydore, and a contract to build a new Brisbane City watch-house at a cost of \$24.7m was signed on 1 September this year. Police Service policy ensures that, once an indigenous person is taken into custody, the specific cultural needs of the person are catered for by notifying the Aboriginal Legal Service when the person is arrested and placing indigenous persons together in multiperson cells unless there appears to be a threat of injury. These are just some of the initiatives, which include the removal of hanging points, the provision of better monitoring systems, better video links, better monitors themselves, increased surveillance, that have contributed to this excellent record in minimising deaths in police custody. I certainly want to congratulate the Police Service for that achievement because it is a big one in terms of Aboriginal people.

Mr MUSGROVE: Minister, the MPS overview talks about the document Towards the 21st Century. As you are probably aware, this document was tabled in Parliament in 1995. Can you explain what the service has done since then to ensure that the planning in that document is still appropriate?

Mr BARTON: That is a document that I am pleased to say, as Mr Musgrove has already indicated, was developed by the previous Labor Government and was tabled in June 1995. It formed the basis of the previous Goss Government's plans for taking Police into the 21st century. With the addition of some increased police numbers, it formed the plan, continued by the previous coalition, and we are very pleased to pick our own document up again and run with it. The plans have been implemented and the Government's commitments now exceed the original targets that were included in that plan.

The service is currently revising its strategic plan and as a first step has developed an

environmental scan which examines a range of trends and influences on policing in Queensland. The development of the new strategic plan is taking place in parallel with the implementation of Treasury's Managing for Outcomes Policy, which is having an impact on all Government departments.

In common with all other Government departments, the service is to replace its current program structure with one based on Government outcomes and departmental outputs. As part of the process, the service's performance indicators are being re-examined and redefined. The new structure is expected to be in place in time for the next budget cycle, the one next year, and the Police Service has used a range of data and research findings in its planning process. Data reflects developments at the international, national and local levels, including innovative service delivery mechanisms, trends in criminal behaviour, Government policy directions and changing demographics and socioeconomic trends.

Planning is also focused on the balance between reactive and proactive service delivery and providing meaningful performance indicators in each of these areas. It involves the use of technology, problem solving, partnerships, effective corporate support, adequate resource provision and ethical behaviour. They are all key components of the accountability mechanisms which the Queensland Police Service is continuing to develop and refine.

At this stage, four key areas have been identified: general policing, specialist operations, road safety and policing accountability. Planning has detailed a range of strategies that have aimed at improving service delivery and providing a response that the Government and the community desire. For example, victims of crime and police satisfaction surveys are used by the Queensland Police Service to measure performance and improve service delivery over time, and the Police Service has also identified particular special events that require individual planning efforts. Examples of those are the millennium bug—a big effort is being put into that—the involvement that the Queensland Police Service will have with the year 2000 Olympics, because much of that activity is in fact going to be happening around south-east Queensland, and the massive increase in the numbers of tourists that we expect to get through here.

The CHAIRMAN: The Government's allotted 20 minutes has passed. We would like to thank the Police Service for its assistance.

Mr GRICE: I have a question to place on notice.

Mr BARTON: I would like to thank the commissioner and his team for the very professional way they have assisted me in the run-in to this and for the way they have conducted themselves this afternoon.

Mr GRICE: Minister, on 28 May the then Opposition Leader, Mr Beattie, released a six-point plan to prevent break-outs, with \$3m allocated for a further 50 prison officers. Where does this funding appear in the MPS, where will these officers be located, when will the jobs be advertised and when will the extra officers be recruited?

Mr BARTON: The Beattie Government made an election promise to provide an additional 50 correctional officers. The 1998-99 Budget appropriates \$1.5m for additional staff in correctional centres. This amount is half the full-year costs for 50 additional correctional officer positions. Full-year costs for this initiative will be \$3m. We are conscious that the budget has just come in. Over a full year, by the time we have people in situ, it will be \$3m. So there is \$1.5m in this budget, and from there on it will be recurrent expenditure of \$3m.

Every State-run correctional centre will benefit from these extra staff, who will be applied to the areas of drug prevention and prisoner management. In relation to drug prevention, the staff will be deployed in the areas of visits processing, intelligence, drug detection training and drug dog handling. Approximately 31 extra staff will be allocated in this area for an annual recurrent cost of \$1.8m.

In terms of prisoner supervision, all secure centres will benefit from an allocation of additional staff to prisoner accommodation areas. Nineteen extra staff will be assigned to Sir David Longland, Woodford, Moreton, Brisbane Women's, Townsville, Lotus Glen and Rockhampton correctional centres, with the annual cost of those numbers of the staff being approximately \$1.2m.

Mr GRICE: Are you satisfied with the existing parole guidelines? What changes do you have in mind?

Mr BARTON: In fact, I am not satisfied with the existing parole guidelines. I do not know where this shows up in the MPS or the Budget, but I am only too happy to answer the question. Since I have been there, it has become very clear to me that there has been a blockage in terms of the consideration of people who under normal circumstances could be considered for parole. I know that we had the experience early last year of the unfortunate sacking by the previous Government of the entire Community Corrections Board and a new set of ministerial guidelines applied from September of last year. This very greatly tightened up and removed many of the discretions that the Community Corrections Board had in terms of considering people for parole.

In the three months that I have been in the Ministry, I have reviewed that. Very early in my Ministry I certainly had informal discussions with the complete parole board and with the previous chairman of the parole board, Des Sturgess, who subsequently retired to, as he put it, finally go and put his feet up or do a bit of overseas travel. I have had representations from not just the interest groups but also people such as the Ombudsman.

As those people who read his report regularly would know, as I am sure Mr Grice does, the Ombudsman handles hundreds of complaints from prisoners in any given year. The Ombudsman was also very concerned about the inability of the parole board to consider some people for parole on the basis that they had not met the very regimented criteria—that they absolutely had to spend certain amounts of time in certain classifications before moving to the next one, before they could be

considered for parole. I had the Queensland Corrective Services Commission, through their board, conduct a review on my behalf of the existing parole guidelines. In the last several days I have signed correspondence to the Community Corrections Board and advice back to the Queensland Corrective Services Commission amending those guidelines. They are not massive amendments, but they are designed to do essentially three things. They are designed to allow for more discretion of the board. After all, the board is supposed to be there to reflect the community values and make decisions.

I would like to finish this answer—if I could be given a bit of discretion—because I believe that this is important. There needs to be discretion by that community board. If they are simply going to make decisions based only on a straitjacketed, very tight set of instructions rather than guidelines, then there is no need to even have a board; you would just simply put a bureaucrat in charge of making an assessment on whether the various criteria have been met. As Minister, I have already been taken to the Supreme Court once during the three-month period by a prisoner who believed that he had not been properly treated in terms of the Act and that the guidelines were being handled in too regimented a way. So I have made an adjustment to address that. It gives the board some genuine discretion.

The second aspect relates particularly to those areas where people have to have so much time in medium security and then so much time in open custody before they can be considered for parole, which in most cases involves being given work release. If you are Aboriginal and you just simply cannot get a job, then you will never, ever be considered for parole, because you cannot be considered if you have not met that regimentation which is too tight. In meeting the requests that particularly the Ombudsman made, and in a careful reading of the decision from a Master of the Supreme Court, we have made a value judgment that we had to make that adjustment. And that properly gives the Community Corrections Board its proper role. Alternatively, another area that was delaying the consideration of many—

Mr GRICE: Minister—

Mr BARTON: Well, you asked the question.

Mr GRICE: I know, but we have time constraints.

Mr BARTON: I will shut up. If you do not want to know the answer, that suits me. You are the one winding me up.

Mr GRICE: Control your own dummy. Mine is under control.

Mr BARTON: Mine is well under control. But if you are not interested in knowing the answer, I am not interested, either.

Mr GRICE: There is a procedure of time—

Mr BARTON: Ask the question.

Mr GRICE: I am sure that any normal person would agree that you were given a fair bit of extension of time. What plans have been made for

the supervised use, if any, of computers following last week's discovery of computers being abused within our prison system to access pornographic material?

Mr BARTON: In terms of that particular issue, we did act very quickly. I certainly want to congratulate the prison service and the Police Service on how quickly they acted last week. Rather than as you presented it to the media—as being an indication of how bad things were—it was really an indication of the effectiveness of the prison system and the Police Service under the current Government to take some effective action when good intelligence tells us that the wrong thing is occurring out there. That is what happened last week, and it is continuing in terms of the investigation of those 1,000 computer discs.

This Budget makes provision for extra funding for additional staff in the Corrective Services Investigation Unit, and staff in that area have been increased by nearly 50% under this Budget. About two weeks ago, one prisoner in an open security area was found to have pornographic images on his computer. I have been advised that there was no child pornography portrayed. Corrections staff acted responsibly in a joint Corrective Services/police raid. All prisoner computers at the centre were seized for inspection. Eighteen computers were seized at the centre, and they are being checked for inappropriate or illegal material.

Computers have been allowed into prisons for a number of years and certainly during the time of the previous Government and the previous Minister. They are used appropriately in education, job training, communications and private activity, but when prisoners are locked down in their cells for 12 hours a day, such resources, properly controlled, become a useful part of their management. The QCSC has rules about what computers can and cannot be introduced. They must be stand-alone and have no capacity to interfere or interact with any other computer network. It is a requirement that all computers are checked on receipt at the prison. Prisoners can access prerecorded programs on computer discs. These are listed on the prisoners' property cards. Prisoners can purchase blank discs inside the prison. They are inexpensive items and not usually included on property records.

As a result of this latest raid, the QCSC is reviewing centre practice and procedures in this area. It appears that some centres have not been as vigilant as they should be in controlling access to discs which are not prerecorded. It is not proposed to turn the lights off and issue prisoners with quill pens and ink wells at this stage, but we will be properly controlling the access to computers and properly controlling what information is being brought into centres for use on computers.

In summing up, I make the point that if they are properly used, computers are a good tool and they are helpful in the rehabilitation of prisoners. But the people who play up will lose their access and they will probably end up back in a more secure centre as well with longer terms because we will not cop that sort of nonsense going on.

Mr GRICE: I have no argument about their being of assistance, when correctly used, in rehabilitation. But I refer to the general manager's rules at the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre with regard to pornography, computers and discs. Are they available to you?

Mr BARTON: No, I do not have them with me. As you would appreciate, the Queensland Corrective Services Commission is a statutory body. The actual running of the prisons is conducted by either Q Corr, the Government corporatised body, or one of two private providers. I am afraid that they are the ones who manage the prisons. I do not have great detail of their general managers' rules. I am flying in the dark.

Mr GRICE: But you are responsible for the contracts.

Mr BARTON: No, the contracts are determined by the board of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. The contracts are then adhered to by the relevant provider—one of the two private providers. I think you need to read the legislation, because it is part of why I have a review going right now into the prison system.

Mr GRICE: If you are that far removed, then perhaps I can offer you some information.

Mr BARTON: I think you had better read the Act.

Mr GRICE: If the general manager's rules had been complied with, there would have been no pornography and not 1,000 discs under suspicion inside the jail.

Mr BARTON: Which jail? You mentioned the manager's rules for Sir David Longland. It was not Sir David Longland from where the computers were removed.

Mr GRICE: Correct.

Mr BARTON: Then why are we talking about it?

Mr GRICE: The general manager's rules allow for that sort of thing. If they had been complied with, the problem would not have been anywhere near that size. Anyway, let us go on.

Mr BARTON: If you are making the point that, if the rules were complied with, there would have been no pornography in there at all, then I would agree with you fully, because we do have rules and we do have systems to properly control that type of information.

Mr GRICE: That is precisely the point I am making.

Mr BARTON: And as soon as the intelligence systems, which are working very effectively—which is why we have had 21 drug busts over this three-month period—as soon as we get that good intelligence, action is taken. Very clearly, one person has already been proven to have broken the rules. That person has lost his computer and his computer discs, and he is back in a secure custody prison, not an open custody prison. We think that we have pretty fair rules, but the people who break the rules—

Mr GRICE: We are talking in the same direction. My point is that if the general manager's rules had been properly enforced by the officers, there would not have been anything like the nature of the size of the problem. Anyway, let us go on. In June of this year, the previous Government announced a program to impose a \$1 a week levy on all prisoners in secure custody to fund a \$250,000 a year community-based crime prevention and victims support group. Will this levy system be pursued by this current Government? Is that your plan?

Mr BARTON: That levy was not pursued by the previous Government.

Mr GRICE: That is correct.

Mr BARTON: An announcement was made about it; no action was taken. It is not something that I went to the people on as a commitment. In the same manner that the idea was abandoned by the previous Government, I have not picked it up.

Mr GRICE: What commitment do you have to prisoners helping repay debts to victims?

Mr BARTON: The victims of crime issue is one that you should have discussed with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice this morning, because it comes back to where the relevant responsibilities lie. The victims of crime support funding lies with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. In terms of our Government's approach, I very strongly support increased funding for victims of crime and meet with victims groups all over the State, as I did during the period that I was in Opposition. Funding for victims of crime quite rightly rests with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Prisoners earn \$5 a week. There are some basic needs that inmates of correctional facilities have. I was approached on the weekend at a Neighbourhood Watch conference in Toowoomba by people from Crimestoppers who wanted a dollar a week from prisoners to fund Crimestoppers. Prisoners who are working in the prison system get access to \$5 a week for some very basic needs. If we try to fund everybody's anti-crime role from that meagre amount of money, we will end up with problems with prisoners in the system because they will have absolutely no access to money to buy a packet of smokes or a packet of chewing gum. I do not think we want to go down that road.

If there is any implication that I am not supportive of victims of crime, let me tell you that the reality is exactly the opposite. I am very supportive. Our funding for victims of crime comes through JAG. Unlike the previous Attorney-General who used to bust those amounts back, we do not do that. It is the AG's area.

Mr GRICE: As you are aware, the previous Government did a lot of work on a proposal to build three 200-bed prisons in rural and regional communities. We all know the enormous economic benefits that such a prison creates in a small community in particular. What socioeconomic considerations did your Government base its decision on? What is the final decision?

Mr BARTON: Sorry—on what did I base my decision to do what?

Mr GRICE: What socioeconomic considerations were taken into account in your decision? In fact, what is your final decision in regard to the three 200-bed prisons?

Mr BARTON: I have not made a decision about that yet. That is a matter that we are still working on. We are very close to making a decision. I will also stress that there is a need in terms of the long-term planning that was done by the previous coalition Government and which still exists to consider those additional cells. We have something like 1,093 cells under construction this financial year and another 400 or 500 are committed that will come on in the following financial year. That is without SEQ2. Not one single dollar was allocated in your Government's Budget for SEQ2. My predecessor ran around the southern part of the State committing, promising and encouraging; yet there was not a single dollar allocated. We do not have a dollar for SEQ2 in our Budget at the moment, because we have that commitment. We have \$178m worth of capital expansion happening in prisons as it is in this Budget. We are not selling two prisons to pay for it. We are not putting Rockhampton out to be built as a private prison either. We are planning properly for those additional 600 cells. In terms of no decision having been made at this point, we are still working on it. It is very clear that the advice coming to me is that you almost double the capital costs and almost double the operating recurrent costs if you do that by three 200-cell prisons compared with one 600-cell prison.

This is the Deputy Premier's responsibility more than mine, but this Government is very committed to ensuring that we get development out into the regions. My role as the Minister for prisons is to ensure that we do not get inefficient prisons but that we get up the cell numbers—for which there is a huge demand—that we need. Although I have not made a final decision, it is pretty clear that, unless we can draw in an enormous amount more Budget funding next year, particularly for capital, it will be very difficult in a practical sense to consider three 200-bed prisons. We are in the process of continuing to work through that area.

Mr GRICE: With regard to the Woodford Correctional Centre, are you aware of the extent of the nepotism that exists in the work force there? I will not mention any names; that would be inappropriate. I draw to your attention, if you are not aware of it already, that a member of the dog squad and management are spouses. There are spouses who are a secure block supervisor and a secure block officer. There is a mother and a daughter, one in development and one as an assistant. I will not be specific. There is a pair of bothers, one in development and one in probation. There are de factos in education. There are a brother and a sister. I am out of time, but there are another pair of spouses, another pair of brothers and another pair of spouses.

Mr BARTON: If you give me the names, I will have it investigated. I should make the point that that

is an operational matter conducted by Queensland Corrections, which is a Government owned corporation. I am hardly going to say that the nepotism relating to whom they hire is commercial in confidence. I think we are all aware that we have considerable restrictions on examining what occurs in a GOC. I point out that I do not believe in nepotism in any shape or form. If you would like to give me that detail privately, I will have it thoroughly investigated.

The point has been made by my director-general that Q Corr is bound by Government selection criteria, which should prevent nepotism from occurring. If it has occurred to that extent, there is a real possibility that the wrong thing has been done. We will have a good look at it. I am not going to say that the wrong thing has been done, because I have not seen the detail. It is a management issue. We can make sure that they are not breaching—

Mr GRICE: I am just trying to add to your information.

Mr BARTON: We are very well informed. They have to appoint on merit. If that has been breached, we are able to do something about it. Those people have to have been appointed on merit. Not everyone has a dumb brother or a dumb sister.

The CHAIRMAN: As the Opposition's time for questions has expired, it is now the Government's turn to ask questions. I refer to the \$1m upgrade of security equipment at the correctional centres, which is shown on page 2-4. Can the Minister advise what type of equipment will be purchased and where it will be located?

