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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Wednesday, 26 May 1999

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 26 May 1999

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

The CHAIRMAN (Mrs Hodson-Thomas): For the information of members, the Estimates Committee will be reported by contractors to Hansard. A daily verbatim proof *Hansard* will be available during the afternoon of the following day. Hansard will distribute the documents for correction at that time, which must be returned on the A4 document sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page. I caution members that if a Minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information which the Minister agrees to provide will be sought within one week. It will also greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the program statement volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, and amount in preface to their question.

As has been the practice of previous Estimates Committees members should not raise questions about matters of general concern which do not have an item of expenditure in the consolidated fund. The Estimates Committee's consideration of the consolidated fund's estimates of expenditure will be restricted to discussions of those items for which a vote of money is proposed. We are dealing with estimates of expenditure and that should be the prime focus of this committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, they need to be clearly related to matters of expenditure. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators which are included in the Budget Statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates.

It would assist in the committee's examination if questions and answers can be kept brief, without unnecessarily omitting material information. It is my intention to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The Minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, would the Minister clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide? Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers, and accordingly I ask the Minister to cooperate with those requirements.

Division 80: Family and Children's Services, \$154 395 000 -

[Mrs Hodson-Thomas, Chairman.]

[Mrs Parker, Minister for Family and Children's Services.]

[Mr R. Fisher, Director General, Family and Children's Services.]

[Mr W.R. Budiselik, Executive Director, Industry Development and Service Specification.]

[Ms P.M. Bagdonavicius, Executive Director, Strategy and Funding Management.]

[Mr P.M. de Mamiel, Director Financial Services.]

[Ms A. Norgard, Executive Director, Women's Policy Development Office.]

[Mrs D. Moran, Executive Director, Office of Seniors Interests.]

[Mr T. Murphy, Executive Director, WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office.]

[Mr P.M.A. Birchall, Director Service Design and Evaluation.]

[Mr R. Freeman, Director Business Management, Office of Seniors Interests.]

[Mr L. McCulloch, Executive Director, Family and Children's Services.]

[Ms M. Robinson, Manager, Corporate Services - Women's Policy Development Office.]

[Mr M. Cormann, Chief of Staff, Family and Children's Services.]

[Mr O. Cole, Media Secretary, Minister for Family and Children's Services.]

Mrs PARKER: I would like to seek the consideration of, in particular, the Opposition in regard to how you want this 3 hours structured. In the past we have sought to set a time aside for Family and Children's Services and then allocated a time after that for the other considerations. That has not always been satisfactory and I note the member for Perth nodding because I know last year we did run out of time for questions regarding the Women's Policy Development Office. So, I really would just seek the comment of the Opposition on how you would like to structure the 3 hours made available to us today. Do you want to have 2 hours for family and children's services and then, say, 20 minutes each for Office of Seniors Interests, Women's Policy Development Office and Terry Murphy regarding drugs and allocate it that way although it is all now coming under the one particular item in the budget. We could simply just call people to the table and move around.

[This transcript has been produced by a private contractor.]

Ms WARNOCK: Well, I certainly would be grateful, Minister, if we could do the women's interests matters before the end as we did the last time. There are two reasons. Firstly, we ran out of time and, secondly, this time I have an official engagement at 1.00 so I am afraid I will not be here to deal with the area that is very dear to my heart if we do not do it before 12.45 pm. So, I would be very grateful if we could do that somewhere earlier in the last hour than we did last time. I do not know whether any of my colleagues have any requests. I thought I would get in early.

Mrs PARKER: My proposal is that we, in fact, do all things at any time.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. Leave it at that.

Mrs PARKER: Do I have the concurrence of the committee?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. Members, questions.

Mr CARPENTER: Minister, in relation to both family and children's services and your drug strategy portfolios - page 506 dot point 3 - how do you categorise your government and your ministerial performance in these two areas in relation to homelessness and crisis support. I mean, there is an assertion that Western Australia has the worst rate of homeless youth in the nation and in relation to your Drug Strategy Office you had something like 80 deaths of heroin overdose last year and on target to probably exceed that this year. So, how would you categorise your performance in those areas?

[9.08 am]

Mrs PARKER: I thank the Member for Willagee for the question. In regard to young people at risk, presently the State and Commonwealth Governments are spending some \$6.4m a year through the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program. There is funding for 26 youth accommodation services and 10 support services in responding to youth homelessness. In addition to that, Family and Children's Services funds 53 youth services around the state to the value of \$2.8m.

In regard to the issue of the level of youth homelessness, there was a new service model that was trialled as part of the Prime Minister's youth homelessness taskforce. There was a significant outcome. In fact last week when the Federal Minister was here we visited the site of one of those pilot projects. The view and the premise of that taskforce was that to reduce the number of youth homeless people or young people at risk of homelessness, crisis assistance on its own will not help. We have to look at some of the causes. The Member for Perth was present at that particular occasion. That crisis program in fact put into place a service model that provided mediation and counselling and support services for both the young person who is either at risk of homelessness or presenting as homeless and their parents. The two trials in Western Australia indicated that where both the parents and the young person received support, then in fact there was a significant rate of reconciliation; around 80 per cent. Bill Budiselik was actually on that national taskforce for youth homelessness and I might ask him to comment in a moment.

In terms of the recommendations after the review of those pilot projects the singular or primary recommendation was to provide funding in the Federal budget for early intervention and prevention to in fact implement programs right around Australia on that model. In the Federal budget there was \$60m allocated and we anticipate that there will be ten new services in Western Australia. I have written to the Federal Minister and requested consideration, for example, that the two services that are presently in place - that is, the one operating out of Mercy Community Services which covers all of Perth, and the one for South-West Agencies Accommodation Services operating out of Bunbury - in fact be given priority consideration when those tenders are called so that we do not have a disruption in service.

In terms of what we are doing for young people at risk, I believe that certainly there is a significant amount of money being spent for accommodation but those new prevention services through those taskforce outcomes is going to be significant and I do trust that we will also see reductions in the demand. In regard to young people at risk - -

Mr CARPENTER: Minister, can I - -

Mrs PARKER: No, can I just - -

Mr CARPENTER: Can I just interrupt? One of the requests from the Chairman was to have brief answers. If you carry on like this we will get about three questions in. So could I just interrupt?

Mrs PARKER: It is an important question.

Mr CARPENTER: Yes, I know, and you are not answering it. My assertion to you is that you are the Minister responsible for these areas. You have the worst homelessness rate in Australia among youth and you have an incredibly high heroin death rate. It is a dramatic failure in your Government's policy. What are you doing about it? You have blown out your budget by \$10m from last year. What are you actually doing that can demonstrate a reduction in homelessness? You cannot demonstrate it. What are you doing that can demonstrate in these budget papers that you are serious about reducing the number of the dozens of young West Australians who are overdosing from heroin deaths every year? Your department, your Government and your policy is failing hopelessly. Now, what are you going to do about it and where does that policy direction show up in these budget papers? All it looks like to me is we are getting more of the same claptrap which has resulted in this policy failure. Now, what are you doing about it?

Mrs PARKER: The question is almost as long as the answer.

Mr CARPENTER: No, it was not. If you want me to start timing them, I will do it.

Mrs PARKER: Just finishing off the comments on young people at risk, certainly I believe there has been need of a development in how we respond to young people presenting at risk. Significantly, this year we will see the completion of the youth adolescent assessment centre being built at Hilston. That is certainly progressing well. When we put the package of services in place for young people at risk and include that assessment centre in Hilston, I think we will see the opportunity to be able to take those young people who not only present once, but re-present, and give a proper assessment.

In regard to the drug strategy, it is very easy for the Opposition to sit there and put in a few cheap throw-away lines. In terms of something like the heroin death rate, that is a problem of concern right around this country and through the western world and there is absolutely no doubt about that. This Government has an unequivocal commitment to responding to it. The "Together against Drugs" strategy we launched almost two years ago now, covering 1997 to 1999, has outlined a wide range of initiatives. Although it is something that I do not go out and boast openly about, because any rate of death is tragic in the lives of the family it is impacted upon, the death rate figures go against the national trend of increases; Western Australia saw a decrease last year. This year we have had a rather tragic last week. Certainly over the last year we saw a reduction and we have seen a stabilising as opposed to some states that have had runaway problems with the amount of deaths due to heroin.

We have also been extremely creative in terms of a wide range of initiatives. We have increased the availability of beds for drug treatment services. We have eliminated waiting lists for Methadone. We have established eleven community drug service teams right throughout this state. We have strategies so that agencies such as the Ministry of Justice and Family and Children's Services can respond to clients far more effectively who have addiction problems. We have had a three year \$4.5m commitment to produce effective drug education and training for teachers into schools and that particular project is considered a national best. So when you talk about an abysmal failure certainly a lot of the things we are doing have seen a benefit in the short term but a lot of them are commitments to medium and long term. You do not have a three year \$4.5m education package to get into every classroom in every school and expect to see a result on the first day of implementation.

[9.15 am]

Mr CARPENTER: It is an absolute pittance.

Mrs PARKER: It is a significant - -

Mr CARPENTER: No, it is not.

Mrs PARKER: - - commitment which has resulted in an education curriculum package that is now considered to be the best in the country. We are also getting interest from overseas on that particular package.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Minister, if you look at page 503 of the budget papers and the total of current services and page 507 at the bottom where consolidated fund and current appropriation for Family and Children's Services in 1999-2000 is properly \$146m compared to \$143.5m in 98-99. To me that appears that there is an increase of \$2.5m and yet when you look at nearly all the outputs, comparing the figures, it seems to be a reduction. Could you explain that?

Mrs PARKER: Certainly I am happy to explain because it really does relate to how the budget has been presented and I will also ask Bob Fisher, director general, to make a comment on this one as well. However, the appropriation from the State Government for recurrent services for Family and Children's Services in 1999-2000 is as you say \$146m and in 1998-1999 that appropriation was \$143.5m. So at first sight there does appear as you say to be an increase of \$2.5m. However, you also need to factor in that the four year old program has been transferred from Family and Children's Services to the Education Department with a transfer of \$950 000. So in fact there is an effective increase of \$3.45m and also it is an interesting thing about budgets but as soon as you print the estimate figures they become a bit out of date, because since we have had these budget papers printed I have been engaged in negotiation for some time with my Federal counterpart and with the Federal Government and I was very pleased to see that in fact we had had acknowledgment of the significant commitments we had made to funding the impact in the supported accommodation assistance program to the increased costs due to a new Federal award. So in fact there is \$2.6m recurrent in the Federal budget for my budget for that impact plus also a recognition of \$2.4m as a payment for the pre-payments that we had made during 1998-99. So in fact there is an additional \$5m into my budget for 1999-2000, which does not appear in these estimates, \$2.6m of which will be recurrent into the out years.

So with all of that detail, and it is the nature of budgets with the detail, certainly since I became the Minister in 1997 the recurrent allocation to my portfolio has increased from \$134m to \$160m which is an increase of 19 per cent. So in response to why does it look like there is a reduction in some of the outputs, as I said it really does relate to the accrual accounting situation and the way an output based management budget is structured. The other thing, and there has been some public comment about the comparisons between the 1989-89 actual spending levels and the 1999-2000 budget estimates, there is in fact a perceived decrease between what is printed there as the actuals for 1998-99 and the estimates for 1999-2000.

Now what you need to do is compare apples with apples and not apples with pears. You need to compare the estimates for 1999-2000 with 1998-99 but let us just have a look at those actuals for 1998-99 and why were they so high. They significantly were high because of that commitment that I made to the SAAP sector because of the impact that the cash award was having on them. Not only did I assess on a case by case basis the cost to them of that award and not only did I back pay my commitment to meeting that award to 1 January 1998 during this present financial year but I also pre-paid the

Commonwealth share of that and so we have had a significant cost in this present year and that is why the estimated actuals for this year are in fact over some significant amount to what they were earlier on as an estimate.

So there certainly have been other indirect costs in 1998-99 shared because of the structure of the budget across all of those outputs as well as carryovers. For example, the commitments to the Y2K issue in 1998-99 have been spread across all of the outputs and that has been a significant expenditure this year. For example, under the child protection output the actual expenditure there for 1998-99 included an out of court settlement payment which was quite significant in response to the death of a child in 1991 and they are the sorts of things that you cannot simply pre-empt and calculate for at the timing of the setting of the budget but which are costs that you make determinations to meet during the course of the year.

[9.23 am]

Mr FISHER: Thank you, Minister. I think the Minister has explained it. When we got together to talk about coming along today we made a deliberate decision to try and if we could explain it from a non-accounting point of view some of these anomalies. The other alternative we have got is to have our accountant explain it in accrual accounting terms which is fairly complex and fairly technical but the reality is that if we were sitting here this time last year and we were looking at our budget from last year, as Mr Carpenter has said our expenditure figure is significantly higher than what our budget was last year. That was not as the result of a blow out, it was a result of good management on the part of the department. In other words, what we did, some expenditure we carried forward that we prepaid from 97-98. Some items came up in 1998-99 which were just out of the blue. We only went back to government for one excess of funds?. One was in relation to the legal case and one was in relation to 400 000 for accommodation. Everything else has been managed via our balance sheet and I suppose the analogy is that in terms of an individual running their own budget at home you do not just necessarily go from pay to pay. Sometimes you have to carry things forward.

With accrual of accounting we do not have to finish on a set date and start on a set date. We have got the ability to manage the business of the department and even if, as Mr Carpenter said, you had a blow out, what that simply means is we had more money. We spent more money and surely that is a good thing.

Mr CARPENTER: So are you conceding there is a blow out?

The CHAIRMAN: Order, member for Willagee.

Mr FISHER: There was not a blow out because what we are doing - -

Mr CARPENTER: I did not say it was a bad thing.

Mr FISHER: You have a look at our budget estimate for 1999-2000. I am telling you now that when we come back - -

Mr CARPENTER: Which one?

Mr FISHER: Any figure in that right hand column. The bottom line is 146. When we come back next year and look at that figure when it is set out as a 1999-2000 estimated actual, it will be significantly higher than that 146. Our estimated actual expenditure for 1999-2000 in any one of those columns will be significantly higher than what is shown in this budget paper, exactly the same as when we were here last year.

Accrual accounting. The way these budget papers are set up, we realise they are confusing. They are confusing for us. The one absolute that we know is that the amount of money that the government has given us this year is higher than what they gave us last year and for the last six years that I have been in this position we have had an increase in funding in our consolidated fund from the State Government.

We acknowledge that in some of the outputs it looks as though the funding has gone down but what that really means is the funding in some of those areas in 98-99 went up and the good example that the Minister gave is in crisis support where it would appear as though we are dropping from 25 million down to 23 million in crisis support. That can be explained by either there has been an actual reduction or because our expenditure in 98-99 was inflated and above budget, which it was, because as the Minister has pointed out, we had organisations out there in the non-government sector who were going to reduce services if we did not provide them with funding. It is a joint program of the Commonwealth and the State. The Commonwealth said, "We are not in the position. We have not made a decision. We will not go and do anything until next year's budget." The organisations were coming to us 24 hours a day. SAAP services saying, "If we do not get extra funds, we may have to fold."

The Minister made the decision that we would commit ourselves as a State Government without absolute guarantee from the Commonwealth Government that they were going to provide funding and not only do we pay the State Government component, we pay the Federal Government component as well, so that the expenditure in that crisis support area increased by 3.4 million. There are ongoing discussions between the Ministers and at a bureaucratic level and we were very, very confident we were going to get that funding which we subsequently have. I know this sounds crazy but the figures, even though it indicates on individual outputs there has been a reduction, it is often because there has been inflated expenditure in 98-99 and because in 1999-2000 those figures will be higher.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, I would just like to remind you that we must keep questions and answers brief so that other members have the opportunity to ask questions. For the purpose of those people that were not here earlier, I am calling members in the order that they seek the call.

Ms WARNOCK: I would like to follow my friend, the member for Willagee's questions about homelessness and particularly homeless youth. I have an inner city seat. I am very conscious of homeless youth, homeless Aborigines, homeless women and homeless single men because there are a great number of them in the City of Perth and their concerns have been my concerns over the last seven years.

My colleague has asked a question about what are we doing about homeless youth when it is apparently notorious that WA has the worst rate. Can I take you to page 519 and I am interested in the number here. It talks about the number of supported accommodation cases and I am interested in the fact that the number in 99-2000 appears to be going up just a very small amount, three more than in 98-99, and I am asking whether that is realistic when every feature article or commentary on the radio talks about the problem of homelessness in WA and how it is higher than elsewhere in Australia? I would like an answer to that and I also would like an answer to, further on the same page, the matter - and we see these in all the budget papers - of satisfaction rating. How do you reach the conclusion that the customer satisfaction rating is 95 per cent in the case of those SAAP services? Who do you ask? What about those who are not able to be accommodated?

Mrs PARKER: Thank you to the member for Perth for the question. I will not go over the ground that I mentioned with the issue of youth homelessness. In regard to the figures that were quoted last week - I assume you are referring to the figures that came out of the Council on the homeless seminar which was conducted on Wednesday and Thursday of last week. Certainly, I had some difficulty and I know also when following up the issue with the media that there were some discrepancies that had to be corrected in those figures that first came out in their release. But in regard to the figure about young people who were homeless, the figures that the council to the homeless quoted actually included in those figures children who presented, for example, with their mothers at refuges so that when they are talking about youth homelessness, they are actually talking, for example, about a two year old who have accompanied his or her mother at a refuge and were counted in those figures.

I am not wanting, in any way, to diminish the concern that there is regarding homeless people and clearly women fleeing situations of domestic violence are a priority and providing services for their children is important but we do have an ongoing problem with the validity or the reliability of the figures. I would just like Bill Budeselik to comment, because he has been critically involved in this matter at a national level, about the difficulty in getting the likely data.

[9.30 am]

Mr BUDESELIK: There are a lot of difficulties, as you would appreciate. In terms of the predicted demand for next year, basically that is linked to the services we delivered this year. In terms of measuring consumer satisfaction we have a variety of ways of sampling consumers. With our youth services we have developed a computer package so young people can directly enter their views about the services they have received into a computer which is then translated to our data. So we have some very good methods of attempting to glean satisfaction levels.

It is very difficult to count homeless people. Part of the problem with the SAAP data is that it counts people more than once. So, the homelessness figures released by the Council of Homeless Persons were based on their inference in terms of SAAP data but from my experience on the Prime Minister's Youth Homelessness Task Force I think Western Australia is certainly not in a poor position in comparison to the other states.

Mrs PARKER: The difficulty is that those figures record the number of people who present and make a request and they include turnaways. They do not show the number of people not receiving a service. As I have said and I continue to say consistently, those figures have to be taken with caution. They include what is called in the sector "turnaways", where a person might have presented at a facility that is not appropriate to house the young person, or whatever, and so they are actually not accommodated at that place but they would be given advice as to where they might be able to present themselves for support. So, again it is the issue of keeping the data but when you count all the turnaways it certainly does look far more frightening than what the realistic situation is.

Can I just repeat what I indicated earlier on; there has been a significant increase in the number of services, not only for accommodation - both womens refuges and for other services - but also I believe that the new services that we will see as a result of the Federal Government monies as a response to the Youth Homelessness Task Force - - that those early intervention mechanisms are absolutely critical and I would hope to see some good results from them.

Dr CONSTABLE: I would like to take up the issue of domestic violence. The way I have been able to read these rather difficult budget statements is that it is a pretty gloomy picture that we have here in terms of increased demand which is indicated on page 506 dot point two. In terms of funding, output number five on page 516, family safety services, which includes domestic violence, it appears to me there is no increase in funding.

If you turn to page 533 and look at output 14, domestic violence prevention, it appears there is a drop in funding. There is certainly a drop in the number of initiatives in the coming year in domestic violence and so it goes on. My picture of this is that there is less funding, there is less initiatives and there is an increased demand. So, either set the record straight, if I am reading this incorrectly, or tell us what the picture is because it looks pretty gloomy.

Mrs PARKER: My thanks to the member for Churchlands for the question. I share your concern and comment that domestic violence is a critical issue. I believe in regards to advancing the status of women that if a woman is suffering domestic violence then she is so limited in terms of a whole range of things that she might wish to do because of that terrible circumstance she is living with at home. Certainly it remains as a critical priority out of my responsibilities for women's

interests. Over the term of the government over this term of office committed an increase of \$7m to the response to domestic violence and there have been a significant number of things that have already occurred. The number of services has increased from 26 to 33. The responses are far more coordinated. The member for Swan Hills chaired the task force that put in a statewide - -

Dr CONSTABLE: Minister, I appreciate what you are saying but I would like an explanation for output five, which is family safety services and an explanation for output 14, domestic violence prevention. Those figures; I want someone to explain the figures to me.

Mrs PARKER: In regards to direct spending on domestic violence there has been a very significant sum of money that was spent in this present financial year and included a carryover from 1997-1998 for the research and development of the Freedom From Fear campaign and that was very expensive in its developmental phase. The government has a long term commitment to dealing with perpetrators and using the Freedom From Fear campaign on that.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, could you just introduce your adviser then for Hansard, please.

Mrs PARKER: Paul Birchall. He is the director of services, specification and design.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr Birchall.

Mr BIRCHALL: Could I just ask you to clarify the question.

Dr CONSTABLE: I want an explanation for the figures on page 516, output number five, and page 533, output number 14, domestic violence prevention. It looks like there is a drop in funding for the coming year.

[9.38 am]

Mr BIRCHALL: Maybe I can start off by referring to the quantity measure on page 517 which indicates the number of cases dealt with in this output and you will see that we are estimating that that quantity of output will continue. If you compare that with last year we were estimating 4400 cases and so with better recording of services provided we are able to show a significant increase in actual provision of service there for this year and estimate them for next year.

Dr CONSTABLE: I have been asking for information about the budget, about dollars, and I do not seem to be getting the answer. Does somebody here know?

Mr FISHER: It is not that we are trying to be evasive and we will answer your question, Ms Constable. The issue is we are cutting across two outputs and there are two organisations involved.

Dr CONSTABLE: That is fine. They are both related to the same subject.

Mr FISHER: We will get our act together.

Mr de MAMIEL: I think what the member is referring to is the drop in the estimated actuals for the total cost from \$7.487 down to \$6.982, is that correct?

Dr CONSTABLE: Let us start with that.

Mr de MAMIEL: There were some extraordinary costs in 1998-99 which we have already alluded to. Some of them relate to the year 2000 issues in relation to gearing up for 1 January 2000 and those costs have been allocated across all the outputs and there is a slightly inflated figure in 1998-99 and they have been adjusted to bring back a normal position in 1999-2000 and the other issue relates to the Family and Children's Policy Office which perhaps Mr Fisher would like to discuss.

Dr CONSTABLE: If we could just stick with output 5 for a minute, just someone tell me if we are spending more or less or the same in the next financial year as this year? What has happened with this budget on family safety services.

Mr FISHER: I will try and explain.

Dr CONSTABLE: It is a simple question, it should be a simple answer.

Mr FISHER: The reality is we will not be reducing our services in this area. We had, across all of our outputs, to find funding for the year 2000 because this was an obligation of \$1m on us that we had to find during the year. So what we have done is we have gone across each of our outputs we have looked at our administrative overheads to see whether we can make savings in those outputs without making any reduction in services. So across all of our outputs we have taken in proportion to the value of the funding in the output we have taken an amount to contribute towards Y2K and to make a nominal contribution towards the establishment of the Family and Children's Policy Office. At the same time we have made a commitment that we will not reduce services in that area. We have done it through having a good look at our costs, our overheads, looking at our administrative costs and we will be making savings in those areas.

As Paul Birchall pointed out if you look at the targets that we are setting for the year we have not made any reductions in terms of service delivery. The other issue that we are looking at and we have not got confirmation of this but we would be hoping that we would be one of the few departments that would be getting some sort of a productivity dividend as a result of our performance and budget management during last year which will again enable us to reap some rewards from that during the course of the year. We will not be reducing services.

Dr CONSTABLE: You have answered partly the question. You are not reducing services but is there less money to provide those services?

Mr FISHER: In the provision of services, no, there will not be any less money. There will be reduced overheads. We will be making savings through administrative cuts with administrative overheads. We will not be reducing services. We will be managing our budget so that we will not be reducing services.

Dr CONSTABLE: On page 533, output 14, domestic violence prevention. Now those numbers appear to me to indicate that there is a lot less money.

Mrs PARKER: Can I just make the comment that with the domestic violence services and the services that have been contracted out, the budgets for the refuges, the budgets for the counselling and advocacy services for women, three services for children and perpetrated programs and one pilot, that they are all operated under contract and those contracts will remain the same. So there will be no reduction in terms of the contracts that are out there for the provision of those services. Over the course of the last few years if we want to look at this administrative cost burden the department has sought to increase the number of people available for direct service delivery and while we have had consistent increases in our budgets, as I outlined at the very earlier state of this Estimates Committee, we have also wanted to add to that increase the opportunity for increased levels of service delivery through added efficiencies and we have done that through a range of mechanisms to decrease the cost of administration and, for example, we have got a section, the admin bureau, within the department which now streamlines administrative services out to all the district offices so that the people in the district offices have less of an administrative burden. That is now handled by a central bureau and they are involved in a direct service delivery.

Now in comments with Mr de Mamiel he was saying that while we have in fact decreased the number of people involved in administration there has actually been an increase in productivity during that time and in the same way in regard to those services for domestic violence you can clearly know whether there is going to be a cut in funding for that service delivery if in fact I had been advising those that had those contracts that there was going to be a cut in their budget and there has been no such move; quite the opposite.

[9.45 am]

Mr FISHER: Can I just add that in fact there has been an increase in your funding. Each organisation involved in this area has been given CPI increases. So service delivery has increased, we have not reduced services, funding for service delivery has increased. We have made savings through having a close look at the administration, by centralising as the Minister said some of our administration in our admin bureau and we have made savings in that area.

Mrs PARKER: If I could just finish my comments regarding Output 14? Output 14 included, for the 1998-1999 period a \$1.6m carryover in the expenditures for the Freedom from Fear campaign. In fact the research and the modelling, particularly of the advertisements, took longer than was anticipated. Those monies were not spent in previous years. It was always going to be over the 1996-97, 1997-1998, 1998-1999 period but the allocations where we anticipated spending some monies in 1997-1998 were not in fact spent then, but all in 1998-99.

The campaign was not ready earlier and we launched it in August 1998. So those expenditures where we thought we might have been starting to pay for advertising in 1997-1998 in fact did not occur. So there was a \$1.6m carryover into that year. That is why there is a drop because we have had two intensive television campaign series with that Freedom from Fear program. They have been very expensive and the reductions that you see there under Output 14 between actual estimate 1998-99 and estimate 1999-2000 can largely be explained by not only the preparation and production costs, but by the costs for the payments in 1998-99..

I would like to repeat, in regard to the services that are being delivered by the refuges, the counselling and advocacy services and, in particular, the services for children, they are new programs that were put into place over the course of the last two years in particular and they will continue. There is no reduction to the contracts for those services.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, we have not moved very far. I have only allowed four members to ask questions so far. I would like members to ask their questions in series, but we have to keep the answers as short as possible. I am not going to thwart explanations. I have five members who have sought the call.

Mr CARPENTER: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, can I direct your attention to page 507, and your total cost of outputs? In the context of the explanation that we have been given, both to the last question and in general about your budgetary position - and it is an explanation that I do not accept and I do not think that anybody who reads the budget papers would actually accept it - what has happened is that your recurrent spending has dramatically exceeded your expectations. I am not saying that is a bad thing but it probably indicates that you were under-funded to start with. You have spent far more money than the expectation and you, as the Minister of the department, have been told to rein that spending in. That is exactly what has happened and all this obfuscation is just trying to hide that fact. If you have a look at your net cost of outputs for your estimated actuals for 1998-1999 and compare it with what your estimate was, your estimate was going to be \$146m and it turned out to be \$165m. That is your estimated actual. It is \$19m over. This is on recurrent spending for same sort of categories of spending.

If you then turn your attention to the next column in page 507 and look at the budget estimates for 1999-2000, every column except the ones in relation to policy development shows a reduction. What has happening here is that in this financial year, and I think probably in the last financial year, your department has spent more monies particularly in recurrent spending on

your service delivery than what was budgeted for, considerably more, and you have been told -- this is the problem across Government now, because the Government spending has blown out. Everybody knows that. It has been a conceded fact in the Parliament. Your spending has blown out and the departments have been told to rein it in.

All this gobbledygook that we are hearing here is just trying to conceal that fact. Why not admit that is what you have done and then look at the results of your spending; whether or not it has been successful? Because I actually think that is just as important. I want you to concede that your recurrent spending exceeded your expectations by \$19m over \$146m and then we can get on with it.

Mrs PARKER: I certainly want to very clearly put on the record that there has been no blow-out. There has been no --

Mr CARPENTER: In that case, these budget papers are meaningless.

Mrs PARKER: The fact that the Director General has indicated that we are confident of being one of the few agencies in Government to receive a productivity dividend is because we have been able to manage within the budget requirements. The comments that the Member for Willagee has made in the media in regard to this budget has shown a very clear lack of understanding about accrual accounting and the way these figures are presented.

I do not want to repeat myself, but if the question, Madam Chair, indicates that the members have not understood what I have said, there are estimated amounts for the next financial year that we receive an allocation for and then there is the estimated actual expenditure for this financial year which include other payments. I have just talked about domestic violence. There are issues of carryovers and while it is part of the confusion of the way these accrual accounting figures are presented, I certainly very clearly and strongly would like to state that there has been no blow-out.

I have already said that the budget estimate for 1999-2000 that we see there, and the total net cost of outputs being \$159m - those figures have already changed as a result of our quite lengthy and determined discussions with the Federal Government in regard to the SAAP sector's impost in terms of the award and that will be clear. Next year, we will come back and again you will say that the estimate for last year was less than the actual expenditure because we have \$5m more available to us than we had three weeks ago.

Mr CARPENTER: I will factor that in and I will remember it next year.

Mrs PARKER: That is good. In terms of giving a bit more information, Madam Chair, this is an important issue because it goes right through the budget, the need to understand the situation in regard to carryovers. In terms of a budget where it is based on output based management there have to be some things that are carried over from previous years into actual expenditure right across the columns. I would ask Mick de Mamiel to make a comment on that.

Mr CARPENTER: Before he does, I would just like to make a comment, myself. Listen, you have a look at every financial expert in Australia's analysis of this State Government's budget and then tell everybody in this room who understands the budget and who does not. You have a Premier who does not understand his own budget, and if he does he is misrepresenting it. I do not think the Premier has ever understood the budget and you certainly do not understand your budget. Your budget is blown out and your services have not matched the demand and that is the simple fact of the matter.

[9.53 am]

The CHAIRMAN: Members, please, direct questions. Mr de Mamiel?

Mr de MAMIEL: Perhaps I can explain that a little bit. You have to remember that this particular output and appropriation summary is trying to bring it back to a cash position for appropriations and there is an adjustment on the second last line which actually shows that we had an additional \$8.3m which we contributed towards the cost of those outputs that are listed above on page 507. That \$8.3m consisted of carry overs that ranged from non-government payments where we had delays in agreements for the OHPAC services particular agreements and we also had compliance issues in terms of people returning their audits, so that we do not pay out until those particular audits come through. We carry those ones over from the previous year. We also had available to us some capital funds that were expended and that relates to year 2000 monies of approximately \$1m.

We have also mentioned the fact that we carried over \$1.6m for the domestic violence campaign. There were also carry overs in the office of seniors for the centre for positive ageing and there were also some accounting issues where we received monies in 97-98, but because of accounting issues you cannot expense those in that year and those have come through into 98-99. One particular one in relation to that is the supported accommodation assistance money that we received which was approximately \$1m. This has been carried over in our balance sheet and that also is reflected in that \$8.3m.

The legal settlement is another issue of \$600 000. The state gave us an extra \$400 000 for accommodation. Not only did we have those funds but we also had an increase in 98-99 for things such as the drug issue of about \$5m and we also funded the industrial CASH award which, if you round it off, is around about \$4m. If you add the \$8.3m, the \$5m new money for drugs and the \$4m for the cash award, you are getting pretty close to your \$19m that you are saying we sort of pulled out of the air somewhere, so it is all explainable.

Mr CARPENTER: I am sure it is.

Mr de MAMIEL: And I think you will find that the department has managed very well.

Mrs PARKER: Just a comment from the Director General to close.

Mr FISHER: Yes, Madam Chair. From our point of view, obviously as the department what we would like in these discussions is to be seen as being much more positive in our responses and the ideal thing would be for us to compare a budget with a budget. What we are comparing is an - -

Mr CARPENTER: That would be handy for everybody and it is made impossible every year and you know it and I think it is done deliberately. It is made impossible and members on this side have the same problem each year to verifiably compare the budget papers from one year to the next and that has been the history of this government in the last three or four years.

Mr FISHER: Well, you would not expect me to comment on that, Mr Carpenter - -

Mr CARPENTER: I would not expect you to but it is true.

Mr FISHER: - - but what I can say is that we are funded on the basis of our outputs. There is a column here that says, "Estimated actuals", which will be different. It also says a budget estimate and we know that our actual for next year will be significantly higher. The reason for the differences is because expenditure for all sorts of reasons, whether it was carried forward or given some more money for outstanding items or pre-paid in 98-99, are all decisions that we made in managing our budget and managing our department. We have been managing our budget. If you want to speak with people from Treasury you will find that we are one of the "A" grade departments from their perspective in terms of the management of our budget and we are not doing it with nods and winks. We are doing it in a professional manner. The bottom line is have a look at the budget that we got last year and have a look at the budget we have got this year. The budget has gone up. How we have managed it is giving rise to some of the questions and the system of accrual accounting where it does not finish, it enables us to manage through time.

Mrs PARKER: Just in closing could I perhaps just table two papers that I have here which are graphs that might help where there is some confusion. I will circulate them around the table. They are graphs showing the appropriations and forward estimates from 98-99 through to 2003 and from 93-94 through to 99-2000, the recurrent budget comparisons. While there is some confusion in regard to the columns and the carry overs and some of those difficulties in comparing an estimated actual column of 98-99 with a budget estimate of 99-2000, I think these help clarify the fact that the bottom line is that the budget has increased. If you ask where the services are going to be cut, as I said in my reference in response to the member for Churchlands, if there was going to be a cut you would be seeing a cut in the service agreements with the non-government agencies that are delivering the service or the number of service delivery FTE and that, in fact, is not occurring.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. I wonder whether we could still try and keep the answers much shorter. I know they are complex issues but it would really facilitate the opportunity for other members to ask questions.

Mr AINSWORTH: Page 516, "Major initiatives", where it talks about a no interest loan scheme. What is the purpose of that scheme, Minister, and how much funding have you allocated for that?

[10.00 am]

Mrs PARKER: The no interest loan scheme has been an outcome of the poverty task force. The research that was requested by the task force to be undertaken recommended the establishment of a community-based, state-wide, no-interest loan scheme. The department has had a furniture loan scheme and that that was established in 1993. It was established as a loan scheme but, in fact it has never really operated as such. The repayment rate of those monies was very low. In the research undertaken by the poverty taskforce the recommendation was that the departmental scheme was to be replaced by a community-based, no-interest loan scheme. In particular Victoria has had a similar scheme although it is not as statewide as the one that we are now proceeding with in Western Australia. It was found that when it was a community based no interest loan scheme that the rate of repayments by the people who received those loans was much higher than what was being achieved by the governmental scheme and it was also found in the research that for many families the opportunity to have a loan instead of a hand out was very beneficial because a loan in fact allowed them to re-establish credit ratings, for example, and also that they saw it not as welfare but as something that facilitated their independence. It is not considered part of crisis assistance, but it is more family support work. Where there might be illness or unemployment that has presented the need for a loan of some description but because people do not have a credit rating low income members of the community can sometimes pay very high prices for their credit and can get caught in a downward spiral.

The response to the recommendations of the poverty taskforce has also seen an increase in the amount of moneys. Over three years \$1.5m has been allocated to the no interest loan scheme. It has been put in place in consultation with WACOSS. It has been advertised as going out and we hope to see it implemented from July 1999. It will be a statewide scheme, it will be a no interest loan scheme. The monies in fact will not be spent once but over and over again. The research indicates that where it is a loan from a community based organisation that in fact the repayments are made. In the research certainly the payments were often made ahead of time. People were particularly motivated because they did not want welfare and they understood that when they repaid the money someone else in their own community suffering the same sort of financial hardship would be able to benefit from the repayment of those monies.

Also there needs to be an understanding that because the furniture assistance scheme was initially in output 6 under crisis support and we have shifted the no interest loan scheme, into output 4 as that refers to the assistance the department gives to community members improving their skills and moving towards independence.. It is not seen as a welfare payment, it

is not seen as crisis support, it is seen as support to members of the community through a difficult time. Significantly this particular initiative has had strong support amongst the sector and we look forward to it coming to light.

Mr MacLEAN: My question relates to significant trends and issues, for want of a better title. It is the partnership between the State and the Commonwealth over funding. This year the department supplied non-government sectors with not only the State's commitment but with also part of the Federal commitment, so that the non-government sectors would remain viable. Have you got a commitment from the Federal Government that they will repay this money that is already expended?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, We prepaid the Federal Government's proportion of those not for profit organisations that operate in the SAAP sector, and it was with some I will not say relief because we had had ongoing discussions where we had been able to put our case as a State, and so it was an allocation that was made in the Federal budget, a payment that would be coming to Western Australia to respond to it. So, yes, those funds have come through. \$2.6m was recurrent and \$2.4m was to cover the one off prepayments that we had been making to the sector. We first of all said that the people who were under most pressure were those that provided 24 hour services and so we not only provided support through some management advice by a contract that was won by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry but once they had been through that in being able to respond from a management point of view to operating in an award environment, whereas previously it had been award free, we will now progress on through those priorities and deal with all of those agencies that are affected by that award.