Mr BARTON: That was also a key promise of the Beattie Government at the last election. We made that promise to provide equipment upgrades for correctional centres following my experience in Opposition when I was roaming around talking to correctional officers. Although we were buying all sorts of fancy vehicles such as Hummers and spending a fortune on razor wire and concrete, people did not have the basic equipment, such as bulletproof vests, two-way radios, etc., that they needed. The budget contains provision for \$1m for the purchase of basic equipment for correctional officers to assist them to perform their duties. Part of the funding, \$300,000, has been allocated to fund equipment identified as necessary by the Q Corr general managers' drug task force. In the very early days I asked them to do an audit, which they did when they were forming their anti-drugs task force.

Those funds will be applied to improved video surveillance, specialised visits furniture, passive drug dogs as used by Customs, and anti-drug signage at correctional centres. An amount of \$420,000 will be applied to personal safety equipment, including protective helmets, vests, handcuffs, walk-through metal detectors, hand-held metal detectors, emergency response equipment, night vision binoculars, gasmasks and filters, X-ray machines, body belts and alcometers. Also, communications equipment will be upgraded at a cost of \$140,000. This will include new radios and communications maintenance systems. Additional weapons will be purchased for specialist areas within Q Corr at a cost

of \$5,000. There will be no gimmicks as occurred under Russell Cooper, such as the Hummers, which we still cannot get to work properly. This will provide the basic equipment prison officers need to do their job.

Mr FOURAS: Following your comments about the Hummers, the former Government committed the QCSC to the purchase of armoured perimeter vehicles around secure correctional centres. The current budget, which is at page 2-4 of the MPS, makes provision for the recurrent cost of the operation of these vehicles and for the cost of the operation of armoured escort vehicles that are on order. There are reports that these vehicles are not performing well. Can you advise what is being done to optimise the performance of these Hummers?

Mr BARTON: I can certainly give you some detail about the Hummers, Mr Fouras. It is very clear that they were part of a knee-jerk reaction by the previous Minister. I understand that he made most of these decisions himself and interfered directly in the processes to compensate for his own bungling, because he wanted to be seen to be doing something and doing it in a hurry. So he purchased the Hummer armoured vehicles for use in patrolling perimeters of prisons and for the transport of prisoners. The proposal was implemented without a proper consideration of all the requirements of those vehicles and, in fact, there are not even proper specification sheets of their requirements even now, because they were simply rushed in.

It seems that the main factor in choosing Hummers was the fact that they had the shortest delivery time, because the initial ones that were put into service had been sitting around elsewhere for quite some time not being utilised. No testing was carried out prior to their delivery. To date, seven Hummers have been delivered for perimeter patrols of prisons and all have experienced major and minor mechanical problems. They are things such as door handles falling off. On the day that the previous Minister launched the vehicles in the presence of the media, he could not even get the bloody door open.

We have had ruptured fuel pumps, oil leaks, coolant leaks, excessive tyre wear on most vehicles, fanbelts breaking continuously, and over and over again as soon as they are fitted, a failure of components on the drive train, including CV joints, transfer cases and gearbox problems. Talking about gearboxes, the Rockhampton Correctional Centre Hummer was handed over by the Honourable Vince Lester to the prison on behalf of the Minister. For quite some time, that vehicle would work only in reverse. They have also had power steering failures and other steering failures and electrical faults. This is important: they were rushed in to such an extent that no pre-delivery servicing was undertaken prior to delivery. They had been sitting around for a long period of time and they had not even been serviced before they came in.

I will not go into the full detail. We have been working closely with the supplier. One of the other problems was the fact that the dealer who was to do the servicing went bust. People found out about that after. There is a new dealer in place now. There has

been a lot of lost time and down time that has cost the service dearly, but we now have formal contract arrangements for their continuing maintenance and repair. We are very hopeful that, by putting that in place, we will be able to keep them on the job.

I make the point, though, that they are the wrong vehicle. They are carrying two tonnes of extra armour that the mechanics of the vehicles simply cannot carry, because they were not assessed properly. We are doing a lot of work to keep them on the job. Despite the lack of planning and political pressure applied by the previous Minister, I am confident that we can continue to address those numerous problems to ensure the safety of prison officers and the community.

Mr MUSGROVE: I refer to page 2-8 of the MPS in relation to the Mengler drugs inquiry. What were the costs of the Mengler inquiry into drugs in prisons and in particular, what were Mr Mengler's fees?

Mr BARTON: The commission of inquiry into drugs in prisons was commenced in June 1996 following an order made by the Executive Council. Mr Carl Mengler was appointed as chairperson and sole commissioner of the inquiry. Terms of reference for the inquiry were provided. I better be careful about this. I think that you have asked a direct question about the cost. The total costs for the conduct of the commission of inquiry into drugs in prison, which was held between 13 June 1996 through to 10 September 1997, was \$622,238. An additional amount of \$77,895 was expended on other issues and outcomes directly related through recommendations made in the Mengler report. Fees and claimed expenses paid to Mr Mengler were \$79,590. This constituted approximately 12.5% of the total cost of the inquiry. Other costs not directly paid to Mr Mengler but paid for accommodation and air fares on his behalf were \$29,569.

The official report of the inquiry was delivered to my predecessor, the Honourable Russell Cooper, on 20 December 1996. A total of 63 recommendations were made in the official report by Mr Mengler. Those recommendations have been considered by the QCSC and integrated with the QCSC drug strategy. The commission of inquiry into drugs in prisons was extended by virtue of an order of Executive Council in January 1997. That extension was made to allow the finalisation of investigations that had been commenced at the commission of inquiry into drugs in prisons.

During that period, staffing of the commission of inquiry consisted of six Queensland Police Service officers and one research officer. Two administrative support staff members were also provided by the QCSC. So Mr Mengler had quite a number of resources. On 10 September 1997, the final confidential report on the investigations conducted by the commission of inquiry into drugs in Queensland was presented to the Honourable Minister. The final report showed that during the course of the inquiry, a total of 36 persons had been charged on a total of 86 charges, which included drug offences, various warrants and other offences including misappropriation of property, possession

of tainted property and other offences. A number of other matters were referred to the QCSC for investigation and breaches of discipline.

So it was a huge effort but it also came at a huge price. On top of that, the Q Corr general manager's task force is also doing an excellent job which, at last, allows us to actually get some of the drugs out of prisons, with 21 major busts having occurred over the past three-month period.

The CHAIRMAN: I refer to the table at the top of page 2-5 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements headed Key Inputs. The Beattie Labor Government was elected on a platform of job creation. I notice that the QCSC has a capital works budget of \$178m for new and expanded centres. Can the Minister advise the Committee of the estimated number of jobs that will be created by this budget and the communities that will benefit?

Mr BARTON: Firstly, I will talk about direct positions. The budget makes provision for in excess of 400 permanent jobs during this financial year. That is a large number of jobs. On top of that, there will be a further 50 permanent staff at correctional centres who will be employed from January 1999 and assigned to centres around the State. In accordance with our election promise that I referred to earlier, they are being put into those drugs, surveillance and visits areas. That is where those additional 50 are going. That is 450 new, real jobs out there in the correctional industry. As well, five staff equivalents have been funded for the employment of additional intelligence officers in correctional centres. With the opening of SEQ1 and SEQW in early 1999, an additional 329 positions will come on line in Wacol.

Prisoner growth throughout the year will require additional staff appointments in excess of those numbers at the Rockhampton, Townsville and Lotus Glen centres as well as in the south of the State. Indirectly, a \$178m capital works program will generate over 2,000 job years of employment through to the completion of the Rockhampton Correctional Centre in the year 2000. The major projects and the estimated job years of employment that will be generated in the next 12 months are as follows: Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and its expansion, 495 job years; Borallon, 233 job years; Lotus Glen expansion, 178 job years; SEQ1 and SEQW Correctional Centre expansion, 164 job years. All work will commence during the current financial year. The capital budget for 1997-98 was \$80.349m compared with a budget of \$178.109m for this year. That is a massive increase in the number of jobs that are being developed in the construction industry—which I know is very dear to the Chairman's heart from his experiences before we were both allowed to come to this place—and in terms of direct employment within correctional facilities around the State.

Mr PURCELL: They are out in the Queensland community as well; those centres are far and wide.

Mr FOURAS: Minister, page 2-2 of your MPS states that the QCSC has been challenged with the management of a number of distinct groups of prisoners in the correctional system. In particular, I note that you are faced with a significant over-

representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates. What initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners are being funded in this budget?

Mr BARTON: Certainly as at 30 June of last financial year, there were approximately 926 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult men and women in custodial correction centres in Queensland. That is a very significant proportion of the prison population. It equates to 23.39% of the State's prison population. A large number of adult indigenous offenders are in custody for violent offences and a significant percentage of those were committed while the offenders were under the influence of alcohol. Approximately 50% of ATSI prisoners are incarcerated in the Rockhampton, Lotus Glen and Townsville Correctional Centres.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission is a recognised leader in initiatives to address the recommendations of the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody. Some of those initiatives include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Workers' Scheme, where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scheme is similar to the Watch-house Cell Prisoner Scheme—it has been operating at Townsville and Sir David Longland since December 1996—and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Program Phase 2. The commissioner has expanded the education program on HIV and AIDS for indigenous offenders to include male sexuality issues during incarceration. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders Visits Program is another initiative whereby major correctional centres have programs in place for visits by elders from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The QCSC has provided one-off grants to Woorabinda elders, Cherbourg elders and Gumba Gumba elders in Cairns to purchase vehicles to facilitate community visits programs to Rockhampton, SEQ and Lotus Glen Correctional Centres.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Program is yet another initiative. All major correctional centres are funded to operate the Family Support Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates. This program enables inmates to travel home for funerals, hold family days in correctional centres, celebrate NAIDOC week and receive special visits from family members if warranted. There is also the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Official Visitors Program. Most correctional centres have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander official visitors appointed to work with inmates to resolve grievances and complaints, and assist with other issues. There is also the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Chaplaincy Program, whereby the Queensland Corrective Services Commission allocates funds to Murri chaplains to work in correctional centres throughout Queensland. Those are some of the initiatives.

I also point out that the number of Aboriginal prisoners in our system is a very worrying issue. I was recently at Yarrabah and was told that 82 of their young men were incarcerated at Lotus Glen at that point in time. Yarrabah is a very small community. We

are absolutely adamant that we will work much more closely with the Aboriginal community with a view to finding reasonable alternatives, because we cannot keep locking Aboriginal people up at this rate.

Mr MUSGROVE: Minister, I refer you to the table on page 2-5 of the MPS. I note that the QCSC capital works were underspent in 1997-98 by some \$19m. Can you inform the Committee of the reasons for this underspend, and what impact it has had on the projects concerned?

Mr BARTON: The capital works program expenditure has undergone serious underspend conditions due to the late commencement of projects in the first quarter of 1997-98 and the carryover of low expenditure in the final quarter of 1996-97. The reasons for this include community objections to the SEQ1 and SEQW project, which was the major capital project for the commission, and the lack of early definition of security-type projects.

Major underspends occurred in the following projects: SEQ1 and SEQW. It was originally planned to spend \$14m on those projects combined in 1996-97, but only \$5.8m was actually spent. The underspend on this major project is a direct result of community interaction with the process, which is a polite way of saying that the community blued very savagely about the fact that a couple of new prisons were being built in their faces without proper consultation between my predecessor and them. The resting of the project to Health Department land away from the correctional reserve at community insistence resulted in both additional time to construct being needed and additional costs to Government for the actual projects themselves. While the project has progressed extremely well since construction commenced, it was never possible to catch up on the lost time. The total expenditure of this combined project was \$54.8m at the end of 1997-98 and represents an underspend of \$8.2m.

For the expansion of the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre, it was originally planned to expend \$13.8m. This project was to be carried out as a two-stage procurement of accommodation in far-north Queensland. Stage 1 was the construction of 96 beds within the existing Lotus Glen Correctional Centre and this project has been substantially completed at a cost of \$9m. The second stage has been a point for debate, with the possibility of a Cape York based facility being discussed at length and concerns with net widening having dominated later thinking on this particular option. It has now been determined that a Cape York facility will be set aside for future consideration due to the rapidly increasing population within the existing Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. An additional cell expansion program is to be implemented, and we are doing that. However, this delay in determining the exact nature of the Stage 2 program resulted in total expenditure for 1997-98 of approximately \$5.7m. The underspend of the total program was \$8.1m.

The overall capital works program is also relevant. The remainder of the capital works program was spent at an acceptable rate, with the two projects listed above carrying the bulk of the

underspend. The carryover amount is \$16.869m, equalling 232 job years of employment forgone as a result of the underspend.

The CHAIRMAN: We have eight minutes left, which will give members about one question each. I now ask Opposition members if they have any questions?

Mr GRICE: In respect of funding allocations, on 29 May the Labor Party launched a three-pronged anti-drugs program for improved detection, deterrence and treatment of inmates and aid for community organisations trying to find work for inmates who wanted to rehabilitate. What funding has been allocated for this program? When will it commence and how do you propose to improve the prevention, deterrence and treatment programs?

Mr BARTON: Certainly, we are very concerned that we make sure that we effectively address the issue of drugs in prisons. A sum of \$1m has been allocated in 1998-99 to maintain existing initiatives—that is a matching of what was there before—and to expand the drug strategy into prisons throughout the State. A new allocation of \$150,000 has been made to the Drugs Strategy this year to expand the frequency of urinalysis testing from twice per year to monthly. A further new allocation of \$100,000 is being made to expand the pilot methadone program in correctional centres. A significant proportion of the Drugs Strategy funding in 1997-98 was allocated towards the cost of establishing the Proactive Intelligence Network, which caused delays in the implementation of the QCSC Drugs Strategy.

I want to make it clear that I am not criticising PIN, because I think PIN is doing an excellent job. But it did mean that the previous Government expended funding to establish PIN and expand that area that otherwise would have gone into the Drugs Strategy. To some degree there is a little bit of catch-up going on now. The planned expansion of the QCSC Drugs Strategy into all prisons after the trial was completed in three prisons in February 1997 was slowed as the project officer was diverted to significant corporate tasks, such as the integration of the Mengler report. That was also because of escape responses and the corporatisation during 1997-98. The management of the subprojects of the strategy continued. These also included diversion of the project manager; delays in the establishment of PIN; slow progress with leading-edge technologies, which resulted in a carryover of \$600,000 in the current financial year from the Drugs Strategy; progressing the introduction of biometric scanning technology to identify visitors; developing the statistical database of illegal drug use; and managing the second national Drugs in Prisons Conference and the national steering committee.

The strategy is now being redefined and restructured in the wake of the Mengler inquiry and will be introduced into all prisons over the next two years. Some of the following has already been achieved: the installation of a computerised telephone system for managed prisoner use, including the installation of a Statewide Intelligence Database dedicated to intelligence gathering,

supported by a unit of police/corrections staff, in other words, the PIN—the Proactive Intelligence Unit; funding police resources to deal with supply from community sources; the installation of a computerised visitor identification system based on finger scanning technology; and staff training in techniques used by Australian Customs to detect persons likely to attempt to introduce illicit drugs into prisons. I will conclude with that. Those techniques are already paying off. Staff training, maintaining a consistency in staffing and having very good intelligence is what has been behind those 21 busts. The general manager's task force is working very, very effectively in addressing the drugs coming into prisons. Some of the urinalysis samples are already showing a big reduction. We are sure that they will go on to even bigger and better things in terms of getting drugs out of our prisons.

The CHAIRMAN: The table under Key Inputs on page 2-5 refers to the allocation of current grants and subsidies to community agencies. Can the Minister advise the Committee how it is proposed to disburse those grants in 1998-99?

Mr BARTON: In terms of the grants in 1998-99, the Queensland Corrective Services Commission manages a grants program that provides funding to a range of community agencies. In the past, funds were allocated in accordance with a three-year cycle. The Queensland Corrective Services Board decided in January 1998 that funds this year would be provided for 12 months only to allow for a full review of the grants process. The current one-year cycle provides a total of \$700,000 for 1998-99—the same as in the previous financial year—and funding for grants is decided by the grants committee chaired by a QCSC commissioner and involving senior executive members of the QCSC.

In May this year, funding recommendations to the QCSC Board were finalised. I must say that it includes a very controversial one on the Gold Coast that missed out. Their recommendations were then approved by the QCSC Board lock, stock and barrel in July 1998. Included in these grants, the commission provides funding of \$252,000 per annum for a chaplaincy service, which operates across the correctional system under the control of the State Chaplaincy Board. In 1998, bids for \$5.2m in grants were received and there was only \$700,000 to go around. So people would understand that that means that a lot of people, sadly, do miss out. This required the QCSC to balance the available funds equitably across the State and to ensure fairness of grants to organisations providing assistance to Aboriginals and women in custody, and to place greater focus on the geographical location of applicants. That was under a process determined by the QCSC when the previous Government was in office. ATSI organisations received 22% of the funding, because ATSI prisoners are 23% of the prison population. Funding for women's organisations was between 5% to 6%, with women making up 7% of the prison population.

A number of organisations that had received grants in the past did receive them, and others missed out because of the wide competition and the

change in guidelines that was put into place under the previous Government. Those groups that had primary sources of funds other than the QCSC were not funded. That is another reason why some people who had previously received funding missed out. I would certainly encourage any of the organisations that were not funded to apply for future funding opportunities, and they will be considered equally along with everyone else. The grants program will be reviewed over the 1998-99 financial year to decide its role and function in a corporatised environment. We will see what comes out of the Peach inquiry also. I will provide everybody with a full copy of the schedule of grants approved by the QCSC Board for 1998-99.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for the consideration of the Estimates for the Minister for Police and Corrective Services has expired. I thank the Minister and the portfolio officers for their attendance. Three hours is a fairly long stint. Thank you very much for being here to assist us. The Committee is very grateful for that. I thank also my colleagues from the Committee for their attendance and for the way in which they asked questions.