Mr MacLEAN: For the benefit of Mr Carpenter are they reflected in this year's actuals or next year's?

Mrs PARKER: No, the \$5m from the Commonwealth does not appear yet. We had not had the notice of it at the time of these budget columns and it will appear next year as an increase in our actual expenditure for 1999-2000.

Mr de MAMIEL: The actual expenditure for 1998-99 is reflected in the statements but the revenue that we expect to receive from the Commonwealth is not in the statements and in case people are wondering how we funded the extra \$3.4m it came out of our balance sheet by reducing our prepayments. Usually in June we prepay a whole lot of agreements for 1 July and this year we were going to delay those and not pay them until next year.

Ms WARNOCK: I have got a number of questions relating to women's interests since we seem to have decided to roam freely over these many pages.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we keep the questions short and can we keep the responses short likewise so the member from Perth can ask her series of questions?

Ms WARNOCK: Very happy to be short and sharp, no problems at all. We are talking about page 531 basically here. What is happening, Minister, to the Office of Women's Policy Development? Will it go to the Family and Children's Services both physically and in terms of the budget? What autonomy will it retain and will its budget be cut?

[10.08 am]

Mrs PARKER: What is happening to the Women's Policy Development Office, the member for Perth refers to, I believe, the restructure of the agencies within my portfolio. I have decided to bring the Office of Seniors and the Womens Policy Development Office into the same administrative structure as what the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office was. We anticipate that there will be some efficiencies from the administrative streamlining that will take place from that. Just as WADASO has had policy independence, just as it is physically located away from Family and Children's Services, and just as the Executive Director of WADASO reports directly to me, so too will both the Executive Directors from the Office of Seniors Interests and the Womens Policy Development Office continue to be located where they are.

They will continue to have their directors report directly to me. They will continue to have policy independence and they will continue in terms of their budgets to have the same allocation. Their budgets are as stated in the budget papers but my only comment in regard to their budget is that I would trust that those administrative efficiencies would in fact flow into those agencies and be of benefit. Clearly, the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office has all of that independence. It has its own corporate identity, as it were and I certainly seek to continue that. I believe that all of these three agencies have been very important to Government in terms of being able to specifically focus on a priority area that needs to have particular attention in Government, so that it is not lost as a part of a larger whole as it were. That was why we moved to establish WADASO so that we could have drug policy direction being driven specifically and not being part of say, the whole of Health or the whole of Police. In the same way - I think the fact that last week when we were able to launch our second two year plan for women - previously across Government we had had 36 agencies committed to an across Government planning in the first one. In the second one we released last week we had that engagement of Government to 86 government agencies.

If we are going to see a prioritising of issues in relation to either women or drugs or seniors and also with the establishment of the Family and Children's Policy Office that will also now come under the same structure, you need to engage right across Government and I believe that the office has done well in being able to prioritise these issues.

Ms WARNOCK: Another question in the area of womens' interests. My colleague, the member for Churchlands, has mentioned the matter of domestic violence. On page 534 there is talk about major achievements and so on in relation to this. What is the measure of the Government's effectiveness in reducing violence to women? How do we know whether their personal safety has improved? In view of the fact that almost daily we read in the paper about some terribly violent act against women - I think in the last 24 hours there has been a case in the Supreme Court - how do we actually know whether their personal safety has improved as a result of all the things that the Government has on its books that it is doing? For

example, how effective are those perpetrators programs which have been introduced over the last 12 months or so? Thank you.

Mrs PARKER: This is the centenary of women's suffrage and I guess one of the interesting but disappointing factors for me is reading over the speeches and what was being said by the suffragettes at the turn of the century in 1899 was that the suffragettes believed that when women were going to be given the right to vote it would decrease the rate of domestic violence and in fact almost eradicate domestic violence in the community. I have reflected a couple of times over the last week in speeches that I have made that it is a very sad indictment that 100 years later in fact domestic violence is still a critical issue in the lives of many women and many families, not only in Western Australia but around Australia. When I meet with the Ministers for Womens' Interests from around the country it remains a high priority issue everywhere.

In terms of how do we measure whether we have seen that reduction, we have as a goal the reduction, and hopefully one day the elimination. What we can measure is that we have been able to provide safe houses and accommodation for women. In terms of the value of those perpetrator programs I would have to say that we have really added that as an extra component of our response. We have not had services targeted at the perpetrators in the past. It is a new area of initiative that we have gone into, as a state, and some other states are now starting to follow. The Federal Minister is also now going to start engaging in programs with men.

The men's domestic violence helpline has been a significant initiative, an expensive one so far. We have received a total of 2239 calls. 62 per cent of those calling are men in what we would call the primary target group. That is, they are perpetrators or they are men who admit to being at risk of being a perpetrator of violence. Approximately half of those men have been actively referred into men's behaviour change programs. It really is, I believe, still too early to say, but in terms of having that number of men report in, call in - it is not just the volume of people calling in, but it is that volume who are committing themselves to anger management and change programs. Clearly, the feedback we were getting from women in Western Australia, in particular Aboriginal women, was that while they did not want the violence to continue, they did not necessarily want the relationship to end. So it was a matter of supporting the women by providing the program for the men, helping them to change their behaviour.

We do in fact get some calls to that domestic violence helpline from women and we do know anecdotally that women are saying to their partner that unless they ring the helpline - we have had a couple of instances where, unless they ring the helpline and engage in some sort of counselling and anger management programs, then they are saying that they would have to consider seriously leaving the relationship.

[10.15 am]

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I also have some questions on the women's section, page 532. I must put on the record that I do not like the way they are doing this today. I would rather have one area where we can ask all the questions; because I have got questions back on domestic violence, some back on SAAP, and all the others, and I feel we are jumping all over the place. On page 532 it mentions changes for the Women's Policy Development Office. Can you assure us that there will be no lowering of standards because they do a fantastic job in Western Australia. They are leaders in their field. I take my hat off and commend them for what they do. Would you assure us there will be no lowering of standards by any restructure on that because I think that is very, very important to Western Australia that this group are continuing to do the work they are doing. I know that out in the field that people commend them and really are benefiting from their work. So, that is my first question. I believe there must be an error on page 532. The government's Two Year plan for women 1999-2000. Should that not be 2001?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, it should be.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Could you explain how this is going to benefit women in Western Australia, not just in Perth but everywhere in Western Australia.

Mrs PARKER: Thanks to the member for Swan Hills. I certainly can give an undertaking that the restructure will not impact on the professionalism or the policy independence as I outlined to the member for Perth. It was very important for me to ensure that that was protected. It was also important for me as Minister having a number of smaller agencies within my portfolio that we were able to streamline the relationships between them and myself and achieve whatever efficiencies we could. When we have conducted the review, certainly the reporting relationship that WADASO has had with me it has been one that has been able to achieve all the things that we wanted within an efficient organisational framework. That structure did not particularly apply to the Office of Seniors' Interests and Women's Policy Development Office but I am very committed to ensuring that those smaller agencies retain their level of performances.

As I have said before, I think that they have been very important to government and, in turn, to the community in those issues relating to women, issues relating to seniors, issues relating to drugs and drug policy direction. We have a singular focus so there will not be any lowering of standard.

Your question really was about the government Two-Year Plan. It is from 1999 to 2001. Just very quickly, it has engaged 86 agencies with over 600 initiatives right across government.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: And also across the whole State?

Mrs PARKER: Absolutely. Yes. Right across the State. The goal there really was to ensure that all government agencies

gave consideration and priority to the needs of women in the activities that they undertook. I am sending out to all members copies of those documents but it is very critical if we are going to see an increase of women in leadership positions and decision making capacities, if we are going to see women establish a higher level of economic independence, if we are going to see issues regarding women's health - and we talk about health in a holistic term - then you have to make sure that right across government considerations are being made to that, and right across the State.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: On page 533 it shows major initiatives for the forthcoming year.

Develop new strategies to increase the proportion of women in decision making positions.

I would like to know how you are going to do that because I know that it is very low in this State and we need to get to work on that one.

Mrs PARKER: I will just make a quick comment and then ask Astrid Norgard from the Women's Policy Development Office to make a comment. When I took on the portfolio there had not been an accurate audit done of the number of women on government boards and committees, for example, and so we undertook that audit. We established that the proportion was approximately 18 per cent and we have set targets since then. That has now increased to 25.6 per cent. So, over the 2 years there has been quite a significant increase. We have set the target for 1999-2000 at 28 per cent and clearly we will continue to step beyond that. So, other than through the register of interested persons in the Premier's Department and encouraging other offices, both through my office and Women's Policy, we do have some strategies that were outlined in the Two-Year Plan to actually encourage women and to assist women in their capacity as members on boards and committees.

Ms NORGARD: I could tell you about a couple of the things that we have definitely got in mind and there are some other strategies which it is probably too early to comment on. With the better data that we are now getting through the Ministry of Premier and Cabinet on composition of boards and committees we are planning a strategy for this coming financial year of - within the office developing a profile of particular government agencies, their activities, the proportion of women that there are on their boards and through proper analysis and evidence based approach talk to the executives of those agencies about strategies that they might be able to adopt to attract more women to their boards and committees and improve the balance.

Hand in hand with that is that many women do not feel that they have the skills and the competencies to be effective on boards and committees. Often that is not the case. They are often just as qualified as their male counterparts but there definitely is the feeling there. We have learnt that from extensive consultations with women. So we are looking at ways to providing more support to women who are either interested or are already active on boards and committees so that their input can be given more confidently and, by that means, show both to the people who make appointments to boards and committees that women are very important contributors but also to other women that that can be done.

There is a bit of a confidence area there. The other encouraging area that we might be looking at is the Auditor General's report where he has pointed to boards and committees appointments generally being needed to be made on the basis of competencies and skills that can be contributed. If that kind of approach could be adopted more, rather than content - perhaps not the expertise in the subject or being in a network we believe that there will be more women that can show themselves as relevant to those committees. So, we are working on several fronts at once and as I have said we have got a couple of other ideas as well that we are building up before we are ready to take them further.

[10.22 am]

Dr CONSTABLE: I would like to just clear up a small point about the State drug abuse strategy and then asking a more substantial question but if I go back to last year's budget papers on page 441 and I will just read it out, it says:

Complete implementation of the comprehensive program of over 70 initiatives set out in the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse action plan for 97-99.

So that was last year but when I turn to page 535 of this year's papers at the output measures it says the number of WA strategies against drug abuse activities and policies implemented 35 and 35 for next year. On the following page major achievement for 1998-99, dot point 1, the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office has coordinated implementation of 35 of the 36 initiatives set out in the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse Action Plan and then on page 538 it says at dot point 1 under major achievements, the Western Australian Drug Abuse Strategy Office has implemented 33 of the 34 activities set out in the WA Strategy Against Drug Abuse Action Plan 1997-99. So I want to know whether it is 33, 34, 35, 36 or 70 that have been implemented and then I am going to ask another question. All I need is a one word answer, a number.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, could we have a short response and could you introduce your adviser?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, Mr Terry Murphy who is Executive Director of the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office. If Terry could just make a comment on that?

Dr CONSTABLE: Just a number.

Mr MURPHY: 70.

Dr CONSTABLE: So this 35 is incorrect that is in our papers?

Mr MURPHY: 70 is the addition of the two outputs, 36 and 34. The actual number that we have managed to implement of those 70 initiatives is 68 which consists of 35 and 33.

Dr CONSTABLE: It is very confusing.

Ms ANWYL: Can you provide a list by way of supplementary information?

Dr CONSTABLE: Yes, that would be very helpful. In fact I have that written down to ask.

Mr MURPHY: I would be happy to. I might remind you that there was actually a list in response to a Parliamentary question earlier in the year.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, can I just seek some clarification that you are going to provide that information by supplementary?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, I will supply that.

Dr CONSTABLE: When I look at the output measures on page 535 and 537 I find it very frustrating because I want to know just really what is going on, if there is less kids getting involved in drugs, if there is fewer deaths and so on and these output measures do not tell me what I want to know, so it is very frustrating. What I am getting in anecdotal reports from people and from people involved in schools that there is an impression out there there is an increase in kids experimenting. I just wanted to concentrate on school aged children and adolescents, that there is an increase in kids experimenting, that there is an increase in people being concerned and that there is an increase in the number of young people being addicted to drugs and I want to know whether it is going up, whether it is going down, what effect all this is having because this does not tell me that and I think that is really what we need to know. Can you tell me in a short answer?

Mr MURPHY: I think it is the case that over recent years we have seen an increase in drug abuse. This is reflected in prevalence surveys and fairly obviously that is one of the reasons why we exist and there is a coordinated government strategy. In terms of how those trends will be reflected in the budget recording they are under the effectiveness indicators and the effectiveness indicators for the treatment and prevention services output will report two things. One the impact of treatment services on clients and two, the prevalence as measured by annual surveys of which there are three occurring tri-annually.

Dr CONSTABLE: Can we get data by way of supplementary that will give us the figures showing a trend in those increase you are talking about?

Mr MURPHY: Yes, absolutely. To the extent that they are available we do do those on time series. There are some caveats as to how long the surveys have been going, whether the state data and the national survey is reliable for all drugs and so on but, yes, we do compile those on a regular basis.

Dr CONSTABLE: Just give us the data, warts and all, with those caveats.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I just seek some clarification you are prepared to provide that information by supplementary?

Mrs PARKER: Yes. I will provide that by way of supplementary. Certainly I think if I can just add quickly a comment that there is clearly a worldwide trend in the increase of the use of illicit drugs and it creates a problem for all of us and whether we are in government or in leadership or just as parents and family members and there are not any quick and easy solutions and the government has an unprecedented commitment in response to that. We have in place a multi-faceted strategy that goes across government, across the state and includes the community in the response.

Ms ANWYL: Family and Children's Services soon need to shuffle chairs back, I am afraid, and it is a question that relates to the Family and Children's Policy Office. Page 505, Family and Children's Policy Office. This initiative has had the amount of \$1.063m allocated. We have one paragraph by way of explanation of what is involved. There are 20 projects nominated, I would like to have some detail if possible, by way of supplementary information, about those. I would like to know what the eight FTEs are going to actually be involved in doing and I would like to know exactly which government agencies and what policies are going to be coordinated?

Mrs PARKER: As I have indicated the role of policy offices in government has been very critical in terms of drug abuse strategy, women's interests and seniors and there certainly have been a range of calls for a greater focus and coordination across government on policies that would in fact enhance and support services to families and to children and I outlined in my second reading speech when we introduced the Child Welfare Amendment bill that - - -

Ms ANWYL: Point of Order, madam Chair. I really would appreciate if you could answer the questions I have asked, Minister. I have read your second reading speech, I participated in the debate but I have asked you some very precise questions so that we can move on to another area.

[10.30 am]

Mrs PARKER: So the establishment of the Family and Children's Policy Office will have a similar role to those other minor agencies that I just mentioned in co-ordinating right across government. It will not be limited to any number of government agencies, as I mentioned with the latest two year plan for women, that we have gone from engaging 36 agencies to 86 agencies and the Family and Children's Policy Office will set priorities and then start to operate in a way similar to those

other smaller agencies in co-ordinating and prioritising, across government, policies to support and promote the role of the families and children.

In regard to the appointment, the person to be appointed in charge of that office is almost ready to be announced. After that the appointment of staff can then proceed and then those priorities on projects can be determined. As yet, all of those things have not been finalised. It would not be appropriate to finalise them before the person to be appointed with the team is given the task. It is not appropriate for them to be set but, clearly, that person will report to me as do the other heads of those small policy offices and, in consultation, we will work through the developing of those policies.

Mr FISHER: I think the question that the member for Kalgoorlie asked about the numbers, because in turn there are foot measures we have to put figures in here, we picked the nominal amount and we have done that, obviously, without consultation with the person who is going to be undertaking the task, so we had to put in a nominal figure as an estimate. The actual number of projects may vary up or down. At this stage we have not got any specific idea because that would be up to the new office.

Ms ANWYL: The document in front of me, page 524, states there are currently five FTE's. Is that correct or not?

Mr FISHER: We have got the FTE allocated, yes, but they have not started work yet specifically. Obviously, the office will be requiring the key appointment. That will be announced, I would imagine, in the next week or so.

Ms ANWYL: Is anybody employed at all in this area yet?

Mr FISHER: There are people doing some initial work in terms of ensuring that we have got accommodation and ensuring that we have got the systems in place. In terms of substantive policy work, no.

Ms ANWYL: So there are no FTE's employed, despite the claim of five and the estimate of eight, is that in fact something that you are firm about or is that just another figure that is plucked from the air like the 20 output programs?

Mr FISHER: The work that they have been doing is, as I said before, administrative work in looking at actually physically setting up the office. In terms of policy work, obviously the direction there will come after discussions between the person who is going to be appointed.

Ms ANWYL: Where will the office be located?

Mrs PARKER: It will be in Dumas House.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Kalgoorlie, you asked for some information by way of supplementary. Obviously, that is not available or are you still seeking that?

Ms ANWYL: I am. We have got one paragraph in these budget papers about a \$1.06m project and I would seek whatever information is available by way of supplementary. Are you able to give me something?

Mrs PARKER: Once the person is appointed and the staff are in place and work begins, then we start to put those priorities in place. I certainly will be making an announcement in the House on the appointment of the person when that is available but, as mentioned, we anticipate that to be in the very near future.

Mr CARPENTER: That figure that you have got there of \$1.06m, is that intended to largely account for a setting up fee or do we anticipate that the amount of money expended in the family and child policy co-ordination area will continue to grow rather than diminish after the office is established?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: Certainly, there would be some expenditure to date in terms of setting up the accommodation of the office and that has been the major strategy for costs.

Mr CARPENTER: The reason I ask about this is because we have already heard from Mr Fisher that the money for the establishment of this office was actually drawn from service delivery areas, although you did go on to make the rather astounding claim that would not affect service delivery. Is this going to be a permanent draw on service delivery areas - which it is reflected here in the amount of money, for example, that is taken out of some of the current expenditures - or is the expenditure in this area going to diminish once the office is established?

Mrs PARKER: If I can just briefly say that the budget allocation for the portfolio has seen an effective increase. There have been increases - -

Mr CARPENTER: Point of order. I am not interested in the portfolio. I am asking a specific question about family and child policy co-ordination and the allocation of \$1.06m and whether or not we can expect in the forward estimates in the future years that expenditure will grow, or is that related largely to the setting up costs of the office?

Mrs PARKER: It is a recurrent allocation just as the Office of Seniors' Interests and the Women's Policy Development Office have recurrent allocations for continued policy development and co-ordination initiatives across government, so some of it is for set up costs but it will have a recurrent allocation in the out years for its continued work.

Mr CARPENTER: And what is the anticipated ongoing cost of that office?

[10.38 am]

Mrs PARKER: We really do not know yet. It depends on the parameters of the work that is defined, what projects are

undertaken and how it settles in. In terms of the whole budget process for the ongoing years, in my discussions with each of my agencies we talk about initiatives and things that are under way. For example, the Womens Policy Development Office has had the centenary of suffrage and so there has been an increase there.

Office of Seniors Interests. We have discussed having extra allocations because of the International Year of Older Persons. Similarly, with the Family and Children's Policy Office, those recurrent allocations for their activities will depend on what is being undertaken at the time.

Mr CARPENTER: Minister, I think this is important, because if you have a look at 507 you have reduced spending in all the service delivery areas apart from policy development and co-ordination where you have increased it. I do not accept that that can be done without services being abused and I do not think anybody who looks at it logically can.

What I am trying to get from you is a statement about whether or not you are going to have this leviathan growing in your Ministry, using up funds which have clearly in previous years been expended on service delivery.

Mrs PARKER: In response to that, and I will get Bob Fisher to make a comment as well, if you read the budget papers it says it is a transfer of indirect costs. We are talking about administrative overheads. There has not been, and there will not be, a reduction in service delivery either through the department or through its contracted services.

Mr CARPENTER: Even though the exact opposite is shown in your own budget papers this year?

Mrs PARKER: There has been an increase in recurrent funding to the non-government sector and in our recurrent budget. In regard to whether this - -

Mr CARPENTER: Every service area you have here has its budget reduced.

Mrs PARKER: In regard to your reference to this being a leviathan growing out of all control, I think that the experience -

Mr CARPENTER: Perhaps I should have said a Hydra, many-headed monster. So far we have eight.

Mrs PARKER: In regard to my references to the three smaller agencies that I presently have responsibility for, I do not think any of them could be referred to as either as leviathans or multi-headed monsters. I think they have been extremely effective in promoting policy development and prioritising the issues.

Mr CARPENTER: You only have to look at the press to see how effective they have been. There have been something like 40 heroin deaths this year. We have the worst homelessness rates in Australia and you are sitting here telling us how effective they have been.

Mrs PARKER: In terms of the response of the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office to the complex issue of drug abuse - both legal and illegal drugs - the office has performed extremely well and is well respected - -

Mr CARPENTER: Performed what?

Mrs PARKER: Performed its function of not only policy development but ensuring that it is implemented and some of those initiatives, as I said, are now considered national best. The Office of Seniors Interests. Very effective in terms of our national - - the healthy ageing strategy, in terms of the centenary - -

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the Minister can wind up her answer.

Mrs PARKER: Yes. In terms of the International Year of Older Persons, very important to prioritise those issues and none of them fit that easy line that you might wish to mischievously ascribe to them, and neither will the Family and Children's Policy Office.

Mr FISHER: The reality is we have not cut services. We have increased funding to non-government agencies in every output area. We have not cut services. We have managed our own budget better to find funding for the Family and Children's Policy Office which we see as being a very important office in terms of looking right across Government rather than just looking at the welfare area and the child protection area. The reality is, as the Minister points out, in terms of budget, we expect that \$1m to be recurrent in forward estimates depending on, obviously, their performance and the Minister may have further work for it. Their budget might be \$2m, \$3m, depending on what - - we cannot predict in the future but we have nominally ascribed that amount. It will all depend on the new person when they come in and the direction they take and the direction the Government gives it.

Mr MacLEAN: Page 529, outcome is to improve the quality of life for older persons. There has been recent media coverage about the mistreatment of older people in both institutions and in private accommodation, parental abuse by some older children. What is the department doing about this by way of community awareness and actual intervention?

Mrs PARKER: I thank the Member for Wanneroo for the question. In yesterday's paper there was an article on the issue of elder abuse and today the editorial in The West Australian also makes comment on that issue. In August 1997 the Government contracted the Council on the Ageing to conduct an elder protection pilot program which involved the development of protocols between agencies and organisations that were involved in providing services and support, or who had contact with seniors in the community, to determine the extent of abuse. It certainly is not something that is well understood or documented, and also trying to put into place some protocols for people who might, for example, be delivering meals on wheels; what would they do if they had some concerns and what process was to be undertaken.

Until the protocols project there was no process available for a person to perhaps proceed on from their initial concern. At the time we released the end of that pilot project, we in fact then put in place funding for an officer to assist in the implementation of those protocols. In the 1999-2000 budget we anticipate that there will be some \$40 000 spent on the development of an accredited training course on elder abuse so that people who work in the sector might be informed more comprehensively, and some \$80 000 on the elder protection strategy but I would just like Di Moran to make some comment on that. It is an extremely critical issue at a time when we see the ageing of our population start to escalate.

[10.45 am]

Mrs MORAN: The issue of elder abuse is an emerging trend in our community, sadly. It is one that the government has given a firm commitment to and is one that the office has got specific allocations for further development in the next financial year and in future financial years. It is one, as the Minister said, that is really hard to get to grips with because the data, the research is rather sketchy. It is something that we are working on nationally as well as within Western Australia. The work of the pilot project has been very beneficial and will continue into the future. As the Minister said, we are looking to expand and further raise awareness of the issue in the community and to work with the community services, industries, professionals, to ensure that they are aware of the issue and how best to respond to it. It certainly does require a cross-government approach. It is not an issue that is dealt with by one agency. It requires a lot of coordination and it is one that we have been working with police, the Health Department, community care agencies across the community services sector with a view to trying to prevent incidences of abuse occurring in the first place but also where it has occurred to ensure that appropriate responses are put in place.

Mrs PARKER: The development of the protocols and their implementation has been done at all times in consultation with the sector and the people involved and has received strong support from those people.

Ms ANYWL: I have a couple of questions which relate, firstly, to page 520, child protection services, and then I have got a couple the next section through for children. If it is easier to answer with reference to either of those sections please do so. I am particularly concerned at what we shall see in this next budgetary year relating to the concerns that the Auditor General had about the number of children in care and what services they were not accessing and I am wondering where in either of these sections I can find strategies that will specifically address the whole concept of young people at risk whilst in care and what steps are going to be taken to improve the quality of services they do receive.

Mrs PARKER: The report that you refer to was regarding young people who were unable to live at home and certainly I said at the time that that report raised issues of concern to government and although I do not have responsibility for all of the responses that were required from that report I undertook to certainly respond where I was responsible. There have been a couple of things that have been done. One of the issues that the Auditor General raised was the issue of how quickly we could facilitate placements for children. There was comment by people in the sector, if you recall, and there was a cartoon drawing of a person, sort of, calling everywhere to find out where an appropriate placement was. The department has appointed a central placement officer, a person who has all the information available to them that field officers can call into to get support in finding an appropriate placement for that young person. That was a particular concern because it wasn't that the placements weren't available, it was that the person in the field just did not know where to go to find that particular information.

I have already mentioned this morning the adolescent assessment centre at Hilston. Clearly one of the issues with young people at risk is that services were available but they were not accessing them and that people were re-presenting in crisis. The adolescent assessment centre in Hilston will fill a gap that has existed for some time. We would have liked to have seen that centre built before now but we have had some difficulties with the site for it but I am pleased to say that the building is now ahead of our schedule and will be opened by the end of this year. That assessment centre will have the capacity to take young people into care and provide thorough assessments. It will not be a cheap facility to run. Professionals will visit that centre and make assessment on the mental health needs, the academic and educational needs of the young person, what addiction problems they present with, and how will they best be addressed, so that by the time the young person leaves that assessment centre they will have a full program of the sorts of support services that must be in place. Now, whether they go home to the family or to a foster placement there will be a program of supports already prescribed for that young person so that they do not continue on what we call the roundabout of care and crisis. There has been an increase in the number of parent adolescent counselling services and there has also particularly been the formation of specialist care for children teams.

Mr FISHER: I think it is a very important issue that the member for Kalgoorlie has raised. What we are finding is that we are getting an increasing number of kids in care. At 31 March this year we had 1 323 children in care. That was an increase of 6.5 per cent on the previous year. The number of wards, which about 3 or 4 years ago was down to the low 700s, is now up to 858. That has gone down from 5 000 in about the year 1970. We are right down in terms of the number of wards, where we took out applications successfully in the Children's Court. Right down from about 4 or 5 years ago. It is starting to come up again and what that means, of course, that the more wards the more kids we have in care. In addition to that we have non-wards in care. It is an increasing issue in terms of our budget and I would say, in all honesty, that the sorts of kids that we are getting in care are increasingly difficult and increasingly expensive, increasingly in need of services right across the whole of government including mental health, health, education and ourselves. So it is an issue that unfortunately looks as though it is going to be ongoing and unfortunately the graph is steadily going up. In terms of the services the Minister has outlined a number of services there. I do not know whether Mr Budiselik has got some more information here you might be interested in?

[10.52 am]

Mr BUDISELIK: In terms of the Auditor General's report we are developing a quality of life indicator based on some United Kingdom research. So we would be trying to apply that in terms of children in care. We have also instituted a position in the department called Placement Officer who oversees our referrals for funded non-government services. Previously we had a system where various officers were almost competing for places in the non-government whereas our own officers now come to a centrally located officer. We have also established the move into independence service because leaving care is one of the major criticisms of the children who have been in care and we are funding the Salvation Army to run that service and we will be assessing that. We have also established our care for children committee which brings together a number of other government providers, non-government and our own departmental officers and in terms of the very last recommendation of the Auditor General's report which is probably the most important in coordination between education, health, etcetera, Office of Youth Affairs are taking a lead role in that particular recommendation.

Mrs PARKER: Could I just comment also on WAAYPIC and I do not know if you have had any contact with WA Young People in Care but I consider that a very important area of activity for government to support. The woman who leads that, Helen Moschini, does a wonderful job and she is able to engage those young people. They have been very important in terms of informing both myself and the department on what it is like to be a young person who has been in care who is leaving that formal care, whether it is at the age of 18 or in some cases they move to independence earlier, and in the past there really has not been any support in place for those particular young people and there has been some very important work and we will certainly be continuing to support the people in WAAYPIC and Helen and her work because there is not only benefit for the young people, we are able to get services tailored to meet their needs but it has been very important in terms of being able to inform government where we have not sought advice before.

Ms ANWYL: First of all in terms of Mr Budiselik mentioned the Office of Youth Affairs, can I have some direction from you, Minister, about the demarcation if you like between the role of Family and Children's Services in terms of coordinating service delivery to young people at risk and the role of the Office of Youth Affairs in terms of that same coordination because clearly the Office of Youth Affairs claims to coordinate services for young people generally and has, for example, taken on suicide as one of its charters? So if you can point to specific examples of where there has been a clear demarcation between the two just using youth at risk? The second part relates to page 521 which has the outputs. Now I am interested to know given that the number of child maltreatment allegations estimated has increased from last year and care and protection applications are roughly static at 255 for last year, 250 here which is probably slightly at odds with what the Director General has just said but I am wondering is it possible to give some further detail by way of supplementary information of the regions, the ages, the types of concerns and so forth for those actual care and protection and the maltreatment allegations so that we can keep some handle on those?

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, before you answer the question I am going to be very vigilant in how much time I allow you and your advisers to answer these questions. I have a number of members who are queued up to ask questions so I would like them to be short and sharp, please. Minister.

Mrs PARKER: Just a quick comment on the demarcation. Clearly I have responsibility for those programs that need to run out of Family and Children's Services and respond to the needs of wards of the State. The Office of Youth Affairs as you say has a specific focus on youth policy. I think the Family and Children's Policy Office will also find itself in a role to drive policy across government and so there is nothing absolute in terms of a line but it is something that I have regular contact with the Minister for Youth on. It really is part of the job of this particular portfolio that you find yourself dealing with a whole range of agencies. I deal very closely with the police, for example, with certain aspects of child abuse, investigations, etcetera. So it is a matter of where there is a need to coordinate. I would ask Bill to respond to the second part regarding the allegations.

Mr BUDISELIK: In 1998-99 there were 2400 which was a 3 per cent increase on the previous year. One of the bits of data we have is for the period from July to September, the reasons why we took care and protection applications and just for your interest six related to insufficient means of subsistence and near relatives unable or unwilling to look after a child; one was dwells with a person of ill-repute; 11 were unfit guardians; three were deserted or not maintained; one was found in a place where drugs were used; two were ill-treated and 39 lived in conditions or behaving in manner to indicate mental, moral or physical welfare of the child was in jeopardy. So we do have that sort of information we are anticipating an increase in the future year but basically these figures represent our response to demand in the previous year.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, will you clarify whether you will provide that information by way of supplementary?

Mrs PARKER: The information in terms of the breakdown of why people were presented?

Ms ANWYL: I also ask for if possible region and age.

Mr BUDISELIK: Yes, we have the age too.

Mrs PARKER: I can provide that information as outlined by the member for Kalgoorlie.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Perth. I know the member for Perth has limited time so I would like to extend her the opportunity to ask a series of questions.

Ms WARNOCK: Thank you, I will be very short and sharp, thank you, madam Chair. The first one relates to the Women's

Advisory Council. It is very brief, I am sure. The other one goes back to the issue of supported accommodation programs and women's refuges. First of all the matter of the Women's Advisory Council; it apparently produced a publication earlier this year reporting an induction and planning program which had been held in January to identify an action plan in relation to women and work. Apparently a plan was to be put out. A colleague of mine followed that up again recently and was told that the action plan of women in work is not available, it is awaiting ministerial approval. I would be interested to know when that action plan from the Women's Advisory Council is likely to be available to us. That is the first question. The second one is about the supported accommodation matter. Do you want to just deal with that very brief and I think simple question there?

[10.59 am]

Mrs PARKER: In response to that first one I am not quite sure exactly what document you are referring to. In some instances I ask the Women's Advisory Council for advice. They have been appointed to provide advice to me as Minister. Not all advice that they provide to me is made available for the public. So I am just not quite sure. They have also got a brief and a mandate to consult with women through Western Australia and report back to me on issues.

Ms WARNOCK: Perhaps I can just enlighten you a little further. The impact on women of changes in the workplace and conditions of employment; that is the one, is that helpful?

Ms NORGARD: I think the report that the member for Perth is referring to is one that has resulted from consultations and forums that the Women's Advisory Council held mainly on the effect of casualisation on women in the workplace. The report is being put together, there is still some fine tuning happening with it so it is still being prepared.

Ms WARNOCK: It will be made public later in the year? I mean, it will be a public document?

Mrs PARKER: Well, that advice would come to me and then I would consider whether it is - - as I said in some instances they provide advice to me and in others they prepare material that is for public release - and usually that is the case.

Ms WARNOCK: Just one issue relating to the supported accommodation which we all discussed earlier on. You could find it anywhere in the budget papers, there are numbers of pages which relate to this particular issue. If I could ask the Minister and I have spoken in the House with her about this, it is about the CASH award and the women's refuges. How many refuges have got money for that CASH award which was outstanding for a while and took some time to be paid to women's refuge workers? How many refuges have now got the money for the CASH award and how many are still waiting? That is the first part of the question if I might ask you. The other matter relates to a matter brought to my attention by the Women's Refuge Group. They are pleased that some of them do have that CASH award and they say that it addresses the issue of wages and conditional entitlements for workers but it has to be coupled with a serious commitment towards the real increased demand and running costs of service delivery and that is really what I want to ask in addition to the matter of how many refuges have actually got that CASH award. It is quite clear from everything that the refuge workers have said to me that actually further money is required not only to bring those workers up to date with the payment which they have been waiting for for so long but also to meet other needs in the women's refuge services. For example, like those child support workers that I have spoken about before. Can you first of all tell me about the number of refuges in relation to who has been paid and who has not been? Secondly, is there any further commitment in these budget papers to bringing the refuges into a situation where they are able to employ all the workers they believe they need to provide a proper service to women?

Mrs PARKER: Certainly the member for Perth made some statements in the House which I found quite extraordinary about the level of funding to women's refuges having not increased over 10 years and I tabled in the Parliament a list of funding levels - I will not go over the material now - -

Ms WARNOCK: I recall that, Minister. We had a disagreement about that.

Mrs PARKER: - - I tabled in the Parliament a list of all of the funding levels for refuges in Western Australia and I just add that from 1992 there was funding of \$4.85m up to now in 1999 of \$8.67m. It is an increase of 79 per cent and the number of services has increased from 26 to 33. Of the 33 refuges at my last indication some 19 had had approved increases because of the impact of a cash award. That was to a value of \$1.4m and we have spent some time talking about how I prepaid that back to the beginning of January 98 and also paid the Commonwealth's share of the deal as well and that there is \$2.6m recurrent come through from the Federal Government that will be recurrent for the years that will be applied to support that. So some of those have had a very significant increase. It is important to note that not all of the refuges have applied yet for their increase in funding.

Ms WARNOCK: I am aware of that. Are there any that have applied that are still waiting?

Mrs PARKER: Yes, and I have always said that we gave the 24 hour services priority, most refuges are 24 hour services, they were given a priority in terms of dealing with that CASH award and we would deal with them on a case by case basis and that will continue to proceed. In terms of the increases the services that we contract to non-government through Family and Children's Services are actually indexed to CPI and we are the only sector that provides a CPI increase in the services we contract. So that is a significant gain I believe and one that not many other non-government organisations operating in other sectors enjoy. I do not know if that covers the questions you asked.

Ms WARNOCK: So in other words having paid the CASH award to some, and presumably - -

Mrs PARKER: As they applied.

Ms WARNOCK: - - as they applied and presumably if others qualify if the applications are there, there is no intention to pay anything further in the way of, for example, child support workers or anything like that?

Mrs PARKER: We have put in place three counselling services for children, we have put in counselling and advocacy services for women throughout the state.

Ms WARNOCK: So in effect you are saying that the workers you are providing through another method, if you like, through your own ways different counselling services will take the place of those child support services?

Mrs PARKER: No, not only have we increased the number of refuges we now have refuges throughout the state.

Ms WARNOCK: I am aware of that. That is good.

Mrs PARKER: We have increased the number of refuges. We have then also in understanding that it is not only crisis accommodation that is required - - having said that I regard that as the most critical priority, that we must have the crisis accommodation for a woman and her children to flee unsafe environments at home. That is the priority. We have increased the number of those services. We have also put in place services of counselling and advocacy for those people, once the crisis is over, for them to determine what it is in fact they need to do in their life to stabilise their circumstances. Those are in place and we have also recognised, and there has been a very significant uptake of the services being provided through those new services; providing counselling to children who are secondary victims of domestic violence. Certainly the feedback I have had from one of them is that there has been a significant demand very quickly, and that has also been keyed into the Freedom from Fear campaign because people realised through those ads the impact that domestic violence is having on the children and the trauma associated. They have increases due to the CASH impact. They have CPI increases and there are also other services being provided to support the women and children with whom they are dealing.

[11.06 am]

Dr CONSTABLE: I have a very quick question which relates to page 504, dot point 1. It concerns the new Family and Children's Services bill and also the adoption legislation. When are we going to see both of those pieces of legislation introduced into Parliament?

Mrs PARKER: The rewrite of the Family and Children's Services bill is on draft number 5. It is quite a complex piece of legislation. I anticipate that it will draw strong community debate. It is an important area of legislation. We are anticipating that it will be ready for release as a green bill by the end of the year.

Dr CONSTABLE: When will we see it introduced into Parliament if you are going to have a green bill and a period of consultation?

Mrs PARKER: That depends on the debate and the feedback from the debate. If you recall, as you clearly would, your involvement with the Education bill, there was extensive community debate and in response to that community debate a need for further change to the green bill before it was presented to Parliament. So at this stage we are progressing. As I said, it is up to draft number 5 and I do anticipate, and hope to see, it presented as a green bill before the end of the year.

Dr CONSTABLE: Do you see it passing through the Parliament before the next election?

Mrs PARKER: I would hope to see it in, but having seen the passage of the Education bill and the time that is needed to be taken on a piece of legislation that is as complex as that, I think if one is going to say we are committed to community consultation, you in fact give it the time it deserves, so I will not pre-empt the scheduling of that.

Dr CONSTABLE: I have the same question, Madam Chairman, about the adoption legislation. There are a lot of anxious people out there waiting for this.

Mrs PARKER: In regard to the adoption legislation, there were some 80 recommendations of the review committee. Most of those have been accepted. Cabinet has endorsed 76 of the 86 recommendations. Sixty-five of those will require legislative change. They are now with parliamentary council. If you would like, I am quite happy to provide to you either a copy of the drafting instructions or a briefing on that, if you wish, but certainly that is just going through due process.

Dr CONSTABLE: Yes, please.

Mrs PARKER: All right.

Dr CONSTABLE: Have you got some idea in mind approximately when we might see this?

Mrs PARKER: I have not given that a high priority. That certainly does not diminish the way I view the issue, but it is felt by Government that the changes that were made to the Act in 1994 really have brought about a very balanced piece of legislation in terms of something that is probably one of the most sensitive areas for a Government to legislate for, and that is adoption. We will proceed, but certainly I have not, at this stage, any time frame. Again, it is with parliamentary council at present. The drafting instructions have been issued and as I said, Madam Chair, I will put on record that I will provide to the member for Churchlands a briefing or the drafting instructions. If you want anything else, just contact my office and we will provide that to you.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, just to confirm that you are going to supply that information by way of supplementary?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Dr CONSTABLE: Just to follow up on that, I am not sure what conclusion to draw from your last comments? I think I can conclude that we are not going to see the adoption legislation before the next election.

Mrs PARKER: There is no time frame on it at this stage. In terms of priorities for Government, because of the balance that there is with the legislation as it is, it is certainly something that has not been given high priority but it is still progressing.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the short questions and answers.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Minister, I refer to page 530, and we are looking at seniors again. In the major achievements, I think the document before, the department:

Provided a telephone information service, staffed by senior volunteers, and responded to approximately 40 000 calls during the year.

I would like to know what sort of calls came in, where they came from throughout the state and were they in connection with the Year of the Seniors or were they personal information that seniors wanted to know, how effective is it and were there any Aboriginal calls, and how is this connected to Aboriginal elder abuse? Is there any help for Aboriginals?

Mrs PARKER: Thanks to the Member for Swan Hills. I am very pleased to answer that question. I believe that the International Year of Older Persons is a very significant opportunity for all jurisdictions, and in Western Australia we have taken it very seriously. With the ageing of our population, I do think we face very significant challenges but they are challenges that do not have to confront us. I believe the ageing of the population can enrich us as a society, which is why something like the Office for Seniors Interests and the volunteers that work in there and staff this line are absolutely important. I will ask Dianne Moran if she would make a comment specifically on those inquiries from the Member for Swan Hills.

[11.13 am]

Ms MORAN: The calls come from a variety of different people throughout the community, many from rural areas as well as the metropolitan area. The figure of 40 000 is certainly a major achievement ...(indistinct)... upturn for this year. Next year we are expecting a further increase in the number of callers for that service. We can, through the Minister, provide additional information to you in terms of the breakdown, the calls and the type of demographics etcetera. I would prefer to provide that in a more detailed response.

Mrs PARKER: Yes. I will provide the breakdown that Di Moran referred to. As a final comment to the member for Swan Hills, there is a concern particularly with the Aboriginal population because of their mortality rates in the past have not had a group of seniors per se but they are now starting to have to deal with those issues and so, too, is government and the community. With Western Australia being the most multicultural state in Australia there is a significant issue with the ageing of the ethnic population where English is a second language and the isolation that ethnic seniors can also experience. There are a number of things that we are looking to do to, in fact, deal with that and help those communities break down that isolation and the problems faced by the ageing community.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: This 40 000 calls; how are you evaluating the benefit of the community of that particular telephone call line and how do you get the message out to the community that it is there? I am ashamed to say I did not even know it existed and I am a member for Parliament and should.

Mrs MORAN: The evaluation of the service is an ongoing evaluation. Currently we take samples throughout the year of callers, and return back to them and ask them were they satisfied with the service, and use that information to further look at volunteer training and development of a service. In terms of promotion of the service, it is done through various means; community newspapers, through mail outs, through advice to seniors organisations and so forth, and direct mail to the 168 000 seniors card holders throughout the State. We have just recently done a major mail out to them advising them, once again, about the range of services for seniors but also the importance within the information line; if they have had inquiries or need for information. So there is a range of strategies there that enable people to access the service.

Ms ANWYL: I have a question relating to WADASO. On page 536 under drug abuse treatment and prevention services, I do not see any discussion about evaluation of the community drug teams or the role they are having. I presume that they are part of this budget. Is that correct?

Mr MURPHY: Yes.

Ms ANWYL: That concerns me given the community drug teams play such a huge role in delivery of services right across the State. Can you talk about what sort of evaluation is actually going on, in fact, if there is some and why that is not included in these papers?

Mr MURPHY: The community drug service teams have just had their first full year of operation and, in fact, some of them were not quite fully staffed right at the beginning of the year. We have also just established an 11th community drug service team towards the end of this financial year as a joint Commonwealth State initiative. So, it is early days. That said, they were initially tendered and contracted for 3 years and we have held a 1 year review of those services conducted by the drug

abuse services funding panel which comprises people from the WADASO, Health, Commonwealth Health, the non-government network of agencies, WANADA and that review really, I think, showed us a number of things. They were very busy with direct client work. They are engaging younger people and people at an earlier stage of drug abuse as was intended. They are engaging families as was also an objective. They continue to have sufficient space to work with the community on prevention activities. I phrase that in a way because it is a continuing anxiety for services that are addressing both treatment and prevention that the demand for treatment will edge out the prevention work with the community, but they continue to do that largely with local drug action groups. I think as a reflective success of community drug service teams local drug action groups have continued to grow. The size of the network is something like 55 around the State now; and we have not lost any. None have ceased to exist and all of those are directly supported by community drug service teams.

Ms ANWYL: In terms of my own electorate of Kalgoorlie, as you know, Minister and Mr Murphy, we have statistics demonstrating roughly four and a half times the State average of use of needles and syringes in my electorate and I am wondering what can I look to in this budget in terms of specific extras that are going to be used in my electorate to combat that. I know there is a feasibility study under way, or may indeed be complete. If I can have some information about that and specifically what treatment -- extras, if you like, or facilities are going to be provided as a result of this budget.

Mr MURPHY: The feasibility study you refer to is nearly complete. All key informants in the area have been interviewed and we are at the stage of preparing a draft of the report. The conclusions from that are that Kalgoorlie is different insofar as most drug use occurs amongst people who are employed and employed on very high wages. So, drugs are more affordable to that group and they do not demonstrate the same sort of long term harms as you see in drug users in Perth. There are two reasons for this. One, the affordability and, second, because they are largely transient. Now that affects the sort of service responses both in terms of treatment to help them stop using drugs and harm reduction to reduce the harm of that drug use while it is continuing, that are feasible that can reach those people. That said in Kalgoorlie there are readily available needles and syringes which are a difficult harm reduction measure that is available and that provides an opportunity for further education interventions to ensure that harm is reduced. Secondly, what the feasibility study has shown us are that the demand for some of the more traditional services such as detoxification, residential rehabilitation, are not strongly apparent and dedicated services for those are not generally supported in Kalgoorlie. Rather what we have the opportunity to do is make better use of the existing services whether they are the hospital and people they engaged, the community drug service team and its ability to outreach.

Building on things like the Graham Street Youth Hostel and the inter-agency program involving Family and Children's Services, Justice, Community Drug Service Team, and so on providing services to solvent users. The sobering up centre and expanding it to engage youth and drugs other than alcohol. They are the opportunities we see. We are just working our way through at the moment which of those could be funded through, for example, the one per cent productivity dividend that will be payable to this portfolio because some of those items are very cost effective in how we can expand existing services.

[11.20 am]

Ms ANWYL: To go back to my question I am absolutely familiar with what is in my electorate, so thank you for that, but what extra is available in this round of budgetary funding to my electorate to deal with the special problem as you so quaintly put it?

Mrs PARKER: Can I just make the comment that the services that are available in Kalgoorlie now as compared to what they were, say even two years ago, have been significantly increased. Demonstrated, for example, by the presence of the community drug service team.

Ms ANWYL: Point of order. We can have an argument here about what is or is not in Kalgoorlie. I have asked a specific question and I would like an answer.

Mrs PARKER: Well, in terms of the outcome of that feasibility study that you are very familiar with which is currently being finalised --

Ms ANWYL: I am not in fact. Nobody has ever bothered to discuss it with me.

Mrs PARKER: You are aware that it is being undertaken. That is currently being finalised and in terms of the outcome of that will depend on the information in there.

Mr MURPHY: Given that the feasibility study is in draft the areas that we are looking at being able to expand would relate to the community drug service team and its capacity to outreach, linkages with the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital and its capacity to provide a detoxification service. We are also looking at Prospect Lodge which has traditionally provided services to alcohol users, it is a residential half way house arrangement but that is expanding into illicit drug users. Each of those areas provides some opportunities for expansion on a very cost effective basis.

Ms ANWYL: I am sure you are both aware, Minister and Mr Murphy, there is a difficulty in relation to general practitioners available to prescribe methadone. Notwithstanding your comments there are, as I understand it, at least 50 people using methadone in my electorate and given the opportunity for expansion of naltrexone use across the state I am wondering what specific activities or aspects of the budget can you point to in terms of ensuring that regional and remote communities have GPs who are prepared to deal with intravenous drug users?

Mr MURPHY: In terms of budget that is an issue for the Health Department and they have two substantial programs aimed at engaging GPs further and I would say they have been very successful in doing so. Kalgoorlie is the most difficult area though of the state. The first of those programs is the community based methadone program which provides training and clinical consultancy to all GPs who are providing methadone. There is something like 50 registered providers at the moment. Kalgoorlie as you say has been particularly difficult. That is now being supplemented by a general program of education and support to general practitioners, the general practitioner education and development program which is being conducted by the Health Department.

The Health Department's Next Step is developing these services in conjunction with local divisions. They are working very hard to recruit doctors in Kalgoorlie. That is the Health Department. They have been down there in person speaking to individuals and are trying to get that support on a constant basis. I think we will see better results as a result of two specific things. Better linkages with community drug service teams so the doctors feel more supported so that it is not all being left to them and a stronger response from the regional hospital providing detoxification and other such services which will also support individual doctors and we hope make them less reluctant to provide services. Naltrexone is now registered for general use. That is general use as a maintenance drug, not as a detoxification drug. I think it is worth pointing out that most general practitioners are more comfortable with the tried and tested methadone treatment than they are with the relatively new and controversial treatment naltrexone. That said support for all those GPs who are providing methadone treatment is available through those same programs and is starting to be taken up.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Murphy. We do have 35 minutes in which to complete this division. So I just remind members if we can keep the questions short and more particularly the answers short. The member for Roe.

Mr AINSWORTH: Minister, my question relates to page 526 and I have a vested interest in this one having found myself in that category which is now included in one classification, seniors unfortunately, but under the first dot point in major achievements for 1998-99 there is the implementation of a time on our side program. I would like to know more about it. What is the purpose of that particular plan?

[11.28 am]

Mrs PARKER: Time on Our Side is a five year plan, as it states, on engaging not only across government but also local government. It will also, at a certain period in time, engage private enterprise and the community in responding to our ageing population. Presently 14 per cent of the population are seniors and that will increase to 22 per cent by the year 2021 and I think the statistic that really brings it home to everybody is that by the year 2025 it is estimated that in Western Australia we will have more seniors than children in our population. Time on Our Side is not only something that has the commitment of government agencies to prioritise a response to seniors in a way that has not been done before right across government but, for example, this year has been the target year to engage local governments. We are almost at the end of a process where we have put out the opportunity for local governments to apply for funding to the Office of Senior's Interests so that they could, in fact, fund an audit of the services that are available in their local government area for seniors. That will then inform their plan and it is a way of, first of all, making them fully aware of what the services are and, secondly, that they might be able to identify the gaps in the services for seniors and, thirdly, plan in terms of their budget for that.

I have written to all local government authorities and we intend announcing within about a month those local government authorities that have been successful in funds for those audits so it is a whole of government approach. I have been very pleased to have very strong support by the Opposition on this plan and by the whole community and local government because we all realise that the ageing of our population - - unless we respond effectively in terms of seniors being consumers of services - - what sort of services do they want as customers and the fact that only about five per cent live in nursing homes or hostels, that the remainder are active in the community and live in their own homes in the community, and there are real impacts for all of us but, particularly, for government.

I also continue to raise this issue at a Federal level as far as having an across Australia recognition of a principle and policy, "Healthy Ageing", to be first and foremost and an adequate response in place.

Mrs MORAN: There are 80 initiatives in the plan and already in the first year of implementation there is a lot of activity across government from police through to health, through to the arts, with further opportunities for our older citizens. Basically, there are 12 priority areas, as I said, right the way through to housing and through to the arts, etcetera. Really, the cornerstone of this plan was the extent of community consultation right across the state and all seniors had a lot to say about what they wanted in terms of their futures. There is additional funding; an allocation in the next financial year for the continuation of this work.

Mr MacLEAN: My question relates to page 521, Major Achievements and Major Initiatives. Could you explain your achievements and initiatives in relation to false or misleading reporting about child abuse when it relates to other family problems such as a marital breakdown or a relationship breakdown? One of the problems I face is that I quite often have an estranged partner come in and say, "I have been accused of child abuse and access to my children has been denied. What can I do about it?" I just want to know if the department is putting in any protocols so that they can identify false or misleading reporting right up front so we can ease the burden on these people because a lot of the time they are stressed to the limit?

Mrs PARKER: The problem you identify is a very real one and, of course, in responding to a report of child abuse it is absolutely important that there are processes in place whereby the very best of information can be sought and then the very

best of professional judgments to be made. It is important that there is a recognition of that vexatious nature of allegations that can be made but at the same time recognising that we are dealing first and foremost with the protection of children at risk and that there has to be a very serious consideration of those particular allegations. In terms of the process, the department has spent a considerable amount of effort in improving its practice and I am on the record as saying that I believe our practice is better than what it was 10 years ago and I hope that in 10 years time it is better than what it is now; that we continually improve our practice, but I will ask Bob Fisher to make a comment.

Mr FISHER: We would endorse what the Minister said. We believe that our practice in this area is the best in Australia but, having said that, we also note from experience that it is a bit like Qantas advertising the fact that they never have a crash because you never know what is around the corner.

In relation to the issue that you have raised, it is obviously a very, very important issue with respect to allegations that are made without substance. What we have done over the last couple of years as a result of the restructuring of the department, we have put a much greater emphasis up front when people first come into our organisation in terms of looking at the intake. Traditionally, I think, in welfare departments, intake has been somewhere where junior people have been placed when they first come out of university. What we discovered was that this is probably the most important decision that we make. When an intake or an allegation is first made -- we have restructured ourselves. We have an intake team made up of experienced people because the decisions they make then determine the course from then on in relation to a particular investigation. Obviously, people at intake are experienced. They get as much information as they can before they actually make a decision as to whether it is going to be a child maltreatment allegation or whether it is going to be a child concern report, whether it is vexatious and, to be honest, we do get vexatious claims that are made. Sometimes these are made in the context of Family Court situations and it is very important that we make the right decision at that time.

Last year; that is, between July 98 and March 99 in terms of child maltreatment allegations priority ones - our most severe category - where we have to respond within 24 hours. We received 688 priority ones during that 9 month period. This is where a child was abused or at risk and we had to respond within 24 hours. In 19 of those cases no investigation was undertaken. In other words, in those cases people, before responding, did some initial investigation and they made the assessment that for some reason or another it was either vexatious or it was frivolous, or whatever, that no investigation be undertaken. In the remaining 665 cases investigations were undertaken. From our point of view, I suppose, the short answer is it depends on professional decision making. We as a department are now structured so that we have well credentialled, experienced people up front, at intake, making those assessments.

The problem is, of course, as the Minister alluded to, our priority -- our responsibility is the protection of the child. If we have to make a call between investigating and protecting a child and it is line ball as to whether the allegation has substance or not we will always come out in favour of undertaking the investigation even though that will upset some people. The bottom line though is we cannot exist through time if we get that wrong.

[11.35 am]

Mr CARPENTER: On pages 536 and 537, output 16, the outcome is to reduce the extent and impact of drug abuse and it shows there targets and measurements for quality and so on. I notice that in your description there is no description for reducing the number of heroin or drug related deaths. Now, could you tell us how many people have died of heroin or illicit drug overdose this year in WA?

Mrs PARKER: I am going to make a comment in substance on this, Madam Chair, because this is a very critical issue and I certainly do not want to limit my response to being simple because it is very easy in this area to have very cheap throw away lines. There is no easy answer and this government --

Mr CARPENTER: Point of order, Madam Chair.

Mrs PARKER: -- has a comprehensive --

Mr CARPENTER: There is an easy answer. I asked you a question which requires a numerical response. How many deaths have there been --

Mrs PARKER: I will get to that.

Mr CARPENTER: -- from illicit drug overdoses in WA this year?

Mrs PARKER: I will get to that.

Mr CARPENTER: If I want to hear a policy statement I will ask that question.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, could you keep your answer short, please.

Mrs PARKER: The member for Willagee asked for a specific number and also asked what do we have in place in terms of strategies to reduce the death rate. The current loss --

Mr CARPENTER: Point of order, Madam Chair.

Mrs PARKER: -- tragic loss is 36.

Mr CARPENTER: Point of order. I did not ask the second part of the question, I asked the first part. Thirty six?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Mr CARPENTER: Thank you. Now, as a follow up to that, could I ask the Minister how does that compare on a per capita basis with other states in Australia?

Mr MURPHY: Those figures have not been calculated as yet. However, based on the fact that in 1997 our national figures were estimated to be roughly the same as Victorias, and second to New South Wales, and that since that time Victoria has escalated very, very substantially. Estimates of between 48 and 52 per cent whereas we have stayed steady. We would be coming back on a per capita basis to significantly lower than Victoria and we are already significantly lower than New South Wales.

Mr CARPENTER: You have not actually done that calculation. The reason I am asking this now, Minister, it is coming down to more policy based response, I suppose. I think you said in your initial remarks - or certainly in response to some earlier questions along these lines - that this was a problem that was besetting all the western world. Now, can you tell us approximately how the deaths per capita ratio in Western Australia compares with other countries in the western world; principally, the European countries.

Mr MURPHY: That information is very unreliable, I am afraid, and we do not have it on an accurate basis. If I may have your indulgence for literally 10 seconds. I was at an international conference about 3 weeks ago with a number of international guests from Sweden, the United Kingdom and a number of people who have been to Switzerland and other places, and a number of those countries said they simply do not measure the deaths in the same way as Western Australia does. We have the advantage of monitoring those deaths very carefully, almost on a weekly basis in this State, and we have them accurately but many of those countries do not have them in a form in which we can readily compare them.

Mr CARPENTER: I do not accept that and I think that that is highly unlikely to be the case in countries which have been monitoring drug trends for many years now, particularly in the western European countries. I would just like to ask you if you do a calculation on the West Australian overdose rate would it be roughly accurate to say that per capita per million there is about 40 deaths per million in Western Australia annually now from heroin overdoses and that would compare to an average of less than five for the majority of western European countries. So, in other words, is it a fair enough statement to say that our overdose rate is approximately eight to 10 times higher than most of the western European countries?

Mr MURPHY: The approximate rate of 40 per million is a rough calculation which should be about right based on the last couple of years figures. As I said of those European figures, all the information that I have to hand is that they are not readily comparable. Our comparisons that we can make are with Victoria, New South Wales, other states in Australia and our performance compared to those states is - in fact as much as you can say it in a difficult area like this - good.

[11.42 am]

Mr CARPENTER: Minister, I was hoping you would be able to answer these questions but the point that I am actually getting to here obviously is when you look at different jurisdictions who have different ways of treating the problem, different legal structures, you will find - and I defy you to find otherwise - that the ratio of heroin deaths per million is considerably lower than in Australia and if you make rough comparisons on the figures that are available in countries like Italy and France and Holland, for example, you will find that the number of deaths per million in countries like that ranges from between two and four. Whereas in Australia it is around about 40 and in Sweden which is a model that the Minister holds up as one we could try to emulate there is roughly 28 deaths per million people, 14 times higher than some of the countries in Europe which she criticises. Now what I am getting at in relation to this in Western Australia how are you measuring your achievement? You have achievement targets and achievement figures in here, how are you measuring achievement when we are coming up with some of the worst, if not the worst performance in this area if you measure it against people who are dying?

Mrs PARKER: I just make a comment in terms of that statement that we have got the worst performance. There was an independent assessment last year of all of the jurisdictions in Australia right across the country on drug strategies and while heroin deaths are a significant concern we cannot ignore the fact that alcohol continues to cause the most harm of any drug that is used and abused in the community but across all of the elements of the strategy the independent assessment - and I am quite happy to forward that information if it is wanted - that the Northern Territory came out on a rating as the highest in terms of its response and that was particularly related to their hypothecations of taxes from alcohol and Western Australia overall came up as second and we had made significant improvements.

In terms of the heroin death rate I find it very difficult to argue the case that we are making gains because we have still got 36 lives lost and we have still got tragedies affecting families and it is a little bit like what Bob Fisher referred to in talking about how we are doing well with child abuse responses because there is always families affected, but having said that we are the only state that last year recorded a down turn. Other states had very significant increases in their heroin death rate and this year although we have had a rather tragic last seven or eight days in terms of loss of life due to apparent heroin overdose we are continuing to stabilise those numbers. Now I am not happy with those numbers. I will continue to pursue every possible avenue that will bring a result in terms of bringing down the loss and the impact of drug abuse in Western Australia and there have been some significant creative measures put in place and a broad range of measures. So I do not accept those throw away lines.

Mr CARPENTER: What throw away lines?

Mrs PARKER: The throw away lines that we have got the worst response. If you would look at us on a national comparison in terms of heroin loss we are the only state to have stabilised the loss of life due to heroin overdose and in fact in the last year were able to bring that figure down. I would like Mr Murphy to comment on some of those other questions.

The CHAIRMAN: Before Mr Murphy makes his comments, Minister, are you going to provide that information by way of supplementary?

Mrs PARKER: If it is requested. Yes, I will provide that.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. Mr Murphy.

Mr MURPHY: I am not sure whether you want the numbers over the last couple of years or the strategies that particularly and specifically address heroin overdose.

Mr CARPENTER: I am happy with the Minister's answer. If I could ask another question in relation to - - -

The CHAIRMAN: We have only got another 13 minutes left and there are a number of members who would like to ask other questions. Member for Willagee I will extend the opportunity.

Mr CARPENTER: Minister, first of all thank you for that information and I will have a look at it but I would invite you to have a look at the comments that I made in framing the question about the comparisons that are being made and I am talking about - -

Mrs PARKER: I will explore that.

Mr CARPENTER: - - I am talking about different jurisdictions where they have different legislative frameworks for this problem. You said in response to my question that you will investigate every possible avenue. The tragedy is, Minister, you are not. That is the tragedy. You are refusing to investigate every possible avenue. I would like to know why when we are in the middle of a crisis which puts us up in the worst category in the world for the deaths of our young people you do not even have a target, you do not even have a measure of achievement in this area in your budget papers which has any meaning whatsoever?

Mrs PARKER: The member for Willagee makes the mistake of over simplifying what is a very complex area and one that is facing challenging trends around the developed world. We do have targets and those targets are to reduce the levels of drug use, abuse, to reduce supply, to reduce harm and to reduce demand and we will continue to pursue and to bring down those particulars rates. As Terry Murphy said previously we undertake regularly to assess what the levels of rates of use are and other indicators but it is a difficult area and we are seeing some progress per se in the stabilising of those loss rates due to heroin overdose and as I said before in terms of something like the education program a significant package that will only see a medium and long term outcome as we start to, for the first time, properly equip our children to be able to make informed decisions and properly equip parents to support their children in those decisions. Parents have not been supported before. We have got the community drug service teams and parent education strategies in place as they have not been before but they will bring a medium and long term benefit but there is no quick fix with this one.

Mr CARPENTER: Not the way you are operating as well.

[11.49 am]

Mrs PARKER: Your contribution would be to make heroin available at Government expense ignoring the principle that increased availability leads to increased use. An increase of use, is quite established and in terms of cannabis supply, to allow it to be grown in back yards - -

Ms ANWYL: I have a question relating to hepatitis C and AIDS particularly amongst intravenous drug users, including those in prison, and clearly there is a very high percentage who have one or both of those diseases.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Kalgoorlie, can you refer to a particular page, please?

Ms ANWYL: Yes, page 535. I realise there are some Health Department initiatives which are in another paper's budget but I am wondering if you could fairly briefly address the particular aspects of this budget; whether it is output 15 or 16, prevention or treatment, relating to hepatitis C and AIDS? I say that with particular concern for the fact that there are, I am informed, children as young as 12 years old contracting each of these diseases, in particular I have been made aware of HIV cases in my own electorate.

Mrs PARKER: It is a very important program and important response for the Government to have in place. It really rests with the Health Department and I think it is more appropriately asked within the Estimates Committee for the Minister for Health.

Ms ANWYL: Do you have any contribution from your own budget in terms of those two? It is very clearly linked with drug use. There is no doubt about that. Minister, are you telling me that there is nothing in this budget that relates to the prevention of the spread of HIV and hepatitis C, or the treatment of those people who have it?

Mrs PARKER: My responsibility as a Minister is the co-ordination of the Drug Abuse Strategy right across Government. So from that point of view I have a responsibility with the police and the supply reduction strategies and what they might do. It becomes my responsibility to co-ordinate that, as I did some two years ago just before the release of the Together

Against Drugs strategy, and as we continue to do so. So I have a responsibility to ensure that that needle exchange program for example proceeds, but it is the budgetary responsibility and the operational responsibility of the Minister for Health and the Department of Health.

Ms ANWYL: In terms of intervention, you have a massive budget aimed at preventing people from using drugs. Correct or not?

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

Ms ANWYL: In terms of people who do choose to use drugs, some of those clearly, if not all of them, are at risk of contracting hepatitis C or AIDS. Is that not right?

Mrs PARKER: Madam Chair, I am aware that time is brief but I need to repeat myself. My responsibility is to co-ordinate the Drug Abuse Strategy right across Government. Yes, I do have budgetary allowances for early intervention and prevention. Much of that would be spent via the community drug service teams operations but in terms of a commitment to early intervention and prevention, being an awareness of the dangers of hepatitis C and AIDS, that is very clearly stated in the policy, but again it is the operational responsibility of the Department of Health and the Minister.

Ms ANWYL: I am having difficulty with this. Maybe we are talking at cross-purposes. Minister, just to clarify, there is absolutely nothing in your budget which is directed towards the prevention of AIDS and hepatitis C transmission. Is that right?

Mrs PARKER: It is an integrated strategy. For example, there are - -

Ms ANWYL: I am asking you a question.

Mrs PARKER: There are certain sections within, say, the school drug education project, certain elements of that, that deal with the dangers of hepatitis C and AIDS and there would be a segment there that I am responsible for, but the great majority of that responsibility rests with Health.

Ms ANWYL: You cannot point to anything specific in this budget, can you?

Mrs PARKER: No, I cannot.

Mr MURPHY: Not specifically. As the Minister has indicated, it is part of the school drug education project to pick up part of this issue and all the treatment services deal with this issue with their clients but it is not a part of our budget.

Ms ANWYL: You do not have a specific program?

Mr MURPHY: You should direct your point to Department of Health.

Ms ANWYL: In terms of local drug action groups, is there any monitoring of the number of people actually attending those across the state?

Mr MURPHY: Yes.

Ms ANWYL: All right. By way of supplementary information, can you give me some sort of information about the success rates of those drug action groups across the state and the number of attendances of people at those?

Mrs PARKER: I have a great regard for the local drug action groups and in terms of measuring success, they are early days, as are the community drug service teams. We will continue to monitor the community drug service teams' operation, the level of activity and - -

Ms ANWYL: I am not asking about community service teams. I asked a very specific question and I would like an answer to it.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I would just like to remind you, there are six minutes left and there is another member who would like to ask some questions. So can you just round it off quickly, please?

Mrs PARKER: Yes. In terms of measuring the effectiveness of the local drug action groups, you could look at the projects they have undertaken, but that would be very difficult to manage because you are talking about communities getting involved in actions amongst their own community. Some of the projects by the local drug action groups have been quite significant and large. Some of them have been small initiatives but still significant. I do find it would be difficult to try and put a measure on that in the same way that you might measure something like the performance of a community drug service team. We will provide the information that we have in terms of the locations, the number of local drug action groups and other information that we might have.

The CHAIRMAN: By way of supplementary information, Minister?

Mrs PARKER: Yes. I am quite happy to also supply a range of the initiatives if the Member for Kalgoorlie would also like it. I find that they provide very interesting reading.

Ms ANWYL: I read your newsletter, but if you have something in addition to what is in your newsletter I would be obliged to have it.

Mrs PARKER: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I will just advise you, members, there are four minutes and we have to deal with this division in those four minutes, the remainder of the time. I do not want to take up any more time.

Ms WARNOCK: Very short and sharp. Page 535. It is about the drug strategy. We talked a lot about the meaning of these budget papers and how they are written earlier in the day. Perhaps I have misunderstood something, but I see money going down here in this output description from \$863 000 to \$821 000. Is there any reason for that particularly? That is all I wanted to ask about this particular matter. Why is this going down?

[11.56 am]

Mrs PARKER: Which particular column are you referring to?

Ms WARNOCK: I am referring to the first column on page 535, Total Cost of Output under the Drug Abuse Strategy Co-ordination. Why is that less in the coming year than in the previous year; Cash Cost of Output? What is the reason for that?

Mrs PARKER: I will let Terry have a comment as well but a staff member last year had been actually counted against Output 15 which was Policy Co-ordination and now transferred to Output 16, Drug Abuse Treatment Prevention Services.

Mr MURPHY: It is as simple as that. It now appears in the other output.

Ms WARNOCK: Very well. That is all I wanted to ask.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions, members?

Mr MacLEAN: If I could ask one question. Just with the needle exchange programs, is there a count done of the needles handed in as opposed to the needles given out, including the kits?

Mr MURPHY: Yes, that is regularly monitored and exchange rates vary between 85 per cent and actually over 100 per cent on occasions where these exchanges draw in needles provided from other sources.

[12.05 pm]

Division 75: Contract and Management Services, \$22 594 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mr Board, Minister for Works.]

[Dr P.R. Schapper, Chief Executive Officer, Contract and Management Services.]

[Mr J. Tondut, Director Contracting and Tendering, CAMS.]

[Mr P. Stafford, Manager Financial Services, CAMS.]

[Mr M. Braganza, Manager Financial and Support Services, State Supply Commission.]

[Mr C. Vinci, Acting Chief Executive Officer, State Supply Commission.]

[Mr P. O'Connor, Manager Corporate Services, Office of Youth Affairs.]

[Mr J. Eftos, Acting Executive Director, Office of Youth Affairs.]

[Dr L. Bungey, Chief of Staff to Hon M. Board, MLA.]

The CHAIRMAN: I would just like to say to members that we do have divisions 74, 75, 76 and 77 to deal with. We have three hours in which to do this and if we wish to give equal time to each we need to be mindful that we should probably not go over three quarters of an hour. Minister, do you wish to make an opening remark?

Mr BOARD: Thank you, madam Chair and thank you members in attendance today and the opportunity to be able to elaborate on what we have achieved this year and what we expect to do in our budget and direction in our portfolios over the ensuing 12 months. In opening could I say that in terms of the Western Australian Building Management Authority and the Department of Contract and Management Services, which functioning comes entirely under the Department of Contract and Management Services, that we really need to fully appreciate this has a slight sense of history and we need to appreciate that in 1996 the Building Management Authority, the BMA, amalgamated with what was then the Department of State Services.

The BMA was a body which was primarily involved in the construction of government buildings with a workforce to match to control that construction. Much of what the government did in its construction was in house. The Department of State Services, DOSS as it was called, was a body which procured goods and services on behalf of government. So anything that was not a works that the government needed whether it be pencils or services as such were virtually controlled and done through a central agency through DOSS. As part of a government program which has been in place for many years in fact, the government amalgamated those two bodies into what is now the Department of Contract and Management Services, CAMS and sitting out to one side of that agency and a separate set up by legislation is the State Supply Commission.

The Commission is the body which sets government policy and guidelines in regard to the purchasing or contracting on behalf of government. So they are the body by which the rules are played. CAMS on the other hand have become the body by which the government organises its contracts in line with that and we will talk more about the role of the commission when we examine the budgets for the commission but CAMS' role has been primarily as a facilitator and an operator of government contracts. Primarily in works as its previous function through the BMA but it has in recent years because of the complex nature of contracts which require both sometimes works and services within a similar contract has taken on more strategic and more complicated contracts than just building contracts. The way it works is relatively quite simple. The budgets for government agencies who are involved in capital works will go through those agencies - whether it be education, health, police - and when they want to go out and build something - a new school, a new police station, a new hospital - CAMS will come in and put together those contracts and produce the buildings for them, basically as it were, so that they then can operate within their own budget.

CAMS does that generally on a fee for service basis to agencies and they are used by government agencies as a specialist area where much expertise is housed, being able to put together strategic government contracts. Beyond that, the role of CAMS has developed as we go through this transition between government being a doer to contracting to the private sector in much of this. The role of CAMS has developed in that sense. It has taken on the education role; that is, from the State Supply Commission. It is now involved in making sure that the skills set within other government agencies is higher in terms of contract management. It is a repository for strategic contracts within government and whole of government contracts. A lot of contracts, such as our telecommunications contracts, advertising contracts, contracts of the nature that are whole of government and not specific to one agency are generally housed and controlled within CAMS.

Beyond that CAMS has played an increasing role in informing the private sector and, indeed, the public sector itself and the community about what they have been doing in regard to contract management. The partnership with government in terms of the private sector has been enhanced by the selling to government forums and I might also say that our commitment to regional areas and small business has been enhanced by specific government policies through CAMS this year. In particular, our drive to facilitate electronic commerce as we believe that is of great benefit to the West Australian business community as well as the wider community is a major thrust of CAMS this year. So, we are pretty proud of what we have achieved over the last 12 months and would be happy to talk about our budget and budget directions. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[12.13 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. Before I said we would be dealing with 75. We will deal with 74.

Ms ANWYL: Point of order. If we are going to do approximately three quarters of an hour on each of the sections, I wonder if that is the general consensus given that a lot of the 74 and 75 - -

The CHAIRMAN: That was not a direction to the committee and the committee can obviously take as much time as it wishes on whichever part it wishes. I was just trying to point out to members that we did have four divisions and we have 3 hours. So, if you wanted to allocate equal time you are welcome to but obviously if you do not wish that, and you wish to spend more time on any particular division, that is quite within order.

Mr MacLEAN: Madam Chairman, on that point, I do not have a problem with devoting specific time to the other parts but 74 and 75 are so ...(indistinct)... if we could just drift between the two it would be of great assistance to everyone.

Ms ANWYL: If I could just continue the point of order. We have just had a 3 hour debacle in here where the Minister's advisers had to continually shift between chairs so I just want to avoid that repeat performance. It seems to me that if we do spend a clear amount of time on two divisions that we will cut short the other portfolios and I am trying to avoid the situation where we drift on for some length with the first two divisions and do not have sufficient time for the last two. I would prefer to reach a consensus before we start so that individual members actually know where they are.

Mr MacLEAN: What if I suggest that we take until the lunch break on 74 and 75. After the lunch break we clear up anything outstanding and then do the other two.

The CHAIRMAN: I want the committee to be happy with the proceedings and as divisions 74 and 75 inter relate, as suggested by the member for Wanneroo, shall we deal with them together and put them as one and vote on each one at the end. Is that the wish of the meeting?

SPEAKER: It is.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed.

Mr MacLEAN: Minister, referring to page 258, dot point two, I am interested in the performance of the government contract and the information bulletin board for the use of the internet for contracting services etcetera. Could you indicate to the committee what success that has been, what problems have arisen in that form of direct contracting and any preferences that you have in place for the supply of equipment from Western Australian based companies.

Mr BOARD: Could I say that what we are doing in regard to the electronic bulletin board leads Australia and it also is fundamental with our push in electronic commerce. One of the major focuses for CAMS this year has been to get as much information as possible up on the internet about what government is doing and we have a pretty good story. The reason we have facilitated that so quickly is that it was a decision of the Commission on Government that more information should be available to the community on government contracting and procurement and tendering. Rather than house that in a paper

form in a central agency somewhere we have put it on the net and that gives a number of advantages, both to those wanting to trade with government and also to the community itself who can examine what sort of contract the government is involved in, the size of those contracts, etcetera, and who is winning those contracts. As far as I know there are not too many states who are doing that and we are very proud of the information we have provided. That has been extremely successful because it becomes a situation in which companies, in particular, and small businesses can look at the way in which they need to package their tenders to win government contract work.