Mr BARTON: Mr Chairman, I also wish to thank you and your Committee for the manner in which you have conducted yourselves today. I think it has been a very fair session with a minimum of banter. I have appreciated that. I also place on record my appreciation for the great work that has been done by the Crime Commission, the Queensland Police Service and the officers of the QCSC and Q Corr. It is not easy to prepare the mountains of material that we needed to bring because of the level of detail that is needed. I know people have worked night and day in recent weeks to prepare that. I wish also to thank my staff, because they have been working night and day to make sure that I was prepared to answer whatever questions you threw at me today. The fact that we have only one question on notice indicates that we did our homework pretty well. Thank you for the manner in which you have all conducted yourselves. I thank all of the people who have worked very hard to put us in a position to do that today.

Sitting suspended from 4.03 p.m. to 4.31 p.m.

EMERGENCY SERVICES**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. M. Rose, Minister for Emergency Services
 Mr M. Kinnane, Acting Director-General
 Mr W. Hartley, Chief Commissioner,
 Queensland Fire & Rescue Authority
 Dr G. FitzGerald, Commissioner, Queensland
 Ambulance Service
 Mr J. Noye, Executive Director, Emergency
 Services Division
 Ms M. Smith, Acting Executive Director,
 Support Services Business Unit
 Mr G. Taylor, Director, Facilities & Asset
 Services, Support Services Business Unit
 Ms F. McKersie, Acting Executive Director,
 Strategic & Executive Services

The CHAIRMAN: The next Budget Estimates to be examined relate to the portfolio of the Minister for Emergency Services. I remind members of the Committee and the Minister that the time for questions is one minute and the answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A bell will be rung once 15 seconds before the end of these time limits and twice when the time limit is up. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. The Sessional Orders require that at least half the time is to be allotted to non-Government members. I ask witnesses to identify themselves clearly by name and position before they answer a question so that Hansard can record that information in its transcript.

I declare that the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Emergency Services be open for examination. The time allotted is three hours. The question before the Chair is—

"That the proposed expenditure be agreed to."

Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement? If so, the Committee will ask you to limit it to five minutes please.

Mrs ROSE: Since being sworn in as Minister, I have visited more than 70 Emergency Services facilities from the southern Gold Coast to Cairns in the north and many in between. The common theme I have found is the need for stability. People want to be able to do their job without undue distraction. They want an end to the instability caused by constant reviews. They also want the tools to be able to do the best possible job for the people of Queensland.

The Labor Government will deliver on all counts. I am determined to inject stability into Emergency Services. I am just as committed to raising the profile of all of our emergency services both within Government and in the community. The recently released Budget is the first step towards achieving this goal. It delivered the first instalment of the massive three-year funding boost of more than \$100m for Emergency Services. This financial year

there is an extra \$37m which will help improve fire and ambulance response times and boost service delivery to Queenslanders.

One of the best gifts this Government can give Queenslanders is free ambulance services for pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependents. We will deliver on this election commitment from 1 January 1999. The initiative will cover an estimated 850,000 people. The Budget provides a record \$177.3m to the QAS, up from \$158m in 1997-98. Budget highlights include \$18.6m in additional funds from consolidated revenue, 44 additional on-the-road ambulance officers, 50 new or replacement vehicles on top of the 30 on order and due for delivery before Christmas, 10 new stations either in the planning or construction phase as part of the \$7.9m capital works program, and significant investment in communication centres and communication staff training. The combination of additional ambulance officers and paramedics, better training, new vehicles and communications upgrades will help the Queensland Ambulance Service improve even further its standard of care to Queenslanders.

The Government will provide a record \$209m to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, up from \$192m last year and \$10.3m more than the coalition Budget provided in May. Budget highlights include \$1.25m for safety equipment, including breathing apparatus upgrades, turn-out coats and boots for auxiliaries, and urban search and rescue equipment; \$10m for 69 new urban appliances; \$9.2m urban capital works program; \$500,000 additional funding for the rural fire service for safety equipment and training; \$3.7m for almost 100 new rural fire appliances; an additional \$100,000 for rural fire station land purchases; and \$240,000 available for grants for new rural fire station construction. We will consolidate the base budget from \$2.7m in 1992-93 to more than \$10m now.

The Emergency Services Division budget also contains a number of new initiatives I am proud to deliver. There is an extra \$40,000 each to the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard and Volunteer Marine Rescue, taking their annual allocation to \$880,000 each. There is a record \$3.1m for surf-lifesaving, including an additional \$600,000 for extra equipment and training, accreditation of new clubs, extra beach patrols and payment of WorkCover contributions for volunteers. We have budgeted \$400,000 to help councils in Charleville, Cairns, Hervey Bay and Maryborough prepare and implement hazard risk assessment programs, and we have included \$250,000 as a first instalment of our three-year \$1.5m flood boat replacement/refurbishment program—a great boost to the thousands of SES volunteers across the State.

There is record funding for community helicopter Medivac search and rescue operations on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay, Rockhampton and Mackay and a contract service in the Torres Strait which complement our own Queensland rescue helicopter services operating out of Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. I am determined to ensure the safety of personnel, promote the work

of the almost 100,000 volunteers who come under the umbrella of this, the people's portfolio, and listen to advice from local ambulance committees, the Rural Fire Council and the SES. The Budget will allow greater focus on service to the community by community volunteers and professionals.

During the next year, the Department of Emergency Services and local government will forge an even closer and more productive relationship as we work together to minimise the impacts of incidents and disasters. This is a Budget for all Queenslanders.

The CHAIRMAN: The first period of questioning will start with the non-Government members.

Mr MALONE: Welcome, Minister, to your first Estimates Committee. You are a little bit ahead of us; we have been sitting here for six hours so you are nice and fresh. Before I commence this afternoon, I guess it is important when discussing the future and the budget of Emergency Services to get a picture of where you see the future and what you envisage in the future. I will begin by asking a very simple question. Does the chief commissioner, Wayne Hartley, have your confidence and is he secure in his position?

Mrs ROSE: I would like to assure all members of the Committee that the chief commissioner has my support. I have made a number of public statements as well as private statements to him that he does have my support. A number of rumours have been circulating around the fire service of which I am well and truly aware.

Mr MALONE: That is why I am asking the question.

Mrs ROSE: It is quite a network out there amongst members of the fire service. Once a story starts, it really does incline to be blown out of proportion. However, I have found working with the chief commissioner over the past three months to be quite productive. He has indicated that he is keen to have a strong working relationship with me. We both have the one focus, and that is to provide the most efficient and effective fire service to Queenslanders. He has taken the opportunity of visiting a number of fire stations with me. We went out to Kemp Place. We have been out there on two occasions now—once within two days of my being appointed as Minister. He accompanied me on a visit to Kemp Place and I gave an assurance to the personnel there that his position was secure.

He again accompanied me on a visit to Kemp Place and to Roma Street after the emergency services legislation was recently introduced into the Parliament. He has also made himself available to visit other stations throughout the State. In a nutshell: yes, he has my confidence. He is secure. I have given him an assurance that he is secure in his position and I am looking forward to working with him.

Mr MALONE: Thank you, Minister. I refer to your allegation that the QFRA would be facing a debt of \$118m. The report that was commissioned by you, depending on the terms of reference of course,

could prove that there would be \$118m debt. How can we be sure that that is the case when you refuse to issue the PricewaterhouseCoopers report?

Mrs ROSE: Within about 24 hours of being appointed to the position of Minister, I was alerted to the fact that the QFRA Trust Fund was in serious financial difficulties. On 2 July I requested an independent financial audit to be carried out into the QFRA Trust Fund. PricewaterhouseCoopers is a very reputable firm and I commissioned it to conduct the audit. It presented a report to me on 10 August. That report confirmed my department's and my own fears.

Mr VEIVERS: Point of order, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I am the chairman here, and I will rule on points of order.

Mr VEIVERS: I know, but I raise a point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Mr VEIVERS: We in the Opposition have not seen this report. It has not been tabled in Parliament.

The CHAIRMAN: If you will sit, you will get an opportunity to ask questions.

Mr VEIVERS: You cannot ask about something you have not received, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: You will get an opportunity, but the Minister gets three minutes to answer the question.

Mr VEIVERS: Fine, but I am just saying—

The CHAIRMAN: And points of order will come through me.

Mr VEIVERS: I am asking you for a point of order, because we have not seen this report that the Minister is quoting from. We cannot ask questions about it. We do not know whether what she is saying is quite legitimate.

The CHAIRMAN: Does this report relate to a Budget item in the Budget papers?

Mr VEIVERS: No, it does not.

The CHAIRMAN: Well, that is what we are examining today. You saw the proposition I put before the Committee here today. We are examining Budget items.

Mr VEIVERS: I was not unlucky enough to be here that long, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Continue, Minister.

Mrs ROSE: As I was saying before I was interrupted, the report confirmed the fears the department and I had. That is, the QFRA Trust Fund was rapidly heading in the direction of becoming insolvent to the tune of \$34m within two years and \$118m in six years. The member made a statement that the PricewaterhouseCoopers report has yet to be publicly released, and that is quite correct. Like the former Minister, who used his discretion when he commissioned the Masters report not to publicly release that report I, too, am exercising my discretion as Minister.

Mr VEIVERS: Mr Chairman, that was leaked to the current Minister, so she knows all about it.

Mrs ROSE: I am using my discretion to publicly release the report when I believe it is appropriate to do so. I take the matter of the QFRA Trust Fund very seriously, and so does this Government. The previous Government was well aware that the QFRA Trust Fund was suffering financial difficulties. If it was not, why did it commission the Masters report? The former Minister was made aware in May 1997 that the trust fund was in trouble. That is why the Government commissioned the report, but it sat on the report. It did absolutely nothing. It made no decisions towards ensuring the future financial security of the QFRA Trust Fund. It just left it to spiral downwards, towards running into the red. I do not have the PricewaterhouseCoopers report in front of me, so I am not quoting directly from a report. I am not in a position to show it to the member at this time anyway. The report makes very clear that the QFRA Trust Fund was heading towards insolvency, and that is an absolute disgrace.

It is a sad indictment on the former Minister. It is a sad indictment on the former Government. Treasury had to have been aware. How come Treasury only became aware of the financial circumstances of the QFRA Trust Fund since I became Minister? Is this something that has suddenly happened in the last three months? This is something that the previous Government knew about for two years and it did absolutely nothing about it. I will not sit on my hands. I will not see the QFRA run into debt. I am working on a rescue package with the Treasurer and with the Premier to secure the financial future of the QFRA.

Mr MALONE: Thank you, Minister. In your view, what were the differences in findings between this PricewaterhouseCoopers report and the Masters report? What differences did you perceive?

Mrs ROSE: I am, of course, interested in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report. I was not going to rely on the Masters report, which was commissioned by the previous Government, although the previous Government and the previous Minister are only too well aware that that report also set out the financial mess that the QFRA Trust Fund was in. The key findings of the PricewaterhouseCoopers report were that a continuation of the QFRA's operations on the current basis would lead to reduced operating effectiveness and insolvency in the short term. As a consequence, funds of approximately \$20m per year in today's terms are required from additional revenue and/or cost savings to keep the QFRA viable at present service levels.

The capital of the organisation is being eroded as funds are used for recurrent expenditure. The recent increase in employee numbers and new enterprise bargaining agreement were agreed to without adequate funding strategies. I make the point that nobody is criticising the fact that there was an increase in employee numbers and nobody is criticising the enterprise bargaining agreement; what we are saying is that those sorts of commitments cannot be made without funding them. There were \$20m of unfunded commitments and it is an absolute disgrace.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers report also shows that there were corporate governance shortfalls, including political issues, which stalled action that should have been taken by the board to address the funding issues. I have to be really concerned when, prior to my introducing legislation into the Parliament—therefore prior to any of the board members being aware of legislation to abolish the board—I get a letter from a board member saying that every time the board tried to make a decision there was political interference. That was also confirmed in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report. The issues were notified to the board and the Minister in April 1997. I am sorry, but I think I said May or June before. The board does not have a comprehensive range of expertise to deal with its responsibilities under the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority Act.

Questions arose about the relevance of a board structure for the strategic management of a service delivery agency such as the QFRA. The board's lack of focus on the importance of resource allocation and assets management has left the QFRA with ageing equipment and appliances. Over 45% of urban appliances are over the industry accepted design life for urban appliances of 15 years, and the strategic resource planning needed to determine the number and location of fire stations, appliance requirements and manning numbers is incomplete. The PricewaterhouseCoopers position is worse than the Masters report.

Mr MALONE: Did you make the board aware of your concerns in relation to the PricewaterhouseCoopers findings?

Mrs ROSE: Within probably the first couple of weeks there was a board meeting held at Kedron Park. I went to the board meeting and spoke directly to the board as a group. I told them that I was disgusted to learn of the parlous financial state of the QFRA fund. I indicated to them that I would be taking steps to address the problem. I said to them at the time that I could not believe that they had sat there and done nothing about it. A couple of the members came back to me and said that it was not that they did not try, it was that whenever they did come up with a proposal and they took it to the Minister, it did not get anywhere. They indicated to me that they, too, were concerned about the flagging QFRA trust fund and that, whilst they wanted to do something about it, they felt that their hands were tied.

As I said, after I fronted the board meeting and the members and talked to them—and I spoke to them in general terms, but mostly about the QFRA trust fund—I received quite a detailed letter from one of the board members. As I said before, in that letter he expressed to me his sheer frustration at not being able to make a decision. I also said to the board when I attended their meeting, "You say that you were unable to make a decision, or your hands were tied. I thought that the intent of setting up the boards in the first place was to give you an independence. I thought you had the independence to be able to make those sorts of decisions. That just flies in the face of the fundamental so-called principles behind

the establishment of the boards." When I spoke to them that day, none of the members of the board—not one of them—denied that there was a problem with the QFRA trust fund. So I knew that we were on the right track. I knew that our concerns were justified when not one member of the board defended the financial state of the fund.

Mr VEIVERS: Minister, I refer to the top of page 2-11 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements. The State Fire Service Trust Fund opening balance for the 1997-98 Actual is \$18.461m. Then there are receipts and disbursements. The closing balance, including carryovers—what does that say, Minister?

Mrs ROSE: \$18,705,000.

Mr VEIVERS: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs ROSE: The trust fund closing balance as at 30 June 1998 was \$18.7m. However, these funds are committed as follows: \$3.6m to completion of capital works projects; \$3.5m to equipment and appliances on order; \$700,000 to grants and subsidies to rural fire brigades; \$3.4m to general expenses, telephones, training, year 2000 compliance and project costs. That is a total of \$11.2m. The remaining \$7.5m is required to fund increased salary and wages costs.

Before I continue, I must say that I am beginning to form the opinion that you could not grasp that the QFRA trust fund was in trouble. What do you do? You say, "Okay, we have \$18m this year. Let's forget about next year. Let's not worry about delivering a service next year."

Mr VEIVERS: When I left, it was \$18m in the black.

Mrs ROSE: What were your plans for the future? I really am beginning to believe that you had absolutely no idea. Perhaps your people were not telling you what was happening, or perhaps you looked at these figures and kept saying, "Okay, I have \$18m for this year. I am sure we are going to spend that, but let's not worry about next year." Anyway, I will continue.

The closing balance for 1998-99 is estimated to be \$490,000 due to increased salary and wage disbursements resulting from previous policy decisions. Wow! \$490,000 for the future of the Queensland fire service! The projected trust fund balance is estimated to decline rapidly into overdraft in future years due to expenditure commitments exceeding available revenue. The current healthy cash balance hides the fact that future expenditure commitments are unfunded and exceed the QFRA's ability to raise sufficient revenue to meet these costs.

The disbursements for 1998-99 are estimated to increase by \$31m, largely in the salary and wages area. This is a direct result of previous Government decisions. Labour costs have increased as a result of the following: the appointment of an additional 135 firefighters, \$7.5m per annum; the payment of previous enterprise bargaining agreements, \$11m per annum; the introduction of a 38-hour week, \$4.8m per annum; and on-costs associated with the above, approximately \$4m per annum—a total of \$27.3m.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for questions from non-Government members has expired. It is now the Government's opportunity to ask questions of the Minister.

The free ambulance cover initiative for pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants comes into effect from 1 January 1999. That has caused a lot of excitement in my electorate for pensioners and card holders. Page 3-3 of the MPS outlines a funding allocation of \$15m this financial year to this commitment. Can the Minister explain the costs of implementing this commitment? And given the election promise to provide \$11.5m for a half year, do those additional funds translate into improved service delivery to Queenslanders?

Mrs ROSE: I am very proud that Labor is delivering on its major pre-election commitment to provide free ambulance for all Queensland pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants as from 1 January next year. We expect that there will be approximately 850,000 Queenslanders who are going to benefit from it. You are right. I have had a fantastic reception from people right across Queensland who are just so pleased that we are going to go ahead with our pre-election commitment. It is a policy which is in line—as you, Mr Chairman, would very well know—with our proud tradition of implementing socially just policies and delivering real benefits to those in our community who are most in need of assistance.

In respect of the aged, this policy reflects a debt to those in our community who have done so much to build our State. In their retirement years, they deserve our support. This Budget contains funding to introduce this policy, funding of \$15m for a half year. Our commitment was for \$21m over a full year to implement this policy. Our total policy commitments amounted to \$32m per annum or \$16m over a half year. We have delivered \$18.5m in additional funding to the QAS. The funding over and above the \$10.5m will go a long way to helping the QAS further improve service delivery to all Queenslanders. Our budget provides 44 additional ambulance officers, 15 new or replacement vehicles, 10 new stations and significant investment in communication and staff training.

Some members have had some concerns raised with them by local ambulance committee members who are pensioners. It is in the Act that you have to be an ambulance subscriber to sit on a local ambulance committee. As you would be aware, a lot of our members of the LACs are pensioners. The Bill that I recently introduced into the Parliament will correct that. We will change the definition of "subscriber" so pensioners will be able to sit on local ambulance committees. I encourage all members to ensure that their constituents, particularly their local ambulance committee members, are aware that they will be able to sit on LACs once they get their free pensioner subscriptions.

The CHAIRMAN: I am the treasurer for the local ambulance committee. We have two pensioners on that committee. I will let them know.

Mrs ROSE: They will be pleased to know. I am not surprised that there has been that concern expressed by some people, but we can give them an assurance that it will be fine.

Mr FOURAS: I refer to funding in the 1998-99 budget. How much has been allocated for protective clothing and safety and other equipment for urban firefighters and Rural Fire Service volunteers?

Mrs ROSE: This Government is committed to properly funding the QFRA. That is why this budget is a record budget for the QFRA of \$209m. I am meeting the Government's election commitment of additional funding to the QFRA with an additional \$1.25m to be spent on breathing apparatus upgrades, 1,200 turnout coats and boots for auxiliaries, urban search and rescue equipment, 69 new urban appliances and a \$9.2m Capital Works Program. For the Rural Fire Service, there is half a million dollars in additional funding this financial year, of which \$50,000 is for safety equipment. We are delivering on our commitment to enhance funding and, therefore, the safety and security of firefighters and Queensland communities. We are delivering in full.

The new equipment will also include knapsacks, pumps and hoses for rural fire brigades and also more fire station construction grants, personal firefighting protective equipment, as you indicated, to meet the new Australasian Fire Authorities Council standards. That includes a new design helmet and two-piece overalls. I have had the opportunity to visit a number of fire stations over the last three months. I have visited about 25 stations. I have made it very clear to our firefighters, who do an absolutely fantastic job, that I want to ensure that they are properly equipped and properly resourced so they can provide Queenslanders with an effective and efficient service and to ensure also that they have proper safety equipment, good breathing apparatus, good protective clothing and other equipment for their own protection. They put their lives on the line every time they go into a house fire or to an incident. We want to make sure that they are properly equipped with protective clothing and other safety equipment.

Mr MUSGROVE: I note that, according to page 3-9 of your Ministerial Portfolio Statements, the Queensland Ambulance Service estimates that it will improve the rate of response to Code 1 responses in less than 10 minutes from 65% to 66%. Could you explain to the Committee how that will be achieved?

Mrs ROSE: This Government faces a big task. Under the previous Government, response times blew out. I intend to address that. When response times blow out like that, they threaten community confidence in the Ambulance Service. They have a right to expect that they will have good ambulance response times. We are going to set about repairing the damage that was caused by the blow-out in ambulance response times. First and foremost, we are providing funds to the QAS to adequately resource ambulance stations. Under our record budget of \$177m and our additional funding injection of \$18.5m we are providing 44 extra ambulance officers, 50 new or replacement vehicles, 10 new

stations and significant investment in communication centres and staff training. That is a first step towards bringing ambulance response times down from the level that we have inherited. Ambulance officers also need to know, of course, that they will have the equipment and the resources to properly do their job.

The increase from 65% to 66% is a conservative estimate. Obviously, we want to do better. However, the growth in the population, more traffic lights and more infrastructure obviously slow it down. You have a rapid increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. That all lends to making it difficult for our emergency services to respond in the time that they want. However, we do have a number of strategies to improve response times. They include a significant injection of 80 additional operational staff since January 1998, 44 of whom have been provided for in this Budget. Those staff have been deployed into areas of high population growth. Response time indicators have been incorporated into all executive and management performance plans. Improved and standardised procedures have been incorporated into communications centres. New technology through computer-aided dispatch and automatic vehicle location systems is being developed to aid in the identification and dispatch of the nearest vehicle. Pager systems have been introduced to speed up communication to on-road response crews. Automatic plant room doors have been installed where funds permit, so you can see that we are really focused on a number of strategies to improve our response times. Our rosters are being reviewed to ensure optimal availability of staff.

The CHAIRMAN: I preface my question with a remark in regard to your answer on equipment. I was fortunate enough as a member of the Public Works Committee to go with the Fire Commissioner and colleagues of mine to Ampol and see the facility that you are setting up there. A very competent officer whose name I cannot think of told us about the boots and gear and showed us the facility. That was very professionally done. That person is very well trained. We noted that some \$1,300 to \$1,400 per year is spent on the 2,000 permanent and 2,000 auxiliary firefighters. I thought that was excellent.

With regard to the Program Outlays on page 2-10 of the MPS, I note the Minister's recent comments regarding redirected funds from the abolition of the QFRA and the QAS boards towards the front-line service delivery, that is, to improve such things as safety equipment for firefighters and vehicles for the Ambulance Service. In terms of the cost of travel for senior staff of the DES, QFRA, QAS and the two boards, can the Minister advise the cost and purpose of overseas travel in 1997-98 and the economic return on the investment to Queenslanders?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question. The previous Minister and the director-general promoted potential overseas commercial activities, particularly in South-East Asia, throughout 1996-97 and 1997-98 as a way to develop revenue-earning opportunities for both statutory authorities in the department. This was consistent with the theme

of the Staib review report into the QFRA and, to a lesser extent, the QAS.

In 1996-97 and 1997-98, in excess of \$300,000 had been spent on overseas business initiatives and arrangements with little return to the department. In August 1998, \$5,700 was received for a road accident rescue training program conducted in September 1997 in Thailand by the Department of Emergency Services. This expenditure was funded as follows: in 1996-97, \$112,642—the funding source was the DG's reserve—1997-98, \$196,967, with \$51,901 coming from the Emergency Services Division and \$145,066 from the DG's reserve, which was a total of \$309,609.

A part of the \$300,000 expenditure was an amount of over \$70,000 paid by the Department of Emergency Services to the Asia-Pacific Disaster Management Centre—APDMC—which was a breakaway organisation of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre based in Thailand. The money paid to establish the APDMC included at least \$34,000 paid by the department to three individuals based overseas for the development of an overseas business plan. The resulting business plan was not delivered until 30 July 1998 and focused primarily on the potential business activities of the APDMC rather than on the potential DES overseas business activities. Apart from an initial business case on the viability of the road accident rescue training carried out by DES, the business arrangements entered into in South-East Asia were made without any rigorous analysis of the long-term financial and non-financial benefits, costs and/or risks to the Department of Emergency Services.

An independent—desktop assessment of the data on overseas business initiatives was undertaken by the firm Carter Newell & Associates at a cost of \$3,000 from a risk management and business management perspective. This report found that the decision to embark upon overseas commercial activities leading initially to the arrangements made with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in December 1996 did not comply with the Public Finance Standards as amended in 1993 and 1995 and the department's financial management practice manual. Mr Chairman, is it possible for me to have an extension of time on this question?

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are very lucky. As I am the question asker, you can ask me and I will grant it.

Mrs ROSE: The road accident rescue training course conducted in September 1997 did not comply with the Queensland Government exporting policy guidelines issued on 1 July 1997, which state—

"The department did not subject the overseas commercial activities to a full or even a project risk management study. No risk management procedures were adopted by the department in breach of public finance standard 330 and the department's financial management practice manual."

The report also commented that there were no procedures taken to establish the risk context, to identify and analyse likely risk and to assess, evaluate and treat those risks. Moreover, the business risks were not subject to monitoring and review.

The independent desktop assessment identified particular matters of concern with the activities relating to the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Disaster Management Centre, in particular the arrangement entered into in April 1998 with the three individuals formerly employed by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre. The conclusions that they came to were that they most certainly believed that the overseas commercial activities carried out by DES lacked any rigorous business planning and risk management analysis. The department paid out over \$300,000 for activities in South-East Asia with the only tangible return being the payment of \$5,700 for the conduct of an R and R training program. The payment of \$75,000, including approximately \$34,000 to three overseas nationals, was highly improper and irregular.

As a result of this investigation and the independent report from Carter Newell & Associates, all overseas commercial activities have been halted by my department. I will just ask the Acting Director-General to provide some further details.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that we should wind it up there, Minister. The time allotted to questions from the Government has expired. I now allow the Opposition to have their allotted time.

Mr VEIVERS: Minister, could I ask a question of your Acting Director-General, Mr Kinnane, who on a couple of occasions was made the acting director-general under my particular Ministry? I would like to ask the current Acting Director-General: did you bring that to my attention when I was the Minister?

The CHAIRMAN: I would just like to remind members that questions go through the Minister. That question has to be directed to the Minister. She can direct it to her Director-General if she so wishes.

Mr VEIVERS: Whatever you like, Mr Chairman. That is fine by me.

The CHAIRMAN: It must be directed to the Minister and the Minister can answer that question.

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, as he is looking to the Acting Director-General to give him comments on that time whilst he was the Minister, I am happy to ask the Acting Director-General to respond.

Mr VEIVERS: Obviously, I have to ask the question through the Minister. I was not aware that that was brought to my attention. I am just being fair about that.

Mr KINNANE: Mr Chairman, in response to Mr Veivers, the answer is that certainly on the three occasions where I had the responsibility of being acting CEO for the department, there was neither the need nor the opportunity to alert you to expenditure which was, in fact, approved by at least the former director-general of the department. Certainly, this afternoon the Minister referred to a figure of approximately \$309,000 for overseas ventures,

including travel and other overseas costs. The Minister has detailed some of those issues. They also include salary and related costs of \$96,800; travel expenses of \$86,500; equipment, including freight, of a total of \$64,000, which is made up of a road accident rescue trailer supplied to Thailand at the value of \$51,800; freight and postage for that item was \$6,000; computer equipment to the value of approximately \$4,000; and office equipment, \$1,900. In terms of promotions, displays, printing and stationery, over that period the department spent an amount of approximately \$28,900; on courses and training materials, \$16,000; on legal services, \$8,300; and a miscellaneous amount of \$9,600. That amounts to approximately \$309,000.

Certainly, the detailed matters of overseas business arrangements and business ventures undertaken by the Department of Emergency Services was never the subject of any detailed discussions at the executive level of the Department of Emergency Services. Certainly for my part, I was never informed nor was my advice sought.

Mr VEIVERS: Getting away from that for just a minute, bearing in mind that we have approximately 14 to 16 teams coming here to pre-train for the Olympics, part of the figures that you have quoted related to us getting into Thailand for the very same reason. I thought I should point that out.

Mr MALONE: Minister, did you advise the Local Government Association of your intention to abolish the QFRA and QAS boards before you introduced legislation to that effect? If so, when did you do that?

Mrs ROSE: No, I did not advise the Local Government Association of Queensland that I was introducing legislation to abolish the boards. I cannot see any reason why I would have to contact the Local Government Association.

Mr MALONE: Perhaps my next question will clarify that. I refer to a Labor Party New Direction Statement, which states—

"Every community in Queensland, irrespective of size, is involved and has input into emergency services. To do this, closer ties with local government will be encouraged to ensure that they are consulted about developments occurring in their area and will be assisted to facilitate the development of emergency services capability. This will require a close working relationship with local government."

I go back to my question. Do you see some discrepancies between the policy and what you have actually done?

Mrs ROSE: No, I do not see any discrepancy at all. However, I am making sure that if the Parliament passes the Bill that abolishes the boards, it will also establish the Emergency Services Advisory Council. I am making sure that one of the positions on that the board is filled by a Local Government Association representative, because I am keen—as you say by quoting from our policy document, the New Directions Statement—to have a close working relationship with the Local

Government Association. I have met with Greg Hallam on two occasions, the first being within a couple of weeks of being appointed as Minister. I have since met with him to discuss the Local Government Association's concern over changes to the NDRA arrangements by the Federal Government.

I was invited by the Local Government Association to speak at its recent conference on Hamilton Island, which I was very pleased to do. I think the fact that I was invited was certainly a recognition by the Local Government Association of Queensland of the strong and close working relationship that it has with the Emergency Services Department. I took the opportunity to speak at that conference on an issue that is going to have a very serious impact on our local councils throughout the State, which is the moving of the goalposts by the Federal Government. The Federal Government wants to change the guidelines for local councils to apply for assistance under the NDRA arrangements. Essentially, the Federal Government wants to make local councils put flood mitigation programs in place before it is prepared to give them any financial assistance. I find that—

Mr MALONE: That is the case now, as I understand it. So long as they have a mission statement and—

Mrs ROSE: No, the Federal Government wants to change the guidelines completely. I am happy to get the information to you, because it is something that you should be aware of and on which you could help me lobby the Federal Government. Unfortunately we are only days away from a Federal election. I approached the Federal Government several weeks ago. I tried to get an appointment to see Minister Fahey to discuss the matter.

Going back to your question about the Local Government Association and my working relationship with it, it is through close contact and communication with the association that I am quite happy to take its concerns on the NDRA arrangements to the Federal Government. As I said before, yes, if we can get the Bill through the Parliament and when I establish the Emergency Services Advisory Council, the Local Government Association of Queensland will have representation on that council. There will also be union representation on the council, which is something that neither of the boards had. Neither the QFRA board nor the QAS board had local government representation and neither had union representation. I will ensure that the union representatives are operational people. I am very keen to ensure that our people on the ground can have an input through the council. I certainly will welcome the contribution by the representative from the Local Government Association.

Mr MALONE: Minister, you have obviously dismissed the QFRA board on the grounds of perceived mismanagement. On what basis would you dismiss the QAS board?

Mrs ROSE: The board system is flawed for the operations of an emergency service organisation, which includes the Ambulance Service as well as the fire service. It is ridiculous to pretend, and I will not pretend—like the coalition did—that the services are

independent. They are vitally important services to the Queensland community and they should be appropriately accountable to the Minister, to the Government and to the people. The current financial mess has served to highlight the untenable position of the boards and the Governments. The current mechanism of board control introduced a financial no-man's land, as boards could approve spending but had no real control over revenue raising. It was merely a halfway house that has led to a \$20m annual shortfall in funding for the QFRA. That leads me to believe that this was the first step by the coalition Government on the road to commercialisation and possible privatisation of our fire and ambulance services, because it was impossible for this unaccountable, unmanageable system to survive.

I would like to indicate to members of the Committee the total cost of the boards. In the 1998-99 budget for the QAS board, \$104,180 had been set aside and for the QFRA board it was \$229,242, which is a total of \$333,422. Those costs are as follows: \$80,060 was spent on board fees, wages and related costs; \$20,725 on staff expenses; and administration costs, including travel, was \$232,637. That is a total of \$333,422. I make absolutely no apology at all for wanting to redirect that money into operational service delivery. That is my priority. My priority is to ensure that there is adequate funding, adequate resources and adequate equipment for our Queensland fire service and for our Queensland Ambulance Service to deliver efficient and effective services. Should the legislation pass through the Parliament, I will be quite happy to redirect over \$300,000 directly into operational service delivery.

Mr MALONE: I make the point that the \$300,000 that you are talking about is a very small proportion of the \$400m that is, basically, the budget for QES—actually, it is even more than that. I wonder whether you have taken into consideration the positives of having a businesslike board in place to make decisions in regard to the acquisition of land assets and those sorts of things, which I believe history will show departments have quite some problem with.

Mrs ROSE: Is that a further question or is that a comment?

Mr MALONE: It is a comment, but would you like to make a statement on it.

Mrs ROSE: My further comment to that would be, "What could I do with \$300,000 in the ambulance and fire services?" You have to remember that that \$300,000 is not a one-off but is \$300,000 in recurrent funding. There is absolutely no doubt that that amount and that cost will increase as years go by. We cannot ignore the importance of securing the future financial stability of both the QAS and the QFRA. It is getting tougher out there. There are increased demands on the service. We want to improve service delivery and reduce response times. I see \$300,000 being spent on two boards which could be better spent in operational service delivery. The structure of the boards is flawed. The previous Minister can claim that they had their independence. All indications to me are that they did not. The board structure just does not work for an organisation like

Emergency Services. I know that that \$300,000 will be better spent on operational service delivery.

Importantly, as I said before, the Bill will establish the Emergency Services Advisory Council, and it will have a much broader community representation. As I already indicated, it will have some union representation and some representation from the Local Government Association and other major stakeholder groups, including the local ambulance committees. I cannot let any more time go by without recognising the valuable contribution of the local ambulance committees. I know there have been some concerns expressed by some people that the abolition of the boards will have some impact on the local ambulance committees. I have given an assurance publicly that there will not be. But then again I have to say that in the last couple of weeks since I introduced the Bill I have had local ambulance committee members say to me, "That is a really good decision, because they have done absolutely nothing for us." I have to listen to that sort of feedback coming back to me from the local ambulance committees. They do an absolutely fantastic job. They raise millions of dollars every year. In the stations that I have been to, for example, they quite proudly will show me a building out the back which was built by the local ambulance committees. They have a vital role to play in our Ambulance Service. I certainly continue to welcome their input into the Queensland Ambulance Service.

Mr MALONE: This is not so much a question but more of a statement in relation to what you said about the local ambulance committees remaining in place. Will the local ambulance committee reference groups stay in place as well?