We recently launched an early tender advice site - the first, again, in Australia - in which we give three months' notice now to companies that a tender is coming up so that they can look at their alliances if they need to align with another company. They can look at the sort of workload they have currently got. The point of all this is to make it cost effective and easier. Repetitive tendering for government contracts is a very expensive business and one of our main thrusts is to make that easier and more accessible and particularly for small and regional business where we have had a real thrust to make sure that contracts in country regions, we hope, are won by country firms and being able to facilitate that across the net has been a great advantage. We are not entirely there yet. We have got a trial process at the moment in Bunbury which is a full electronic internet solution to buying and selling, including payments, etcetera, and we again lead Australia in that area. We are hoping that we will be able to spread that throughout government over the next 12 to 18 months, so it is an exciting area that has been started primarily by our response to the Commission on Government on making contracting information far more open and accountable to the community.

[12.20 pm]

Ms WARNOCK: I have two or three small questions relating to money and to FTE's. If we can go, first, to page 138, Division 74, the old BMA. Can I ask why the grand total there for 99-2000 is so much less than the previous years? Why that reduction from \$30.2m to \$27.6m?

Mr BOARD: Could you tell me which line you are looking at?

Ms WARNOCK: That is the grand total line at the bottom.

Mr BOARD: If you look at the top of the page you have got the Western Australian Building Management Authority and we also have, at further outputs, CAMS, and you will see a corresponding increase in CAMS for the reduction in what you see in the BMA. What that really is is a realignment of the functions that were previously done through WABMA and through that area now being facilitated through CAMS and, in fact, funded through CAMS so there is no real great reduction overall. It is a realignment of the way the two functions are funded; one, WABMA is coming primarily down to its works function; the other functions that CAMS provides which used to go through the WABMA budget are now going through the CAMS budget.

Ms WARNOCK: So you are saying that there is, effectively, no reduction at all so that figure of 27 versus 30, as it were, is irrelevant virtually?

Mr BOARD: No. Sorry, I thought you were looking between 97 and 98. The difference between 98 and 99 is a clear reduction in funding. We have taken about a \$3m reduction in funding for 99-2000. Basically, every government agency has taken some sort of reduction, primarily to go into the health, education, and law and order budget and that was our contribution to the increases in their areas.

Ms WARNOCK: So there has been a reduction?

Mr BOARD: Yes.

Ms WARNOCK: Two other small questions, if I may, because there may be a queue. Let us look at CAMS now, page 277. The supplementary information to last year's budget papers; that is, page E747, stated that the estimates for CAMS FTE's for 98-99 was 120 and 90 for both 99-2000 and 2000-2001. In this year's budget paper - and, as I said, that is on page 277 - the estimated actual FTE's for 98-99 is 194 and 191 for 99-2000. Where are these additional FTE's employed? Were they redeployees from other government departments or agencies? It is confusing when departments change their structure and their status as you have just explained with that first question that I asked you.

Mr BOARD: There will be a little trend in this regard through the questions and I might explain to you why this is happening. It was anticipated that when CAMS was formed there would be an amendment in the Parliament which would tidy up what was traditionally done through the old WABMA through the Public Works Act and give CAMS the authority to do contracting in its own right and it needs a legislative protection for that, as it were, particularly the funding side of it. That amendment did not proceed and that was a decision of mine. The reason for that, and when we get to the review of the State Supply Commission Act and a subsequent review of the Public Works Act which will be major reviews, it will seem as not being timely to bring in an amendment which would set in place a course of direction which may, in fact, change as a matter of the reviews so I held that. As a result of that, the accounting had to go back to the traditional two stage side, a work side and everything outside of the works area so what you are seeing here is a settling down of the accounts until such time as we totally review the Public Works Act. I will ask Dr Schapper just to give some advice about it a bit further.

[12.27 pm]

Dr SCHAPPER: Madam Chair, the employee picture is again confused by the split between CAMS work force and the WADMA work force and the overall picture from WABMA has been a declining workforce for some time, it has been going

down many years due to the withdrawal of this particular area from hands on involvement in building works and maintenance and so on and moving towards a contracting role. There is an ongoing redeployee pool within the organisation. I have been associated with that and that comes to approximately 20 FTE and combining CAMS and WABMA the overall picture shows a steady reduction into next year similar to previous years.

Ms WARNOCK: Okay, thank you. I have one other question, if I may, madam Chair. This is page 264 if we could go to that page. We are looking at dot point 4 here which refers to changes to the government fleet contract during 1998-99. I am interested to know what changes were made? What is the monthly rental cost of the government vehicle fleet contract? What is the estimated actual cost of this contract for 1998-99 and what is the estimated cost for 1999-2000? So all those questions relate to the government fleet contract.

Mr BOARD: I will answer this question by indicating that there are two parts of the government fleet contract. As you know the government sold its passenger fleet and now leases them back. There are two parts to that operation. There is the financing of the fleet and the management of the fleet. The financing of the fleet is managed through Matrix which provides the finance for the fleet and it was previously managed through the State Supply Commission and that contract has now, in terms of the management of the finance side of the fleet, moved back to Treasury where in my opinion it should have been entirely but the management of the fleet is done through four new contract fleet managers in place who advise the government on new fleet management contracts which are very much stronger and harder than they were before about providing government with up-to-date and accurate fleet information about how we may be wanting to save money.

There are about 10 000 passenger vehicles in the government's fleet. The majority of those are blue plated vehicles and there are of course private plated vehicles within the government fleet as well. This is an issue which has had a great deal of government scrutiny over the last 12 months because it may surprise you to know that the government can actually save money on private plated vehicles rather than blue plated vehicles because of the FBT requirement of home garaging of blue plated vehicles. We are in fact at a disadvantage since FBT came in on home garaging plus sales tax on the cars. By converting those to private plates and having a contribution we can in fact have more private plated vehicles government and actually save money and it is an issue which we are currently addressing and one in which we are putting in a new scheme within government. I hope to make an announcement in the Parliament within weeks about that but can I say that the average cost of a car has more than doubled in the last 12 to 18 months. That is not for government alone; that is across the whole of the community.

The reason for that is that the price of secondhand vehicles in Western Australia has fallen away quite dramatically and that people are paying far less for quality secondhand vehicles right throughout the community than they did before. The cost of the vehicles has not declined - new cars - and therefore the residual value between the new car price and the secondhand car price which is paid over usually a two year period for the rental of the car has gone up and it is an area that we review. It is not something that is unique to government. It is across the whole of the financing of cars. Had we owned the cars we would still be subject to the same problem between buying a car and re-selling a car so it is just an issue in the marketplace that we need to deal with but the total cost of financing the fleet is about \$220m a year. So it is a significant sum.

Ms WARNOCK: It sure is, is it not.

Mr BOARD: That is the same as if we were buying the cars and selling them. It is not a new cost, it is a transference from having an asset which was costing us a lot to manage and maintain to a maintenance contract which we think provides better vehicles, more cost effective vehicles for our public sector.

Ms WARNOCK: Can we get a comparison though, Minister? That is a significant amount of money, I agree about that. What is the monthly rental cost of the government fleet, if you have got that figure, and also what is the estimated actual cost of this contract for 1998-99? That \$220m we are talking about, is that the - - -

Mr BOARD: No, let me clarify that. The \$220m is not per year, that is the total value of the fleet.

Ms WARNOCK: The value.

Mr BOARD: The cost per year is about \$30m.

Ms WARNOCK: So it is about \$30m a year and what we are referring to there is the estimated actual cost of this contract and are we referring to 1998-99 there or are we talking about 1999-2000? Is there much difference between the two years in fact? Have the changes taken place in that period is what I am saying?

Mr BOARD: I think in a general sense I could say to you whilst there has been a reduction I suppose on the number of government employees across government there has been an increase in cars.

Ms WARNOCK: That is an odd business.

Mr BOARD: Well, it is in line with what is happening the private sector as well in that in many ways cars are part of salary packaging and as part of general conditions which have in many ways crept into the public sector as well.

Ms WARNOCK: So there are less employees, Minister, but you are treating them better. Is that what you are telling me?

[12.34 pm]

Mr BOARD: I might say to you that I may not be all that popular but our strategy that I will be announcing in the next

couple of weeks will be a fleet reduction program and we think we can get better utilisation out of the vehicles that we currently have.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: ...(Inaudible)... without Government plates. You can take it down to the tip without being seen.

Mr BOARD: Yes. Well, that is part of the strategy, Member for Peel, but we believe we can get better usage, better value and accountability out of our fleet and we have some strategies for that.

Mr MacLEAN: Minister, a lot of the contracts for services and for the Government's fleet vehicles were set with the prospect of a GST being put in a place and a further reduction in the price of secondhand vehicles in replacing the fleet, and an increase in price for a lot of the services that would be provided. What do you have in place, given that the GST will either be quite heavily altered or will not proceed at all, to fix up those contracts, because I would hate to see the Government stuck into a contract with their vehicles based on a resale value at a reduced price when the actual price goes up?

Mr BOARD: That is actually a question for the marketplace, because the marketplace is already - - the contracts that we have in place, there is a finance in the contract - that is the cost of money to the Government - and we believe we have saved significant interest payments on the cost of the money through the matrix finance, but also the management of the fleet is a question of which cars you buy, the best value cars, when they should be traded, accessory programs, etcetera. In terms of the GST, the marketplace has already accepted in many ways that there is going to be a GST because they have actually built that in to their forward cost of leasing a vehicle. The reason being that the vehicle you buy today, which is disposed of in two years' time - - they are presupposing that there is going to be a GST. That is one of the reasons why leasing costs have gone up, not because the cost of vehicles under a GST will in fact become substantially cheaper. This means that the disposal of those cars will be cheaper. Great for the community. At the moment the marketplace has determined that in two years' time vehicles will be substantially cheaper, therefore the cost of the vehicle today is higher. That is not a question that necessarily the Government can control. That is a question right across the marketplace which is affecting every lease and in fact anybody who is purchasing a vehicle today.

Mr MacLEAN: I accept that, but what have CAMS put in place to manage the contracts, because at the moment we are paying a high lease price for the probability of a GST coming in and reduced resale value on the cars? If that service tax is altered in any major way where it does not proceed at all, then what has CAMS got in place to make sure that we get a fair deal still?

Mr BOARD: The cost of leasing our cars is controlled through the matrix contract which lies with Treasury. The bottom line of that is that we have to receive at least as good as the marketplace or better in the delivery of our finance. So the matrix contract is reviewed and managed on a daily basis. In fact, there are a number of employees of Government who are constantly working on the cost of our vehicles. It is a heavily managed contract, as you can appreciate, with \$30m changing hands as a result of leasing 10 000 vehicles. It is a contract which requires a great deal of input. Those negotiations, and the cost of money which is really what we are talking about, is an ongoing basis. Paul, do you want to add anything?

Mr STAFFORD: Not specifically in regard to that. The only thing I would add is that all of the contracts that CAMS has in place are being reviewed now and will be progressively over the next few months to determine the potential GST implications. We are determining whether or not the contract in each case has a review date between now and the GST implementation date that would enable any amendment to the clauses in the contract to be put in place and considering what other action we can take to protect both the Government and the private sector suppliers so that the GST does not disadvantage or advantage anyone unfairly. That process is ongoing.

Mr BOARD: There are escape clauses in that matrix contract which say that if the arrangement we currently have on our financing is no longer an advantage to Government or the best we can get in the marketplace, then we can get out of it. So all of those things are reviewed. Even if we were to move away from that, the reality is that we come back to the marketplace which is subject to the same conditions and the same expectations.

Mr MacLEAN: I am just having a little bit of difficulty in understanding. The Water Authority leases a vehicle for a two year, 40 000 kilometre lease from XYZ lease company. They sign the contract for it tomorrow. The lease company has said "Okay. The cost of this vehicle is X because in two years' time with the GST the vehicle, instead of being worth current market value of \$30 000 and a trade-in value of \$20 000, will only be worth \$15 000. So they set their prices for the two years to cover the fact that they are going to have a 50 per cent reduction in the value of the vehicle. The GST does not come in. The value of the vehicle goes up to \$20 000 or \$25 000. What happens? The Water Authority is still paying out for lease price according to the contract which depreciates the value of the vehicle over the two years. The lease company then comes to sell the vehicle at the end of the lease and they have got a \$5 000 or \$10 000 jackpot. How are we protected?

[12.42 pm]

Mr BOARD: First of all I can understand what you are trying to get at now. We are dealing with people purchasing vehicles and dealing with the current cost of the vehicle. Your question relates, as I understand it, to a current contract and on the expectation of something happening and if that expectation does not happen is there an escape clause, do the cars become cheaper as a result of that. My understanding is that, yes, they would and that we are not locked into a fixed price given on every particular vehicle. In other words the expectation is that the vehicle then would have a higher re-sale price. We might have to pay more through the lease of the contract but we pick that up as a result of the sale of the vehicle and the sale of the vehicle then makes the lease of the following vehicle - if you can understand - all that much cheaper. Does anyone want to add anything to that?

Mr MARLBOROUGH: In similar terms, Minister, what you are saying is any increase in retail value on the secondhand market does not necessarily go to a private dealer or even those people putting the leasing package together. It actually comes straight back to government. If the marketplace tells us in 12 months time it is going to sell for 15 but there is a change in the marketplace and we are actually selling for 25 that difference comes back to government coffers.

Mr BOARD: Yes. For example, one of the reasons we are paying a higher leasing cost at the moment is even though we are getting a very good return, about five to eight hundred dollars higher through our auctioning process than when we sold direct to market, through the auction and pre-prepared vehicles. In other words they are plated and they are cleaned up and so forth. We are getting about \$500 to \$800 more than we were getting prior to that. So we are getting a return. That price is generally dropping because the secondhand market has got cheaper. That means our leasing costs get higher. If our sale of our vehicles goes up as a result of the fact that people underestimated the price of the sale of a vehicle and now they are selling higher in the marketplace then the leasing cost dramatically comes down. I cannot align it vehicle to vehicle but it happens over the 10 000 vehicles.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Madam Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, member. I have got my list and I have got the member for Vasse.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I do not mind you having a list but can I just remind you that estimates are traditionally for Opposition to ask questions. Now we have been very patient giving government members a go and listening to long answers from the Minister but quite honestly estimates are for Opposition to ask questions and I just remind you of that and whether you have got a list or not - it may be a practical way to operate - but it is not the best way to operate.

The CHAIRMAN: I would just like to say that it is my intention to give anyone an opportunity to ask a question. I am not aware of the Standing Order that says that members of the Committee from the government side are unable to ask any questions of the Minister and I will be very fair with the member for Peel to make sure that as an Opposition member he has every right and every chance to have his say on whatever he wishes. Member for Vasse.

Mr MASTERS: Can I also point out that some other Chairs run their Estimates Committee so that the questions alternate between Opposition and Government and I do not know if that would satisfy the member for Peel.

The CHAIRMAN: I am quite happy to do that.

Mr MASTERS: My question, Minister, relates to the issue that was partly raised by the member for Wanneroo, namely Internet enabling and electronic tendering. I just have a concern and you touched upon the fact that you are aiming to try and assist some and medium sized businesses through your electronic tendering. My concern is that very small businesses - and I will give you an example of one in just a second - may be so small that they neither have a computer nor do they actually have ready access to the Internet? I am thinking in my electorate of a husband and wife who run a business supplying two way radios to Shires, installing them into vehicles and into out-stations and also supplying the same sorts of facilities to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority. They actually are away for three to four weeks at a time, come home for a weekend and they are off again. Can I ask you firstly how would you be assisting or trying to assist those people so they are aware of potential contracts and secondly on your home page where all your details are listed, is there a facility so that for example a small business or a large business can go and say, "I want to be notified of all tenders coming up in such and such an area" and then you download or give them some alerting service to let them know that a tender for an area that they are interested in has just gone on your home page?

Mr BOARD: It is a real passion of ours to make sure that you do not have to have an office building in St Georges Terrace to win government contracts and whilst it is competitive out there we are trying to make sure that one and two man operations in remote areas can win government work. We have done that in a number of ways. We have converted our CAMS offices regionally into shop front offices so that you can walk in there if you are a one man painter or plumber or candlestick maker and you can have a look at all the government work that is available not only in your town and area but regionally and all around the state for that matter. There is a computer there that they can have assistance with and guidance and help in being able to be able to put in their contract information. They can get themselves on to a panel contract. A panel contract is pre-approved suppliers within the area because many contracts do not go to tender because they are below the tender requirement, they are done through three quotes and most of those smaller companies are looking for that kind of work. So, we have had a real program out in our regional areas in CAMS. The Supply Commission has been out there. We have had forums right throughout Western Australia; I think over a dozen of them now. I think I have been to probably more than half of them and there we get large numbers of small businesses in a room. We show them how they can get work from government. Part of that is being able to understand the information they can get on the net, what value that is to them, what it means to them, and as this develops the electronic commerce actually wins even more complicated tenders across the net because at the end of the day all we need is to be accountable and to make sure that the public are getting value for money and the net, in fact, will be a big advantage for regional based businesses. By government facilitating this role - being a catalyst - it may just pre-empt and support the small businesses into that kind of operation which will help them win business from business to business as well. So, we think it is a leadership role without government intervention but we can actually play. As I said earlier in my opening statements, Western Australia is actually leading Australia in this regard.

[12.49 pm]

Mr MASTERS: What is CAMS doing to advertise the fact that your regional offices are shopfronts? The sort of people

I have in mind probably would not even know that there have been regional meetings. So, you need to really get down to grass roots.

Mr BOARD: Well, the local CAMS office, including our head office, has a promotional program in regard to that. We work with the local chambers. We work through local businesses. Most people in a country town in the regional areas know who their CAMS operatives are or know where those CAMS offices are located. They know the sorts of work that they are looking for; maintenance work in the main - schools, police stations, railway stations. The sort of things that they do. We do have an education program. We have a whole range of government material that has been printed. Notwithstanding we do not want to spend too much in that area because we can be accused of too much glossy material but it is important that people know what is available to them. Plus the Internet itself and the introduction of that. So, there is a whole range plus, you know, every time we have a government contract of any reasonable size it is advertised through the media, government papers, regional papers. I think in the main business is aware of that. What our thrust has been is to make sure they feel confident to be able to put themselves up to be able to win work there they have not done it before.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: In regards to asset management programs, could you explain how your present organisational system works in looking after assets that traditionally belonged to the West Australian Building Authority - existing assets - and in managing those assets, in terms of leasing them on to other government departments or the private sector, what is the system by which those assets are tendered or leased either to government or, in particular, the private sector. Where does the money go from the rental of those assets?

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, before you give the answer, would the member for Peel be kind enough to tell us what page of the budget we are on.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: There is numerous pages. Reading under the asset management program, I think it is page 139, the core functions enabling agencies to share the accountability for contracting risk. Develop the service agreements between agencies and emerging them to effective balance. There is a number of areas in the budget in regards to asset management.

Mr BOARD: Our role is to maintain government buildings. There are about 2 000 government buildings that CAMS have responsibility for maintaining through the State. The leasing of those buildings is not a responsibility of CAMS. That comes through the Government Property Office in the main or the agency by which those government buildings are housed or held. So, CAMS does not get involved in leasing of government buildings at all. There are a few buildings that we actually own and do more than maintain, such as the Fremantle Prison. That is a historical thing from your government that it lies with the Minister for Works.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: What about the old Works depots out at Welshpool.

Mr BOARD: Yes.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Are they under you?

Mr BOARD: Yes. Well, they have been transferred now to DOLA. They were under us, under the previous BMA. They have been transferred for a sale situation to DOLA but the funding through that sale will come back to meeting some of our major requirements.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: How long ago did that arrangement take place with DOLA?

Mr STAFFORD: About a year ago.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: My interest in the Welshpool depot - and correct me if I am wrong - I understand that that is presently being leased out to a training company.

Mr BOARD: In part.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That part of the leasing arrangements for that training company - who I understand are a \$2 shelf company - is based on the use of the building, lots of high tech equipment that was left in those building and I just wonder if that is the people who are using it. What process, if any, was used? Did it go out to tender? How did those people get hold of that building? As I understand it the market value of those buildings has been estimated at about \$140 000 per annum rental and this \$2 shelf company are presently paying about \$70 000 per annum for the rental. Can somebody tell me how it was leased? Was there a tender process entered into for that establishment out at Welshpool?

[12.56 pm]

Mr BOARD: I might get Dr Schapper to add some information but I think the way you packaged that question is you probably know it was actually the MBA that entered the arrangement. Subsequently they had a partnering arrangement with that company and there was, to my knowledge, some changing in the arrangements between the split between the MBA and this training organisation which has left the training organisation with the lease and that is not of great concern to the MBA, but I might ask Dr Schapper to comment on the process by which they have got access to that.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Just before Dr Schapper does, I am asking about the process by which it went there. I am asking about the amount of annual rent for those premises that has been paid at this point in time.

Dr SCHAPPER: The only steps that CAMS has taken in this regard is to transfer to facilitate the sale of the property, transfer the property to DOLA. In the meantime, DOLA themselves have gone out and leased parts of it whilst they are managing it and preparing it for sale. It is a DOLA exercise.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: So it is a DOLA issue in terms of the present leasing arrangements?

Dr SCHAPPER: Absolutely.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Do you have any details of how they leased it out; whether it went out to tender or whether it was sweet out there with the BMA?

Dr SCHAPPER: I think you will have to ask the Minister for Lands.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: If the money in the sale of this is eventually to come back to you, I just wonder how you see your role as a department that supposedly sets standards for other government departments to meet when it comes to the calling of contracts and the running of their facilities. How do you see your role? Do you see it at all in conflict with how you are eventually going to be a beneficiary of the sale of this property which you have no answers to how it is presently leased, how it is presently being managed by a department. According to your statements here, you indicate you go out and you set standards, you train people to set standards, so is this one that you have just overlooked or are you deliberately keeping a blind eye to?

Dr SCHAPPER: What you have got to appreciate and you would know from the history of government how government operates, particularly former governments, that agencies have core business and they do not stray all over the place and get into other people's business. We have core functions.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: But this is your building.

Dr SCHAPPER: We occupied the building and we owned the building prior to the BMA. We no longer use the building and it is a normal process of government for DOLA to be involved in the transference in the sale of that building. It is a normal function of government which your government also facilitated. It is a natural process. It is the Minister for Lands who is responsible for the sale of that property and what happens prior to that sale and its leasing arrangements should be directed to the Minister for Lands.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, in view of the time, we will be adjourning for lunch but just before we do I would just like to get an indication from members that we are going to continue to discuss these two divisions, 74 and 75, when we reconvene at 2.00 pm.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I am more than happy to move on to the areas of multicultural and ethnic affairs.

Mr BOARD: Madam Chair, I am in the hands of the committee.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I have no further questions I particularly want to ask in regards to this particular sector that is in the Minister's hands. After lunch I would like to move on to multicultural and ethnic affairs.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Mr BOARD: In the spirit of cooperation I do not think that members of this Committee were aware that the Office of Youth Affairs is embodied within 75 and therefore 75 is already complete and youth is complete according to the Committee.

Ms ANWYL: That is why I asked at the outset we have some sort of consultation before we commenced.

Mr BOARD: So, madam Chair, in the spirit of cooperation I am happy as the Minister to re-visit 75 and re-open 75 but you may need some advice from...(Inaudible)...

Ms ANWYL: We may as well re-open it all because we have got some new people here anyway. So you might as well just have the sort of holus bolus that is - - -

Mr BOARD: I think we opened it for youth, not for 75, thank you. 75 is already passed.

The CHAIRMAN: Let us officially start the committee and I would just like to welcome everyone back and to say that in view of what the Minister said because the youth component is a part of the estimates there is no problem at all involved in us discussing issues relating to that division and obviously we will not take a vote at the end of this discussion because we have already actually voted on that division but we are well within our rights to actually discuss any part of that part of the budget that we wish. I would like to make sure that there are no members present that would object to that happening?

Mr BOARD: Could I have a clarification, in terms of the advice that I have here are we moving to the Office of Youth Affairs, our assumption was - because I have sent people home - that 74 and 75 were passed which was Contract and Management Services and WABMA. Those people have moved on. I have remaining with me my advisers from the Office of Youth Affairs, the State Supply Commission and the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests will be here in a short while, so I assume that we are moving to the Office of Youth Affairs, is that correct?

The CHAIRMAN: That is what I am saying, yes.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I think what we agreed before lunch is that we had finished with works and the rest were up for debate.

The CHAIRMAN: That is exactly what we did.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: To the degree that youth was tied up in 75 with works. That was an error on our part.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, we are now dealing with youth and it is on page 272 of volume 1. The Minister is happy to answer any questions on that part of the budget and at the conclusion of that discussion amongst members and the Minister we would then move on to the next division which is Division 76 but there will not be a vote at the end of the discussions.

Ms ANWYL: I have a question which relates principally to exactly what sort of coordination role is the Office of Youth Affairs going to take on for the next financial year? If you look at page 272 output 4 youth policy and coordination, I would like to have some detail of what sort of coordination is going to be provided because I cannot actually see any detail of that in the budget papers and specifically what areas you are going to coordinate in.

Mr BOARD: Can I just say in a general sense one of the main purposes for the Office of Youth Affairs, whilst it does not as you know take responsibility for every issue that happens in youth and cannot because of the responsibilities of other agencies, its three primary functions are to initiate new programs for all young people in the state where they feel there is a need. There is a real thrust in giving youth a much stronger input into that and say in that and direction of their own affairs and resolution of their own affairs and thirdly, coordination of other agencies and the coordination of other agencies is probably the biggest challenge for any government in any sense and particularly in youth where there has been practices I think entrenched through budgetary restraints not only within bureaucratic government agencies but particularly how that hits on the ground and there are three ways in which we structure our coordination.

One is through the head office level of government agencies where we have a number of committees on which the Office of Youth Affairs sits and I will give you details of those in a second. The types of committees that we have have a very strong input into government policy across the board. The second level is coordinating networks on the ground where the operatives of those agencies come together regularly now to coordinate their activities on the ground. The third area where that does not exist or we cannot get that assistance either through those agencies themselves or through local government where they have youth officers we actually create a position to be able to facilitate that through our youth development officers but a major area that we play a role in is in youth suicide. I will go through the - - have you got a list of the committees that we sit on? I have got a list here of the committees and I will run through them. Unfortunately I do not have it in writing here but the list of committees that we sit on are the youth suicide prevention committee, the road users taskforce. We sit on the drug strategy committee.

[2.08 pm]

Ms ANWYL: Perhaps by way of supplementary information you can provide me with a list of all those?

Mr BOARD: What I will do for you, member, is provide you with not only with those major committees but all our youth coordinating networks, where they are and the sort of funding that goes to those as well.

The CHAIRMAN: Supplementary information will be supplied.

Ms ANWYL: If I can just ask for direction, madam Chair. I have got a series of questions but I am quite happy to come back to them. You started to identify and we sort of got it from you anyway, Minister, in terms of youth suicide and road safety was the next committee you mentioned but my original question was what areas are you going to coordinate in. Now there are obviously some issues that are not embraced as it might be with the Office of Youth Affairs, for example drug use by young people is probably one example of that when you have got other portfolios addressing that but I am seeking some more information about particularly your initiatives for next financial year will be and which areas you do intend to be involved in.

Mr BOARD: Our major initiatives, apart from the obvious ones of ongoing programs of which you are well aware, we are launching tomorrow morning our new leadership strategy and that is obviously an ongoing program. The continual development of our Youth Advisory Councils and in fact what implementation they have on the ground. Obviously, as you know, the extension of our cadet program. We have five tenders, three metropolitan, two country, that we are issuing for assistance in youth suicide prevention and that will be a peer group type program and I will explain that in a second. We are playing a very strong role in assisting other Ministers primarily with getting young people involved in assisting them with the issues and decision making within their portfolios. For example, the Minister for Transport may go to the Youth Advisory Councils for support in driver training. The Minister for Education will use that process in developing policy as well, so will the Minister for Sport and Recreation. So we have set up a network by which we can have access by hundreds of thousands of young people to the Cabinet involved in those policies. The coordination networks that we have set up are going to be further developed and what we are hoping to do is to make sure that the government resources that are put to youth, particularly the youth who are not coping in the system, young people that are disadvantaged in Western Australia, that those resources are used in a cooperative way and I think the member would know that sometimes it is not a matter of lack of resources but maybe not being spent in the right directions and there are still young people falling between the cracks. We will be having a series of very strong regional forums. Our first one is going to be in Derby in the next few months in which all government agencies, local authorities, youth providers will come together to look at the difficulties on the ground, not only in drugs, but suicide, all sorts of issues facing young people and to make sure that the resources, the energy, the commitment by those agencies are meeting those needs and that is the coordinating part of our process in that we feel that we can play a very strong role as a catalyst in making those agencies come together in a more cooperative sense and make sure that the resources that are used hit the targets they should.

Ms ANWYL: Minister, we have had road safety and youth suicide. Are there any other areas where the office is going to be actively involved?

Mr BOARD: Yes, I have a commitment this year that we want to make sure that in the question of homelessness of the young people that we play a stronger role there. We are aware of the Auditor General's report. We are aware of some of the national reports that have come down. We are aware also that there is a growing trend in homelessness with young people and it is a concern by other young people in our community and we believe it is a proper role for the Office of Youth Affairs to be involved in. While I do not have a budgetary responsibility there we believe it is a coordination role across agencies that we can play a strong endeavour in. So that is another area we will be targeting.

Ms ANWYL: Chairman, the Department of Family and Children's Services apparently has the control of SAAP funding...(Inaudible)... principally exists to address that. Can you explain to me how you are going to liaise with them and what sort of demarcation, if you like, you are going to have in terms of coordination because of course that is an area where that department currently I think claims to have the carriage of the issue?

The CHAIRMAN: Just before we go on can I please remind members to go through the Chair.

Mr BOARD: Thank you, madam Chair. We are probably venturing into government policy that is currently being developed in a coordination sense. I think the best way I can answer that is that parties agree that there needs to be greater coordination and work done in this regard. There are currently meetings taking place as to how that will take place and what role the Office of Youth Affairs will be able to have in that regard. So if I was sitting here next year I would be able to talk to you about what progress and how we have achieved that but it is an issue of government coordination that we are addressing right now and I do not have that implementation strategy together at this point.

[2.15 pm]

Mrs HODSON-THOMAS: Minister, I am interested in the skate park grant scheme which is listed on page 273, it is the second dot point, major achievements for 1998-1999. I am just wondering whether you might be able to provide supplementary information in relation to which local governments have accessed the grant and whether, in fact - I note that it is a single grant application for each local government council and I was trying to find out with say, the City of Stirling, and given the number of young people in that particular local government area whether or not you would, in fact, increase a grant per local government council.

Mr BOARD: I have in front of me the list of all the councils that have currently received grants. Twenty one local authorities have received grants at the present time. They vary from the creation of a very small park where the grant really facilitates the whole construction, to very large parks like in Margaret River where there is a youth cafe associated, where other grants and other agencies have been involved. That is a question of the needs of the town, the vision of the local authority and particularly the Youth Advisory Councils that get involved. The grant is an open policy. Every council in Western Australia is entitled to a grant as to their needs and I am happy to consider in the case of larger councils additional needs. It would be quite ridiculous to look at councils with 200-300 people and they get a grant and somebody else with 150 000-200 000 people only getting one grant. So, I am happy to look at that but for equity reasons we have encouraged every local council and I am quite happy to look at additional grants to councils that have that requirement because of their size.

Mrs HODSON-THOMAS: Is the City of Stirling one of the councils?

Mr BOARD: I will seek some advice because this goes through a committee process, not to me directly. I approve them in the end but they are facilitated through the Office of Youth Affairs. I think they are currently negotiating.

Mr EFTOS: The Youth Advisory Councils that are being established in the local authorities are instrumental in developing the grant applications and I understand that the Youth Advisory Council from the City of Stirling met for the first time last night and one of the items listed on the agenda was to discuss a skate park facility and as soon as that occurs then we will obviously be getting an application form.

Mrs HODSON-THOMAS: On page 276, the last dot point refers to the development of a road awareness grant program. Minister, can you briefly expand on what the development is and what sort of target group you are aiming at reaching and how you are going to raise awareness with young people.

Mr BOARD: Thank you for that question. One of the biggest issues facing young people in the State is their over representation in tragedies on the road and it is not an issue that the government necessarily has to push because it is an issue that comes up in our youth forums and through our Youth Advisory Councils that they want addressed and they want some ownership of the issue as well. In other words, they want to play a role in being able to lift their game and being able to determine the strategies by which they happen. This program is designed to be able to assist the Office of Road Safety which has a primary responsibility in this regard but our input to that and our association to that will be able to let them access the bulk of young people that we now have set up a program to do in developing their strategies so that young people can help drive the policy and implementation of that.

Mr EFTOS: Our office is working very closely with the Office of Road Safety to develop up the program. The details have not been totally resolved yet but it is an indication that it will be seed money; small grants maybe up to \$5 000 to facilitate local initiatives, particularly in regional areas. Unfortunately most of the problems in this area seem to occur - a totally

disproportionate number to the population and we are hoping that the small amounts of money that are available through the grants program will be able to allow local communities to develop initiatives that are particularly relevant to their particular needs.

Ms ANWYL: In each of output 4 and output 5 I cannot see any mention of the Joy Festival. In terms of the Joy Festival are there any intentions to have another and what was the success of the last? I think it was in the last budget year, was it not?

Mr BOARD: Yes.

Ms ANWYL: So, it is not classed as a major achievement.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member just relate to the page, please?

Mr BOARD: What was the year?

Mr EFTOS: It was the year before.

Ms ANWYL: Page 272, output 4. Output 5, 275.

Mr BOARD: It was in March - -

Ms ANWYL: The previous year. I withdraw what I said about an achievement but is it not planned to have another JOY Festival and, if not, why not?

Mr BOARD: Well, how long have you got?

Ms ANWYL: Quite a lot of time, I think, Minister. It is a very leisurely ...(indistinct)... this one.

[2.22 pm]

Mr BOARD: Well, it is all in the spirit of Glasnost that we have created, I hope. The JOY Festival was a great success for a number of reasons; as an initial focus on what young people are really about and achieving. It was a success in being able to get other government agencies and the corporate sector involved in the primary funding of that and to raise the awareness of, I guess, the Office of Youth Affairs as a new agency and where we are heading. It is not our intention to repeat exactly the JOY Festival but it is our intention every 2 years to have a major focus of that nature on youth and we are currently developing some major initiatives for the year 2000 that will focus the whole of the community's attention on youth. I am sure you would be aware there is now a National Youth Week which has been established in April of each year. There was some discussion about when it was. In April of the year 2000, there will be some major programs of the JOY-type size, not necessarily the same format. They may be a different type of promotion of what youth are involved in but there will be major promotions involving the Office of Youth Affairs and other government agencies to the community.

Ms ANWYL: So that will be every third year if you count the difference between April 2000 and 1997?

Mr BOARD: It was March 98, so every two years. The size of the Office of Youth Affairs, the size of our budgetary constraints and really, quite frankly, the amount of work and effort that goes into creating a festival of that size is probably best done every two years rather than every year to make it significant. We are hoping to attract Federal funds as well as corporate sponsorship and we will have some major focuses, not just in April, but other parts of the year as well.

Ms ANWYL: I just want to ask another question on the same issue which was in terms of whatever may be planned for April 2000 but with looking at JOY Festival too. In my experience regionally remote communities did not really access that and did not obtain a great deal of benefit from the expenditure of those monies so I wonder if you could explain what thought will be given towards the next large event to involving country people?

Mr BOARD: You are dead right. One of the challenges for us constantly is to involve young people in country and regional areas in major state-wide initiatives and that is a challenge that we take very seriously. It is not an easy one to fix and actually with my citizenship hat on it is a major focus now for the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests that is marrying together with you on creating the same sorts of issues and programs; how to involve young people in community celebrations throughout the state and take an ownership of that. I think we have made a good start, again, going back to our YACS. I know I keep plugging it but you have got a network there to talk to one another. They talk on the Internet together. They share common problems and common agenda items put through from the state. They discuss issues. They come together on forums. We are having a network of regional forums for our YACS to come together so there will not be just that YAC Attack that we had where they all came down to the city.

There is going to be a series of regional ones that lead up to the state-wide forum so there will be mechanisms for that, but I suspect many of these initiatives will come through from the young people themselves and through our youth grants program which it seems that more and more of our grants are going directly to initiatives that come through our advisory councils. That is a deliberate process because we are trying to encourage and support their initiatives and I suspect that young people will play a pretty strong role in having a say in developing that network.

Mr MacLEAN: Minister, if we could just touch on youth grants for a moment. I note that you - -

The CHAIRMAN: What page are we on, please, member?

Mr MacLEAN: Page 274.

The CHAIRMAN: Which particular part?

Mr MacLEAN: Major initiatives. Just on that I note that you mentioned to the member for Carine that you may consider more than one grant for bigger councils and I appreciate that and I would like you to consider it being based on the number of youth in the local authority for the obvious reasons.

Have there been any investigations about different types of programs? I note the skate park is very popular but it does service a very limited number of youth overall. Once they have tried it out and they get board with it they want to do something else. What I want to know is if the Office of Youth has gone out there and looked around and seen what else is available or come up with ideas about what else might be available or put to the youths about what they could have in their areas.