Mrs ROSE: Yes, there will be no changes to that at all. I can give you an assurance about that.

Mr MALONE: Would you undertake to guarantee as a minimum that the current status with respect to manning and operations at all fire and ambulance stations across the State will remain the same? I am asking for a guarantee in that regard.

Mrs ROSE: You are obviously referring to existing staffing levels at fire and ambulance stations; is that what you mean?

Mr MALONE: Yes, exactly.

Mrs ROSE: Are you saying that existing staffing levels should stay the same forever and ever?

Mr MALONE: No, what I am saying is that, as a minimum standard, those that are there now will remain as they are at this point in time. Of course, we would expect them to increase as time goes by.

Mrs ROSE: I have not given any approvals at all for any reduction in staff numbers anywhere across the State. There are obviously some fire stations where there have been plans to look at changes to the rostering system which might change the number of people who are on during the day and through the night. But I certainly do not have any plans to reduce officer numbers at any fire or ambulance station throughout the State and nor have I given approval for that to happen. I can assure you that when we are looking at staffing levels and at

operations at our fire and ambulance stations I will make sure that if there are to be any changes or any proposals—Mr Springborg is aware of the situation at Warwick—there is proper and adequate public consultation. If we are looking at making changes in a community, especially a smaller community like Warwick, I will make sure that there is proper public consultation. I am not about reducing or taking away services from rural or regional Queensland. They do it tough out there. They seem to cop a bit of a hiding. Certainly, at this stage I have not given any approvals for a reduction in any staffing levels.

Mr MALONE: I notice from the Budget papers that you scrapped a proposal to relocate the Caloundra Fire Station to the Energex building. Considering that the funding was to come from Treasury and not from the QFRA, which you claim is in trouble, why would you reject that proposal?

Mrs ROSE: It is in the Budget. Why do you think that the Caloundra Fire Station has been scrapped? The Caloundra Fire Station—

Mr MALONE: Point it out to me.

Mrs ROSE: I will. It is on page 2-12. Only a couple of weeks after I was appointed to the position of Minister, I went to Caloundra and visited the fire station there. I was very impressed with the work that the fire officers were doing there. They had a talk to me about their desire to move the Caloundra Fire Station out of the main street. It is on a very narrow and busy street. I appreciate and recognise the difficulties that they have with getting an emergency service vehicle out very quickly. When I went up there I was unaware of their proposal. I extended the time I was there. They asked me if I would be prepared to go out and have a look at the Energex site, which I did. When I expressed the desire to go out to the site, they contacted someone from Energex and we met out there. I had a really good look around the site. It is quite a large site and it would allow sufficient room for training areas also. It is perhaps a little bigger than what they would need. I suggested to them at the time that, if they were able to acquire the site, they might look at excising it. They are currently looking at putting together a business plan, and they will be reporting back to the chief commissioner, who will be reporting to me. I am a bit surprised by the question, because I had a call from the member for Caloundra after the Budget was handed down saying, "Thank you very much, Merri, for proceeding with this proposal."

Mr MALONE: I guess the question was more directed in line with the Treasury funding rather than QFRA funding. Was that an issue?

Mrs ROSE: Yes, it is Treasury funding.

Mr MALONE: The Budget papers indicate that it is not in the Budget. Is that money coming through Treasury?

Mrs ROSE: Yes, it will be a loan from Treasury. The member for Caloundra, the former Treasurer, told me that we are proceeding along the same lines that the previous Government was proceeding along.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for questions from Opposition members has expired.

Mr FOURAS: I refer to page 1-3 of the MPS and the issue of SES flood boats. Minister, will you inform the Committee of the timetable for the implementation of the Flood Boat Replacement Program?

Mrs ROSE: Our SES members and volunteers are the unsung heroes of Emergency Services. We have almost 30,000 volunteers on stand-by ready to assist ordinary Queenslanders in times of disaster or emergency. There are 130 active units across the State, with 348 groups. Their work is vital. They need decent equipment to do their job. That is why I have committed \$250,000, or a total of \$1.5m over the next three years, for the replacement of SES flood boats.

As I said, this is part of a three-year program to ensure that the State's 189 SES flood boats are of a proper standard to undertake emergency services. The existing fleet requirements are being reviewed to establish the priority for replacement, refurbishment or issue. Local government, as you would be aware, are responsible for providing SES facilities, and they certainly have an enormous input into that. They will be consulted in the course of the study which is being undertaken as a matter of priority.

Draft specifications for the replacement boats have been developed and are presently being considered. It is proposed at this stage that two different types of boats be considered: a large flat bottom style boat for resupply operations and a smaller boat specifically equipped for rescue incidents. Preliminary discussions relating to flood boats in the replacement program have taken place with local controllers at recent district conferences at Toowoomba on 22 August and Cairns on 29 August. As I said, further detailed discussions will be taking place with the local government authorities.

This program is about enhancing the response capacity and capability of SES units in flood-prone areas by replacing ageing equipment and will no doubt improve the morale of SES volunteers who had been using the outdated boats. As all members know, we have had unseasonable heavy rains and the pressure has already been put on our SES volunteers. I think it is important that we do try to get them their new replacement boats, because all indications are that we are going to have a very big wet season this year. I am happy to have the executive director of the Emergency Services Division provide you with more detail, but I think we are just about out of time.

Mr MUSGROVE: My next question relates to a hovercraft which I understand is not going to much use. At page 3-3 the Ministerial Portfolio Statements contain an allocation for additional vehicles to the Queensland Ambulance Service. I understand that the QAS possesses a hovercraft which has for the past few years been idle and wasting away somewhere in north Queensland. Can the Minister advise the Committee what action is intended to ensure that such a costly item of equipment—I imagine a hovercraft is not cheap—does not remain forgotten and neglected? Will it possibly be traded for a more suitable land-based vehicle?

Mrs ROSE: I am pleased to take that question from the member. A couple of years ago they actually launched the QAS hovercraft on the Gold Coast and I attended that launching. As a matter of fact, I had a ride in it all around the Broadwater. I must say that I was pretty impressed. I thought that this ambulance hovercraft was a great idea. I am trying to remember how long ago it was.

Mr VEIVERS: I know that it did not transport too well, either.

Mrs ROSE: As I said, I was quite impressed with the hovercraft. So when I first came to the portfolio I asked somebody about it. I said, "What happened to that hovercraft that I went for a ride in a couple of years ago?" My understanding at the time was that it was to be sent to the Torres Strait, and I understand that that is what happened. It was originally purchased for a trial as an ambulance to be used between Thursday Island and Horn Island. Anybody who has been up to the Torres Strait would know that you go either by boat or by plane. As members may also be aware, the airport is on Horn Island while the hospital is on Thursday Island, hence the plan to have a hovercraft.

The local ambulance officers had frequently expressed concern about the necessity to load and unload patients from ambulance vehicles to boats and expressed the view that patients could be loaded onto a hovercraft at the hospital and then transferred directly to the aircraft on Horn Island. Unfortunately, the hovercraft has not proven a success and, with the introduction of the helicopter service, the need for the hovercraft has declined. The QAS is currently exploring the possibility of using the hovercraft at another location, such as in lower Moreton Bay or in the Fraser Island area. I doubt that there is a very big market out there for QAS or ambulance-style hovercrafts, but if those locations are not practicable then, yes, I will be looking at selling the hovercraft.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to turn to a totally different subject. As you would agree, an efficient telecommunications system is essential for the operational units of fire, ambulance and emergency services. I saw that myself—the urgent need out there for that sort of equipment for communications in emergency and to be able to communicate with one another—when I did a trip with Dr Gerry FitzGerald from Cairns to Bamaga. Can the Minister outline steps that are being taken to ensure that the millennium bug computer problem will impact minimally or will not have an impact on Emergency Services operations? It is a life and death matter when people communicate with Emergency Services.

Mrs ROSE: The millennium bug problem is indeed a serious problem for the whole community, but certainly the impact on Emergency Services is even more critical. Only a few weeks ago the Ministers, including myself, and chief executive officers were given a briefing about the millennium bug and the extent of the problem was explained to us. I was very pleased that the Department of Emergency Services was recognised as a

department that has done a great deal of work towards ensuring that there will not be any problems with the changeover to the year 2000 or where, come the year 2000, we may see wholesale failure of computer systems—computer systems that are at the heart of every piece of modern technology, computer systems and computer chips that lie at the heart of Emergency Services. My department is treating this matter with the utmost seriousness. As I said to you, we have been recognised as a priority organisation for the response to the problem and we have also been recognised as being at the forefront of implementing strategies to deal with the potential effects.

In recognition of this, the Government has allocated the Department of Emergency Services an initial \$2.5m. This will supplement internal funds required to minimise the impact of the year 2000 millennium bug on the delivery of emergency services to Queensland's community. The department relies on a combination of equipment, telecommunications and computer systems to respond to emergency and life threatening situations, hence we are doing everything that we can to ensure that lifesaving services can continue to be delivered.

Telecommunications systems are also essential for the effective operation of fire, ambulance and emergency services, but they are only one of the links in the chain of operational service delivery. The department has adopted an end to end approach in the chain of providing lifesaving services with careful attention to every link in the chain being checked and certified fit for use.

Mr FOURAS: As a former bronzed lifesaver at Main Beach many years ago, I used to walk around patrolling the beaches and I am pleased to note there is additional funding in the budget for surf-lifesaving. I particularly note that there is an increase of \$0.6m. I know that the Labor Party made a commitment to increase funding for surf-lifesaving before the previous election. Can you indicate to this Committee what the increased programs will do and how you will be allocating that additional \$0.6m for surf-lifesaving?

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, beware of bronzed Greeks.

Mrs ROSE: I share the member's interest in the valuable contribution—

Mr FOURAS: I was first aid officer and I really could look after people in those days.

Mrs ROSE: I share the member's interest in the surf-lifesaving movement, and I certainly recognise the valuable contribution that it makes to our community. Of course we want to assist our surf-lifesavers, in every way we possibly can, to ensure that they have the equipment they need to patrol our beaches and to save lives. We should never forget that there has never been a life lost on a patrolled beach in Queensland. That is a real credit to our surf-lifesaving movement. They make thousands and thousands of rescues every year, and I think it is really important that not only the community but also the Government support them in any way that they can.

The budget commitment of the additional \$600,000 is for extra equipment and training, accreditation of new clubs, extra beach patrols—I was pleased to see only in the last few days that the Gold Coast City Council is working on extra lifeguard patrols on our beaches as well—and payment of WorkCover contributions of volunteers. I will ensure that the money goes where it is meant to go. I want to ensure that the money goes to the clubbies on the ground and that it does not get lost. I want to make sure that it gets to those volunteers who protect lives along our coast.

We have had a fantastic reception to the commitment we made leading up to the election and since in relation to the payment of the WorkCover contributions. As it stands at the moment, every surf-lifesaver is required to pay a premium of between \$12 and \$15 for WorkCover. We do not believe that, as volunteers, the surf-lifesavers should bear the financial burden of their WorkCover premiums. They are volunteers; they should not have to pay for it. That was really welcomed by our surf-lifesaving community. That is at a cost of some \$250,000.

\$350,000 of that \$600,000 additional funding for 1998-99 will be recurrent funding and \$250,000 is the first instalment of \$1m over two years for capital equipment. The \$350,000 recurrent funding will provide funding for, as I said, six new accredited clubs and those workers' compensation payments.

Mr MUSGROVE: My question relates to jobs and capital works. The budget of the Queensland Ambulance Service contains \$7.9m in capital spending. I am sure you are aware of the significant level of carryover from previous capital works programs. Indeed, in the previous financial year the carryover was \$3.7m. Can you assure the Committee that steps will be taken to ensure that the majority of capital works funding will be delivered this financial year, in line with the commitment by the Government to ensure that capital works budgets are spent to boost job creation?

Mrs ROSE: Queensland communities deserve the very best Ambulance Service that we can provide. It is a matter of saving lives. For that reason, slowdowns in expenditure that impact on the ability of the Ambulance Service will not be tolerated by this Government. That is why I was disappointed to find that the level of carryover of ambulance capital works funding under the previous Government was \$3.7m from the last financial year. Capital works money needs to be spent to ensure that services can be provided effectively and efficiently. I will be working with the QAS to ensure that capital works expenditure is fast-tracked as much as possible. I want to see improved ambulance stations out there in the community.

I have been fortunate in the last couple of weeks, since I became Minister, to open up two new ambulance stations—one at Cleveland and one at Cooroy. I have also visited the fairly new station at Bundaberg. I have to say that I have been really impressed with the design of the new ambulance stations. They are functional and practical, and they provide a good working environment for our ambulance officers. That is why we are providing a

capital works budget of \$7.3m, and we are building a range of new stations.

I will outline some of those new stations. There will be a replacement station on the hospital site for Bamaga, right up the tip of north Queensland. We expect that that will be completed in April next year. We have a replacement station on site at Bribie Island. That will be \$430,000. There will be a replacement station on the current site at Childers. I was delighted to receive only yesterday from the local ambulance committee at Childers a lovely card congratulating me and the Government on our plans to build a new station at Childers.

We are refurbishing the station at Dalby, at a cost of \$250,000. We will have a new station on the hospital site at Karumba. That will be \$125,000. We are spending \$100,000 on a new station, combined with Rural Fire, at Macleay Island. There will be a new station on the hospital site at Mornington Island. That will be at a cost of about \$193,000. That will also be ready in about April next year. In north Rockhampton we are building a new station and co-locating it with the QFRA. That is a \$550,000 project.

We are building a new station at Redland Bay at \$450,000, a communications centre refurbishment at Rockhampton at \$125,000 and a replacement station and residence on the current site at Rosewood. That is a \$126,000 project. In Townsville, there will be a communications centre refurbishment of \$150,000. So the Committee can see that we are fully committed to the Capital Works Program.

The CHAIRMAN: As the time allotted for Government members has expired, I invite Opposition members to now question the Minister.

Mr MALONE: Minister, can you explain why the projected cost of the hot fire training facility has dropped from \$14m to \$5.6m?

Mrs ROSE: The hot fire training facility is a project that I am very pleased to see. We have a commitment to funding. My understanding is that this project has been hanging around for years. Very little has been happening, so I am very pleased that we have the money allocated in the budget and we are going to start to move on this project, because it has just been sitting there for so long.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for fire suppression, fire prevention, hazard mitigation—particularly chemical incidents—and rescue services throughout Queensland. The decision to develop the hot fire training site is one that will enable the authority to ensure that its training facilities equate with those in other parts of Australia. It will provide state-of-the-art training for Queensland firefighters well into the 21st century.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority hot fire training facility will incorporate fire simulation scenarios involving marine fire suppression and incident management, aircraft fire suppression and incident management, structural fire suppression, breathing apparatus training, fire investigation, LPG firefighting, road accident rescue extrication and fire suppression management, and hazardous materials incident management. To give details on how the

money in this budget is to be spent, I ask the Chief Commissioner of the fire service, Mr Hartley, to provide the Committee with those details. He can tell the Committee exactly how we are going to be spending that money in this financial year.

Mr HARTLEY: In relation to the hot fire training facility at the Lytton Ampol site—some money will be saved by not having to acquire the land at Amberley. In fact, we will be leasing land at Ampol. Also, we will not have to spend the money on building a hot fire training building. The program now endorses the use of shipping containers. A number of shipping containers can in fact simulate high-rise buildings, and shipping containers can also be used to simulate a marine-type vessel.

As to the hot fire training facility at Caltex Ampol—in regard to the drill area, the hot fire training pad, drill ground and the port of Brisbane building and decommissioning of the existing facilities at Pritchard Road—in Stage 1 it is expected that we will invest \$2.1m on the Caltex Ampol land in the infrastructure for shipping containers and simulators. We will provide a bunded area to collect run-off water. We will develop a facility to collect smoke or products that come from the combustion out of the shipping containers. Those products will also be scrubbed and cleaned and sent into the atmosphere in a much cleaner state.

As to the other drill area with regard to the port of Brisbane land—there will be a \$97,000 investment there. As to the works to the existing port of Brisbane land—\$135,000 has been allocated for that. The decommissioning of the existing Pritchard Road site is \$80,000. The proposal there has consultancy fees of some \$300,000 in the development of the site. There is a contingency, and the relocation of State training is approximately \$30,000. The overall cost of Stage 1 is \$3.4m. The budget has an allocation of \$2.8m to be achieved in this financial year.

Mr MALONE: Minister, I note that, at page 1-6 under disaster management, the coalition was able to establish eight SES cadet units. I have a real interest in that because one has just been established in Sarina. Could you give me some indication of the number of cadet units that you might be looking at establishing in the next 12 months or the next period?

Mrs ROSE: I am aware of the member's interest in the SES and the cadet groups. In the last few weeks, I have taken the opportunity to meet with a few SES groups. I am not sure whether you have been to the Southport SES group. They had a number of cadets there when I went there. They have an excellent program. We are delighted that we are going to be able to establish a number of additional SES cadet groups. To date, 28 SES cadet groups comprising 750 cadets and 145 adult leaders have been established: 10 in 1994-95, seven in 1995-96, three in 1996-97 and eight in 1997-98. It is expected that up to 10 groups will be established in 1998-99. The direct cost of establishing a cadet group is estimated to be about \$10,000. The Emergency Services Division district coordinators are also allocated a supplementary annual budget of

\$6,000 to allow them to meet additional support costs for groups.

As you would be aware, with your close association with SES groups, one of the difficulties for our volunteer organisations, particularly your blue water organisations, like volunteer marine rescue, the coastguard and, to a lesser extent, the SES, is that it is very difficult to encourage young people to come into the fold. But I have to say that the SES do a fantastic job with their cadet programs. Also, there is a large percentage of girls and young women in SES cadet units, which I am very pleased to see, and in the SES service itself. A number of women are taking the opportunity to be volunteers. My own mother and sister were SES volunteers at one stage. I share your enthusiasm for the SES groups. As I said, there will be up to 10 additional groups established in this financial year.

Mr MALONE: I refer to an article in the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin on 26 May wherein the then shadow Minister said that the state of vehicles used at the Emu Park ambulance and fire stations was a disgrace. Can you give me some idea of the upgrades that you have planned in relation to the ambulance and fire offices at Emu Park and when these upgrades will occur? I am not quite sure whether it is the appliances or the offices themselves—the buildings.

Mrs ROSE: Are you talking about the ambulance station at Emu Park?

Mr MALONE: Yes.

Mrs ROSE: I have not taken the opportunity to go to Emu Park or Rockhampton as yet. As a matter of fact, I will be going up there in a few weeks. I am unaware of the statement that was made by the shadow Minister. However, I am more than happy to ask the Commissioner of the Ambulance Service to give you some detail. He might be able to let you know where we are at with the replacement vehicle program.

Dr FITZGERALD: I am not sure of the exact state of the current vehicle at Emu Park. I do recall that, when the issue was raised, we explored this. It was scheduled for upgrade at that time. I am not quite sure whether it has been. We could certainly provide you with that information later. I might point out, though, that the Emu Park location is a joint emergency service location. It is actually a fire station which has an ambulance presence there. I think that there is at any time just one ambulance officer present at the station.

Mr MALONE: Minister, what commitment can you give in pursuing the excellent risk analysis work done by Dr Paul Barnes?

Mrs ROSE: I know the importance of risk mapping. There were some discrepancies with the fire levies and the risk mapping. I am unaware of the details of that, but I am happy to ask the Chief Commissioner of the Fire and Rescue Authority to provide you with that detail.

Mr HARTLEY: The risk initiative project of Dr Paul Barnes is designed to enhance and develop opportunities for achievement of risk mitigation and goals of the QFRA strategic plan. The program is

planned for development and implementation over a time frame of approximately three years. The initiative project takes in a number of tasks. The first task of the project was the definition of a whole-of-organisation risk management framework for the QFRA, and it does encompass both operational and corporate needs.

The involvement in the identification of the decision-making levels within the organisation that reflect appropriate preventive and response activities aligns with the QFRA's strategic information systems to aid output budgeting reporting. The adoption of the elements of risk initiative and both community and QFRA personnel safety has been integral to everything that the organisation does. So it involves regular safety audits of the working environment of the QFRA personnel and living and working environments of the general community.

In the tasks two, three, four and five, we are to develop an analytical methodology comparable with industry's best practice. Dr Paul's program has allocated what is referred to as a FARRAM model, which refers to a Fire and Rescue Resource Allocation Model. The model is to provide equity of service delivery. A number of years ago, the Queensland Fire Service developed standards of fire cover and followed through with a service delivery model. This is the implementation methodology which is referred to as the FARRAM model. It will identify the risks and hazards in our community, and it will identify the locations of fire stations associated with those risks. It is going to bring about a degree of equity of service delivery for all Queensland. The design of the Queensland FARRAM system and resource allocation planning has not included any requirements for determination of any crew sites, but we have worked closely with New South Wales and developed a cooperation with New South Wales fire services and Queensland fire services in developing this FARRAM model, and both agencies have benefited greatly from it.

Mr MALONE: I refer to page 2-8 of the MPS, where it is claimed that there will be enhanced training for rural fire service volunteers. What enhanced training is proposed, and where will the training occur?

Mrs ROSE: We certainly recognise the valuable contribution of our Rural Fire Service. The rural fire brigades are an army of soldiers who are always prepared to put their lives on the line to protect others and to protect property. They deserve due recognition and support. I am fortunate to have three rural fire brigades in my area: Currumbin Valley, Tallebudgera and Tomewin. I will be out at Tomewin on Saturday night. I have had the opportunity to go out to the Tallebudgera valley brigade. They certainly do a fantastic job. The amount of hazard reduction undertaken by the brigades plays a significant role in ensuring that we in Queensland are not faced with the same fire problems as occur interstate. There are around 44,000 rural fire volunteers, almost twice the personnel of the Australian Army. They give their own time and resources to train and respond to fire threats.

For the specific details on the training that we will be providing, I will ask the chief of the fire service to give you that breakdown.

Mr HARTLEY: The development of rural fire training for our volunteers has included a combination of the new incident command steps that we are taking with both urban and the rural inspectors. The incident command system that we are introducing into the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority has been across other Government agencies such as Queensland Rail, the Department of Primary Industries and forestry. We have adopted a standard approach to incident command. That training is being undertaken now. A number of our officers across the State have been involved in that training. We have also involved the Queensland Police Service. That extended out to our volunteers, to our first officers, second officers and training officers. It been enhanced across the State to provide additional training in that aspect. We are undertaking the development of training manuals for Grade 1 and Grade 2 for volunteers. Those manuals are under the print process now, to be made available for all of our volunteers across the State. We will also utilise video training. As we move further into the future, technology will be more involved in simulated training, of which we have two units in the State.

Mr MALONE: It is always true that when somebody gets a bit of training others will put up their hand and say, "Me too." The Auxiliary Fire Service provides a tremendous amount of support for permanent fire firefighters. What have you envisaged in the budget in regard to extra training, facilities and fit outs for auxiliary firefighters?

Mrs ROSE: We have set aside in the budget \$512,000 for turnout coats for our auxiliaries. They do a terrific job. I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with a lot of them over the past few weeks. I was speaking with the president of the auxiliaries only yesterday. I am meeting with him in a few weeks when I am in Rockhampton. I will have to ask the Chief Commissioner to provide you with the detail on the additional training.

Mr HARTLEY: As to the additional training that has been undertaken for our auxiliary firefighters of which we have nearly 2,000 across the State of Queensland, most of whom are in rural and regional Queensland—in one aspect of its training, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority has developed a BA trailer. It is a pantech vehicle. That is a semitrailer-type vehicle that has proved to be an enormous success. The trailer has been fitted out by our operational staff and our auxiliary firefighters have input into its design. An officer travels that vehicle around regional and rural Queensland providing breathing apparatus training to our auxiliaries. In the past, while it might surprise us, some of our auxiliaries used to put on breathing apparatus and mow the grounds of the fire station for their training. This vehicle simulates darkened smoke conditions and the type of environment that an auxiliary firefighter is likely to encounter in structural firefighting. The trailer has proved to be such a success that it has also allowed us to market the

organisation, because the side of the vehicle has written on it "Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority" and it promotes our mascot, Blazer Bear.

As to the other training that is being made available—our hot fire training facility at Lytton will also provide access for our auxiliaries, of which we will have access to nearly 65% of our permanent staff by placing that facility in the south-east corner. That will also allow us to get significant access to our auxiliaries. We recognise that in future developments of training for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority a centre needs to be provided somewhere around central Queensland and somewhere in northern Queensland. As the hot fire facility is a pilot program and this year we will be developing it up into a full program, I would see that in latter years the development of fire simulation centres such as gas-fired ones is likely to take place. We recognise the role that auxiliaries play and the vital role they have in the whole of the staffing arrangements for QFRA.

Mrs ROSE: I add for your information that we increased the auxiliary training and education program. We upped it from \$25,000 to \$30,000. We are serious about providing the extra funding for their training.

Mr MALONE: I refer to page 2-8 of the MPS where funding has been approved for urban breathing apparatus upgrades. Is the intention to have similar funding made available for rural firefighters? When would that funding be allocated?

Mrs ROSE: That issue has been raised with me by the rural firefighters. One of the groups that I visited asked what the urban fire service did with its old breathing apparatus when it upgraded its breathing apparatus. It was asked whether it would be possible for the older equipment to be handed on to the rural fires. I made some inquiries through the Chief Commissioner, because I was not aware of what they did do with it. I understand that there are minimum safety standards that the breathing apparatus must meet. The only time that the breathing apparatus is replaced is when it does not meet those minimum safety standards. For very, very good reasons—and they are all safety issues—we are unable to pass on to the Rural Fire Service any breathing apparatus.

We are providing additional money to the Rural Fire Service for improved operational equipment and base funding consolidation. Some of the personal firefighting protective equipment has to meet new Australian Fire Authorities Council standards. There are also the new-design helmet and two-piece overalls. The funding is there for knapsacks, pumps and hoses. You are particularly interested in the breathing apparatus, are you, for our rural fires?

Mr MALONE: The situation with rural firefighters is that quite often they get into a situation where breathing is difficult. The apparatuses probably do not need to be as efficient as those used in a building, but they do need them from time to time. I am aware also of the upgrading of the fire service vehicles.

Mrs ROSE: Of course, always the safety of our firefighters, whether or not they are urban or

rural, is of paramount importance to us. As far as that type of equipment, given that that is an operational matter, I will ask the chief to provide further detail for you.

Mr HARTLEY: In relation to breathing apparatus for rural volunteers, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority currently has a policy that we try to have the volunteers refrain from using breathing apparatus. That may sound a little harsh. There are standards for the acquisition of the breathing apparatus set and standards of maintaining the set. It has to go through fairly rigorous safety measures every three months. A person who is trained in breathing apparatus on our permanent staff is reclassified or retrained every 56 days. Given that we have 50,000 volunteers across Queensland, to move volunteer fire services into breathing apparatus would actually bring them into a more unsafe circumstance than to bring them into a safer circumstance.

The CHAIRMAN: The 20 minutes allotted to the Opposition has expired. Page 1-6 of the MPS outlines a memorandum of understanding with the Commonwealth for a State support package. Can the Minister outline the terms of this agreement and the status and fairness of the National Disaster Relief Arrangement with the Commonwealth in terms of meeting the needs of the Queensland community in times of disaster? I know my rural colleagues in the Opposition would be most interested in this answer.

Mrs ROSE: As you are aware, the NDRA, or the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangement, is a joint Commonwealth/State funding program that supports disaster-affected communities, and the restoration of eligible public assets is the major component. Under the NDRA formula, the State provides the first \$30m of disaster assistance and, in most years, pays the lion's share—sometimes 90c in every dollar paid under the NDRA. In 1998-99, the State has already committed \$65m for existing or past disasters, and we have not yet entered the cyclone season.

As I alluded to before, the Commonwealth Government has introduced a new guideline linking funding for the restoration of public assets with evidence of mitigation. This decision is of grave concern to myself, my department and to local government. It is the issue which I spoke about recently at the Local Government Association conference. It is of concern because there is a very real possibility that cash-strapped councils could miss out on the Commonwealth component of disaster relief if they do not meet the mitigation guidelines which have been forced upon us. The Federal Finance Minister, John Fahey, will be the judge and jury—that is if he is still the Minister after Saturday. He will decide whether or not councils have qualified for the Commonwealth funding. It is a travesty for the Commonwealth to expect small councils around Queensland, many with restricted rates bases, to have to provide proof of disaster mitigation works in order to qualify for disaster relief from the Commonwealth.

As I said before, the Commonwealth is trying to shift the goalposts. I am sure that most people would agree that there is a need for disaster mitigation work

to be carried out and a need for the Commonwealth. Local authorities recognise this. The States and Territories and local government should work together to achieve common ground on this issue. As I said before, I requested an urgent meeting with Mr Fahey to discuss the issue. He ignored my approach. As a matter of fact, I did not even get the courtesy of an acknowledgment to my request.

I support the Local Government Association of Queensland's contention that the overriding power of Mr Fahey to veto any aspect of claims is a blatant attempt to reduce the Commonwealth's commitment to financially support local government following a natural disaster. The Federal funds available nationally to State Governments and local governments is a measly \$3m. That is hopelessly inadequate. That is small change compared to what is needed for the implementation of risk assessment and disaster mitigation studies, which the Queensland Government is helping to fund.

Dissatisfaction with anomalies in the NDRA and uncertainties created by the guidelines prompted the LGAQ to undertake a public inquiry into the NDRA, and that report was published in July this year.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Minister wishes, she can finish her answer. By way of comment, it would not matter who wins on Saturday, you will find that the Commonwealth has long pockets and short arms. Whatever happens, you will have a battle on your hands.

Mrs ROSE: Mr Chairman, I am going to be fighting for Queensland, and I will be fighting for our local councils. Regardless of who the Government or the Minister of the day is, I will be again seeking an urgent meeting with that Minister to discuss the changes to the NDRA guidelines. My department is working closely with the local governments to ascertain how Queensland can access the \$3m fund announced by the Commonwealth in August.

The CHAIRMAN: Good. Thank you.

Mr FOURAS: Page 2-12 of the MPS outlines the capital works program for the QFRA. I note a budget allocation of \$2.8m for a hot fire training facility in Brisbane. How will this facility boost the skill level of the State's firefighters? Will the facility provide a new avenue for commercial operations for the QFRA?

Mrs ROSE: The chief commissioner provided some detail on the hot fire training facility before.

Mr FOURAS: I should not have walked outside for a couple of minutes.

Mrs ROSE: The hot fire training facility is planned for the Lytton area to replace an existing facility. Therefore, it is important that I give you some background on it.

Mr FOURAS: Can you give me a short answer, then, to make up for a long answer.

Mrs ROSE: It will replace an existing facility that will be resumed for a Main Roads development near the port of Brisbane. The current facility is inadequate in terms of the range of real-life training scenarios available for firefighters. I have to say that in the visits that I have made to fire stations

throughout the State, when you think about it, it really is quite incredible what our firefighters are faced with when they actually go into a building. They have towers at the back of a lot of the fire stations. It is very, very dark and they fill them up with smoke and, as a training exercise, they get the firefighters to run into the building. It really is quite amazing when you walk inside. It is just pitch black and you have absolutely no idea where you are going.

We are progressing with the hot fire training facility because our firefighters need to have training in simulated fire situations. Of course, that training can save our firefighters' lives. Seeing you stepped outside, I am quite happy to ask the chief commissioner to provide you with some other details on the hot fire training facility.

Mr FOURAS: Are you going to add—

Mr HARTLEY: Yes, I am.

Mr FOURAS: Keep going.

Mr HARTLEY: Let me pick up on the latter part of the question with regard to how it may enhance commercial opportunities. We have researched a number of fire services in South-East Asia, the South Pacific, across Queensland and in other States. There is this type of facility in Melbourne, which is able to achieve a significant amount of commercial opportunities. We have taken the model from the fire services in Sweden, which at this stage are the leaders in the world with regard to fire behaviour training for staff. In Sweden, they have achieved US\$750,000 a year in community training—just bringing John Citizen through this facility for a four-hour training program, for which they pay the equivalent of US\$120 per head. So there is an opportunity for us to train John Citizen, but mainly through industry. Currently, the Australian National Line have their crews trained in Tasmania. We have made approaches to ANL to see if they will have their crews trained here in Queensland.

Mr MUSGROVE: I refer the Minister to initiatives referred to on page 3-7 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements, and I ask: could the Minister explain to the Committee how the Queensland Ambulance Service will improve the service access to residents of Aboriginal communities through the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coordination unit in Cairns?

Mrs ROSE: The provision of ambulance services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is an area of particular concern to the QAS and to this Government. Only weeks ago, I was fortunate enough to be able to visit the Yarrabah community outside Edmonton. Can I say that I was so impressed with the dedication of the officers there and their keenness to expand the Queensland Ambulance Service into the Torres Strait and Aboriginal communities. Many of the large communities do not have the capacity to support ambulance services, and the lack of those services has the potential to have a significant impact on health outcomes. On my visit to that area, during which I visited Yarrabah, I also had the pleasure of meeting in Cairns a very fine officer by the name of

Mike Dillon, who had developed a first aid instruction program for the communities, which is delivered via the Internet. It was really, really interesting to see. The QAS has established services in a number of communities, including Bamaga, Thursday Island and, most recently, Mornington Island.

Several years ago, the QAS commenced a major research project aimed at defining the appropriate model for services in ATSI communities. This project was funded by the Commonwealth's Rural Health Support Education and Training Program. The report on this project has only recently been completed. One of the principal recommendations of that report was to establish a coordination unit within the QAS to coordinate and monitor services to Aboriginal communities. The report also recommended an integrated model of service delivery that takes into account both emergency response and non-ambulance health transport services. This model is being gradually implemented at Mornington Island and progressively at other locations. The principal role of the proposed coordination unit is to provide education support to the communities. This support is for the members of the community to learn first aid, to provide education support to student ambulance officers from Aboriginal backgrounds, of which there are currently 18 in the service, and to coordinate and monitor special recruitment programs and service delivery in ATSI communities.

As I was saying, I went to Yarrabah and met some of the Aboriginal ambulance officers. They were a great bunch of fellows. One of them in particular was pretty excited because he was on his way to play with the State ambulance officers' football team against New South Wales—a game which we lost. We let New South Wales beat us. This budget provides funding for the ATSI coordination unit to be based in Cairns and additional capital funding for a new station at Bamaga. It is envisaged that additional services will be implemented in other communities in future years.

The CHAIRMAN: While you were at Bamaga, did you meet Sailor's brother, who works as a ranger?

Mrs ROSE: I did not go to Bamaga, but to Yarrabah. I do plan on going to Bamaga. I did actually go to Bamaga many years ago. There are a number of Sailor families in a number of the communities. I quite possibly did meet him.