[2.30 pm]

Mr BOARD: Yes, we do. We have virtually two full time officers conducting youth forums apart from our Youth Advisory Councils around the state on a constant basis and the issues that we put is what is it that you are looking for? What is it that we can facilitate? And the answers are not always simple and not always easy. One thing we do not want to do is repeat exercises that may have happened in the past with the spirit of best intention where large amounts of government funding were spent only to see white elephants where kids do not want to go and be part of because it was not their concept. Our current belief is that if a program is going to be successful then the initiation really needs - obviously within guidelines and support - to be from the young people themselves. There has to be a commitment to that program and there has to be an input as part of the process and where we have done that I think we are seeing ongoing success at this point where government or big brother comes in and says, "This is what you are going to have because we think it is a good idea", and that tends not to work. There is pressure from various groups to do that but we would prefer to facilitate the initiative of the young people themselves and at this stage that is what we are developing.

The skate facilities were a big push because it is an easy entry point for many young people. It is open, it is healthy, communication takes place there. Many of those skate facilities have additional facilities with them such as youth cafes and so forth where there may be computerisation and Internet. The one in Margaret River, for example, has their own cook and chef and they put bands on and it is quite a facility, probably world class and various local authorities have dealt with this issue in a different way.

This is really not just a matter for the Office of Youth Affairs, it is a matter for other government agencies, it is a matter for the local authority, the community themselves, particularly the young people and what we are trying to set up is really a process by which those people can come together and really put something on the ground that young people really want, that occupies their energy. If it can be educative at the same time as well as relaxation then that is great but in the end it is really the young people who are going to determine the success of that and I think we have had a history of programs over many years that have been initiated and fallen away through lack of support and interest and we do not want to re-visit that. We want to make sure that we have got some long term potential but having said that and just finalising this, that I do not think you can ever guarantee that anything is going to have a long term future. I think the interests of young people, different cultures, different things that are happening in our community determine where young people go. They have got different interests at different times and I think we have always got to have the capacity and the flexibility to meet those needs.

Mr MacLEAN: Minister, is your department following the reference book for local government authorities of the successful youth projects being tried in not only Western Australia but interstate and a case in point is that youth in Wanneroo some years ago built their own BMX track, the council ...(Inaudible)... build it up again and now council have gone out and they have put junior BMX tracks in a lot of the parks around and they are proving very popular. That is something that is probably not unique to Wanneroo but it is an initiative the local government body took up and it should be promoted in other areas but it is very hard for local government to communicate with itself, with the other local governments around the place. If the Office of Youth had a program book which explained to local authorities how they got the projects off the ground I think it would be of benefit because not many are as big as Wanneroo Joondalup in Perth and can afford the programs that we put in place.

Mr BOARD: Firstly I do not think there is any lack of coordinating potential networks among local government. I mean, the local government authority, the Western Australian Municipal Association plus all of the groups in which they meet there is ample opportunity for them to deal with these issues. I might say that some local authorities, and I have had great success with local authorities, but they tend to be reluctant in areas that take them out of what they consider used to be their core business of rates, roads and rubbish and now the community is partnering with all other forms of government and some have been very quick to take that up.

For example, in the skateboarding area we had to overcome all of the perceptions about insurance and difficulties associated with a new initiative which may expose local authorities to claims and the Insurance Council in the end and the Skateboarding Association were able to resolve all of those issues to the satisfaction of local government, so hence we proceeded and I think this area is another example of that but if the local authority or the young people themselves wanted that kind of facility there would be no reason that our grants program would not extend into that as well. We are very keen to have young people involved and we are not there to fund the responsibility for infrastructure projects that would be the responsibility of local government or for other government agencies but if it is a program that obviously meets our needs,

particularly if young people are involved in it, especially if they were going to help build it or control it or run it and facilitate it so that it became a youth program as well, then we are in there boots and all and if people wanted to walk away from skateboarding type facilities to BMA type facilities or to rollerblading or anything else that works and we have done that. We are funding up in Carnarvon quite heavily the project up there for rollerblading because that is what the kids want and right around the state where it is driven by the young people who say in the process, "This is really what we want. We do not want that one, we want this one", then that is where we go. We it is really a matter of people coming together, deciding what their needs are and within our budgetary constraints we will try and meet it.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Yesterday there was some publicity given to a young woman with a disability, young Tania Sanders who happens to live in my electorate. I just wonder what programs do Youth Affairs have in place for creating opportunities for these young people who are quite capable of working and being fairly independent? My concern is that somebody like Tania has now been for well over 20 or 30 interviews. As a result of yesterday's article in *The West Australian* - I spoke to her yesterday - she received three interviews yesterday. Do you have any programs at all in place for those type of people? The other concern with youngsters with disabilities is that if you look at how the state looks after those youngsters prior to the age of 18 in the main these days they go certainly at five or six years of age into special education facilities. Those special education facilities take them up to the age of 17, 18 but then many of them at that age just fall out of the system. There is nobody, it appears, picks them up under any specific program. Those areas where they have traditionally been able to get some sort of daily activity, funds are continuing to diminish and the places are not there for 18 year old youngsters with disabilities; those where they need a support mechanism but are capable of going into a work situation with that support mechanism. There seems to be in fact less and less opportunities, not more and more opportunities. I just wonder whether your department is recognising that and what role, if any, it plays in creating the sort of opportunities that are needed for those youngsters.

[2.37 pm]

Mr BOARD: I am not the Minister for Disability Services. I will explain how it works.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I just notice that you mention on page 273, your website:

The continued production of Youth Facts. The latest fact sheet is Young People and Enterprise. Other fact sheets being prepared are:

- Young People with Disabilities;

Now, I know you are not the Minister for Disability Services, otherwise I would not be talking to you. I would be speaking to whoever the Minister for Disability Services is. I see you have a role to play, according to the budget papers, and I just wondered what is it, what influence do you have, if any, in providing opportunities for these young people?

Mr BOARD: I will pick up one thing, even though I am not the Minister for Disability Services. I would challenge strongly your statement about money going into Disability Services. I think you will find there have been more record amounts of money than ever in the state's history going into Disability Services. That is a known fact and it is right there.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The truth of the matter is that there are massive amounts of money that your Minister for Disability Services keeps going to Canberra to try and get his hand on for disabilities that have been refused to every state. In fact, if you are a child with a severe disability requiring 24 hour care from your family, I can tell you that at 12 years of age you will still probably be sleeping in a bed that was designed for you at home when you were two and a half; I can tell you that you will be sitting in a chair designed for you to be showered and bathed in that was given to you when you were three, and I can tell you that if you are the parent of that child, you are going to Disability Services today and being told by the Minister there is no money in that area to provide those families with those facilities. That is a fact of where the money is going, but it ain't going into those areas, Minister.

Mr BOARD: Member, I would be very happy to have the debate outside of the committee process because I would be straying from the item that is here, but within my portfolio responsibilities, could I say that if this issue was constantly raised by young people in our community as a major issue, a lack of coordination by government, we would see that as a role for the Minister for Youth Affairs to play.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Sorry, Minister. Is not your department telling you that? Surely you do not rely on young people coming to tell you. I thought you had a role to be aware of what was happening with youth matters and have these things reported to you through all different sorts of areas.

Mr BOARD: The issue is that we also have a Minister for Education, we have a Minister for Sport and Recreation, we have a Minister for Juvenile Justice, we have a Minister for Police, we have a Minister for Health and so on, and all of them are involved in Youth Affairs.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: So what do you put on your Disability web page? "Go to these other Ministers"?

Mr BOARD: No. We disseminate information to the whole of young people in the state. The dotU site is probably one of the most visited sites in government and we are very proud of that. In fact, other states have copied it.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: If you have a disability, do you go to it?

Mr BOARD: That site is visited by a large number of young people looking for issues, whether it be on health and

education, whether it be on disabilities, a whole range of areas that are hot-linked to that site. So we have provided a mechanism, a single window of opportunity, for young people to access other government agencies' responsibilities because it is a coordination role that we play. In other words, you enter that site and you can access whatever information you need to from that site. We are approaching other government agencies, making it bigger and bigger and bigger for the ease of young people to do, and we are getting in the order of 100 000 visits to that site a month, and we are getting that from other states and overseas as well. That site has been copied. It is a role that we can play, particularly with young people who might have difficulty accessing information through traditional ways. We have made it easy, user friendly and that is how we have helped. I do not walk away from your question. I cannot be all things to all people in Youth, we do not have the line of responsibility to do that, but if I felt that there needed to be a stronger input for youth in other Ministers' areas then we would play a role and I would be happy to discuss with the Minister for Disability Services the programs there and I can come back to you as to how they are being developed.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I thank the Minister for that, but I just say that a particular area of concern is the 17 and 18 year old person with a disability, who has been in the school process, who comes out of the school process, and really there are no opportunities beyond the age of 18. In the main they go back to being the responsibility of their families. The Office of Youth Affairs may be the appropriate body to bring those matters to the attention of those agencies and to bring some pressure to bear. Yesterday's story is the tip of the iceberg. It highlights a problem that young people have suffered, in terms of the perception of them, in terms of being a valuable asset to any future employer, and I believe there needs to be a role of Youth Affairs to be able to convince employers that these people can be an asset to them as well as an asset to the community.

[2.44 pm]

Ms ANWYL: I am referring to page 274 where I think we have seen a \$654 000 increase to the cadet program. There is not a lot of detail provided so I do not know whether all of that \$654 000 has gone to cadets. That is the first question; is that whole \$654 000 to the cadet program? Irrespective of the answer to that, what evaluation is going on of the cadet program? I am particularly concerned about equity for young people in this State. I would by way of supplementary information like to have a list of all the cadet programs and, if possible, I am also interested in gender and age of participants in those. As to cadets, how can we be sure that the dollars, if you like, are being spent in a way that will maximise exposure of young people to benefit in this State.

Mr BOARD: I appreciate the question.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just ask before we go further, Minister, are you happy to accept the supplementary information requested from the member for Kalgoorlie?

Mr BOARD: More than happy. In fact, we publish it and it is available on our websites. We just recently did a question on notice with all that information as well. That information is readily available and will be provided to you.

The CHAIRMAN: Supplementary information will be provided.

Mr BOARD: Let me deal with that question in a couple of ways. Firstly, the question of access and equity is a strong focus to us. I can tell you that about 54 per cent, as I know it, of our cadet program are girls. There is a much higher proportion of Aboriginal people in our cadet program than, one, we expected and, two, by population. We have had, I believe, strong success in what people might consider lower socioeconomic areas and difficult schools. In what you might consider advantaged schools in some sense we have had strong numbers in our cadet programs. We have a very strong presence in regional areas for our cadet programs. So, from anecdotal evidence we are doing reasonably well. We presently have an independent review and I expect to report on that in the next 4 to 5 weeks and I am happy to table that report in the Parliament. I will certainly make that available to you. It is an open and accountable process as far as I am concerned and I do not have a problem with that review.

The money that is going to the cadet program in terms of the additional money is actually forward budgeting in terms of expansion because what you might have to appreciate is the fact that the program grows like a pyramid and every year that goes on the base gets wider, both with the number of schools that come in and also with the fact that kids are in their second or third year of the program. So, in fact, you require additional resources. You would require additional resources even with the same number of young people because the drop out rate is relatively low compared to the number coming in so that you end up with kids in their second and third year of the program. Plus the fact that as we widen the scope of the program we have had very strong numbers in environmental cadets. Twenty bush rangers, Red Cross, and we will be hopefully shortly be announcing a new cadet program.

Ms ANWYL: I am waiting for you to announce cadet nurses.

Mr BOARD: We have Red Cross cadets. Could I say in Armadale - and the member for Armadale is delighted - we only started with 20 kids in the Red Cross cadets up there and they have now got over 100. A third of the school population and growing. Applecross High have just signed up for Red Cross cadets working with the community. A lot of our focus in our cadet program will be community based, working with the elderly and disabled as young people are wanting to do more and more of that. We have strong focus on additional life skills. There is a very big program that I cannot announce now that I expect a whole heap of schools to support. I do not walk around saying that this is the be all and end all of youth training. It is not. It is just another option and these young people who are joining this program are joining it because it is available

and they are not accessing other kinds of youth training. We are putting strong amounts of money into other forms of youth training and will continue to do that and I am very proud of the fact that we are prepared to put more and more money into those areas.

Mr BROWN: I have two separate lines of questions. The first one concerns the cadet program.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just ask the member to relate what page of the budget we are talking to?

Mr BROWN: Page 275 under the heading of major achievements, the first dot point. There is now a number of cadet programs, I understand, that are run within school hours as opposed to outside of school hours. Is that correct?

Mr BOARD: Yes. The option of when the cadet program is run is a decision for the school. If the school decides to make it part of their curriculum - in other words, their life skills program - they can do so.

Mr BROWN: So, for example, at John Forrest High School, which I believe has something like about 120 kids in the bushrangers cadet program - and that school has had now for many years an environmental program operating at the school - so those kids now are electing to go into the cadet program but still continuing with the type of studies they were doing previously under the environmental program?

[2.52 pm]

Mr BOARD: Well, it is not quite like that. The environmental programs that the school had was a curriculum based program. The cadet program is much wider. It links to outside agencies, creates camps and creates a funding which comes through either a government agency or a community based group. In the case of the bushrangers, they are linked with CALM and CALM officers play a very strong role in particularly their outside studies but the difference between what young people might do in environmental studies at the school and the bushranger cadets is that it is a cadet program. They have a uniform, there is a rank structure involved, there is progress through achievement. There is a drill. There is a range of life skill programs, first aid programs and other initiatives that are across all the cadet programs that come in to that particular program so it is a strengthening of, I guess, what they may have been doing environmentally into a much wider program and linked with the other cadet programs as well. So there are a few schools, for example, I know of one I think in Esperance, that have a very strong bushranger program but if you go and talk to those kids the range of things they are doing now compared to what they were doing just in their environmental work is much wider and has a lot of programs that were outside environmental studies themselves.

Mr BROWN: I am not denigrating what they are doing, I was just interested to know that at that school there is something like 120 kids participating and something like about 90 or 100 participate in there because I was there recently and I asked the children how many of them participated in it after school and they said it was not an after school activity it was a school activity. So I was interested in the differentiation because at some schools that I have been to, and particularly Lockridge before and they do not have a bushrangers cadet scheme, they have another one, but for example the kids there who are doing environmental studies have been participating in such things as ... (Inaudible)... blue, water reading, a whole range of things over many, many years and a lot of that has been done outside of school hours, the testing of water and water sampling and so on. Could I have an indication as to the degree to which in terms of total numbers of cadets - it talks about 3000 here - are doing the work in school's time as opposed to after school time?

Mr BOARD: The total number of cadets now in Western Australia is approaching 5000 in fact and that is made up of a range of programs that are now really coming within the umbrella of our cadet program. We have about 85 new programs that have been generated, community based programs outside of military programs. We have got the traditional army, navy and cadet programs that were pre-existing, many of which have swung across to being partially funded from the state as well. We have got our strong police ranger program which are cadets. Some were previously PCYC type programs that have been lifted and now funded and changed their direction to a cadet program and the reason we are doing all that, member, is that we want to have a really strong composite and comprehensive youth program which has equity in its funding. We do not want to see programs because they may have existed before, the re-establishment of cadets, miss out on any funding and we are trying to make sure that we have a range of options so that when a school or young people want to start up in this kind of program they can access the same level of funding regardless of what that choice is and we are just about there. Now, in terms of your question as to what the break up there are not that many schools that actually have the cadet program as curriculum based. I would have to provide it as supplementary and I would be surprised if out of the 139 cadet programs in total - having just explained how that works - there were more than 10 that were curriculum based but I will come back to you with supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Supplementary information will be provided.

Mr BROWN: When I asked a question on this some time ago in terms of the cost per cadet it was something in the order of \$250 to \$500. Can you tell me is that still approximately the cost and is that the up front cost or is that the annual cost?

Mr BOARD: It is a basic formula and that is that we fund the cadets per cadet, so that we fund \$450 per cadet per year to that program.

Mr BROWN: So the formula has changed since I asked the question?

Mr BOARD: No. That has always been the case since day one. What we have done, member, which may have clouded the issue is that when we first started the cadet program independent schools were only receiving 50 per cent of the funding

and that is half of the amount. I have changed that and now all schools are funded equally. Well, all programs because they are not necessarily run by the school, they are run by community based programs in a school. So all schools receive equal funding and we are supplementing some existing cadet programs, that is, the army, navy and air cadets that are not funded in cash but often funded in kind through the Federal Government. We are supplementing some of those programs at \$75 per head per cadet for those that come within the umbrella. It is very unusual for a State Government to fund a Federal program but we want to make sure that those young people and those programs have the same sort of equity as the state initiated program. In general terms for 90 per cent of the cadets in this State it is \$450 per cadet, per year and that is how the formula works and it is up to the school based committee which is P and C, mums and dads and some school representatives and so forth to determine how much of that money goes on uniforms, how much goes in transport, how much goes to equipment and we are hoping as it is seen that they are able to save some of those resources to buy more substantial equipment and so forth.

Mr BROWN: Are you going to extend this funding to scouts and guides?

[2.59 pm]

Mr BOARD: At this point in time I have lifted the funding to scouts and guides incredibly. In fact I think they are getting record amounts of money in a generic sense to their head agency. If you are asking me am I going to put scouts and guides into schools - -

Mr BROWN: No, no, as cadets.

Mr BOARD: As cadets, the answer is no, because they are already a successful youth training program. There are 7 000 guides in this state. There are 10 000 scouts in this state. They are a successful program. They have been operating for a long period of time. I give large amounts of money to their head office to continue their promotion and recruitment and assistance in their program. What we have done with cadets is try and provide a program for young people who are not accessing scouts and guides and the Duke of Edinburgh and a whole range of other programs that are out there, not to duplicate or take over their program but to provide another alternative so that we have more young people in training.

Mr BROWN: I think the last grant you made to the scouts was \$150 000.

Mr BOARD: It is \$210 000 to the guides and \$210 000 currently to the scouts.

Mr BROWN: 10 000 members. That is \$21 per scout compared to \$450 for a cadet. It seems a bit inequitable.

Mr BOARD: I reiterate, I did not want to start a program that was school based, that was going to be starved for funds and fall over. I think with the commitment of the Government, we have now established a program and I would say we have not taken any young people away from scouts and guides. We have now got probably closer to 4000 young people - - there is 1500 existing in cadets. We have probably now got 3500 additional young people in training which would not have been there. If I felt that the guides and the scouts were losing members as a result of the cadets, or that in any way their program was diminished by the addition of the cadets then we would seriously have to look at our program. That is not the case. I attended the guides' AGM just two nights ago. They are very supportive of the cadet program. They are very supportive of the funds that are going to their organisation. It is a different kind of training in terms of in the main the kids that access those programs have obviously means by which to get there, often supported by their family units and I do not want to interrupt what is a fine program. We are hoping that what we are doing, especially with what the Member for Kalgoorlie raised, is we are capturing a number of young people in our cadet program who are enjoying that kind of training who would not have accessed scouts or guides or other forms of training. That is part of our review and I would be more than happy to share that with you when I receive it.

Mr BROWN: I will not take the argument any longer. I am pleased you have increased the amount of money to the scouts and guides. I know you did that and I know when you announced it in the Parliament you made particular reference to the fact that I have raised that on a number of separate occasions and continue to raise it. I put you on notice, Minister, that I will continue to raise it, because no matter what you have said, I think there is a gross inequity. The other matter I want to raise concerns the matter of juveniles, and you and I have had this discussion before.

Mr MacLEAN: I just have a question on the scouts. Could I - -

Mr BROWN: Yes, go for it.

Mr MacLEAN: Minister, the biggest problem that a lot of the scouting groups have, especially in the northern suburbs where the monies are not always available, is the cost of the camps and special excursions. The cadets are subsidised with the camps. The scouts seem to fall into that vast morass of having to find their own money which is sometimes very difficult. Is there an opportunity for the scouts to pick up some form of funding along the lines that you now give to the cadet unit for the camps, etcetera?

Mr BOARD: We are providing a fairly large amount of money each year in youth grants and both the scouts and the guides, beyond the major grant they get each year, have had access to those grants funds. Usually it has been for community based projects that they want to get involved in, which has a flow-on effect. With our grants program we try to benefit the wider community as a result of what those groups do. Often, if that camp could be shown to have a longer term benefit, other than just the immediate group - for example, as the Member for Peel raised, if it was based on access for disability kids or there was a particular drug program involved, or something that I thought was not just funding travel and camping - then it would

probably come within the guidelines and be approved. It is a question of trying to make our dollars go further and the answer is, I cannot fund every scout camp that happens just as a camp, but if it was a particular camp, a particular program, something which was within what we are trying to achieve within the Office of Youth Affairs, or raising awareness amongst the community, yes, and there are camps that have been funded but they have been particular purpose arrangements.

Mr MacLEAN: If the scouts were having a youth leadership camp, I would have had more chance of getting funding as opposed to a camp in the Kimberleys or whatever they call the scout group.

[3.06 pm]

Mr BOARD: Tomorrow morning, I am launching a state youth leadership program. It is a very comprehensive program dealing with leadership in this state. We are wanting people to demonstrate and get involved in leadership programs. We will be supplementing part of that through our youth grants program. So, yes, exactly, because it meets what our grants program is set up to do but if the local cricket team wants me to pay for their trip to Adelaide, or the volleyball team to Brisbane, or the scout group to go just for a camp, no, I cannot because once you start funding travel you have no money left for anything else. So, it has to have a longer term benefit, not only to that group but to the wider community and that is how we try to use our resources.

Ms ANWYL: First of all, we talked about equity in terms of a couple of other areas - namely, cadets and other groups - but in terms of the youth grants would it be possible, perhaps by way of supplementary information, to provide some sort of regional breakdown of where those grants are actually going within the metro and the State.

Mr BOARD: Yes. More than happy to do that. In fact, I thought - but I could be wrong - that I tabled something last year in the Parliament. I am happy to provide you with total information, size of grants and who they have gone to. Could I just say that where the young people have been pro active - particularly the youth advisory councils have been pro active - more grants have been coming forward because we want to fund their initiatives. Where we do not have that mechanism - and that is why the coordination committees, the youth development officers are so important - you are not going to see a lot of grants. So, that is why, like in particular your area, we are so keen to get that youth advisory council off the ground, our youth development officer in place to make sure that people are applying for grants because unless you get an application you cannot approve it.

The CHAIRMAN: Supplementary information will be provided to the member for Kalgoorlie.

Ms ANWYL: Office of Youth Affairs, page 272 and 274, the two outputs 4 and 5. I am interested in the total cost of advertising the Office of Youth Affairs ...(indistinct)... current financial ...(indistinct)... Do you have those figures available or, if not, by way of supplementary information?

Mr BOARD: Yes. We have them here.

Ms ANWYL: I think you are required to make them available under the Electoral Act, so I know you have them.

Mr BOARD: The total amount for 1998-1999 for advertising was \$148 764. Television was \$92 959. I think the bulk of that was in our cadet recruitment program. For the cinema advertising, \$36 000. There was no radio costs although we had a lot of radio and that was provided free of charge. Newspaper, believe it or not, is only \$12 521 and I think we have had millions of dollars of free advertising, particularly from *The West Australian*. Most of the advertisements, particularly our youth awards recently - and the whole page that they did - all free of charge from support from The West Australian Newspaper and any other form of advertising came to \$7 200. So, it was \$148 764 in total.

Ms ANWYL: That is for the current financial year? Is there a projected amount for the next financial year?

Mr BOARD: I do not have any advertising programs in place. In other words, I do not have a strategy at the moment to go out and advertise or promote any particular one issue. As they arise and I see a need - quite frankly, because of what we do and the nature of, I hope, how we go about it - I hope to receive the majority of the support for our initiatives without charge to government and that has been the case so far.

Ms ANWYL: In relation to consultants fees for the Office of Youth Affairs, are the current financial year's figures available?

Mr BOARD: I will provide that by supplementary information.

Ms ANWYL: If an estimate is possible if you could do it the same way.

Mr BOARD: Yes. Not a problem.

The CHAIRMAN: Supplementary information will be provided.

Division 76: State Supply Commission, \$1 331 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mr Board, Minister for Services.]

[Mr C. Vinci, Acting Chief Executive Officer, State Supply Commission.]

[Mr M. Braganza, Manager Financial and Support Services, State Supply Commission.]

Mr BOARD: There has been some change within the Commission over the last 12 months and it would benefit the Committee for me to just given an opening statement in regard to that.

Ms WARNOCK: Make it brief, Minister, if you would not mind. We are all a bit short of time.

[3.13 pm]

Mr BOARD: Maybe we could do it by question if you would prefer.

Mr MacLEAN: I refer to 1349, dot point three, "Regional buying compact." What procedures are in place to assist local businesses and especially locally produced products from those businesses in competition with locally assembled imported products?

Mr BOARD: There are a whole range of programs there about buying local, buying West Australian and our regional buying compact. The regional buying compact, contrary to what some people have tried to make out, is actually a very strong and strengthening of government procurement locally. In fact, for businesses trying to sell to government, local contractors have an advantage. They have a five per cent advantage in works and a 10 per cent advantage in goods and services up to a \$50 000 advantage. On a contract for \$500 000 the local company could be \$50 000 dearer, all things being equal, and still win the contract. That is a commitment the government has made to local purchasing through the regional buying compact. That is a program that we encourage every agency to be part of. In fact it has been endorsed by the Cabinet and we are currently getting agencies to make sure that is applied consistently across government.

Mr MacLEAN: The problem I have is that I have had a couple of contracts shown to me recently where they have had brand name products in place. Instead of saying, for example, "Glass sliding doors", they have said they have to be sharp edge glass sliding doors and that restricts the local trade. It restricts not only imported products but local produced products, etcetera. Where does State Supply stand on brand name purchases?

Mr BOARD: I will get Mr Vinci to add some comments but the Commission creates policies and directions. What the Commission does not do is it does not direct agencies as to what their requirement or standard is. The standard that has to be met is a minimum standard but in terms of what the needs are of the agency, whether it be in goods and services particularly with the Commission or whether it be through canvassing works, is a question of the need and then justifying to their own agency, their own Minister, what that requirement is. For services it might be a purchase of photocopiers, for example. If those photocopiers can be manufactured and bought within Western Australia then that is the ideal situation, but if their need is such that it can only be met by an outside source, then you have to examine whether that need is appropriate. That is not a role for the Commission. It is a role for the agency, but I will ask Mr Vinci to add some comments.

Mr VINCI: In terms of brand names we actually discourage agencies not having brand names in the tender because it is not fair on the other providers of those type of products so I think if that is happening, we would like to take the case up with the actual supplier. We like to see the actual sort of specs, if you like, quite open and in terms of allowing, if you like, all bidders who have got a product of that category like to be able to bid for that job. If that is happening we would like to have a look at that.

Mr BROWN: If I can refer to budget paper 1349, "The Commission evaluating procurement policies that support local industry and is developing strategies to improve their application and effectiveness", and an earlier one under Significant Issues and Trends, "The State Supply Commission will continue the transition of accountability for purchasing and contracting to agency Chief Executives under a framework of policy, guidelines and review process." Are there any guidelines in place for where an agency uses a middle person to contract for the agency supplies or services, and here I am talking about where a department has engaged a company and where that company itself is engaged or supplying goods or services and particularly for engaging people on behalf of the agency, not as employees but as people for that agency?

Mr BOARD: Yes, there is but could I just answer the question in an overall government policy sense first. The role of the Commission - - government policy is in fact in the transition of being central purchasing agencies and central contracting agencies to devolve responsibility to CEOs for their own purchasing and contracting and to lift the skills set within those agencies to be able to not only procure but manage those contracts themselves. That is a government policy which we are in transition for. About 86 per cent of government at the moment is spent directly by agencies under State Supply Commission policy. They have the accreditation for those purchases so the bulk of that has already happened. Now that agencies have got that accreditation, it is true they have used outside assistance in their contracting as they try to lift their skill set to be able to handle the majority of that in house but I will get Mr Vinci to answer about the policy.

[3.21 pm]

Mr VINCI: In terms of our policy framework there is a policy that does deal with third party providers and that is the people who actually do our buying on our behalf when we do ...(Inaudible)... and as part of our policy requirements ...(Inaudible)... support if not the government policies that we have got in place ...(Inaudible)... and also in terms of how they go about their actual sourcing of actual jobs under that contract and we do increase our performance measures as well as part of that process. So there are policies in place to actually safeguard that process.

Mr BROWN: Let me put this scenario to you and see if it fits within the policy. Department A uses company B to recruit person C. There is a general advertisement for the person C. The general advertisement carries with it no closing date, so one does not know when their applications close. The advertisement appears on a Tuesday or a Wednesday and it closes in the same week on the Friday or Saturday. That is, it closes within two or three days of the advertisement appearing. There is then selection made by unknown people and there is a result in terms of that. Now in that scenario does that conform to your guidelines?

Mr BOARD: The short answer to that is that it does not sound to me to be as good a process as we could be managing and they are the kinds of issues that would be referred to the State Supply Commission who may then go and assist that agency in making sure that the policies and guidelines of the commission are complied with. I am not going to sit here and say across government procurement and contracting that there are not errors made, there are, as there are in the private sector every day of the week and the issue of procurement, the issue of contracting and tendering is an ongoing area in which we strive for higher accountability and more transparency and I think we are reaching that. The compliance across agencies is important. Consistency across agencies is important and there are obvious examples throughout the state from time to time when things could have been done a bit better. We probably do not want to go into the detail - - -

Mr BROWN: We do actually.

Mr BOARD: If you want to be more specific we might be able to be more specific.

Mr BROWN: Did the State Supply Commission receive correspondence concerning irregularities or alleged irregularities in relation to the tendering process for the position of project director of the Jervis Bay project?

Mr BOARD: Just so we can get that answer exactly right we will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr VINCI: I think I was aware of that one some time ago. I think that came in probably over 12 months ago. Do you want to just elaborate?

Mr BROWN: What I am referring to is that there was an advertisement in the paper - I assume it was *The West Australian* - the advertisement was under the name of ...(Inaudible)... for the project director. It invited companies and individuals to apply for the position. It did not have a closing date on it. It set out various bits and pieces. It was open for about three days and then closed and then a selection. Now as I understand it the Premier's Office actually wrote to the State Supply Commission about the ...(Inaudible)... and said would State Supply Commission have a look at it. What I guess is I do not know whether you got the correspondence from the Premier or not, or a correspondence or not. If you did get it did you do anything with it? It is one thing to have a policy, we can all write lots of policies and have lovely books and they look beautiful and people ask what is the policy and you get the policy out and you recite it and it is terrific but if it is not enforced, if nothing happens with it, it is a bit of paper. So when people talk to me about policy I am also interested in is it real policy or is it imagery? So the question is was the correspondence received either from the Premier or anybody else and if it was received what happened?

Mr BOARD: I think the issue that the member refers to is over 12 months ago and so that we can be particularly accurate - the Commission was approached and Mr Vinci can recall that. The exact detail Mr Vinci was not the chief executive at that time so what we will do is we will take that by way of supplementary information and get back to the member?

Mr BROWN: If supplementary information is going to be provided can I put all of the questions on the record and you can answer all of them in one go if you will.

The CHAIRMAN: So supplementary information will be provided.

[3.29 pm]

Mr BROWN: If I can just ask these questions, did the State Supply Commission receive correspondence from the Premier's Office or indeed anyone else concerning irregularities in the tendering process for the position of project director of the Jervis Bay project? If yes, what action did the State Supply Commission take as a result of the correspondence? Will the Minister make any documents in relation to this matter publicly available for scrutiny, and if not, why not? In relation to that correspondence and to the position of director of the Jervis Bay project, were there any discussions in the department about the process involved in this appointment; that is, any internal discussion, any internal memoranda about it, any queries about it? If yes, who was involved in those discussions? Were any concerns expressed to any other department or the Premier about irregularities in the process? If so, what were they? What action was taken, if any, in relation to the matter? Was any contact made with the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards or any other government department or agency in relation to the matter, and if so, what contact was made with them? Can that be provided by supplementary information?

Mr BOARD: I am happy to do that, Madam Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary information will be supplied to the member for Bassendean. Member for Perth.

Ms WARNOCK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have three rather short and rather mechanical questions. I would like to quickly fire those off because I am deeply conscious of the shortness of time. They all relate to this particular order of business. 1358 is the page concerned. It relates to employees. In last year's budget papers, at page 1150, the State Supply Commission expected to employ 30 FTEs until 2001-2002, but on page 1358 of this year's budget papers the estimated actual number of FTEs for 98-99 is 11 and this is expected to fall to six in 99-2000. Why has the SSC cut the number of FTEs by four-fifths in two years and will these employees be redeployed or made redundant? I have a question about accrued leave liability and also one about complaints. I do not know whether you want me to fire them off now or do them one by one.

Mr BOARD: Let us do the FTEs. What I was going to handle in my opening statements is that when the State Supply Commission started up, it started with a goal and the goal was to write government policy. In fact, over the years there have

been 34 major policies written, policies and guidelines in regard to the overall framework of buying wisely. You would recall just recently in the parliament I tabled the new policy set, which is eight streamlined policies, which has completed the work of the Commission in regard to formulating and driving those policies. You just cannot keep writing policies because the policies are there. Secondly, the education part of the Commission, which was with the Commission, has been transferred to CAMS because CAMS, having the doing role of contracting, has really taken on the education role for government agencies within the Commission. It was a better marriage, as it were, and we have just transferred those employees across to CAMS as a result of that. There have been other changes. The fleet policy, which we dealt with, has been transferred back to Treasury, so there were a couple of employees who were involved in managing a government fleet. The financing issue, that has gone back to the Treasury itself. Also, the accreditation process, the major function of the Commission, is near completion. It has reached 86 per cent of the government spend and we are now launching on a program which will look at much more accrediting of individuals within the agencies themselves. So it really has been a natural process of continuing what the Commission was set up to do. The Commission is still there. The Commission is actually a board. This is the secretariat, as it were, that assists the Commission. It is just that we did not need the entire firepower because those functions were either completed or transferred.

Ms WARNOCK: Thank you. This is a follow up to that, if I may; page 1349. It is about accrued leave liability. On page 1349 it is stated that the Commission has reduced its accrued leave liability by approximately 30 per cent, well above its 10 per cent target, and the target a lot of other departments and organisations have, but at the same time it has reduced the number of FTEs from 30 in last year's budget papers to 11 in 98-99 and six in 99-2000. Considering that nearly two-thirds of the estimated 98-99 SSC employees are no longer with the Commission, should not its accrued leave liability have been reduced by even more than 30 per cent?

Mr BOARD: I guess it is a question of who those individuals are. Often the more senior people, the ones that have accrued the highest leave entitlements, both in terms of cost and the fact that they are driving their desks pretty hard - that goes for every agency. So the Commission's target for June 1999 is \$200 000 liability which is a substantial reduction from the 300 000 at the beginning of the financial year. This reduction is due to a number of redundancy payments, better leave management, some pay-outs through the workplace agreement. Our target is for a 25 per cent reduction in that to \$150 000, so we are making inroads. In terms of other government agencies, I suppose the percentage does not look good. Government went through a phase where all hands were on deck and at this point in time we are conscious of the leave liability and all government agencies, through Premier's instructions, are working particularly hard this year to make sure that is reduced.

Ms WARNOCK: Thank you. I have a final question on this section, about complaints. This is on 1357. On this page the budget papers state that 30 complaints were investigated by the Commission in 98-99. Can you, Minister, provide details of each investigation as supplementary, including who the complaint was lodged against, the reason for the complaint and any action taken as a result of the investigation? Is that possible?

Mr BOARD: I am happy to provide that; the number of complaints, who the complainants were?

Ms WARNOCK: The number of complaints was 30 and I wanted to know the details of each investigation, including who the complaint was lodged against, the reason for the complaint and any action that was taken as a result of the investigation.

[3.36 pm]

Mr BOARD: Yes. We can provide that.

The CHAIRMAN: Supplementary information will be provided.

Mr MASTERS: Can I refer, Minister, to page 1356 the output measures associated with output 3, complaints handling service. The measures are quantity, quality, timeliness, and cost and I refer specifically to the quality measure, the number of recommendations etcetera that have been implemented as increasing hopefully from 80 to 85 per cent. Can you give me some explanation of that because I would have thought that a better measure of the quality of the success of the State Supply Commission in dealing with complaints is whether the people lodging the complaints, are satisfied or not. I am not sure if that is actually built in to the measure that you have written there.

Mr BOARD: If I could develop a program that satisfied every complainant I think I would be in a higher place.

Mr MASTERS: Not the outcome but the process. Satisfaction with the process.

Mr BOARD: Yes, but the thing is that it is the customer that drives, in many ways, whether they even believe the process is satisfactory. The reality is that you are not going to be able to please every person every time. We put in stringent processes, accountable processes, ones we think are transparent, ones that involve outside bodies as well, but in the end there are going to be people who will say, "I am sorry, I do not accept that."

I think what that figure does is just reflect the reality of the world. If the agency were to put in 100 per cent there and then we had one person saying they were not happy with the process we have failed. So, I think that reflects the fact that we are striving to get everybody to be happy with our processes but the reality is that in a competitive world of contracting and tendering, where there are winners and losers, that is the way it is. We hope that everybody is satisfied with the outcome but there are individuals who will never be satisfied with the outcome because they did not win the tender.

Mr MASTERS: I understand what you are saying, Minister. I guess, I am just a little confused by the wording here, namely, "The number of recommendations accepted and implemented." Accepted by whom? By the person against who the complaint is lodged?