The CHAIRMAN: And they look like they can all play football, too. The Paramedic Program was introduced in Queensland under the former Labor Government. I refer the Minister to page 3-3 of the Budget papers. Can the Minister advise the Committee of the commitment of this Government to the Paramedic Program and to providing better training for qualified ambulance officers, and how this will impact on the level of medical responses to the people of Queensland?

Mrs ROSE: This Government is fully committed to the Paramedic Program. I am very pleased to say that the program was launched by the previous Labor Government in 1995. The Budget

provides funding for the training of an additional 12 paramedics each year. In the recent weeks I was delighted to hand out certificates to our graduate paramedics in Townsville and at Kedron Park, which is my and my department's home facility. The number of paramedics who graduated at those two ceremonies brings the total number of paramedics in the State to 69.

The Paramedic Program is a very important component in providing a range of ambulance responses to the Queensland community. It provides a pathway to better training for ambulance officers and ensures that Queenslanders have the best possible assistance available in an emergency. We are continuing with the Paramedic Program and the budget includes, as I said, the training of an additional 12 paramedic students.

You may have seen in the media recently an announcement that I made that we are going to be having a trial on the Gold Coast in which motorbikes will be used as first response units. Those bikes will be set up with emergency equipment and paramedics will ride them. There will be two bikes, an on-road bike and an off-road bike, and we will ensure that our paramedics are properly trained to ride them. I am delighted that the trial is on the Gold Coast, because we have kilometres and kilometres of beaches, which is difficult terrain for a regular ambulance vehicle to access. In addition, our hinterland area is a pretty popular playground for bushwalkers. Hopefully, through the trial, people who have been involved in an incident will be accessed much quicker. The motorbike ambulances can also avert the necessity for an ambulance vehicle to attend an incident. They are paramedics; they are highly trained and highly skilled ambulance officers. They will be able to ascertain whether or not it is necessary to bring an ambulance vehicle to the site. I am very keen to see the outcome of the trial, and I expect that it will be very, very successful.

The CHAIRMAN: The Balmoral local ambulance station recently outfitted two of those ambulances for the paramedics.

Mrs ROSE: Well done.

The CHAIRMAN: They also lent an oxy-viva to the paramedics at Mount Gravatt to help with their training. All the first-response ambulances at Balmoral have those in the vehicles and the paramedics did not have any, so we thought we would help them out.

Mrs ROSE: Well done. I would say they have a particularly good Treasurer, Mr Chairman!

Mr FOURAS: Has anybody asked you about the CPR 2000 Program? I notice at page 3-2 that the CPR 2000 Program has a goal of increasing the level of CPR training in the community to 25% by the year 2000. Could you advise the Committee how you will measure this improvement, how many more staff will be involved in that and, ultimately, what it will cost?

Mrs ROSE: First aid is a vital element of saving lives, as the member will well appreciate with his association with the surf-lifesaving movement. The more people in the community who have first aid and CPR skills, the greater the likelihood that a life can be

saved by ambulance officers responding to an emergency.

When I was in Townsville recently to launch Ambulance Week in north Queensland, I was delighted at a display on CPR. Response was made to a gentleman who had a cardiac arrest in the middle of the Townsville mall. He was an actor. I had in fact been warned prior to the beginning of the display that he was an actor, but he was an extremely good one. The lady who was acting as his wife was even better and was screaming quite loudly when her husband fell to the ground. That display brought home the message of how important it is to have CPR. That is why the CPR 2000 Program is such an excellent program. I am fully committed to supporting it, because the program aims at increasing the survival rate of heart attack patients attended by the QSA from the current 5%. The QAS is seeking to increase CPR knowledge in the community to an impressive 25% of the population under this program. I am pleased to say that my husband and one of my sons has CPR and my other son will shortly begin his training through the surf-lifesaving movement to get his CPR as part of his bronze medallion.

In 1998-99 we have budgeted \$247,000 for the CPR 2000 Program and we have project piloting under way with Toowoomba, the southern Gold Coast, Gayndah, Dysart, Nambour and parts of the Pine Rivers Shire. The CPR 2000 steering committee is chaired by Associate Professor Vic Callinan, who is the national chairman of the Australian Resuscitation Council. Organisations participating in the project include the Australian Red Cross, the National Heart Foundation, the National Safety Council, the Royal Lifesaving Society, St John Ambulance, the surf-lifesaving movement and TAFE. The pace of implementation beyond piloting continues to be subject to private sector funding. Activities to secure sponsors have increased. However, the project cannot proceed beyond the pilot stage without external funding.

Mr FOURAS: I note that the Pacific Surf Life Saving Club is running a course over the school holidays that includes CPR skills. Such courses should be promoted as being a fun thing to do on the beach. That is an approach that should be taken. It is the way to go.

Mrs ROSE: Yes, it is excellent.

The CHAIRMAN: You might make one of your officers available so that members of Parliament can upgrade their CPR skills. It would be over three years now since an officer was made available. Other members of Parliament and I availed ourselves of that service. Although we are locked in here a lot of the time, we could sneak away to do that course. It would be handy if we look at offering that again for all members of Parliament.

Mr MUSGROVE: Particularly for members of the Opposition.

Mr MALONE: I am sure that it would have bipartisan support.

Mrs ROSE: Yes, I would look for bipartisan support from the Opposition spokesman. That is an

excellent suggestion. Unfortunately, last time I was unavailable to do that course. I am sure if we organise another course for members of Parliament we would get a good response from members on both sides of the House.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for questions from Government members has expired.

Mr MALONE: I suggest that we might be a little selective when we do the kiss of life! Minister, I refer to the Government's decision to provide free ambulance services to pensioners and Seniors Card holders and ask: what loss of income is the QAS expecting as a result of the diminished ambulance subscriptions?

Mrs ROSE: As I was saying before, the free ambulance subscriptions for pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants from 1 January next year is a wonderful project by this Government. You are right; we recognise that there will be a loss of income from subscriptions. We expect the forgone subscription receipts from pensioners for the 1998-99 year to be \$8.4m. That is quite substantial. In 1999-2000, after the program is in for a full year, we expect the loss to be \$16.8m. There is also the Department of Veterans' Affairs receipts of \$750,000. Of course, in the out years we expect that to be about \$1.5m. There is also the transport accounts for non-subscribers—\$1.15m and \$2.3m in the out years. Group scheme receipts amount to \$50,000 and in the out years \$100,000.

We plan to have a marketing program to try to encourage those people who are not eligible for the free subscriptions from 1 January to take up subscriptions. A lot of people are not Ambulance Service subscribers. It can be quite a costly exercise if you need an ambulance in an emergency. It can cost an average of between \$300 and \$500 for a call-out. It really is a costly exercise. For a family, a subscription rate of \$89 is really quite affordable. It is certainly well worth meeting that cost, given that it can save several hundreds of dollars.

The Queenslanders who qualify for free ambulance services are those who carry pensioner concession cards and also Queensland Seniors Card holders and their dependants. The QAS has utilised eligibility criteria from Centrelink, Veterans' Affairs and the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care to determine eligibility. As you may know, the following income support recipients are entitled to receive a pension concession card and will therefore be eligible to receive their free subscription—all Department of Social Security and Department of Veterans' Affairs pensioners, including those in receipt of carer and parenting payments, mature age and mature age partner allowees, bereavement allowees, Newstart, widow partner and sickness allowees, special benefits and some parenting recipients over 60 years of age who have been in receipt of income support for nine months or more.

Mr MALONE: How do you intend to treat the loss of income to the QAS? Will you treat that as a community service obligation and will it be funded directly from Treasury?

Mrs ROSE: The funding to cover the free ambulance subscriptions has all come from Treasury from consolidated revenue. The commitment that we made leading up to the election was that we would provide \$21m to cover the free ambulance subscriptions. In effect, in the Budget we are providing \$15m for this financial year. We are actually providing well above what our pre-election commitment was. We are very keen to ensure that everybody who is entitled to their free subscriptions has the opportunity to take up the offer. I would ask all members to ensure that they encourage people to keep their subscriptions up till 31 December. The notices that have been going out over the past month have been adjusted so that people are only receiving a subscription account up to 31 December.

Mr MALONE: There will be extra costs involved in providing that service associated with either buses, other vehicles or extra manpower. I imagine that is the difference between the \$15m and the \$21m?

Mrs ROSE: We expect that there will be additional pressures, particularly with respect to non-urgent patient transfer. We are providing some funding in that area and providing extra vehicles specifically for non-urgent patient transfers. We have also recently introduced a requirement that doctors have to notify by noon the day before if they have a patient for non-urgent patient transfers. This is one way of helping to manage what we see could be additional pressures put onto the Ambulance Service once the free subscriptions are introduced.

You mentioned the additional operating cost due to this anticipated increased demand on the service. We expect that to be about \$900,000. But we have provided the funding. As I said, we have provided the additional funding in the Budget to be able to cater for that. There are also implementation costs for refunds, administration, communications and marketing of \$750,000. For those people who paid their 12 months' subscriptions, we will give them a refund after 1 January if they apply for it. Part of the other \$15m that we have provided is a reduction in service accounts for non-subscribers over 60. We expect that that could be \$1.15m.

Mr MALONE: How are going to administer the rebate that those cardholders will receive after 1 January? Will there be a direct refund back to individual cardholders? Will there be some difficulty in identifying those people?

Mrs ROSE: Because the Queensland Ambulance Service has been working on it—and I know that the Commissioner of the Ambulance Service has been working on that now for the last couple of months—I will ask him to provide you with the detail of how we will be implementing it.

Dr FITZGERALD: As of the time that the policy announcement was made, we started adjusting the invoices going out to our current subscribers to take into account the 1 January implementation date. So for all of those people who have received an invoice since, I think, some time in August, there will be no necessity for any further refunds. Soon after 1 January we will automatically generate a refund for those people who paid an annual subscription prior

to that. That is the most effective way of doing it. Obviously some people have indicated that they do not want the money and we are quite happy to accept donations in return. It will be done automatically as of that date for those people who have prepaid effectively into next financial year. The Budget has provided an amount of money—I think it was \$3m—to accommodate the fact that we will have to refund certain prepayments.

Mrs ROSE: Can I just add something in relation to the non-urgent patient transfer that I referred to? That policy was actually introduced in 1992. The pensioners are entitled to receive the same services. Once they receive their first subscription, they are entitled to receive the same services that they do now.

Mr MALONE: I refer to page 3-3 of the MPS at the second dot point where there is mention of the National Competition Policy which requires public sector agencies to identify and eliminate any non-competitive behaviour. What sort of non-competitive behaviour does the QAS engage in?

Mrs ROSE: I will ask the Commissioner of the Ambulance Service to provide you with that detail.

Dr FITZGERALD: As part of that commitment to the National Competition Policy, the State is required to review all legislation. The Queensland Ambulance Service legislation will be reviewed later this year to early next year. The key provision within our legislation which may require special consideration is the fact that it is illegal to provide an ambulance service in this State without the permission of the Minister. You can transport patients, but if you call an ambulance service that is in breach of the provisions of the Act. That is the key provision which will need to be considered which obviously provides the Queensland Ambulance Service with a monopoly provision with respect to ambulance transport in the State. The areas in which we do have a monopoly position really is with respect to ambulance transport, pre-hospital care and emergency response. In relation to the other areas of our activities such as teaching first aid we are obviously already in open competition with other providers.

Mr MALONE: So the time frame is about 12 months?

Dr FITZGERALD: This year. We have to review our legislation this year in accordance with the time frame.

The CHAIRMAN: I just have a comment. I hope that we do not open the door to lunatics. You had better make sure that that does not happen or the Minister will be responsible for those people getting in there and not being able to give the quality of service that is needed.

Mr FOURAS: I do not think we should open the door to anybody outside.

The CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Dr FITZGERALD: The provision does not necessarily mean that we need to go to a fully competitive situation. All we need to do is mount a public benefit test to retain the current monopoly

situation. I would suggest to you—without pre-empting the outcome of that—that the people of Queensland may be a little bit puzzled if we end up with a tow truck situation with respect to the emergency side. However, there may well be a different case to argue on the non-emergency side of the transport.

Mr FOURAS: I think that it really is the craziest thing I have heard. I think it is crazy that we should even have to write a letter to justify it. I think the spending of a stamp or five minutes of your time is absolutely ludicrous in this situation. It is about time that we seriously said, "Just forget it."

Mr MALONE: There is five minutes out of this.

Mr FOURAS: There would be unanimity here on the floor of the Parliament. This is just going crazy. What are we doing?

Mr MALONE: All that the National Competition Policy requires is a public benefit test, and that really covers it quite well. The sugar industry has been through it in Bowen, so there is no problem.

Mr FOURAS: Yes, but I am just suggesting—

The CHAIRMAN: That will be enough. It is the Opposition's time.

Mr MALONE: In reference to the employment development within your portfolio, what are the details of any VERs for persons whose employment has been terminated, whether on a contract or a permanent public servant, since the Beattie Government came to office? Could I have details of that?

Mrs ROSE: I will ask Margaret Smith, the Acting Executive Director of the Support Services' Business Unit to give you details on that.

Ms SMITH: Since the change in Government we have certainly complied with the Government's stance that we are to minimise any restructuring within our organisation. Since the change in Government there has been only one single look at the restructuring, and to date there has been no offering of any VERs within the organisation. There has been no termination of contracts. If anything, the department's stand has been that, if any officer's position is deemed to be subject to abolishment, then that officer is deemed to be surplus and the department will take every measure, whether they be a public sector employee or a public servant, to try the redeployment. In the rural fire area there has been the offer of a VER and I believe one has been accepted by Bob Bourke. A VER is everyone's entitlement. It is as it says: it is voluntary. Our department must in certain circumstances offer a VER, but certainly redeployment will always be the preferred option if that is the request of officers.

Mrs ROSE: I can actually provide you with some additional information on that. As a matter of fact, for the financial year 1997-98 under the previous Government 26 officers were offered and accepted voluntary early retirement. The total gross payout amount for those officers was \$2,484,088. So that equated to an average payment of \$95,538.50. Additionally, five assistant commissioners and the

deputy commissioner did not retain their jobs. Five have accepted VERs at a cost of \$671,451.07. That all happened under the previous Government.

Mr MALONE: I ask about the Queensland Ambulance Service's new vehicle, the Bronco 7.2 litre diesel engine. I see that they have moved away from air bag suspension. Perhaps somebody could comment on their reliability, serviceability and perhaps even economy.

Mrs ROSE: I will be happy to ask the Commissioner of the Ambulance Service to talk to you, but I have to say how impressed I am with the blue bonnets. Since I was appointed Minister of this department, I have had the opportunity of commissioning a number of the new blue bonnets.

Mr MALONE: I am more interested in what is under the bonnet.

Mrs ROSE: I have actually talked to the ambulance officers on the ground, and they have told me how happy they are with their new vehicles.

Mr MALONE: I just need that reinforced.

Mrs ROSE: As I said, I will get the Commissioner to provide the Committee with information on the reliability and the serviceability of those vehicles. As someone who has been talking to the ambulance officers on the ground, I assure the Committee that they are quite happy with their new blue bonnets.

Mr MALONE: I am not expecting to hear bad news.

Dr FITZGERALD: I must admit to the fact that I do not know too much about what is under the bonnet either, but from the feedback we have had on the new vehicles from the staff, who do fully understand the vehicles, it seems they really have been very well received in terms of their operations, reliability and serviceability. There certainly were some initial issues with respect to the availability of spare parts, because these vehicles were fully imported from the United States. I understand that procedures have been put in place to have spare parts available within the country. Because these vehicles are diesel they seem to be much more reliable than the petrol engines, and at this point we certainly have not had too much adverse feedback from anywhere regarding their reliability or serviceability, bearing in mind of course that the oldest of them is probably only 12 to 18 months old anyway.

Mr MALONE: There are no initial problems with them at all?

Dr FITZGERALD: The only initial problem was the availability of spare parts, because the vehicles were fully imported.

Mr MALONE: Does your Government give any consideration to providing extra funding to the Royal Life Saving Society, having regard to the statistic that a large majority of drownings occur in still water—dams, pools and those sorts of places—which comes under the auspices of Royal Life Saving? Could I have a comment on that?

Mrs ROSE: I certainly recognise the contribution of the Royal Life Saving Society. We do

provide subsidy funding to two groups. One is Neptune. That group is on the Gold Coast and I am familiar with it. As a matter of fact, only a couple of weeks ago I was speaking to Mrs Welford, who is a member of the Neptune Royal Life Saving Group.

As I said, we certainly do recognise the contribution made by the Royal Life Saving Society. I have met with Les Mole and he has raised with me a number of issues of concern. Of course, the society is looking for additional funding from the Government, particularly having seen that the surf-lifesaving movement had an additional injection of funding. It appealed for some consideration for the royal lifesaving movement.

One of the suggestions it put to me—I am investigating it at the moment—was for WorkCover premiums for 131 of its active members to be covered. I do not think that is an unreasonable request. I have asked my department to look at that and do the figures on it. Hopefully I will be able to make a decision on that in the not-too-distant future.

The CHAIRMAN: Labor's Emergency Services policy espouses a need for initiatives to attract ambulance officers to remote communities. On a trip I did from Cairns to Bamaga I heard about the difficulty those regions sometimes had in holding ambulance officers in those remote communities and the need for very good officers, and I heard about the lives that they can save in those areas. On page 3-3 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements there is reference to additional funding for this initiative. Can you explain what is planned in this financial year and how those remote communities will benefit?