Mr VINCI: It is a very difficult area because you are dealing with agencies on one side and also the complaints and we try and, sort of, bring, if you like, complaints together; sometimes after the event when it is sometimes just too late to do anything but we try and achieve a solution which would balance those two. So, in some cases, as the Minister has mentioned, we cannot achieve total satisfaction but as long as we can get to a point where both parties have felt they have had a fair go. That is what we try and achieve.

Mr MASTERS: Is there a measure of whether both parties think they have been given a fair go?

Mr BOARD: Many of these things are arbitrary. I mean, I think the point is the number of complaints that we get, if you have a look at that, they are not a great number. I mean, there are literally 100 000 contracts out there a year and the number of complaints that in real terms end up with the commission are small. That is because most of these dispute resolution processes are built into contracting and the vast majority of queries, concerns are dealt with in-house and are resolved to the satisfaction of both. Those that end up with the commission are ones in which, in a general sense, they cannot resolve between themselves. They end up with the commission and the commission comes down with recommendations for a resolution. It might be that both parties do not like the resolution but they accept it as the independent umpire has determined.

Division 77: Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, \$2 256 000-

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mr Board, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.]

[Ms B. Robbins, Executive Director, Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.]

[Mr B. Siva, Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.]

Mr BOARD: Could I introduce Ms Brenda Robbins, who is the acting Director of the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. This is Mr Bernie Silva, who was formerly the Acting Corporate Services Officer. Bernie has just moved on but carries most of the expertise in terms of the last 12 months. So, he has joined us today.

Ms ANWYL: Minister, I am very conscious of the time and I think it is really quite sad that this important portfolio is left such a short time in the overall events because there are certainly lots of challenges within the field of multicultural affairs. Having said that, if I could just ask a couple of short questions and ask you to keep your answers short. On page 167 it states that the future of multiculturalism as the Commonwealth's official settlement policy is undergoing review with regard to "Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward." It is a process, I take it, that is going on. What is the State's official position in relation to multiculturalism? Is it possible for you to state what your position as Minister is irrespective of whatever the outcome of the Federal procedure may be?

[3.43pm]

Mr BOARD: Yes. Very happy to. We embrace, support and promote multiculturalism in this State. If you look at what the directions of the Federal Government and State Governments were, through the 60s, 70s and 80s, primarily focused at access and equity for migrants into government programs and settlement programs in particular. Access to health, access to education, access to all government programs in an equitable sense and I think in real terms migrants have achieved that in this state and in Australia and what we focus on now is an extension of that and that is we no longer need to talk about migration as something separate to our country. It is an intrinsic part of our nation. We have no growth without migration. Births equal deaths. Without migration we do not grow. Migration is here to stay. It is important that we accept that that migration is culturally diverse. I think we have won the battle in access and equity, what we need to do now is to demonstrate to the whole community and provide to the whole community a program that develops a sense of citizenship, what it is to be an Australian, what it is to develop and be part of your country wherever you come from and however long ago and that is our focus. We believe that there has been in many ways too much internal focus within ethnic communities and I am challenging the ethnic communities in this state to help sell the message about the state of cultural diversity, in that instead of certainly celebrating who they are and where they are from, an important program, but to go beyond that and to sell it to the wider community as well.

Ms ANWYL: Now in relation to page 173 there are a couple of programs that specifically mention multicultural women. I am wondering generally if either you or your CEO could make any comment about participation of ethnic women in boards and on committees? We know that women in general only have less than a quarter representation across government boards and so on. I am just wondering whether it would be possible either now or by way of supplementary to give some information about the participation of women with non-English speaking backgrounds on those?

Mr BOARD: A little bit like the Office of Youth Affairs, OCMI, as we are now known, gets into just about everybody else's portfolio in some sense because through the Ethnic Communities Council, through our representation for ethnic communities and particularly now in citizenship as we drive that focus, we are really into a whole range of other government bodies and boards and so forth making sure that ethnic communities have representation. In terms of the womens representation on board I will get Brenda Robbins to comment.

Ms ROBBINS: The register of committees and boards that is maintained by the Department of Premier and Cabinet is a broad based register and as you probably will be aware the Minister for Women's Interests has specifically worked very hard on increasing the percentages of women that are considered for boards and committees. We have written to the director general of the department and suggested that an additional category be included on a voluntary basis for people to identify themselves by their cultural background and with review of that particular register that matter is being considered.

We also conduct programs, you will note some of the seminars. One was specifically a joint venture with the women's group of the Ethnic Communities Council and they were invited to participate in a seminar working with women who had participated in boards and committees, providing a workshop on their experience and how they could perhaps give them some advice on approaching for themselves opportunities on boards and committees but as the Minister said in general terms we work very hard to ensure that there is representation when we can influence it.

Ms WARNOCK: Can I just ask a practical question about the level of leave liability in the office? That is just a simple practical question then I want to ask a question of a different kind altogether. Minister, can you give us any information about the leave liability for this office? There is not a large amount of funding for the office anyway but I would be interested in knowing about that outstanding leave liability.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member just identify the page in the budget?

Ms WARNOCK: 167.

Mr BOARD: The liability in 1998-99 was \$132 000. Our estimate for 1999-2000 is \$119 000, \$107 000 in the year 2000-2001 and \$95 000 in the subsequent year. So we are on target to meet Treasury requirements in that regard.

Ms WARNOCK: On page 171 you talk about developing a citizenship strategy for Western Australia and you explained the different focus of the office now and that is interesting. Can you just very briefly explain exactly what this citizenship strategy will involve and how do we measure if this has succeeded? Obviously with something like a Quit strategy it is fairly simple. You put out all your ads and by the end of the year when you do surveys you can get the statistics that show you have managed to reduce smoking from 27 per cent of the population to 25. It is easy. You can then write it up all over the place and it looks good and incidentally Western Australia has obviously done very well there but how do we actually measure whether this new direction of the office, the new focus of the office is successful?

[3.50 pm]

Mr BOARD: Quite simply in the end, and that is by participation. I am not in the position to give you the full details because they are not launched yet but I can tell you there will be programs within the next six months which will be comprehensive programs in this state that will involve extremely large numbers of people, possibly all young people at school, programs that involve community groups to a large extent, hopefully all our ethnic groups, in programs that are inclusive and bond our community. I might say to the member that we see the year 2000 as a year of not only providing we hope more infrastructure in our community but a program that will bond the community together. We see it as an opportunity for developing a sense of very strong pride in our state that involves participation at various levels, from the school level through our community groups, involving seniors as well. I cannot tick off all of the things we will be doing, but if we are sitting here next year discussing this, you will have answered your question by the size of those programs and the participation involved.

Ms WARNOCK: Fair enough. I just have one further question, if I may, Madam Chair. Does the Minister anticipate any problems in settling refugees from Kosovo into the WA community, and what sort of plans have you made, briefly, Minister?

Mr BOARD: There is an issue at this point, member, because the Kosovo refugees are still considered as temporary to the state and to the country at this point in time. As you know, they are here through the invitation of the Australian government, through the Minister for Immigration. We expect about 350 to arrive tomorrow. They will then be at Leeuwin. The expectation is that at this point in time they have a temporary status of three months. I understand that will be reviewed and looked at as the needs arise and decisions on behalf of the Commonwealth will be made at that time. So the Federal Government will make decisions about their long term future depending on what happens obviously in their home country and so forth, so those decisions are not made by the state. However, when that decision is made about their future, we will play our role, and a very active role I might say, a coordinating role in making sure that if there is a requirement for settlement in this state that would be a speedy and accessible one.

Mr MASTERS: Minister, I refer you to page 167 and elsewhere. It is a profoundly important issue because it relates to your celebrations for the millennium. What is the government's view as to when the millennium starts? In other words, what are we actually celebrating?

Mr BOARD: We have a major celebration that goes over two years. This will be decided by the community, not by governments. The reality is that on new year's eve this year, when the clock ticks over to 2000, the majority of people will be celebrating the new millennium. That is their opinion, the celebration of that. We will meet that challenge as we have programs right through the year to celebrate the millennium. It is a major program, some of which will touch on the previous question from the member for Perth about citizenship. We see much of our millennium progress will be in developing coordination in community-based programs within the state, new initiatives that I believe are very exciting. Obviously in the following year, when you click over from 2000 to 2001, there will also be a major celebration, both of a technical nature in terms of the millennium and of course the centenary celebrations which will also commence, and we have another year

of celebrations in that regard. So we look at it as a two year celebratory period and you can take your choice as to when you party but we will be meeting that challenge right through the two year period.

Mr MASTERS: I will be partying both new years. I understand what you are saying about what some technical people might think, but if you are trying to raise public awareness about citizenship and issues relating to the millennium and centenary celebrations and so on, would it not be a great headline to say "We, the government, reject the people's belief that the year 2000 is the beginning of the millennium when in actual fact it is the end of the last one." You can use that to your advantage to get people thinking about the issue.

Mr BOARD: No. The point is that people will see the year 2000 as something extremely significant. Whether they see it as the end of a millennium, whether they see it as the beginning of a new millennium, I do not know that that is exactly the issue. The issue is that there are no more nineteens and we have now got a "2" and we have got "2000". That is what fires up people's imagination and quite frankly I want to use the whole two year period to concentrate on community involvement. We are best using the two years rather than one year to concentrate on what our community is.

Mr MASTERS: I agree with you in that regard. I am suggesting there is an alternative way of actually handling it.

Mr MacLEAN: Minister, Sunday is Vensarka? Day, which I am sure you are aware of is Buddha's birthday, two thousand seven hundred and something. What this has done is highlight the one glowing flaw in the Harmony? calendar. The Harmony calendar does not explain what the various special event days are. It says it is Vensarka Day or Amallah? Day or some other day but there is no explanation. Being of Anglo-Saxon origin, although not many people admit it, a part from the fact that I am associated with the community, I would not have a clue what these other special event days are. If the department could look at ways of educating the general public about the significance of the special event days, it would all go to help ease some of the tensions that some feel and overcome some of the problems that others experience.

Mr BOARD: It is a good point you have raised because it goes to the heart of what we are trying to do. I will explain why. The calendar itself is just a calendar and obviously there is a space problem because virtually every day of the year has some special celebration, but there are hundreds of ethnic organisations in this state and we have given both grants and support for community events, celebrating their culture, their religion, very important things to do. However, I have challenged them this year through the Ethnic Communities Council and I will continue to challenge them to make their events to the wider community, and they have to take a responsibility as well. This is not just a government role, this is their organisations' role, to make sure that the wider community is aware of what is going on. That is why we have created our new grants program, we have tripled the amount of money in the grants program, to be able to assist these communities to sell their message, not just about their culture but how they develop citizenship in this state and their contribution to developing strong citizenship and their contribution to adding value to our Western Australian community. They are our goals. We have put a lot more money in the grants program to do that. I want all of those communities to help me sell that message.

The CHAIRMAN (Mrs Holmes): Thank you, Minister. In view of the time, members, I am going to put the question but just before I do I just think that it might be an idea or a suggestion for next year's budgets on this portfolio in view of the fact that the Youth portfolio was put in with the Building Management Authority - - that next year, because it is obviously a very important portfolio for the members, which was shown today by the number of questions that were asked, maybe the Minister might like to suggest to the powers that put these things together that we actually make that a separate division on its own, so there would be five divisions, then we would have more time to discuss everything.

Mr BOARD: If I could just respond to that, Madam Chair, that would require a decision of the Treasury for a separate line management. It is not quite as simple as that. There are issues in regard to administration and the size of agencies that go into those decisions. If I can convince the government and the Premier that the Office of Youth Affairs ought to be that size then I would - - I will take that on as a challenge. This is the third year this has been that way. It is probably important that we are aware of that before our deliberations. It is not all that important exactly what it is in; it is a question that it is dealt with with appropriate time and of a separate nature.

The CHAIRMAN: That is correct.

[4.05pm]

Division 45: Zoological Gardens Board, \$3 653 000 -

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Mr B.W. Easton, Chief Executive Officer, Perth Zoological Gardens Board.]

[Mr R.C. Bredenkamp, Acting Accountant, Perth Zoological Gardens Board.]

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 1571 and under significant issues and trends words about the zoo's continued involvement with the Cooperative Research Centre and ask can you outline briefly what the CRC does, the amount of funding it brings into the institution and either the number of jobs it brings in or the contribution to the number of jobs it brings in?

Mr EASTON: The CRC is an organisation that concentrates as far as the WA Zoo is concerned with marsupials. I attended a meeting in Newcastle just the day before yesterday of this committee. WA has a very high profile and it has a very active native species breeding program. The actual training officer for the national program is based in Perth and we have a

director of research here and they have two other research staff working with them. They have extensive links with each of the universities and we are helping supervise Honours and Phd programs. Precisely I would have to ask the acting accountant to tell you the amount of dollars that actually flow into Perth Zoo.

Mr BREDENKAMP: It would vary from year to year but I believe next year it will be in the vicinity of \$150 000.

Mr MASTERS: I refer to page 1576, output measures and two particular sets of numbers there. The total customers admitted to the zoological gardens is estimated to go up by quite a small percentage next year and my estimate is the increase is less than the population growth of Perth and I ask if that is a concern to the Minister and secondly, timeliness, service to customers every day of the year 365, I ask the Minister is that really desirable that the zoo be open every day? At the end of the day there needs to be economic issues considered and there might be a case for closing the zoo mid-winter on a Wednesday or some particular appropriate timing in order to reduce costs and so on. So if I could get answers to those two questions.

Mrs EDWARDES: I would not be supportive of closing the zoo on any one particular day in the year. It is the most popular zoo per head of population in the whole of Australia and I think that is testimony to the tremendous work and commitment of the staff that we actually have out at the zoo. Over the last couple of years there has been an increased level of number of activities that have been carried out and as well we had the centenary year which then focussed on achieving an increased number of patronage to the zoo. There is only so much you can do to continue to keep that trend on such a steep incline and it is a conservative estimate that has been put forward but it is expected that there will be a reduction in the patronage - not a reduction in patronage but not as great an increase in the patronage, although the zoo has undertaken some key initiatives. The night zoo has proven to be very popular. The evenings where a band is present has also proven to be very popular and, again, they will continue on being part of the zoo's annual events from hereon in. Do you want to add anything to that?

[4.13 pm]

Mr EASTON: No, Minister. I think I support that fully and I just highlight the fact the Centenary year last year certainly brought a lot of people. I think with increased competition around town for the family dollar that we are going to feel it next year and although I have only been at the zoo a fairly recent time, I have worked out that the animals need to be fed every day so the actual staff on site, seven days a week, every week, the infrastructure costs are really difficult to avoid. So by having the gate open I think it is probably a better revenue return than closing it one day a week.

Mr BRADSHAW: On the same section, page 1576, it says, "Students admitted to the Zoological Gardens". Are they admitted free or do they pay? And then further down it says, "Average cost of Education Program per student", and there is an amount for last year and the current year." It seems fairly expensive for the education program so what do students actually get for that and how many staff are involved in the education program?

Mr EASTON: We are the only zoo in Australia which provides a full education facility without the support of the state Education Department so the zoo, as an organisation, actually does meet the full cost of the special student program. That also includes the preparation of materials for teachers and the enhancement of the child's experience at the zoo is supported by that because the teacher comes armed with all sorts of literature and the preparation has been done. The price appears high but, in fact, that includes the normal entrance as well so the student actually pays an entrance to offset that cost and we charge 50 cents per student for the special education component that they receive while they visit the zoo.

Dr EDWARDS: Still on page 1576 and picking up on the member for Vasse's point, does the number of total customers admitted include those people who go to the zoo just for a function rather than to go on a zoo visit?

Mr EASTON: That is something that I am looking at presently. It would not include the people who attend weddings and special commercial functions run through Mustard Catering but it would include the people who attend the night zoo and the twilight concerts.

Dr EDWARDS: On the same page - and the Minister has mentioned this - you talk about the possible decline in the local market and targeting tourists and I see that you have had a really marked increase in the number of tourists you have attracted. How high do you think that can go? There must be a saturation point.

Mrs EDWARDES: I think, obviously, that is a part of the marketing strategy that is going to be employed not only from the zoo but other agencies whereby we are going to try and keep tourists one more day in Perth. The more you can do that the more economic benefit there is and the zoo is very much a part of that tourism attraction. I want to just mention - which follows on from the member for Vasse's question and leads into yours as well - whilst we have had an enormous number of upgrades and new exhibits over the last few years, the zoo has not stopped at that. Whilst we believe that there will have to be a peaking off of the increase of people coming to the zoo, there are still planned for this year a number of upgrades and new exhibits. In July we hope to open up the new penguin exhibit. In September the zoo will be given an exhibit and also, too, we are going to be expanding the rhinoceros exhibit to cater for two new females who are due in September as part of our program and that is, again, thanks very much to the members of the public who have very much supported that appeal. Also there is going to be major changes and enhancement of the Orang utan building, hopefully in the new year.

Mr MASTERS: Minister, one of the successes of the zoo is its marketing of Zoo Poo. I am therefore very pleased to hear that you are getting two new rhinoceroses to increase the volume of that product, but I do believe that it is a service that you offer to community groups. They come in and buy it, I think, in bulk or take it in bulk and then sell it in smaller amounts. How well is that working and is there potential for expanding that particular community education exercise?

Mr EASTON: Zoo Poo is no longer - we have in a commercial sense, I should say - because it is my early briefing that there are some contaminants in some parts of the faecal matter that may cause some problems for the public in a sense of hospital attention and disease. It is really sad because it was of great interest to the public and it was a money spinning but, in fact, it does have some other problems which we are presently looking at and I might just say that one thing that I am looking at since I arrived at the zoo is a new waste management and composting program which will see us move more in the areas of improving environmental management, but at this stage we are unable to sell it, unfortunately.

Dr EDWARDS: Madam Chair, I refer to page 1571 where it says that capital works within the zoo have been reviewed and some projects deferred. For what reason were the projects deferred and was that to keep down expenditure during the coming financial year?

[4.20 pm]

Mr EASTON: What we are actually doing is reviewing the whole development of the zoo for the next five to 10 years and will, in turn, be briefing the Minister on that. We are developing a new master plan. As the Minister said, we are opening a new penguin exhibit which is going to be of tremendous public appeal, especially for kids, and also the Silvery Gibbons project which is very exciting as are the others referred to. The high cost of designing and building those exhibits is really catching up with us a bit. We are actually reviewing the priority and the manner in which we construct those exhibits. So, yes, it will slow down a bit but we will give more emphasis to the particular exhibits of public appeal.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 1573 under output 1, output measures, it talks about the quantity of specimens. It says, "Comprising 291/275 species." Why is there that drop off in the species between the 2 years?

Mr EASTON: My understanding of that is that there has been rationalisation of the collection. We are introducing a new factor formula where you actually assess the value of the animal relative to its score on the endangered species scale and also its public appeal. So, you have this combination of the work and the money that we spend in areas of protecting endangered species and working with other States and countries in that interest which is quite a cost factor against those animals that really are of lower value in an international sense but of higher public appeal. So, there has been a rationalisation, especially in the area of birds, but I do not think it is of great significance in terms of the main exhibits other than a rationalisation of the importance and cost of those.

Dr EDWARDS: How can you so accurately predict animals produced for reintroduction?

Mr EASTON: I think that goes back, in part, to the question about the Co-operative Research Centre. The work that West Australia is doing with the chuditch and numbat and the stick nest rat, just to name three, as part of the Australian wildlife, is outstanding and it is done on a very selective basis as to which species should be reintroduced and with the assistance of CALM we are physically putting those out into selective areas in various parts of the State.

Mrs EDWARDES: There has been some very successful reintroductions. I mean, the Western Swamp Tortoise is one very good cooperative project involving the zoo.

Mr BRADSHAW: In regard to that giraffe that was born a year or so back, which had some successful photos from, was it the zoo that was selling the photos?

Mr EASTON: Yes.

Mr BRADSHAW: What return did the zoo receive from that?

Mr EASTON: Yes. Very successful. The money came directly back into the zoo retail outlet. That photograph has gone all around the world and has been marketed very successfully and we hope to promote it a lot further yet.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 1579 and under non-current assets, the leased assets, and ask what are the leased assets?

Mr EASTON: My understanding is that, in part, they refer to vehicles but I have to defer to my accountant to answer that more specifically.

Mr BREDENKAMP: That is correct. It is for vehicles and also equipment such as photocopiers and other office equipment.

Dr EDWARDS: Why does that figure then, sort of, disappear in the future?

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide the answer to you by way of supplementary information.

Division 44: Kings Park Board, \$8 718 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Dr S. Hopper, Chief Executive Officer, Kings Park and Botanic Garden.]

[Mr N. Power, Manager Business and Finance, Kings Park Board.]

Dr EDWARDS: On page 786 you refer to the creation of Bold Park. How much extra work does managing Bold Park involve for Kings Park and how will this be done with the same number of FTEs and very little increase in the money in the budget.

Dr HOPPER: The number of FTEs the agency has been operating on for a number of years is actually lower than approved. The government gave us an increase in actual staff. We have of the order of six new staff members as part of the Bold Park team and a considerable allocation for engaging consultants as well. The mix for Bold Park is one of core staff and consultants. In terms of managing Bold Park, obviously it is a major change for the agency. I believe we are reasonably on track and we have had a longer than expected time to get ready due to a number of negotiations that had to happen, so the impact on the agency has been significant, but we have made the structural changes necessary. I believe we are well under way now. In terms of the financial detail, I would defer to Mr Power, if you were seeking any written information in that regard.

[4.28 pm]

Mr BRADSHAW: On page 786, where it says summer theatre and fee-for-entry concerts entered its third year of programming, are those concerts run privately or are they run in conjunction with the Kings Park Board and is there a cost out of it or do they break even or do they run at a loss?

Dr HOPPER: They are run by private organisations but under an arrangement with the Kings Park Board so that there is a percentage of the gross profit received by the agency. There is one exception to that and that is the annual Valentine's Day concert which is the sponsored event involving WASO. It is done jointly in conjunction with BankWest and Channel 7 and the proceeds from the entry paid by the public to that are split fifty-fifty between Telethon and Kings Park.

Mr MASTERS: I refer to a number of places in the budget booklet about the annual wildflower festival. I went to the festival three years ago when it was located up at the clock tower end of Fraser Avenue and then last year when it was down near the water fountains. I commend you on both of them. They were both outstanding events, but they were different, and the most recent one incorporated a lot of stalls and displays by community groups, and that was a very good idea because it created the opportunity for people to realise that it was not just Kings Park operating in this field but other community groups as well. One area where it might be improved is that the most recent one did not have the same spectacular display of wildflowers as the one up near the clock tower. In other words, a very large number of plants had been grown in cultivation and then artificially put together to make an artificial garden. Are there plans for improving the festival this year, hopefully take on board the sort of suggestion I have put forward?

Mrs EDWARDES: Thank you for that comment. It is always good to receive feedback. The change in the location has been positively received by the community and of course last year was an extension of what had been the previous year still in the same location. I will ask Dr Hopper to respond on next year's project.

Dr HOPPER: Yes, Minister. The member's observations are similar to feedback that we received from a number of quarters based on last year's festival. I put it down to teething problems with the new site where obviously it takes a little while to get up to the quality and spectacular display that we can deliver. The actual volume of material that goes into the new site is as much as, or more in fact, than the old site but it is a bigger site. Our broad strategy is to build up the garden beds surrounding the site so that there are permanent wildflowers that are perceived by the public as part of the festival when the festival is on but are there when the festival is not on. The precise arrangement of marquees, we are getting professional landscape advice on. Our intention most certainly is not to lose sight of the fact that it is about that stunning display of wildflowers that we know staff can deliver and we are focusing on improving that delivery this year.

Mr MASTERS: I also have one other word of praise, and that is that at the most recent festival you had a water plant feature down at the fountain and that also was highly desirable.

Mr BRADSHAW: I visited that show a couple of years ago and the thing that I noticed, apart from being a very good display, was that it was very crowded. I just wonder if there is any sort of crowd control these days because it did make it unpleasant to actually visit it with the number of people attending there. I know it is good to get lots of people there but it is also not that enjoyable when you have got to keep moving and you do not get a chance to look at the plants, etcetera. I just learned the other day that to go to the Chelsea flower show you have to book a year ahead. I just wonder if there is some way to control it better, if it is like that all the time, so that people do enjoy it. Even if you have to turn some away, they would be very disappointed and angry, but it is better to be able to wander around and have a pleasant day rather.

Mrs EDWARDES: Member for Murray-Wellington, you can have a personal tour with me next year.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that your answer, Minister?

Dr HOPPER: Minister, perhaps I could add that the member has certainly identified an issue. Again I would say it relates to our developing experience with the new site and certainly our intention is not, wherever possible, to turn people away, but at the same time to ensure that they do have an enjoyable experience. Last year's festival was a little unpleasant in the sense that there was one day in which I recall there was sleet, so obviously people had to crowd into the marquees on those days. The weekends are often the most popular time and our approach has been to see how the public enjoy it and to try and design the structure of the displays so that we do not get that overwhelming sense of being forced through in the sausage machine approach, if you like. We will monitor it and should it become so unpleasant that the public says they are not enjoying it then naturally we will take extra measures. I would hate to get to the Chelsea situation immediately where you do have to pay an exorbitant entry fee a year ahead and they just turn people away, as you say, 12 months prior to the event.

Dr EDWARDS: What income is generated from the wildflower festival and how is that used?

[4.35 pm]

Dr HOPPER: The gross income, I will defer to Mr Power, but my recollection is that it is in the order of \$200 000. Mr Power perhaps could give the accurate figure.

Mr POWER: The approximate figure is \$216 000 as a gross profit to the agency. Of that figure there are operational costs, tent hire, electricity, etcetera; plus there are other costs incurred, for instance, a merchandising program. Included in the figure of \$216 000 was the initial cost of goods purchased for then resale as well. Approximately \$216 000 is the gross return.

Mr MASTERS: Can I refer to page 797, about a third of the way down, Total Cost of Services? Could you please explain, Minister? 1997-98 was a low figure; 2002-03 is a relatively low figure, but in between there is a big peak in expenditure. Could you just explain the expenditure details there?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will actually get Dr Hopper to respond on that, dealing with total cost of services.

Mr MASTERS: Total cost of services goes up to a very large number and then - -

Mrs EDWARDES: 97-98 does not give an accurate reflection for comparison with the current year because of the changes in the way that the budget has now been restructured, so that is one point to keep in mind not only for this particular item number but for future. I will get Dr Hopper to respond to the rest of your question.

Mr MASTERS: The peak year is next year in expenditure. The relevant information on that would be appreciated.

Dr HOPPER: I will defer again to Mr Power in a minute but in general terms we have a capital program under way for refurbishment in Kings Park and in Bold Park. Part of that capital program relates to landscaping works and under present accounting standards we have to expense landscaping works rather than count them as an asset. I have already had discussions with the Valuer General and the Auditor General. As a biologist, I have a personal view that a tree is worth as much as a building, for example, but that is a matter of philosophical debate in auditing circles, I am advised, and it may take some time before living things are counted as an asset in the same way. In general that is the explanation for the trend but Mr Power can perhaps elaborate on this point.

Mr POWER: Yes. Dr Hopper is correct. The government via the capital appropriation provides extensive funds to Kings Park for capital items. The unfortunate thing is that under the Australian Accounting Standards we cannot bring in to our balance sheet items like soft landscaping, such as reclamation works or tree planting, along those lines. We can bring in hard items, like shed construction, etcetera. The standards say that I have to exclude them from the balance sheet and expense item in the operating statement. Dr Hopper is also correct in the sense that this year we also increased the valuation of Kings Park and Bold Park by a revaluation by the Valuer General. That came about after discussions Dr Hopper had with the Auditor General and the Valuer General. Just off the top of my head, the revaluation was \$8.89m as the total revaluation with this apportioned to \$7.69m for Kings Park and \$2.09m for Bold Park as well.

Dr EDWARDS: On the same page, just underneath what we have been looking at, under Operating Revenues, user charges and fees have gone down this financial year, then they really jump up next year. Can you explain that as well?

Mr POWER: That includes, if you like, a provision for a donation which we anticipate receiving from an associated voluntary organisation, The Friends of Kings Park. There is a major redevelopment going on in the botanic garden for the water garden project. The estimated revenue which the Friends will be receiving via a Lotteries Commission grant is in the vicinity of \$490 000 to \$500 000 and that is included, that user charge, as a resource received free of charge.

Mr BRADSHAW: Under that entertainment sort of section where you have these various sorts of things, has the Board ever considered having a rotunda somewhere or a bandstand where on the weekends bands can come and operate from, not necessarily pop bands, maybe pop bands occasionally, but Salvation Army bands or Midland Brick's brass band or those types of bands, on a freebie, so people can sit around and have a bit of entertainment? The times that I have been there for a wreath laying ceremony, something that has a bit of pomp and ceremony, people do crowd around to witness that and I am sure if there was other entertainment there people would sit there with their picnic baskets and perhaps take that in. I am not saying you should be paying these bands, but the bands could perhaps get a bit of exposure or practice. They might like to go there and perform free of charge for the public to enjoy.

Dr HOPPER: The idea is under active consideration at the moment. Naturally we would hope that you could have reasonably quality in performance and suitable music. In the past the rotunda that overlooks the Narrows Bridge was used for that purpose - as I understand, a regular Sunday brass band. It was a long time ago. It has only been in the last few years that we have reintroduced arts, drama and music into Kings Park. Our focus is to make the Pioneer Women's Memorial precinct the premiere outdoor entertainment area, so we have been focusing on that area initially and trying to get good quality arts and drama in that precinct, but we have a number of other delightful, more intimate venues around the park that would be suitable for small groups, so the idea is under consideration.

[4.42 pm]

Mr MASTERS: Page 789, Output measures, relating to Output 1: Customer Services. I have two questions. Total annual visitor numbers are not expected to change at all from last year and I would hope that there would be a constant increase, maybe consistent with population growth. So could you explain your pessimism in that regard? The second issue is that

the outcome that is required is awareness and appreciation of various recreation and tourist resources. That does not necessarily mean that people understand anything additional about the natural environment once they have been to Kings Park. I appreciate that this is a qualitative output issue that I am asking for but has the Kings Park Board at all considered trying to see if people have learnt and taken away with them knowledge that they can use in their valued judgments and so on once they have been to Kings Park, in other words, a qualitative measure, as difficult as it might be.

Mrs EDWARDES: Kings Park has been identified in all the studies as Western Australia's number one tourism attraction and as such we are constantly looking for ways in which we can further enhance that experience up there at Kings Park as well as leave them a little lighter when they leave Kings Park and there are some opportunities for that in the future but I will get Dr Hopper to further respond.

Dr HOPPER: The estimate that is provided reflects the difficulty we have with Kings Park in that there is not a single entry point and coming up with a reasonable estimate of how many visitors will arrive is challenging. We do have statistics that come in through the population monitor the Tourism Commission operates, so we do have a good handle on international visitation and that is rising. That is my understanding at present. The figure that is quoted there is based on the last opportunity we had to commission the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake a census based on telephone interview of 300 people throughout the metropolitan area and we are focused now in developing more accurate ways of linking those sort of estimates with such things as traffic counters which might give us a statistical link in which we can more accurately predict local visitation as well as tourist visitation. So it is a problem we recognise. We also have a number of people counters on footpaths using infrared trips in the botanic garden, for example, so we do have a growing body of data that is helping us estimate the visitors but we have this issue that there are people accessing the park from a number of entry points, be they roads or whatever.

The other issue I would point you to in relation to the awareness is on page 791 under output measures the quality measure there, visitors expressing an awareness of Kings Park, Bold Park and the State Botanic Garden, we do census a sample of visitors each year and ask them are they aware of the State Botanic Garden and its role. So that is a very crude approach, if you like, to try and get an understanding of whether people appreciate the State's Botanic Garden is in Kings Park and it is delivering a conservation service.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 786 in the dot point third from the bottom you make reference to progressive works along Fraser Avenue. Can I ask how do you manage the trees along there and is it true that a tree shed a limb recently and injured a person?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is true and I will get Dr Hopper to answer your question.

Dr HOPPER: The question was how do we manage the trees along Fraser Avenue. We have an arboriculturalist permanently on staff who undertakes regular inspections of trees that are in high risk areas of the park. Basically with so many trees in the park we have, if you like, a strategy of risk management that focuses on the highest risk areas first and going down to the bushland areas in which we manage trees on paths and roads but off paths and roads where the public are not encouraged to walk we leave the trees for the animals and plants basically. In relation to Fraser Avenue we have had major arboricultural work undertaken and as I say there is a regular inspection so that if any risk is identified by our arboriculturalist then that is acted upon. It is true that a limb injured some young people about a month ago.

Dr EDWARDS: Were they badly injured?

Dr HOPPER: One young lady was knocked out. Two of them received stitches. Three of them were taken to hospital.

Mr BRADSHAW: I noticed a press article recently where the police have stepped up their patrols on pushbikes and crime levels have dropped. I was a bit surprised to read that because according to this we have high levels in Kings Park but what are the crimes that tend to be the most dominant and have the rangers been doing something to overcome that problem?

Dr HOPPER: Kings Park and the restaurant carpark in particular is either number 2 or number 3 in terms of car break ins in the city, at least it was before we negotiated this excellent relationship with the police. We do have park management officers who are authorised to enforce the bylaws and they regularly patrol Kings Park and as you would appreciate there are staff and members of the public going through the place. So most nefarious activity is reported when detected. The police have been very helpful with us and we have developed a number of strategies. They do have this presence in the park on bicycle patrols and also we have an energy efficient little golf buggy which now focuses activity around the new Lotteries family area so that the police have an interaction with young children and have a PR role as well as an enforcement role. We also have a police caravan which is permanently parked on Fraser Avenue in a conspicuous place as people enter the park so that combination of strategies has reduced the crime rate at a very pleasing level. Given the size of the park and the number of visitors I think complete elimination of crime is a worthy goal but I do not believe it will get there but we have certainly improved the situation.

Mr MASTERS: Page 795 is just one of several references to Bold Park but 795 in particular talks about the restoration works which are about to commence. I am aware of the fact that tuart used to be one of the more important tree species in Bold Park but most of those trees I think are either under stress or have died and of course the ones in Kings Park have died out completely. Can I just get some technical comment from you as to what chances you believe there are of getting the tuart as an important tree species back into Kings Park and more extensive cover in Bold Park?

[4.49 pm]

Dr HOPPER: The member is correct in saying management of tuart is an issue, however in Kings Park they have not died out completely. In fact, they have diminished in number but after major fires the number of seedlings of tuart in the park at the present time is quite significant. That is in Kings Park. The issue with tuart is a matter for research and I am pleased to advise the Committee that Alcoa Australia has funded a post-doctoral fellow and a Phd student for the last two years on a project aiming to identify the factors that are critical in getting tuart and jarrah back into Kings Park and removing the invading eastern states eucalypts which were planted in the 1930s, sugar gum, lemon scented gum and Sydney currajong in particular. If unmanaged the bushland of Kings Park 50 years from now will be dominated by those eastern Australian species and you are quite right we could face the complete loss of tuart, jarrah and banksias in Kings Park.

Our preliminary arboricultural assessment of Bold Park is that the tuarts are in fact in better condition over there and our major challenges are to maintain their condition where appropriate and deal with a massive veldt grass invasion in the understorey which is the really big challenge in Bold Park. Tuart is one in which I suspect the basic problem is when the branches of a seedling get up to two centimetres in diameter they are invaded by wood boring beetles, longicorn beetles they are called, and they kill the branches. If members travelled down the Old Coast Road last year you may have noticed around Lake Clifton massive branch dieback occurring in tuarts and that I understand is due to these beetles. What we do not understand is how you control those beetles and I suspect the fire ecology of tuart was one of responding after massive high intensity wildfires over large areas which reduced the beetle abundance to a level where the seedlings could get up and get through that critical phase.

Mr BRADSHAW: So the firebugs actually help Kings Park bush?

Dr HOPPER: Unfortunately not at all, it is quite the converse and clearly we cannot have massive high canopy fires in Kings Park. It is not a strategy that we can deal with. This is one of those very difficult ecological changes in remnant vegetation in an urban environment in which we are going to have to devise an alternative strategy and the research project I alluded to is focussed on trying to come up with that alternative strategy.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 787 you talk about there being some indications that external support for research funding might be more difficult to get and that new strategies are being investigated to manage this situation if the trend continues. What are the new strategies?

Dr HOPPER: The research dollars are getting fewer and fewer nationally particularly in ecology and conservation and it is a very competitive environment. Our researchers I believe do a great job and they are very competitive in national granting schemes like the Australian Research Council grants. They are very well supported by the mining industry and that is a major source of funding for postgraduate students at the moment but naturally that strategy is depending upon a buoyant mining sector. We are in the process of constantly assessing opportunities that might be available for funding necessary research.

The Alcoa project I just alluded to is one example where a very practical problem has a clear need for research at the front end. The other big one we are doing in Kings Park is WMC Resources have funded the scarp restoration project and they, to their credit, believed with us that a research front end was very necessary to get the techniques right before we undertook the work which members may have noticed is now underway on the scarp. They are the sorts of strategies we have followed up but we are also looking all the time at new avenues. Under the new legislation for the agency which is to be proclaimed shortly there is the opportunity to establish a foundation for the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. That is another strategy that we will pursue vigorously to see if we can attract public donations to help with this very valuable research.

Mr BROWN: If I can refer to page 785 under the heading of appropriation and forward estimates ...(Inaudible)... and particularly to the item in the table total capital services. The budget estimate for the coming year is \$4.29m and the breakdown of that is obviously later on at page 801. The budget estimate and the forward estimates for the following financial year, 2000-2001 is \$6.68m. Can you tell me how that forward estimate has been arrived at?

Dr HOPPER: Minister, I will defer to Mr Power for the detail on this one. We have a forward capital program for Kings Park and a major new capital program for Bold Park which will come into full swing the financial year after next and I believe that is the broad scenario but Mr Power perhaps can elaborate.

Mr POWER: Yes, Dr Hopper is correct. There were some basically cash flow movements with regard to projects which could not commence on time. They have been adjusted for over two out years, 1999-2000 and 2001 and is basically the reason there was a \$1.5m cash flow adjustment in 2000-2001. But the basic parameters are that Kings Park is going from an active capital works program which is just starting to slow down whereas Bold Park is just starting to take off. So those two meet together and that is the cause of it.

Mr BROWN: So do you have indicative capital works spending for 2000-2001 to make up that figure of \$6.68m?

Mr POWER: Yes, I have.

Mr BROWN: Can we have that information?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

[4.56 pm]

Mr BROWN: Thank you the Premier has indicated there will be a major announcement in relation to Kings Park later in the year. Is there any money in this here for that major announcement?

Mrs EDWARDES: From what Dr Hopper has told me, yes, it is covered in the budget.

Mr BROWN: Where?

Mrs EDWARDES: It would be in the total capital program.

Mr BROWN: The capital works is set out on page 801 and that is set out in various line items. Under "Kings Park" there is Botanic Parkland, Bushland Management, Depot Relocation, Irrigation Mount Eliza Scarp, Wildflower Display Gardens." Some of these look like continuing amounts of money being allocated if you look at the estimated total cost of some of these things. I do not know what is new there. There does not look like there is anything new that has come on this year. They all look like continuing sums of money.

Mrs EDWARDES: The comment, if you are referring to it in the budget speech, "A major plan for Kings Park Board will be ready for public comment in October", is that the comment that you are talking about?

Mr BROWN: I actually thought there was some other proposal coming out around October.

Dr HOPPER: In the Premier's speech, Kings Park refers to the agency. The agency will be changing its name to the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. The major announcement by the new authority will relate to a draft management plan for Bold Park due for release in September/October and that will set the 10 year forward plan for Bold Park and how the capital budget will be spent.

Mr BROWN: So it will be for Bold Park rather than Kings Park?

Dr HOPPER: Predominantly, yes.

Mr BROWN: Has there been any consideration of things like chairlifts and all those other sorts of things we keep hearing for Kings Park?

Mrs EDWARDES: Lots of people have lots of ideas of what they would like to do.

Mr BROWN: I know they do. I wrote to the Premier a while ago with one that a constituent brought to me. Has any consideration been given to any chairlifts or railways or inclinator or anything like that?

Mrs EDWARDES: Lots of people have the concepts from time to time and, yes, as they are brought forward they are referred through to the board for their consideration and advice back but there is nothing in any of those areas that has met with the board's plans for the park.

Mr BROWN: And there is nothing in these figures here that would suggest that we are going to move down any route like that?

Mrs EDWARDES: No.

Mr BRADSHAW: I guess, to some extent, my question has been answered with regard to the announcement of the Bold Park management plan. Do you plan to have a similar set up to Kings Park with grassed areas where people can picnic and have some entertainment or just recreate, similarly to Kings Park, and are there any permanent employees out there and do they operate from Kings Park or do they operate from Bold Park?

Mrs EDWARDES: A lot of what you are talking about in terms of Bold Park is presently under consideration for the development of a management plan for Bold Park which would include concepts for passive recreation, recreation and the like. Do you want to add to the other question?

Dr HOPPER: If I could add, Minister? Yes, there are staff at Bold Park and they have recently moved out to accommodation in Bold Park adjacent to Perry House. Perry House is currently occupied by the Wildflower Society and Birds Australia as lessees and we have no intention of asking them to move. In fact, we seek their co-operation and continued participation. So our accommodation is located in a transportable adjacent as a temporary arrangement. The management plan will provide the context in which we can engage in full public consultation about the future of Bold Park including the question of where we might house staff permanently and in what sort of accommodation. That is the context.

If I could just amplify what the Minister said in relation to recreation. We have gone down a collaborative route with the management plan with Town of Cambridge and the Department of Defence and permission for the same consultants, PPK Environment Consulting, to do three management plans at the same time. They will do Bold Park for us, Perry Lakes for Town of Cambridge and the Department of Defence land at Campbell Barracks for the Department of Defence.

In this approach we are able to consider matters like, "Is Perry Lakes a better place for some sorts of recreation than Bold Park and can we collaborate with Town of Cambridge and encourage people to use Perry Lakes for certain forms of activity and Bold Park for what it is strong in and likewise." Campbell Barracks is really fenced off and a place where conservation would be a priority.

Mr MASTERS: I refer the Minister to page 789 again and the total annual visiting numbers of just over 2.25m which is more than the population of the state. That obviously provides a major corporate sponsorship opportunity because I would imagine that in Western Australia many corporations would love to see their name associated with that many visitors. However, it is a balancing act because you do not want the sponsorship recognition to, in any way, shape or form, detract from the values of Kings Park. Could I get some indication as to the overall degree of sponsorship from corporations at present and ask if there are plans to extend that further and, if so, how will that balance be achieved between recognising the sponsorship and not detracting from Kings Park's virtues?

[5.03 pm]

[Mr Bloffwitch, Chairman.]

Mrs EDWARDES: I think you will recognise throughout the budget statements that where agencies have relied upon sponsorship it has been recognised that they are all in competition with each other and as such the dollars are beginning to dwindle. There is some suggestion that some of that has to do with the Sydney Olympics at the moment and money being more inclined to be heading off in that direction.

Dr Hopper has already this evening referred to sponsorship for particular research projects etcetera and we will continue, wherever possible, to attract sponsorship. The foundation that will be able to be established following the proclamation of the new legislation obviously will be a vehicle by which that also will be able to be achieved.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 797 you point out the number of FTEs which is 90 this financial year and next year. How many re-deployees are at Kings Park currently or this financial year and predicted for next financial year? Are they included in the FTEs and what monetary contribution does Kings Park pay towards the re-deployees?

Mrs EDWARDES: Dr Hopper.

Dr HOPPER: Minister, I do not believe I have the precise answer to that question. Could we take that on notice?

Mrs EDWARDES: It can be provided by way of supplementary information.

Mr BRADSHAW: ...(indistinct)... CALM have a plan for endangered species and I just wonder if there are any birds that have disappeared out of Kings Park that you might like to try and find and reintroduce. That may mean getting rid of some of the other birds there which are perhaps predators of those ...(indistinct)... birds, certainly from Bold Park. Are there any plans in that regard ...(indistinct)...

Dr HOPPER: Our bird research in Kings Park is one of the best records in Australia because CSIRO ornithologist Dr Dom Serventy in the 1920s used to walk from Subiaco to the university and did a bird count then and recorded it in a form that was discovered by Professor Harry Recher from Edith Cowan University and Dr Serventy repeated his counts in the 1950s. Dr Recher subsequently undertook one in the 1980s and it is an ongoing program. So, we actually have a pretty good idea of what birds were around up to 70 years ago.

There has been extinction of some species, particularly insect-feeding birds that feed on the ground. Things like Splendid Fairy Wren, for example, and one of the robins, I believe, have also become extinct. There has been an increase in a number of birds, including ravens, in particular. It is a challenging issue, bird management, and we have engaged a consultant ornithologist to help us provide the program that will enable us, we hope, to reintroduce some of the extinct species. The member is correct in identifying that we may well have to control other species as a compensating measure to give the best chance of survival for the reintroductions. That is a matter under active research at the moment.

Division 42: Conservation and Land Management, \$56 368 000 -

[Ms McHale, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Dr S.R. Shea, Executive Director, CALM.]

[Dr J.C. Byrne, Director Corporate Services.]

Dr EDWARDS: On various pages in this section reference is made to the RFA. For example, that I guess, would be a major policy decision that was made just before this budget was given to us. How will the outputs, for example, be affected by what is going to happen to CALM following the RFA? How will they be affected?

[5.11 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: The RFA was announced on Tuesday 4 May 1999 and that was subsequent to the finalisation of the budget process - you would be aware, of course, of the documentation in the budget which I handed down 2 days later - which means that essentially the impact of the RFA, particularly where funding arrangements are concerned, and that would include the new administrative arrangements, etcetera, are not identified in this budget at all. The financial arrangements are as we outlined them on the signing of the RFA. The new administrative arrangements will require legislative change. They are presently being typed and we will be bringing them into Parliament in the Spring session with the hope that they will pass through both Houses of Parliament before Christmas so that we can put them into place in advance of the finalisation of the budget for the forthcoming year so that next year's budget will actually give us a complete full year of the new administrative arrangements, the new funding arrangements and the like.

Dr EDWARDS: So will money be coming from this budget for things like the new State Conservation Agency and the new Forest Production Commission?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes, there will be a major restructure for the financial arrangements. You may recall that the Forest Production Commission and the Forest Industry Advisory Board will be funded through the royalties after deduction of costs. They will then be transmitted by way of dividend back to the government. The government will fund by way of appropriation the functions of CALM, although there will be still some net appropriation through the other fees and charges that they receive; tourism, etcetera, national park fees and the like, and the State Conservation Authority will receive its own separate budget. They will have their own staff as will the Forest Production Commission.

Mr MacLEAN: My question relates to page 239, Output 1, Nature Conservation. Could you outline the actions being taken about the feral cat problem and could you also give us some indication of the results that have been achieved in the Western Shield Program? I know it was last year but it is an ongoing program.

Mrs EDWARDES: It is an ongoing program. First of all, with the feral cats there has been a program that has been operating up at Peron Peninsula now for a couple of years and we believe that we will be able to make a significant announcement in the not too distance future as to the success of that program. It has obviously been a little bit more difficult than the fox because of the narrower window of opportunity for the feral cats and the particular bait but it is going to be quite significant because feral cats, as we well know, are a major predator as well right throughout our region but also, too, in respect to other parts of Australia and on many islands as well whereby they are meant to have more conservation control.

Western Shield received the Banksia Award last year as a national award and has highly been recognised, both nationally and internationally, as a tremendous initiative that is having some remarkable results in being able to reintroduce some of our species back to where they used to once reside. Do you want to add anything more, Dr Shea?

Dr SHEA: I will leave the cat announcement, Minister, in the sense that it has been a very important thing to achieve. I guess Western Shield has been a bit more successful than we thought. Just for the information of members, we are currently sponsoring a tour by Jarri⁷ Aboriginal Group through the south west because we are interested in extending that program into the drier regions. We are particularly keen on linking up with Aboriginal people - and it is a rather sad story - because the elders remember all those animals which were a very important part of their culture and religion. They are very keen to get them back.

The other opportunity and the particular reason for this tour is that we see an opportunity to link nature based tourism with the success of the conservation management so they will be visiting and are currently visiting Dryandra where we have developed a captive breeding program and it already is important for looking at animals. We are going out to Yanchep where they will see our Aboriginal cultural tourism and then they will be going to Pinnacles.

The Minister said there has been a very successful program at Peron with the amount of full animal control and we have a large breeding program there. I always use the example of Shark Bay as the opportunity to integrate conservation and tourism because currently a large part of the tourism in Shark Bay rests on dolphins and generates about \$5m or \$6m a year but most people only stay a day or a night and the idea is if we can get people to stay one more day just to look at these rare animals, then that would generate another \$5m, so I think it is a good example how we can link Aboriginal culture and employment to conservation and to tourism as well.

The CHAIRMAN: Dr Shea, could I ask you to speak up because I am having difficulty hearing you. These microphones are not - -

Dr SHEA: Sorry. You must excuse me because I have got a bit of a bug.

Mr MacLEAN: Could I just ask a quick follow up question relating to the feral cats? Because feral cats are a particular problem - they do not relate at all to domestic cats - is there any consideration given to taking rex⁷ around to schools and explaining the problem to school children about the difference between domestic cats and feral cats?

[5.18 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: The new interpreter centre up at Shark Bay on the Peron Peninsula, Francois Peron National Park. That particular cat is on display and I think again it is a very good educative tool for some of the problems that we do have with these cats.

Dr SHEA: I think it is a very important point because obviously everybody has, as I have in my family, people who like domestic cats and they are beautiful animals, whereas the fox I think most people are quite happy that we are getting rid of this. There is a little bit of a problem that perhaps people feel about the wild cat but what is interesting, and some of the research we are doing is fascinating, we suspect those cats go back to the time of the shipwrecks because Aboriginals actually have them as part of their folklore and we are doing some DNA studies now. The other thing is when we go out where we trap these cats and it is quite scary to see them. They are not little cats like that, they are very vicious, and I think we have actually got a video of that. I think one of the TV channels did show it but I think it is very useful to show these cats as they are operating because they are killing machines and quite different from the little one you pat on your lap in the lounge. So I think it is a good idea and we will follow that up.

Mr BRADSHAW: I notice on page 236 you are talking about nature based tourism and I just wondered whether the Department of CALM has any plans for anymore projects such as the forest heritage centre of Dwellingup and also the tree

top walk at Walpole. So have you got any plans to do any more of those nature based tourism projects around Western Australia?

Mrs EDWARDES: The tree top walk has been quite a successful project. It generated \$2.5m which has been put back into conservation as well as provided the opportunity for the provision of six new accommodation outlets which included a new 35 room motel and since it was opened in 1996 more than 500 000 visitors have visited the tree top walk. As part of the RFA announcement we will be doing a similar icon featuring the tall karri trees in and around the Donnelly River. It obviously will not be exactly the same type of tourism icon because otherwise you are going to be drawing from one to the other. What we want to do is add to their experiences and knowledge of the forest and as such build upon something which can incorporate a small group of the tall karri trees.

Where there are respective national parks and you have management plans being put in place and being developed some tourism concepts are developed as part of those management plans. Some of those are ones that we will do in CALM because they are not going to be cost effective for the private sector to get involved but wherever possible it will be something that we will put out to the private sector. The other three eco-tourism type camping sites which again was part of the RFA for the south west region we will be putting out to the private sector.

Dr EDWARDS: Following up on my previous question to the Minister is the model that you have described for restructuring CALM now fixed? Is it absolute? What other models were considered and what is the cost of implementing this new model?

Mrs EDWARDES: There were a number of models that were considered. I think everybody that raised the issue had their own particular fixed model. The model that is being developed is one I think and still believe very much meets the concerns of the public and if I can just reiterate those concerns they were that there was this perception of the conflict of interest with CALM as the management agency of conservation also having the role of the commercial side. There is obviously also too an issue for us in terms of our competitive neutrality principles and so therefore we have separated off totally the commercial arm of the native timber hardwood industry. The other aspect was obviously the representation in terms of the Lands and Forests Commission by CALM but even if you were just to remove CALM from being represented on the Lands and Forest Commission you still had the perceived conflict of interest between a body dealing with the conservation of the estate as well as dealing with some of the commercial aspects, not only just timber but also to honey production and the like. Therefore what has been developed I think is what we are all about and that is primarily conservation. So under your State Conservation Authority they will be the ones in who all of the public land will be vested. So you have got your conservationist land as well as your state forest. They will be the ones who will be doing all the auditing and monitoring of both CALMs operations and forest production commission from both those aspects but particularly from the conservation aspect and as such whereas there were other respective models all of the issues dealing with royalties and dealing with yields and dealing with the forest management plans ought to go across to a new forest department. It does not achieve what it is that we are wanting to achieve in terms of having a high focus of conservation and separating the commercial side out from the conservation side. With this model you actually have a very strong conservation aspect keeping just purely the contractual side of the native timber hardwood and the allocation of the timber to those contracts being totally separate from how the yields and royalties are established, how the forest is managed, how the compliance with ministerial conditions, how the ministerial conditions themselves will be imposed. They will be the body who will be working with the Environmental Protection Authority as well. So they are going to be a very key component.

Dr EDWARDS: What is the cost of all that?

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not have those figures with me and I can provide that back to you by way of supplementary information.

[Mr Bloffwitch, Chairman.]

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister agrees to provide that by supplementary information.

[5.25 pm]

Mr MacLEAN: My question relates to page 236, significant issues and trends, dot point 2. Could you give me some indication of the progress of the plantings for salt resistant pines down in the south west. This is the marine pine plantings. Could you also relate those plantings to the development of the Gnarup Park and especially dot point eight on page 236 which is the Aboriginal communities' expectations of being involved in land care?

Dr SHEA: Still with the maritime pine issues, the problem with salinity is rising water tables and that causes the watertable to rise in the lower valley. As yet we have not got a species and it is unlikely that we will ever get a species that will pump up that water just by planting out the salt affected area. We are experimenting, with particularly river red gum, and we have a whole range of different clones which have got salt resistance and that is ongoing.

Maritime pine and the other commercial trees we are planting though are planted up slope because the basic problem is to consume the amount of water that currently is not consumed by annual crops. That is working. We have some really classic examples. For example, Noel Monks, a farmer from north of Gingin, has a classic example where he has put in rows of maritime pine and kept the water table descending whereas in adjacent paddocks it is reaching the surface. The program is driven commercially. Maritime pine is a very commercial species. In France and the Bordeaux region there is a million hectares of it. Interestingly, it was planted there over 100 years ago on the instructions of Napoleon the II, I think, to deal

with rising water tables and erosion. That currently supports an industry employing some 40 000 people. This year we are planting 5 000, the next year we are planting 10 000. There are some really interesting technical developments with the maritime pine program which I am happy to answer any questions regarding. It is a tree that has been significantly improved since it came from the Mediterranean. It has increased by 140 per cent in volume. We now have the capacity, with a tremendous gene pool, to be able to select for other wood properties and we are currently negotiating with French people for some really interesting new technology to do that quickly.

Moving on to the Gngangara pine program, that neatly fits into the overall program. What was recognised as the Gngangara - although it was a good idea at the time, in effect, the decision to plant pines there effectively protected the water mound, which was not then used, for future use. As time has gone on we have a number of problems. One is that as the trees get bigger they consume water and that is in conflict with the water mound so we are working with the water people to thin the plantations down.

The other thing is that there is also constraints on making the trees grow faster. You cannot put as much fertiliser on as you want and so on. The other major problem is that it is a well known area for dumping stolen cars and the normal thing is that after a stolen car has been dumped it is set alight. So, it is constantly a fight to maintain the forest state. So, a decision was made by government to progressively commercially remove the resource on that Gngangara mound and, using those funds, to replace the resource by the growing of trees on the farmland. As has happened, the growth of trees in farmland is about three or four times greater on that mound because of the extra fertiliser.

In terms of Aboriginal people, CALM has a very keen interest in working with Aboriginal people around the State. In terms of the actual Gngangara process we will use the normal planning process to have Aboriginal people involved. We are very fortunate to have Aboriginal people on our staff. Noel Nannup⁹ is the head of our Aboriginal cultural tourist section and he will be one of the people being used to look at how we can bring them into the planning process.

Mr MASTERS: I refer to page 237 where there is a set of allocations to the Gascoyne Murchison strategy and then three pages later one of the major achievements this year is to purchase three pastoral leases under that strategy. Can I, first of all, commend the strategy to you and say that - - considering the Murchison Gascoyne area is recognised as one of the most degraded pastoral areas in Australia and therefore is in urgent need of land care. In terms of future expenditure, how is that money to be spent by CALM? I presume it is primarily nature conversation rather than land care work. If so, will there be any further property purchases and in addition or, alternatively, will there be money provided to pastoral station lessees to allow them to continue to maintain a physical presence on their station whilst doing conversation works? The reason I ask that is because I am aware of the fact that one of the important things about that Murchison Gascoyne area is that it has a low population density and it is important to keep people there to maintain roads and keep air strips open and so on. I would be interested to hear comments about the future of the Murchison Gascoyne area.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will be continuing to expand our conservation reserve system and it is from a conservation aspect in that region and it is actually being done in conjunction with some funds from the Federal Government as well. It is hoped that we will be able to make an announcement in the not too distant future as to the number of purchases that we have been able to make to date which has been quite significant in terms of adding to the conservation estate up there.

[5.32 pm]

Dr SHEA: I think it is a tremendous initiative but I also understand the question the member for Vasse has asked and we agree. One classic example is that with Burnerbinmah, which is station in the Gascoyne. We have retained the pastoralist to stay on the station and he is very happy because he maintains his lifestyle and has turned overnight into a very strong conservationist. Apart from destocking, which has a remarkable effect in terms of bring back the vegetation, we are then progressively introducing feral animal control, so we are very conscious of the fact. The last thing we want to do - - and nor could we afford the prospect of putting a whole cadre of state government employees on the station, so we are very interested in doing that to actually retain people on the pastoral lands. We are also working with people in implementing the Gascoyne Regional Strategy in a variety of ways. In addition to outright purchases of stations, we are also developing section 16 leases where part of it is set aside. There is also the opportunity, we believe, for other types of activity in the Gascoyne region, particularly nature based tourism, and there are already some pastoralists working there. As you know, quite a lot of stations are now owned by Aboriginal people. As I said, we have this troop of Aboriginal people working with us. There is a real opportunity to work with them. There are parts of the sandalwood industry where we are already providing contracts for pastoralists, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to get other sources income. The other interesting aspect of the Gascoyne region is that in addition to our purchases and Aboriginal purchases we are seeing very significant mining company purchases and we are also working with those companies, particularly in looking at the opportunity for conservation. I agree with you that as usual with all these things it is a balance in that - in a lot of areas we will not be grazing sheep, certainly not on our lands - we need to retain the infrastructure for fire control and feral animal control, so it does involve working very closely with the people. The big advantage of course is that many of these people have spent their lives on the stations and have a commitment and they are interested. The people of Burnerbinmah, who are tremendous people, are relishing being in the same place but doing a totally different job and we want to extend that model.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 239, Output 1: Nature Conservation. In how many national parks are entry fees actively collected? What do you do about people who are not paying the entry fees? Is there a capacity to issue infringement notices yet, and if not, when will there be one?

Mrs EDWARDES: We have not got the capacity yet to issue infringement notices, although we are working towards that.

That requires legislative change. In respect to those who do not pay, in the initial stages it is basically an educative program and warnings are issued and the majority of people once it is identified to them, are really supportive and therefore pay. The number of national parks - -

Dr SHEA: We will take it on notice, Minister. I just do not know.

Mrs EDWARDES: We can provide that too by way of supplementary information.

Mr BRADSHAW: With the low output of jarrah, is it expected the return to CALM for the government will increase as demand will outstrip supply? Does CALM receive a royalty or does CALM sell the logs off to the highest bidder?

Dr SHEA: The overall impact in this coming year of reductions in royalty due to the reduction in quantity of timbers harvested, and this is karri and jarrah, is 1.87m. It is a disproportionate increase this year because there is quite a sudden drop in the karri cut of some 15 000 cubic metres. Those royalties are gone and that is an area where we have not got funding. In terms of auctions, it has been a great dilemma with this industry since forever in that it is not large enough to have a free market. For example, in the United States, in the oregon forests, they do auction timbers but the difficulty with an auctioning process in a market like ours is that you could go from the saw-miller who has invested maybe \$2m and he misses out on auction, even if it is only for a year, and he has got no resource. So what was initiated in the 1987 timber strategy was, if you like, a blend of long term contracts with topping up with tenders and auctions. So we have tenders and auctions running all the time but underpinning it are these contracts. Prior to the 1987 timber strategy there was no security so there was no investment in the timber industry. We have been trying to juggle the need for security to enable investment to occur but also we want to exploit the market so that we can do it. When royalties are then determined, one of the factors that is taken into consideration is the results from auctions and tenders. So it is a blend of the two.

Mr BROWN: If I can refer to page 242, under the heading of Output Measures, and under the heading of Quantity, particularly the first line, it refers to native forest - tonnes harvested, then under 1998-99 the estimated amount which is 1.63m. As I understand it, in the last year's budget it was estimated that there would be 1.725m tonnes harvested for this year, so that now appears to have dropped back. Can you tell us the reason as to why that has dropped back? That is the first question. There is a series of questions.

[5.40 pm]

Dr SHEA: There are two reasons. One is the general market recession in the industry. It has been very significant now progressively over three years. The other reason for the reduction in cut, and it is a good reason, is that particularly in jarrah the move has been quite substantially towards value adding and kiln drying, but each kiln is a unit and so it cannot be incremental. It is a big investment for each unit. Currently all the kilns are full bore and they cannot get enough timber through them and so one of the reasons, which was inevitable, is that there has been a hold, if you like, in investment in new kilns because they did not know what the outcome of the RFA was. So there are two reasons for the reduction in the overall market situation. If I can give some indication of how serious it is in the pulp and paper industry, one of our clients is the Oji Paper Company who we are growing the bluegums for in Albany. They are a very old company, over 100 years old. They recently advised me that this is the worst year in their whole history.

Mr BROWN: For demand, you mean?

Dr SHEA: For demand.

Mr BROWN: Has electronic commerce...(Inaudible)...

Dr SHEA: In a strange sort of way, electronic commerce has actually generated for them more demand. As you know, if you have a computer there, when you go home and pump it out, the first thing you want to do is get a hard copy, and with good quality paper, and so the demand for good quality paper has in fact increased. It has become a bit of a joke, the paperless office; it has got more papers. If your office is anything like mine, we are generating more paper than before. There is a very, very serious recession across the world, particularly in Pacific Rim countries, and particularly in Japan. Just to measure it, Oji say it is the worst record in over 100 years of history.

Mr BROWN: I notice the 1999-2000 target is 1.555. Why has that target been adjusted down? For the same reason?

Dr SHEA: It has and it will be reduced down further because these figures did not incorporate the reduction in yields that were programmed in the RFA. In addition to that, with the signing of the RFA there will be another reduction of yields in total, jarrah and karri, in the region of 30 000 to 40 000 cubic metres.

Mr BROWN: In terms of tonnes as well?

Dr SHEA: Same thing, roughly a tonne a cubic metre.

Mr BROWN: So 30 000 or 40 000 - - so 1.5 it will go down to. Right. What is it expected to be in the out? years for that?

Mrs EDWARDES: Those will probably have to be reworked again because of the implementation of the RFA and the stepping down in the reduction from 2000.

Dr SHEA: Beyond 2004 we do know that the sustained yield, as has been verified, is for jarrah - and this is saw logs - 286 000 cubic metres and for karri 178 000 cubic metres. They will be saw logged. Now, in addition to that is the wood

that is taken for other means, whether it is woodchips or so on, but the basic saw log yield will be quite substantial beyond 2004 and progressively until 2004.

Mr BROWN: Can you provide us by way of supplementary information the expected yields for the next three financial years?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes. We can provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr BROWN: Could you provide also in that supplementary information whether the yields that you expect are restricted by the RFA or whether the yields you expect are likely to be further restricted by market conditions given obviously in terms of - - what I am looking at is what is the maximum allowable under the RFA for each year and what your expectation is in the maximum that you would ... (Inaudible)... given particular market conditions. Now, obviously the first is known, the second is unknown, and you are asking me to poke in the dark a bit but nevertheless can you do that?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes.

Dr SHEA: I can comment now on that second question. If you look at the current situation, the cuts are probably at the lowest level in the whole history of the timber industry. In terms of jarrah, it is around about 350 000 cubic metres and that is at the bottom of the market. We are already starting to see some upturn in the market, particularly in the value added sector. My reasonable guess is that what will set the amount that is actually sold will not be the market because we are now at the bottom, it is increasing. What will be the limit on it will be the sustainable levels which will, as I said, be in the years beyond 2003-04; in the case of jarrah, 286 000 cubic metres; in the case of karri, 178 000. I think the market will not be the only factor that constrains it. It will be the quantity of timber.

Mr BROWN: What about the years before 2003?

Dr SHEA: My guess is, and one could never be surprised by the economy, but looking at the economy now and looking at programming in quite significant cuts this year, the problem will be the demand for logs, not being able to sell - - we are seeing the beginnings of a substantial pick-up, particularly in the value added market. We will give you those estimates but that is from my judgement of - - in that period that we will see the industry go up to the levels and the job will be for the industry because the industry has agreed with the Minister that they will manage the reduction themselves to meet that reduction.

Mr BROWN: Can you then just clarify for us in the figures you provide, one, what is allowable over the next four financial years in terms of the RFA and existing contracts and so on, and in terms of total cuts and so on, and, secondly, what your expectation is in terms of those cuts?

Mrs EDWARDES: We can provide that.

[5.47 pm]

Dr EDWARDS: If I can follow on, given the advertisements that have been in the paper and on TV about Westwood and their sale of jarrah, to what extent is there a bit of a glut of jarrah and what type of jarrah is that glut occurring with?

Dr SHEA: I am not close to the commercial side of the industry but certainly the anecdotal evidence is that there is increasing demand for value added jarrah and judging by the number of people - I had a personal group in my office this morning who are very interested in that value adding market - there have been substantial inroads being made, particularly into North America. For example, Max Jensen⁷ is the person who provided the furniture which is now outside the Parliament here. His orders are something like a 40 per cent increase each year. Dino Gasseti⁷ similarly and Bunnings have made very big inroads and Geoff Bertolini's group are selling this higher value material into the Japanese market. So I think there would have been a very serious problem if the industry had not restructured to value adding because despite the low interest rates there is still housing demand that has been down. If they were only producing structural timber and jarrah then I think they would have had a problem but because a lot of them have, and in the case of Bunnings substantially, changed over to value added material I think they can sell it. There are certainly indications that the market is increasing quite dramatically in that area.

Mr BRADSHAW: In relation to Westwoods it is value added wood but its seconds tend to be seconds in the way of floorboards and things like that.

Dr EDWARDS: Can we get some more information on that because it does seem to conflict with what you were saying previously? We have had this company advertising that they have got so much jarrah they are having to cut their prices by 50 per cent and really off load it. If we can get more information about what type of jarrah it is, whether it is jarrah that has actually had value added to it or whatever, that would be useful.

Mrs EDWARDES: They are not within our sphere of interest and we will find out whatever information we can and we will provide that by way of supplementary.

Mr MASTERS: Minister, first of all can I refer you to page 238, recurrent outputs and I am pleased to see that for the last three years the native forest management has returned a profit and I hope that puts to bed the lie that somehow the taxpayer of Western Australia is subsidising the native forest management side of CALM's activities. So my first question is, is that profitability expected to continue in the future?

Mrs EDWARDES: Obviously given the changes to the administrative arrangements as well this is going to be represented quite differently next year and it will be the forest production commission who receives all the royalties and will be, after deduction of costs, then remitting that back to government by way of a dividend and we believe that there will always be that dividend back to government and also too as part of the RFA there is a commitment to a further review of royalties as well.

Mr MASTERS: That was my second question and I refer to page 243, the first dot point, where it states -

Negotiations were finalised with the timber industry on the payment of a second phased increase in royalties.

I have always held the view that, until royalties on our hardwoods are sufficiently high so as to encourage the growth of hardwood timbers on private property, the best we can hope for is that there will be woodchip production or logs for woodchip production from private property but the extra time and effort required to turn those logs into sawn timber logs, the economics simply are not there unless the royalties are significantly higher. Could I seek from the Minister a broad overview of where she sees native timber royalties going over the next, say, 10 years recognising as you pointed out that as part of the RFA there is the opportunity for further renegotiation of royalties?

Mrs EDWARDES: Royalties since 1993 when we came into government has been increased for jarrah by 38 per cent and for karri by 31 per cent and obviously any review for the royalties is going to look at all the particular aspects and particularly we will ask them to focus in on the points that you have made but some of the other points that have been made in terms of the issues that have been raised by way of public submissions throughout the RFA, that will all be fed into the forthcoming review. So I would not like to pre-empt where I believed royalties would go other than to say that I think you would be fairly safe to say that they would be continuing to increase to represent the value of that resource for Western Australians.

Mr MASTERS: Can I just add that Dr Shea mentioned the Jensen Jarrah outdoor furniture is in the courtyard of Parliament House. Max Jensen is obviously operating in my electorate and I understand that he said that royalties on native timbers currently comprise about two per cent of his total cost of production. So if we, as a government and as a community, are keen on increasing that sort of value adding, then a significant increase in royalties will not actually do much to the bottom line of a producer of those products.

[5.55 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: That is something that obviously is factored in in terms of the review and that has been done in the last two reviews that I have overseen since coming into this portfolio. As Dr Shea indicated his product is very highly regarded and has been well received overseas and the opportunities for him to grow are enormous and he is one of the key players who wished to put his hand up for the revamped Nannup Mill, but it is pleasing to know that it is not just one. There is another keen player as well in the market and likely to be more.

Mr BRADSHAW: With regard to national park management in regard to the Yalgorup National Park management plan, it states that where possible and where suitable, private land will be bought from the money available. What sort of money is available in the budget for the purchase of such land?

Mrs EDWARDES: For the conservation estate?

Mr BRADSHAW: For the conservation estate, yes, but private land adjoining a national park like Yalgorup, for example, and it seems the guy at the Department of Conservation and Land Management has ...(Inaudible).... Is there funding in relation to that and, if so, how much?

Mrs EDWARDES: There is funding in the budget for that but it is not just limited to that funding because there is also Federal funding which is available for us to add to the conservation estate and usually it is done on a 50/50 basis as well, although we have been successful in getting more than 50 per cent in some purchases from the Federal government. I will ask Dr Byrne to identify the amount of money for the conservation state.

Dr BYRNE: We have significant amounts of money provided for land purchases as the Minister said on a 50:50 basis with the Federal Government. In addition, there is a general provision of \$200 000 to pick up the odd parcels of land that come on the market from time to time.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 240 reference is made to the State salinity action plan. Can you give us the total figure of the amount of money that CALM is contributing to this plan for the coming financial year and the breakdown of the activities?

Mrs EDWARDES: As you would be aware, the amount of money that CALM puts in is not just the total sum of money that goes into the salinity action plan. There are other departments that go in and that is the Water and Rivers Commission, Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Protection.

For the forthcoming budget CALM's total is \$14 352 000. You add the other departments which is 5.35. That gives you a total for the forthcoming budget; government total of 19.7 and it is an increase over last year which was 15.285.

Dr EDWARDS: And what is the breakdown of CALM's input?

Mrs EDWARDES: Nursery expansion is 1.876 for next year, although the total cost for the nursery expansion has been 8.588. Planting of maritime pine is 9.702 and reserve and catchment protection is 4.65.

Dr EDWARDS: How is the funding of the maritime pine done?

Mrs EDWARDES: Essentially, asset sales have largely funded the maritime pine planting costs for 1997 and 1998 and they will also be relied upon to fund the 99-2000 winter plantings.

Dr EDWARDS: What assets propose to be sold?

Mrs EDWARDES: Dr Shea?

Dr SHEA: The principal asset is the Baldvis land but the detail for the assets John Byrne will have because he manages this for us.

Dr BYRNE: Next year in the Baldvis plantation we are selling some land. We are hoping to sell some land to the police academy at Joondalup. It is state forest which has been cleared for revocation by the Assembly and is currently before the Council. That would be about \$1.8m from that source. From the Baldvis land at least \$6m is our estimate for the next financial year. We are in the final stages of negotiating with Commerce and Trade to sell about \$4m of land at Como for the CSIRO this financial year. In the future the other part of the Joondalup land will be sold for another \$4.5m. I think that will be next financial year or the year after.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, it being 6.00 pm I will leave the Chair and resume at approximately 7.00 pm.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

The CHAIRMAN: We are still on division 42, CALM.

Mr BROWN: On the top of page 241, the first three dot points under major initiatives for 1999-2000, the first dot point says:

Develop a new Biological Diversity Conservation Act to replace the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.

Can the Minister advise what work has been done to date in developing this new Act and when it is envisaged that the new Act will be introduced into Parliament?

Mrs EDWARDES: Considerable work has been done on the new Act and we are primarily in consultation as to what needed to be in the new Act and are proceeding to drafting within the next few weeks although some considerable amount of drafting has already happened in terms of the 1992 wildlife amendments which went back out to the public in 1992. So therefore some of that material is going to be incorporated primarily because it has relevance. Biodiversity has taken over since that time and adds an issue - the Act and the reason for the change of the name because it incorporates the concept and so therefore there is needed to be further work to be done to add to it. Further drafting is about to commence and as such, whilst I would have liked to have said that I could have had it into this session, or the spring session, it is more than likely going to come into Parliament next year. I think that is reasonable because one of the things that I have indicated, is that because of the extent of it - and also, too, the fact that it is replacement Act of a very old Act - that what we do need to do is involve all the major stakeholders in consultation. That has been fairly positive and productive in terms of the environmental protection amendments. Both the minor amendments that went through the Parliament earlier and as well as the major amendments which we are progressing at the moment. The same will be the case with the Biodiversity Bill that by having gone back out through the major stakeholders and people that have got an interest in this area that we will actually come back to the Parliament with a much more compact Bill.

Mr BROWN: So, you see this ...(indistinct)... session this year?

Mrs EDWARDES: I would say next year. It would depend upon the level of consultation; if matters arise out of the consultation. I do not want to be held to a timetable which means that I need to get it into the Parliament with a Bill which is of a lesser quality. I would prefer to get it right first and foremost.

Mr BROWN: So, some time in the year 2000?

Mrs EDWARDES: We would be looking at bringing it in next year.

Mr BROWN: The next dot point states:

Continue to expand the conservation reserve system with an emphasis on marine areas and the Gascoyne-Murchison rangelands.

I am not sure what that, in fact, means in terms of real areas. What does that mean?

Mrs EDWARDES: Pastoral leases and the like.

Mr BROWN: You are talking about expanding the conservation reserve system. What is in mind in relation to that?

Dr SHEA: I do not want to pre-empt my Minister's announcement about what we have already purchased but looking in terms of at least a million hectares addition when the program is completed.

Mr BROWN: So this is what; pastoral leases purchased?

Dr SHEA: Pastoral leases that we will purchase in the next - -

Mr BROWN: And then they will be what; used as pastoral leases?