Mrs ROSE: Mr Chairman, I share your concern. I have visited some of the more remote stations and this is an issue that has been raised with me. I am certainly pleased to support the QAS officers in remote and rural communities. Attracting officers to those positions is difficult, due to the lack of amenities for their families. We are focusing on employing locals where appropriate, but there is some difficulty in maintaining the skills base of ambulance officers due to the relatively small number of cases. I ask the Commissioner for the Ambulance Service to give the Committee some more detail on some of the measures and strategies we have in place to address that.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Commissioner to cast his mind back to the blitz that was used as the ambulance at Coen. It is a bit hard to get dedicated officers to think they are going to do a great job with that. Is the blitz still at Coen, or is there now a decent ambulance?

Dr FITZGERALD: I do not think it is there, no.

The CHAIRMAN: It operated from the hospital.

Dr FITZGERALD: I think that has been replaced. The Queensland Ambulance Service introduced a rural and remote incentive scheme to try to attract our staff to remote and rural areas. Obviously, difficulty in getting professional staff to serve in remote and rural areas is not peculiar to the Queensland Ambulance Service. The same difficulties arise with attracting doctors into rural

areas. The key elements of the scheme were: the provision of some special leave for staff in those areas for personal development purposes; payment of an isolation bonus; payment of equivalent to the locality allowance; and an integrated transfer system, including term appointments, to some of those areas.

One of the pieces of feedback I receive from officers is that they do not mind spending some time in the country but that they do not want to stay there forever. To be able to get out again is an issue for them—for their own personal development as well as for family reasons. Housing is provided or subsidised in selected locations and incidental allowances for relievers and so on are also paid. There have also been some improvements in the QAS meal allowance provisions.

This scheme commenced in December 1996. It has been relatively successful in attracting staff, or at least limiting the number of vacancies in those rural areas. There are always requests to extend the program, as you can imagine. In this year we have provided an additional amount of \$300,000, mainly to try to construct some additional residences to try to attract staff into remote and rural areas. The actual particular allocation of those residences has not yet been decided.

Mr FOURAS: Page 1-8 of the MPS states that the functions of the Disaster Policy and Research Unit will be, inter alia, to "undertake disaster risk management projects in conjunction with high risk Local Governments". Minister, can you indicate what would be expected of local governments with regard to that? What would their commitment be in this sort of project?

Mrs ROSE: Are you referring to the hazard mitigation program?

Mr FOURAS: Yes. It specifically states that the projects will be undertaken in conjunction with local governments. What would be expected of local governments in this partnership?

Mrs ROSE: The Disaster and Policy Research Unit is an important element within the Emergency Services Division. It is coordinating the implementation of studies into mitigating the impact of natural disasters in Queensland, in conjunction with local councils. In this financial year these studies will look at improving disaster management in Cairns, Hervey Bay and Mackay. A flood management study of the Murweh Shire, based around Charleville, has been completed. These studies are an integral part of improving the safety of all Queenslanders in the event of natural disasters. I ask Mr Noye, the Executive Director of the Emergency Services Division, to provide the Committee with some more detail.

Mr NOYE: As the Minister mentioned, the studies being funded out of the budget are an all-hazards risk management study for Cairns, the flood risk management study for Mackay and the engineering lifeline study for Hervey Bay. The study that is looking at implementation at the moment with the Murweh Shire—the Charleville/Augathella area—is a flood study. We are looking at implementation this year and working very closely

with the LGAQ, the Local Government Association of Queensland, and the Murweh Shire. Our staff have been out to the Murweh Shire recently to help the Murweh Shire with some basic implementation, such as adjusting their town planning, and with some public education for the people of Charleville in particular, who have had two floods in seven years. We are expecting another wet season, so we hope to put in place some pretty good public education there.

Under the State Counter-Disaster Organisation Act, each of the local governments has a responsibility to prepare a local counter-disaster plan to deal with all counter-disaster measures in its area. With the three studies that we are planning to do this year—Cairns, Mackay and Hervey Bay—each of those councils is putting up funds to do the project and the outcomes. Cairns has allocated a \$50,000 contribution towards the study there, Hervey Bay has allocated \$20,000, and Mackay City has allocated \$50,000 towards the project.

As to what the projects will be doing with the particular hazards that they are looking at—they will be looking for some template to apply to other local governments across Queensland. This is the first time that these sorts of studies have happened in Australia under the risk management standard. This is a big plus. The LGAQ is right behind these projects. The residents and the mayors of the cities are very supportive. The Minister got a lot of support at the recent LGAQ conference. The projects will then flow on to other local governments across the State.

Mr MUSGROVE: As I represent an urban centre, I have a particular interest in urban research and rescue. I refer to the Budget Initiatives of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority on page 2-4 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. You have already commented in brief about the provision for additional funding for urban search and rescue. I am wondering whether you could elaborate on that. In particular, would you be able to outline the benefits and anticipated enhancements for the safety of all Queenslanders, particularly those in urban areas, by the upgrade to urban search and rescue equipment and training?

Mrs ROSE: As I have said, the QFRA budget for 1998-99 is a record \$209m. I am proud that we have been able to achieve such a significant level of funding in our first budget—a budget which aims to improve services and firefighter safety. Additional capital funding of \$1.25m this financial year is to go towards protective safety equipment, breathing apparatus and urban search and rescue equipment. This equipment is necessary so that the QFRA can properly provide the emergency services indicated in its title. It is the Fire and Rescue Authority.

In creating the Fire and Rescue Authority, the previous Government did not provide adequate funding to match the new responsibilities of the then Fire Service in the area of rescue work. I am starting to redress that problem. That is why this Budget allocates money towards urban search and rescue equipment to upgrade the capabilities of the QFRA in this most important area of responsibility. For a

detailed breakdown, I will ask the Chief Commissioner to also respond.

Mr HARTLEY: The urban search and rescue component for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is a recognition of our role and accountabilities, particularly in relation to the future of our communities and particularly in relation to the Olympics 2000 in New South Wales. What has happened overseas, of course—there was the bombing in Oklahoma City. With the emergency management agency in Australia, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority has a representative on that committee to look at urban search and rescue, which is dealing specifically with large urban disasters, such as a building collapse through earthquake or a building collapse through terrorist bombing. It is a specialist type of rescue, and it requires specialist type of equipment.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is leading the Department of Emergency Services, because Queensland has adopted a multi-agency approach. It will be the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Emergency Services Division as we approach the urban search and rescue component. We have undertaken to upgrade all our ropes and lines, particularly on fire appliances, right across the State. We intend to bring all of our firefighters into Level 1 training of urban search and rescue. We have 27 officers in the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority trained up to Level 2 and a number of officers trained up to Level 3. Level 3 is to take command of a major incident. What will ultimately happen is that we will have specialist units based in Beenleigh, Brisbane and somewhere in central Queensland which need to be able to be mobilised within two hours and in the air within six hours, fully equipped to go anywhere within Australia or even into the international arena. The ultimate investment will be somewhere in the vicinity of \$1m when the program is completed.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to ask you a question about page 111 of the Budget Overview—Budget Paper No. 2. It shows \$0.25m for the Energex Community Rescue operation based at Bundaberg. Can the Minister inform the Committee of the valuable role performed by the Bundaberg-based helicopter in terms of ensuring coverage of aero-medical rescue services along the length of the Queensland coast and how that fits into the emergency services link covering all Queenslanders on the east coast of Australia?

Mrs ROSE: I really do need to recognise the magnificent role that our community helicopter service providers play in the Queensland community. I have had the opportunity to visit a number of the Queensland Rescue helicopters around the State, and the RACQ CareFlight, which is in my own electorate of Currumbin. The RACQ CareFlight helicopter is actually based at the John Flynn Hospital, which is located at Tugun but certainly in the electorate of Currumbin. I also attended the launch of the new Energex helicopter on the Sunshine Coast fairly recently. Those community helicopter providers complement those services which are provided by Queensland Rescue, which

has one of the best helicopter rescue services in the world.

Energex Community Rescue has extended its existing service to Bundaberg on a trial basis for a period of three years. Energex Community Rescue has relocated its single JetRanger helicopter to Bundaberg to provide this service. It commenced operations on 1 March 1998. The helicopter is housed in the Queensland Ambulance Service hangar in Bundaberg on a rent-free basis. The QAS has two fixed-wing aircraft based in Bundaberg which also service the Wide Bay/Burnett area. When I was in Bundaberg last week, I took the opportunity to go out and have a look. As a matter of fact, they were transferring a patient—an elderly lady who was on her way back to Mundubbera—so I took the opportunity to have a chat with her and to the pilots.

I have to say that I was very impressed by the officers out there. They are completely dedicated. They love the job that they are doing. There are two permanent full-time pilots based in Bundaberg. Energex Community Rescue's chief pilot relieves on the Bundaberg flight roster as required. Energex Community Rescue has made arrangements with the QAS, the Queensland Police Service, the State Emergency Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority to crew the helicopter on a task-specific basis. The JetRanger helicopter in Bundaberg is backed up by Energex Community Rescue's two helicopters operating from its Maroochydore base: a twin-engine Kawasaki BK117 helicopter, which is the helicopter whose launch I went to, and a single-engine LongRanger helicopter.

The Energex Community Rescue base at Maroochydore directs all operations in Bundaberg, minimising administrative and operational costs. The Energex Community Rescue will receive an additional annual Government grant payment of \$250,000 to cover the extension of its service to Bundaberg for the three-year trial period. The extension of the Energex Community Rescue service to Bundaberg will be reviewed before the end of the three-year trial period.

Mr FOURAS: I refer you to page 2-10 of the MPS, Program Outlays—Fire Services, and specifically to the section under non-labour operating costs which shows a substantial increase from the actual of \$34m in 1997-98 to nearly \$41m in 1998-99. I presume that is where the training costs for firefighters would appear. Do you have a figure for what it would cost to train firefighters? Is that seen as extremely necessary in terms of improving both the safety and effectiveness of our fire services?

Mrs ROSE: This Government is committed to improving the safety of Emergency Services personnel. That is why one of the first initiatives for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority to be delivered under the Labor Government is additional funding of \$1.25m for the provision of safety equipment for firefighters. With 1,200 turnout coats and boots for auxiliaries, breathing apparatus upgrades and urban search and rescue equipment, I am delivering on Labor's promises to the community and to firefighters. Obviously training is a vital

component in minimising the risk to firefighters' lives and in ensuring that the community receives the highest level of protection possible from their firefighters. That is why we are progressing with the development of the hot fire training facility, which we have heard a lot about this evening, so that firefighters can experience real-life conditions in a training environment.

Mr FOURAS: We cannot hear too much about that.

Mrs ROSE: I am quite happy to talk about all of the positive initiatives of this Government over and over again. The QFRA expends millions of dollars on training, from initial recruit training to upskilling our firefighters in the use of urban search and rescue equipment, vertical rescue techniques, road accident rescue practices and many others. Firefighters deserve that support and I am determined to maintain it. I am quite happy to ask the Chief Commissioner to provide you with some additional detailed costings on training.

Mr FOURAS: I will specifically ask you a question, because your time would just about be up. Can I ask you specifically to give me your views on the benefits of firefighter training?

Mr HARTLEY: The non-labour cost that you referred to for training this financial year is \$4,168,000. The actual expenditure for training for the last financial year was \$2.7m. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority offers training and benefits to our staff. A lot of our training packages have been VETEC accredited. That means that our firefighters' training packages are now transportable nationally and are also transportable in a vocational sense in industry. The curriculum for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is aligned to meet the national standards by the inclusion of the Australian fire competencies. It does provide transportability of competencies across Australia into other fire agencies. Currently, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is providing pathways for career streaming for volunteers and for auxiliaries. The Minister should be proud to announce that the first of all auxiliary recruit courses is now being conducted in the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority training facility at Lytton and, in the future, through the hot fire training facility. The course has recognised the skills and knowledge of our auxiliary work force through the reduction of the course length. Currently there are 22 firefighters training. Those firefighters who are currently trained have an auxiliary background. They were auxiliaries in the first place. The course has been reduced from 12 weeks to 10 weeks, which ultimately provides us with economic benefits as well. That has provided an enhancement to the morale of our auxiliaries, because of their desire to become permanent staff. The cost savings to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority will show that there are benefits to the organisation.

It does provide also education and training in a number of learning modes to meet the geographical challenges of the State. Our training packages are distance education through QSTEP, the Queensland State Training Education Program, and ATEP, an Auxiliary Training and Education Program. They are

all developed for distance education. Our packages are currently being prepared on CD-ROM for our firefighters in regional Queensland. There is a proposal that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority would like to explore and that is in the aspect of apprenticeship training into our permanent ranks, because our third-year firefighter is regarded as a tradesman firefighter. We will be looking in the future at apprenticeship concepts for the fire services. The Internet has also become a valuable tool for the training package and the transferring of training material into our stations. We have been trialling the use of the Internet in our permanent stations which now use computers and computer modelling.

The other aspect for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is that our training is now recognised interstate and is being utilised by other agencies, for instance, Mount Isa Mines. We recently took over the contract for fire and rescue services for Mount Isa Mines. The ease of transportability of the staff in Mount Isa was that they had already been trained in QSTEP.

The CHAIRMAN: The time for Government questions has elapsed. As the shadow Minister has a couple of extra questions to ask the Minister, we will allot the remainder of the time to the Opposition spokesman.

Mr MALONE: The Opposition of the day made quite an outstanding comment about our previous Minister, who utilised the rescue helicopter to promote Japan/Queensland relationships by transporting sumo wrestlers. I have been made aware of the fact that quite recently some Arab businesspeople were flown in a rescue helicopter on the Gold Coast, as detailed in the Gold Coast Bulletin. Could the Minister indicate what criteria were used for that flight?

Mrs ROSE: I am unaware of the situation that you are talking about. I will ask Mr Noye, the Executive Director of the Emergency Services Division to provide you with that detail.

Mr NOYE: I am not aware. Was it a CareFlight helicopter or the Government helicopter?

Mr MALONE: I understand that it was a rescue helicopter. I am not quite sure which particular one.

Mr NOYE: My understanding is that it may have been the CareFlight one. That probably would have been a promotional flight. I will check with one of my directors. It definitely was not a Government helicopter.

MR MALONE: Is it subsidised by the Government, though?

Mr NOYE: No, we pay only \$600,000 per year to CareFlight. Their operating costs are nearly \$2m a year. They undertake promotional flights. That is allowable under our service agreement with CareFlight for them to do so. That flight would not be counted as one of the ones we have provided funds for.

Mr MALONE: I was just checking.

Mrs ROSE: You have now put on record how the previous Minister used the helicopter.

Mr MALONE: The same conditions applied. In regard to centralisation of communication, I have some concerns about that. Could you give me some guarantees that you will undertake very careful consideration about the centralisation of communications? I have particular concern where a community helicopter is involved. In my own central Queensland electorate, because the community helicopters are funded by community benefit, when there is a mistaking, a misunderstanding or a problem, goodwill will disappear very quickly. I would like some guarantees in regard to that.

Mrs ROSE: I gather that you are referring to a proposal which has been put forward to amalgamate Mount Isa with Townsville and—

Mr MALONE: Not necessarily, I am talking more about Mackay with Rockhampton.

Mrs ROSE: Mackay and Rockhampton. There are those two situations that I have been made aware of. You will be pleased to know that Tim Mulherin has approached me about this. He actually came and saw me with John Bird, a representative from the Central Queensland Helicopter Rescue Group. John and Tim came to see me and expressed some concern. I share their concerns and I share your concerns. I know that the local community of Kilcoy in the Brisbane Valley, which is my own home town, was up in arms when they were part of the Caboolture communications centre and Caboolture was then amalgamated with Brisbane. They believed that when information was sent through about a particular location—which is the same concern that has been expressed by the Mackay and Mount Isa communities—the people at the communications centre, for example, in Rockhampton, would not have the local knowledge of the Mackay area. I am aware that that is one of the major concerns, or the major concern.

Can I give you an assurance that when we are looking at any of these proposals, and they are on the table, I will not make any changes or allow any of those changes to be made without full and proper public consultation.

Mr MALONE: There is probably another facet to that in relation to the training of communications centre operators as well—to have them QA qualified.

Mrs ROSE: Ambulance officers?

Mr MALONE: No, the communications centre operators—to have them fully qualified.

Mrs ROSE: That has been raised with me. I will ask the Commissioner of the Ambulance Service to outline for you how our communications officers are trained.

Dr FITZGERALD: Yes, this budget actually provides half a million dollars to enhance the training of communications operators. It has been an issue of concern to us. In the past, the training has been fairly limited. We are in the final stages of developing a TAFE certificate, four-level course, which will be implemented as soon as it has been accredited. The half a million dollars is provided as well as some additional money that is already in the budget—another \$200,000—to implement that training and to upgrade the training of

communications operators across the State and to, hopefully, avoid the concerns that you have.

Mr MALONE: Thank you, Minister.

The CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for the consideration of the Estimates related to the Minister for Emergency Service has expired. I thank the Minister and the portfolio officers for their attendance, particularly the large number of officers that the Minister has made available to the Committee today to assist us with our deliberations on these Estimates. I would like to thank them for their time. They have done a bit of OT for us tonight. I am sure that the Minister will make sure that that does not go unrewarded.

Mrs ROSE: And that applies to the Committee members as well.

The CHAIRMAN: I would also like to thank my Committee members for their deliberations and help with the Committee today. That concludes the Committee's consideration of the matter referred to it by the Parliament on 15 September 1998. I declare the public hearing closed.

The Committee adjourned at 7.33 p.m.