Dr SHEA: They will be destocked. We already have a million hectares of pastoral land in the conservation estate.

Mr BROWN: So, is there money in this budget for the purchasing of those pastoral leases?

Dr SHEA: Yes.

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes, there is, but as I indicated earlier we actually did address this question before. It is not just reliant upon funds within this budget. There are considerable funds in store from the Federal Government for purchases of conservation areas and usually it is on a 50:50 basis but in some areas we have actually been able to work successfully in getting extra funds from the Commonwealth.

Mr BROWN: So, in terms of the money you had in this budget, how much money do you have in this budget for the purchase of pastoral leases?

Mrs EDWARDES: Dr Byrne, that was what; 200 000?

SPEAKER: It was more than that for the pastoral program.

Mrs EDWARDES: Just for this area.

Dr BYRNE: Could I have a moment, if I may, just to find the right page, page 237 there is details of major policy decisions on the Gascoyne-Murchison strategy.

Mr BROWN: Yes, but is all that money there for the purchase of pastoral leases?

Dr BYRNE: 1999-2000 budget estimate \$3.2m and forward estimates 2000-2001 up to 2002 and 2003 \$1.2m per year.

Mr BROWN: So that is all for the purchase of pastoral leases?

[7.08 pm]

Dr BYRNE: Purchase of pastoral leases from the State's contribution but there are also other components; management of the pastoral leases and other components like that. In addition to that State money there is also Federal money that the Minister mentioned.

Dr SHEA: As the Minister implied, we have actually got a very good deal with the Commonwealth where we put up \$1, they put up \$2 for the purchase. So in fact, those funds are multiplied quite considerably by federal money.

Mr BROWN: Right. Can we get by way of supplementary information just how much of that amount that is shown there is going to be used for the purchase of pastoral leases and what the expectations of the state are in terms of Commonwealth level? I do not know what pastoral leases are worth these days. I know what the state collects from them in terms of royalties.

Mrs EDWARDES: We are happy to provide that by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you happy to do that, Minister?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes.

Mr BROWN: Have you selected the pastoral leases?

Mrs EDWARDES: There have been a number which have been identified and whilst I would like to identify those which we have been successful on, we are presently working with the federal government, given the considerable investment in this area, to be able to make the announcement. There are a number which are still in progression and under way in terms of some of the negotiations. You will even find you might get to negotiations which actually fall by the wayside, but as they become available and are going to be a significant contribution to our conservation estate, that is where we target.

Mr BROWN: Some of the pastoral leases up there have run into difficult times, have they not?

Dr SHEA: Yes. I think they are in very difficult times with the price of wool. I should just elaborate on that question you asked. We do not have specific stations targeted. We have done an ecological survey over the whole area and it is zoned. So what we are looking for is representative conservation areas so that we are not tied to a particular station. It has been our experience that we are flooded with inquiries about selling pastoral stations but we have not targeted any.

Mr BROWN: So that work has already been done. Is that available?

Dr SHEA: I think it is generally available. It is not published but it is just ecological survey data if you are interested.

Mr BROWN: You can provide it?

Mrs EDWARDES: We can provide that information by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr BROWN: The fact that the pastoral industry is now in these doldrums and difficult times, is that reflected in the prices that you have been talking about to me?

Dr SHEA: I guess so, but we are - -

Mr BROWN: I do not want any specifics.

Dr SHEA: No. We are subject to Valuer General valuations and as is usual, when things are very prosperous, there is a disparity between what a pastoralist would accept and the Valuer General's valuation. At present there is a general acceptance of the Valuer General's valuation without much negotiation. I guess that is a reflection of the fact that probably in its history this is the most severe time of economic hardship.

Mr BROWN: The third dot point refers to the voluntary nature conservation covenanting scheme. Can you explain why that sort of voluntary scheme that you refer to there is being used?

Mrs EDWARDES: It has been very successful. I think there are a number of reasons. Land owners are starting to understand the value of their land better in terms of the protection of some of the earth, whether it be remnant vegetation, whether it be swamp, whether it be something unique in terms of flora and the like. As such, they are actually entering into this voluntary scheme of land for wildlife and we assist and support them in doing so.

Dr EDWARDS: Is the land for wildlife scheme, and what you are referring to as a voluntary nature conservation covenanting scheme, something different?

Mrs EDWARDES: Separate, absolutely separate.

Mr BRADSHAW: On page 236, significant issues and trends, I notice it has:

Unique location on the globe of Perth Observatory resulting in continued demands for its services and for use of its facilities by international astronomical institutions.

How did the Department of Conservation and Land Management finish up with the Perth Observatory and do we actually make any money out of providing these services which you say there are continued demands on and these international astronomical institutions that use the facilities?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will ask Dr Shea to answer, but if any of you have not been up there to actually have a look, do so. It is great. Take your kids. It is something which is unique and we should actually enjoy it.

Dr SHEA: The decision was made at the time by Minister Foss, who was our Minister, because it was an oddball. It had been moved around a lot. I think it was in the Department of Administrative Services and there was a choice between the museum and arts portfolio or CALM and the Minister decided to put it in CALM because he thought we would be more entrepreneurial. I must say that we have actually applied internal net appropriations to that group so that they retain all their revenue. Although it is a relatively small unit, we are in quite a unique situation in terms of the universe. If you look that span of observatories around the world, that is the one in between Africa and eastern Australia, so there is a lot of scientific interest. There is considerable sponsorship by American foundations to it. We are very interested in the idea and we are working with the CSIRO on the radio astronomical thing which could go out in the pastoral country, but there is also a possibility, and it is a long term goal, to look at a major observatory in the pastoral Gascoyne region because it is about one of the best places on earth to view the stars because you have got absolute clarity. Just as an add on, I think that is one of the great attractions in terms of tourism, particularly when I take my Japanese colleagues out to the pastoral region, they are just amazed, as I was on Monday night, Minister, if I may, as I lay in swag - because the government wanted me to be economic in the way I travel these days - as I looked up at the stars I could almost pick the stars as I was up in the Goldfields. So it is a very interesting area.

[7.16 pm]

Mr BRADSHAW: Do you make any money out of it from these people that use the place?

Dr SHEA: Yes, we do. It is still obviously a deficit. Perhaps John Byrne could answer specifically.

Dr BYRNE: Yes. As shown on page 248 of the statement, Total Cost of Output is \$976 000 and operating revenues \$96 000, is currently covering 10 per cent of costs. Quite a lot of the visitors are school groups and you do not really want to charge school groups because it is an educational activity properly funded by the state for that purpose. In addition to cash revenue, there are also donations of various kinds. We received a donation of historic 16 inch aperture telescope from the University of Western Australia, and other donations from American universities. The fourth dot point, electronic cameras; one was donated by the University of Cincinnati. In addition, the Department of Astronomy, Ohio State University also donated a camera to us. So quite apart from the cash contribution, we have some partnerships with groups that provide goods in kind.

Mr BRADSHAW: Just to follow on that, can I just go up there one night? Is it open to the public each night or most nights?

Dr SHEA: It is best to ring ahead because we have a program and also we have a problem when the clouds come over. You certainly can ring up and there are programs for it, less in winter because of the cloud problem, but you can certainly go.

Mr MASTERS: Minister, I think the planning and environment committee might have to arrange an evening excursion there.

Mrs EDWARDES: I would be pleased to organise it and host it, and similarly for yours.

Dr SHEA: Minister, if I can just add one thing, which we have noted there, and I think it is quite interesting, we are hoping to set up an Internet site because this is an unusual part of the world for seeing things and with the Internet we will be able to further let the general public have access to what we are seeing.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 242, in the native forest - tonnes harvested output, and I ask, in light of the Minister's comment with the release of the COG report, has the second expert panel been established yet; if so, who is on it, and when will its work be completed?

Mrs EDWARDES: The second, as against the Turner? panel which verified the figures, no, it has not, neither has the terms of reference or the identification of the individuals to form part of that panel been established. It is estimated, in the discussion with Mike Codd, Bernard Bowen and Dr Shea at the time, that their work will take approximately 12 months and as such their work needs to commence prior to the draft forest management plan because it is their verification of those figures which will go into the draft forest management plan to go out to the public. The draft forest management plan takes a couple of years and that needs to be in place by the beginning of 2004, so you are looking at this panel actually starting in the year 2000-2001.

The CHAIRMAN: Further questions, members?

Dr EDWARDS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Maylands.

Dr EDWARDS: Continuing on with the RFA, with regard to those voluntary reductions that industry has given with the cuts to the karri and jarrah, have contracts been signed to lock in those lower levels, or how are you going to manage that process?

Mrs EDWARDES: No, it has not, and that is the reason why it is a voluntary acceptance of the step down between now and 2004. We have entered into contracts and as such it has really been due to the industry's acceptance of that step down that we will be able to achieve that. I mean, if they had not accepted that - - and as Dr Shea was saying earlier, the production side as against the harvesting side has actually increased and therefore there was potential that they would actually start to mill more in the next year as against what they have done in the last year. That certainly was not something that we wanted to have happen. We wanted them, as a government, to move towards their reduction and we were able to move them in that direction.

Dr EDWARDS: Could I ask if the Minister or Dr Shea could give us a brief overview of sandalwood? With the contract with Mount Romance, what percentage of the volume of sandalwood that is taken goes to them? Can you give an idea of where all the bits of sandalwood come from? For example, when will the Kununurra sandalwood come on-stream? To what extent has the whole issue of Sandalwood been taken up privately and to what extent is it still coming from Crown lands?

[7.23 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: I will get Dr Shea to respond in respect of that. I can say that the products that come out of Mount Romance are one of the secrets of Western Australia at the moment and if you have not used any of their products do so because it is quite surprising that we in Western Australia can produce such a product, whether it be for cleansing or make-up, that is of such high quality. I have been very impressed not only with their marketing and their new products that they are about to go into, which is going to increase the need for sandalwood, but their current products.

Dr SHEA: You have asked a question which the Minister will regret because it is a very favourite subject of mine. It is like the cat question I get in the upper House. It is, as the Minister has indicated, a very exciting industry. In a very brief time, Madam Chair, I will try to give you a thumbnail sketch of an industry which was a first export in Western Australia. What has happened is that in the early days of the sandalwood spicatum, which is a Western Australian sandalwood, there was in fact quite large exports to China and there was value adding. There is a company which actually was producing oil, then that collapsed about the depression and the then Conservator of Forests bought them all out and established the Sandalwood Act. From that time onwards the production has basically been for joss sticks into the Asian market and it has been a very profitable exercise. The value is about \$4000 or \$5000 a tonne to the state net. A couple of things have happened which are very exciting. Firstly, on the biological side, we had some research done at Kununurra by a PhD student, one of our employees that we sponsored, and he was using Indian sandalwood, which is the product from India, which is in serious trouble because they are not regenerating and it is a very difficult industry in India. We have been able to develop a technology which allows us to grow it very economically, probably on a 15, maybe 20 year rotation. That technology involves using very sophisticated forestry practices, using different hosts at different times, and nowhere else in the world is that being done. The other thing which we have patented is that we are able to induce sandalwood oil formation much easier by a special injection which, unless I am pilloried before the committee, I will not reveal, Minister, because it is worth a lot of money. So we have the capacity with Indian sandalwood to do that and there is actually 300 hectares privately sponsored sandalwood going into the Ord River. The nice thing about that is that the hosts also that we have used are ornamental timbers, high value, tropical African timbers and Asian timbers, so you get two for the price of one. What is also interesting is that in the wheatbelt maritime pine program we are establishing sandalwood because sandalwood used to be extensive right throughout the wheatbelt. We have again been able to crack the technology to grow that in plantation form and we find that usually we offer something like a few hectares with our maritime pine program. Our farmers love it. It is a double-barrelled tree. Because it is a native and it has a native host, this is a parasite, you get two conservation trees but

also a money tree. It is very valuable. We have been very interested, as we are with the overall timber industry, in developing value adding in Western Australia and Mount Romance won a tender. I will check the figures. It is initially about 10 per cent of the total quota. We were looking for somebody to diversify the market and also try to do it in Western Australia. This guy is a goer. He has 40 different products already and he has changed the whole focus of that factory, which is really owned by Indian people, to focus on sandalwood. He is also negotiating with French perfumeries. It is used as a base in perfumery. The other market which is very potential is called the new age market where you know a number of products are sold in terms of their health or pharmaceutical benefits. There is in fact research done on sandalwood which shows that it has very, very potent effects on bacteria at very low concentrations, so we are working with Mount Romance on that. As I said, Madam Chair, I apologise but it just happened to strike a chord and I hope you heard that. It is a very exciting industry. The member for Maylands, one of your questions was where does the existing resource come from. It grows naturally from Shark Bay right the way through to the South Australian border and beyond. In fact, I was out on Monday digging up a few samples of root systems to check them out. It grows in a scattered woodland formation. That is an incredibly valuable asset because we are also doing a lot of research on the genetic make-up of sandalwood and we are finding tremendous variation in percentage oil contents but also variations in the constituents of the oil. So there is a real prospect with some of our other technology to actually breed, and we are already actually breeding, as we are with maritime pine, particular properties. The vision - particularly if Mount Romance is successful, and I am very confident that sort of entrepreneurial effort will be successful - is that we have the potential on a sustainable basis of having a recreation of the asset that we first had when we came to Western Australia, right throughout the wheatbelt, very significant areas of sandalwood sustainable of producing maybe in 20 years time 5000, 10 000 tonnes; times \$5000, that is just the royalty farmer to the farmer, then multiply, when you take a little scoop of it and make it into a perfume, you talk about real value added. So it is a good news story and very exciting.

Mrs EDWARDES: Have you actually had a chance of visiting the Mount Romance factory?

Dr EDWARDS: No, Minister.

Mrs EDWARDES: Next time you are down in Albany take the opportunity of going and actually having a look at what they are doing there. It is a well worthwhile visit. Apart from the fact of the product and the value to the state, it has also become a good tourism attraction for all people in that region, but it is well worthwhile to visit.

Mr BRADSHAW: With regard to the plantation up in Kununurra, do you need a licence for that or can people just get into the industry?

Dr SHEA: There is no embargo. Currently the old Sandalwood Act, going back to the 1930s, has a ceiling on the percentage of private wood that could be sold. Under competition policy, and I have just forwarded the report to the Minister, that will be taken out of the Act, so long before that wood comes on the market there will be no constraint on selling sandalwood from private entrepreneurs.

[7.30 pm]

Division 43: Environmental Protection, \$19 950 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for the Environment.]

[Dr B.R. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Environmental Protection.]

[Mr G. Ticehurst, Manager Finance and Administration, Department of Environmental Protection.]

Dr EDWARDS: On page 456 there is reference to the resource agreement. Can you briefly explain what the resource agreement is?

Dr JENKINS: There is now a standard approach between Treasury and each department once there is an agreement on the budget that there is a sign off by the department with Treasury on that amount. So, it is as simple as that.

Dr EDWARDS: Thank you.

Mr MASTERS: I refer to page 459, output measures. In particular, around about the middle under Timeliness, I note that the provision of advice within 60 days is estimated to go down from 90 to 80 per cent and Environmental Conditions, I presume being set, within 3 days will go down from 91 to 80 per cent. Can I inquire as to the reasons for the pessimistic targets for this year recognising that the work of the environmental impact services section of the DEP is very important to industry and if these targets mean an industry is kept waiting longer, then obviously there are economic impacts and implications.

Mrs EDWARDES: The targets are exactly that; they are targets. So, it is not actually going down, it is the fact that in 1998-1999 the work of the Department of Environmental Protection was well above what was previously expected and so therefore the target is a very conservative target of what we believe we will be able to achieve but as of 1998-1999 it may very well be that we will exceed that.

Mr MASTERS: It is important to aim high, if possible.

Mrs EDWARDES: As you look through many of the outcomes that are referred there, and the outputs and the like, they are actually doing particularly well and is something that they should be commended for. If you look at page 461 in terms of the output measures that have been identified there and just throughout I can suggest to you that the department are exceeding targets beyond expectations and I have no doubt that they will actually continue to do so.

Dr EDWARDS: On page 458, under major initiatives for 1999-2000 we have finalisation of Perth's bush plan. What has happened to the review of system 6 given there is some system 6 areas outside of bush plans area? Are the other systems going to be reviewed as well?

Dr JENKINS: The member is entirely correct. There is additional system 6 areas outside of the metropolitan area that is covered by Perth bush plan. When the Perth bush plan work is complete a more detailed analysis of the remainder of the system 6 area, including some of the system 1 area that is really a very similar vegetation association type that work will then be completed.

Dr EDWARDS: Can I ask about the other initiatives immediately underneath. When do you think the State's implementation plan for the national greenhouse strategy will be published?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will ask Dr Jenkins to respond to that. You would be well aware that Western Australia has established the most comprehensive consultation process towards the development of a State plan or State response to the national greenhouse strategy than any other State in Australia. As such, whatever is going to be published we believe will be jointly owned by everybody and I think that is important, rather than a government just necessarily plucking figures out of the air which, with respect to my other State colleagues, is not necessarily the way to go and it is the way that they have approached it. The matters are still presently before the committee from the technical working groups in respect to each of the stages and are still to come to me. So, it is not likely to be published for some months as I am still to receive it. I hope to meet with the council shortly and hopefully we will be able to progress it from that point.

Dr JENKINS: There is the State process which is being run but the time lines, to a large extent, have to be coordinated with the national process. The greenhouse council is developing what is going to be the most cost effective way for the State to deal with the issue. That then has to be moulded in with the national process.

Mr MASTERS: Page 465, top of the page is the costs associated with output 5, waste management. Could I be advised of the number of dollars involved in the once off OMEX funding in 1998-1999 and also the breakdown in dollars derived from waste management recycling fund and WMWA. So, if you could give me those three sets of numbers for 98-99 and the current year. I think that would allow me to make better sense of that entire figure.

[7.37 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: Obviously, you would be aware and I will get Dr Jenkins to respond with specific detail. Omex is funding that occurred in 1998-99 and, of course, it has been offset by the level of revenue that we are receiving through the Mount Walton facility and, as such, that is why the figures do not actually show up as a direct change just in terms of the Omex funding. I will get Dr Jenkins to respond.

Dr JENKINS: If you look at the amounts going between 97-98 and 98-99, the funding for Omex for 98-99 is \$6m. The waste management recycling fund is estimated to be at \$4m and the WMWA is Waste Management Western Australia, part of which is Mount Walton and part of which is Forrestdale. That is the two operations that are covered by Waste Management WA and if you look at the change in revenue that is associated there, that is a relatively small amount for that year. When you get to the change to the 1999-2000, you have a reduction in the amount of money that is going to Omex. There is \$0.9m that is associated with the 1999-2000. The waste management recycling fund continues and it is anticipated that for Mount Walton there will be a major integrated disposal operation and that is in the order of about \$2m of cost and, of course, that is revenue coming in to cover the cost. It is a cost recovery function.

Dr EDWARDS: Just following on immediately from that and on page 481 where down the bottom you have got the waste management recycling fund amounts and Waste Management WA, is that big jump in Waste Management WA's money due to the exercise at Mount Walton?

Dr JENKINS: That is right.

Dr EDWARDS: And what is the exercise at Mount Walton?

Dr JENKINS: There will be a combined disposal operation, some of which will be the arsenic trioxide waste that comes from Kwinana Bell. Some of it will be additional waste that comes from CSBP. You will be aware that CSBP had a deposition of waste last year and there may also be some Health Department wastage.

Dr EDWARDS: And somewhere in here did I see that there was a sum of \$200 000 to be spent on Mount Walter?

Dr JENKINS: Whereabouts did you see that?

Dr EDWARDS: I am not sure. Let me check that. Maybe I am wrong. I will come back to that.

Mr BRADSHAW: On page 460 under Pollution Prevention I just wonder how many industries or businesses that you actually have problems with and is there any that you have actually shut down in the last 12 months, or do you normally give them advice on how to improve their outputs of whatever they are putting out?

Dr JENKINS: Certainly it is not our intention to be shutting down industry. The intention is to achieve environmental outcomes with industry still operating with a lot of work that is being undertaken in terms of pollution management. Some of it is a result of inspections by our officers. Some of it is responding to complaints by local residents and then working with the industry to try and solve the problem and we find in just about all instances, industry having been made aware of the problem, is happy to work with us to try and solve the problem. There have been some temporary closures but quite often we are working with facilities to try and bring them back up to speed.

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 461 under the Output Measures and under Quantity there are pollution incident responses and 850 estimated for this financial year and 562 for next year. The 850, why is that number so great? What happened that there were many more incidents than predicted?

Dr JENKINS: One of the things that has certainly occurred, we have expanded our regional presence. We have got a new office in Geraldton and we have found that people who were not prepared to make complaints to Perth were quite happy to make complaints to Geraldton so that is certainly one of the issues. Also with some of the other regional areas we have increased the regional presence and that has been taken on board by local people, so most of the growth has actually been in regional complaints because we now have a greater presence in those locations.

Mr BRADSHAW: Has the south west had an increase in that regard?

Dr JENKINS: Yes.

Mr MASTERS: Page 469, Output Measures for Output 6, Investigations and Management for Environment Systems, the very first line on 469, Scientific/Technical Advice is reducing from 300 to 200, I am afraid I cannot understand the explanation and I would be grateful for some detail:

Reduction in case-by-case technical advice due to development of strategic policy guidance by EPA.

Could you explain what that actually means?

Dr JENKINS: What we have been doing with the EPA is trying to identify those issues that keep cropping up for which the EPA needs technical advice, so rather than providing case by case advice we will take an issue and develop a generic guidance statement for that issue. If you take, for example, issues of marine water quality, rather than doing a case by case analysis we will provide general guidance that can be applied in almost all instances so the number of times they have to provide technical advice is therefore reduced because they have done it in a generic sense rather than case by case.

[7.44 pm]

Dr EDWARDS: I refer to page 465 to the Output Measures and one of them under Waste Reduction is the Government Waste Paper contract, tonnes recycled, which drops from an estimate this year of 350 tonnes to 300 tonnes. I know the problems associated with recycling but given it is a Government contract, why is there that drop?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is to do with the markets.

Dr JENKINS: The Minister is entirely correct. The issue is in relation to the amount that can be sold in Asian markets. The major way that we can deal with waste paper is to sell it into the Asian market. That market has almost disappeared.

Mrs EDWARDES: There is a downturn in the Asian economy.

Dr EDWARDS: So presumably the quality of paper coming from Government offices is actually quite good compared to where you might get paper from other sources?

Dr JENKINS: There is no doubt the high quality paper is easier to sell than the lower quality paper. We have reached the stage now where the amount being stored is more than what the market can absorb, so we are now looking at composting trials for some of the lower grade papers. Adding paper to compost is certainly one way that we can get an alternative market. It is clearly not as profitable as the waste paper returns, but it certainly is a concern to us.

Dr EDWARDS: Given that reduction, is the cost to Government the same regardless of the tonnage of waste that is actually recycled?

Dr JENKINS: There is no doubt we get less revenue, which is one of the key things, because you cannot sell it for the same amount, but the cost of collection of course is going to be the same.

Dr EDWARDS: Regardless of the amount of waste?

Dr JENKINS: That is right.

Dr EDWARDS: Is there an actual reduction in the amount of paper, etcetera, which is to be recycled that has been produced by Government agencies?

Dr JENKINS: Yes, there is a reduction because the major market is the Asian market.

Dr EDWARDS: No. Is there a reduction in the amount of paper that is to be recycled? Are there efforts being made to not use as much paper?

Dr JENKINS: In terms of the total quantity being generated? We do not have a total estimate because the contract has only recently been established to try and service the Government agencies. We do not have a total estimate, so I cannot give you an answer to that question.

Mrs EDWARDES: I think your question is, are there strategies in place to encourage Government to utilise less paper in the first instance. I think we are all aware of that.

Dr EDWARDS: But are there actually targets set or met?

Dr JENKINS: No, they are not targets. There are really two strategies that have been taken. One is certainly a reduction one and the second is the greater use of recycled paper.

Dr EDWARDS: So what is the cost to Government of the collection of the recycling per tonnage?

Dr JENKINS: I would have to respond to that as a supplementary.

Mrs EDWARDES: I can provide it by way of supplementary information.

Mr MASTERS: At page 471, towards the bottom of the Output Measures for regional services, Timeliness, pollution incidents dealt with within 30 days, 80 per cent. I hope that does not mean that it takes 30 days to actually stop the pollution from occurring. This is an administrative or licencing or related activity?

Dr JENKINS: Clearly we respond to a complaint far sooner than that. What the indicator is trying to demonstrate is, have we developed an approach to solving the problem within the 30 day period? Some of them require further investigation than what you can achieve in 30 days, but our target is to get 80 per cent of them with an approach to solution within 30 days and we are achieving that.

Dr EDWARDS: At page 469, you talk about salinity and catchment management projects. What is the total amount of money that the DEP will be putting into salinity this year and what activities will that be used for?

Dr JENKINS: If you look at the total cost, it is for the three projects and you can get the average cost of \$233 000. So three times that will give you the total expenditure, which is \$700 000 that is being expended in terms of salinity and catchment management. If you look at it for the next year, one of the activities that is going on in Government at the moment is trying to get a revised strategic approach as part of a review of the salinity action plan. That is one of the key tasks that the department is involved in.

Another is the overall process of the selection of priority catchments. We are trying to get the environmental management components incorporated into that prioritisation and there is a technique being developed for that. The most significant task, similar to the draft MOU we have on vegetation clearance in relation to salinity management, is that we are developing a draft MOU on drainage proposals. So they are the three major tasks for next year.

Dr EDWARDS: When do you think that draft MOU will be completed?

Dr JENKINS: I could not give you a deadline at this stage. We are developing the project schedule with other agencies because it is a multi-agency exercise.

Mr MASTERS: Page 470. The bottom dot point under Major Achievements for 1998-1999 refers to a regional vegetation analyses of the West Midlands area. That is certainly an area where there are significant problems in relation to clearing controls on private property. I had not previously heard that you were conducting this vegetation survey. Is the project completed? If it is, will there be a report made available for the public? If not, when is the report due and again, will it be made available to the public? How involved have the land owners in that West Midlands area been in the project?

[7.51 pm]

Dr JENKINS: The exercise was undertaken as part of the overall issue of dealing with the MOU on vegetation clearance. One of the few areas of the state where we still have under the 20:20 rule is the opportunity for considering further clearances in the West Midlands. We were getting a string of proposals for clearance applications. Rather than deal with them on a case by case basis, we did a regional analysis. That information has been used in informing the EPA in their evaluation of those clearance proposals but what is clear from that work is that we needed a more detailed analysis. Further work is being done in association with CALM and the Commonwealth in refining that regional analysis. So, there are maps and documents available that we have been using but it is not in a standard public report form. It has been used to inform EPA and the level 1, 2 and 3 decisions under the MOU for vegetation purposes.

Mr MASTERS: Are those maps publicly accessible, if necessary?

Dr JENKINS: Yes, they are.

Mr MASTERS: Will the combined agency report be publicly available?

Dr JENKINS: Yes.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, on page 468, major initiatives for 1999-2000 states:

Development of a long term strategic plan for waste management in Western Australia.

My local community newspaper this week had the headline "City chief wants action on waste", and the first sentence was:

Stirling City Council Chief Executive Officer, Mike Wadsworth, is not satisfied with the outlook for Perth's waste management system and wants an immediate plan of action.

What I would like from you, Minister, is do you share with the City of Stirling their concerns that there is a looming problem in disposal of domestic waste so that in the next 2 to 5 years we could actually not be able to meet the demands for disposal? Are you confident that this long term strategic plan will be developed in time to meet any looming problem with disposal of domestic waste in metropolitan Perth?

Mrs EDWARDES: That plan has been worked on for some time now and is in the process of finalisation and ready to be put out to the public. I think the City of Stirling's issue is, of course, they have put a lot of their eggs into Atlas and as such that has not resulted in the outcomes that they were expecting. They have a major issue that they need to face. That does result in a major issue for us as a government overall in terms of any waste management strategy but particularly for all of us who live out there in the northern suburbs, deeply focusing in on Mindarie. We now are working with the City of Stirling and Mindarie Regional Council in endeavour to identify where Mindarie is actually going to go as well. So, that is something which needs to be worked on virtually on a case by case basis as far as they are concerned but the strategy is in the process of finalisation ready to be put out to the public.

Mr KOBELKE: When you say that, Minister, in terms of the current stage of development does that indicate that you actually have the firm figures for removal and storage of domestic waste in the outyears or is there a looming problem?

Mrs EDWARDES: The strategy that is in the process of being finalised and being put out for the public is a policy. It is not dealing with your figures and your targets. The targets are ones that we would like to achieve and we should aim for as a community and until 1 July 1999 we have not had all councils involved in kerbside recycling. On 1 July 1999 we will have all of the metropolitan councils involved in kerbside recycling. When I first came into the portfolio a couple of years ago it was very, very poor. So therefore a lot of work has been done just in the last couple of years in an endeavour to bring that level of work up but it is not something that is just something for government. It is something for everybody to involve themselves in.

The City of Joondalup and the City of Wanneroo have only just come on board and again they are some of the largest councils. I can say that from personal experience but also, too, from my ministerial portfolio. They are one of the largest councils and as such had a big impact in terms of the figures and being able to meet any particular target. Now that we actually have all councils involved as of 1 July 1999 in terms of kerbside recycling we believe there is going to be a greater ability to be able to meet some of those targets than we have been able to do. However, it is not something that we can be complacent about. It is something that we have to consistently work on, every single one of us. Until we get to the stage whereby our recycling bin gets collected weekly and our waste bin gets collected monthly I do not think any of us are going to be able to become complacent.

Mr KOBELKE: In short, Minister, I can take you as saying that, firstly, you are setting guidelines and strategies which have the right direction?

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes.

Mr KOBELKE: Secondly, it is a matter of consultation with local government which has prime responsibility. Additionally, you cannot give any undertaking that we actually have the problem locked away so that in 2 to 5 years we could have some council with a major problem in disposing of their waste in metropolitan Perth?

Mrs EDWARDES: I think some of the management that we are being able to put in place in terms of licensing has given us as a government greater control over what is actually occurring in terms of waste management and landfills and probably it is a bit too early to say.

Mr KOBELKE: Meeting the tonnage of waste disposal in cost factors that are comparable to today's costs, we do not current have a solution?

Mrs EDWARDES: I am not sure that - -

Mr KOBELKE: It is the sort of problem if you are willing to pay enough money you most probably solve it but given that the councils have a certain budget, and given they have a certain volume of waste - and you can project that out even though you are trying to minimise it with recycling and waste minimisation - I take it from what you are saying that we do not currently have a well defined and laid out strategy which we can be absolutely confident will be able to dispose of all Perth's domestic waste in current costs structures within the next 2 to 5 years?

Mrs EDWARDES: No. We will have.

Mr KOBELKE: Well, you do not have it now.

[7.59 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: The policy and the strategy will be released shortly and that is being worked through in consultation with the major stakeholders to get it to this point. I will get Dr Jenkins to comment further but can I say that some of the key initiatives which regional councils are coming up with - - I mean, Mindarie was the first - - but you look at what these

metropolitan regional councils are now involved in and then you take that almost, sort of, 10 steps further and go to what the South Metropolitan Regional Council are proposing, you are going to have virtually new age initiatives being put in place to deal with the management of waste; ten steps by ten steps. Basically, I am telling Mindarie that what East Metropolitan have been doing, what South Metropolitan are doing they can now pick up on and even advance that further. Therefore, it is not going to be static. It is going to be dynamic in terms of the solutions to the problem. It is not something that you can say "Hey, this is it and that is the way we have to go." You have to be flexible as far as waste management is concerned.

Dr JENKINS: If you go back to Mike Wadsworth's comments, you should be aware that Mindarie Regional Council is going through a strategic planning exercise at the moment to get exactly those numbers. I think he is trying to put some pressure on that overall process in terms of getting a strategic solution that will suit all of the councils that are part of the Mindarie Regional Council.

The state's responsibility is setting a policy framework. As the Minister said, that document is in its final form. When it comes to the level of detail in terms of the exact number of tonnages and how it is going to be developed, that is the responsibility of the regional councils and, with a lot of prodding from the City of Stirling, Mindarie is actually looking at a much longer term framework than they have in the past. So I think that is where Mike Wadsworth's comments are really being directed. There is no doubt that he is one of the few people that is actually looking in a strategic sense. All local government needs to be looking in a strategic sense.

There is no doubt that if we are going to have waste management facilities that are operated to meet environmental requirements, then the costs that people were familiar with 10 years ago will be unattainable because you did not have the standard of landfills that would protect Perth's groundwater. You do not have the controls on operations that keep odour and dust levels down to what are now considered acceptable levels. People are looking a lot more at secondary waste treatment rather than landfill and those costs are going to be different from what have really been under-engineered approaches to waste management in the past. So the costs that may have been the operational costs - not necessarily the total cost, because we are paying for some of those in terms of environmental management costs now - will certainly be higher in terms of day to day operations, but in terms of the total cost that is certainly a debatable issue because of some of the problems in the past.

Dr EDWARDS: Are we likely to run out of landfill sites on the metropolitan coastal plain in the near future?

Dr JENKINS: You would be aware that we are trying to close down most of the sites on the Swan coastal plain because of the potential contamination of groundwater aquifers. What we are looking for is sites that are better located. For example Red Hill, which is off the coastal plain but still accessible and has the depth of clay that is relevant for siting those sorts of facilities, is a much more secure location than some of the other sites that are on the Swan coastal plain.

Dr EDWARDS: Given the problems we have had with Atlas and the diversion of their waste to Tamala Park and the fact that recycling -- the problems we are seeing with paper just for the Government paper contract indicate that people are now getting notices in their letterboxes saying "Only recycle really good quality paper." A lot of stuff that could be recycled is going into bins. Are we at risk of filling up our landfill much more quickly than we had anticipated?

Dr JENKINS: There certainly are issues in terms of filling up landfills. One of the things we have done with setting up the landfill levy was to get a more realistic cost in relation to landfill and also to provide funds in terms of developing better recycling programs. Of course that work is now just starting. The fund is now in place. There is about \$1m that has been passed out to particular programs; a lot of those in the recycling area. A lot of them really relate to minor infrastructure additions that are getting substantial returns in terms of improved recycling. I certainly agree there is a lot more work to be done, both in terms of waste reduction and recycling and also secondary waste treatment to reduce the amount of waste that needs to go to landfill.

Mr MASTERS: Is it not fair to say that it is not a council issue as suggested by the Member for Nollamara, but in fact it is a whole community issue because at the end of the day the user pays, meaning that the person who has their rubbish bin emptied is the one who will pay for it?

Dr JENKINS: I was not suggesting that at all.

Mr MASTERS: No, but as I understand it, it is a case of council just passing the cost straight on to their ratepayers and therefore it is up the ratepayers to reduce, to re-use and recycle.

Mrs EDWARDES: It is an issue for everybody and we all should have a strong responsibility and commitment to it.

Mr MASTERS: Yes.

Dr EDWARDS: I have a pamphlet. It is from the Government, Budget 2000, the Goldfields-Esperance region. It says the Department of Environmental Protection has allocated \$200 000 for the Mount Walton intractable waste facility. Can you get me more information about that?

Dr JENKINS: The key issue there is a number of items of infrastructure that are needed on the site and we want to get that in place as part of the program that is coming up for the next round. So it is improving site infrastructure, particularly in relation to some of the emergency response and occupational health issues that are anticipated in the next round of disposal.

Dr EDWARDS: So there is no thought of putting any nuclear waste there, is there?

Mrs EDWARDES: None.

Mr MASTERS: Page 473, Output 8 is services provided to the EPA. I note that there is no estimate given of funding to the EPA for years beyond the forthcoming budget period. Minister, are you able to say that in general terms it is likely that funding for servicing the EPA will stay essentially the same over the next three or four years?

Mrs EDWARDES: Absolutely, but I do not know why the information is not presented. It is probably a Treasury requirement in terms of the way they want the outputs determined as against the operations.

Mr MASTERS: I could not see the information anywhere else in the papers.

[8.07 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes. It is a Treasury requirement in the way the budgets are structured. I think we came across this problem last night when we were dealing with some of the items under the arts and culture one which did not have outgoing years.

Dr JENKINS: The breakdown is only to that year. The 651, which is the ongoing funding, is the standard funding.

Mrs EDWARDES: All of the outputs are exactly the same and it will be stay consistent.

Division 46: Productivity and Labour Relations, \$7 707 000

[Mrs M. Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for Labour Relations.]

[Mr J.R. Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Productivity and Labour Relations.]

[Ms J. Connell, Executive Director, Fair Workplaces, Department of Productivity and Labour Relations.]

[Mr E.M. Macneall, Manager Finance, Department of Productivity and Labour Relations.]

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, I would like to ask some questions, if I could. Starting on page 1146, the first dot point under Major Achievements, Over 97 per cent of public sector agencies have workplace level agreements. Minister, are you able to give figures, even if only rough percentages, as to whether they are EBA certified agreements or workplace agreements?

Mr LLOYD: Yes. Industrial agreements cover 40 per cent, workplace agreements 21 per cent, and certified agreements - that is, federal certified agreements - 37 per cent.

Mr KOBELKE: Do we have any figures, as to the public sector, what percentage of public sector employees are actually on Western Australian workplace agreements?

Mr LLOYD: The number I just gave you then was 21 per cent; 21 per cent are workplace agreements. Yes. That is across the whole public sector.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, are there currently any obstacles delaying salary packaging for employees in the public sector who are under award employment or agreements which come within awards or alongside awards?

Mr LLOYD: No. There were some proceedings in the WA Industrial Relations Commission perhaps at the end of last year or early this year where that access to award employees was confirmed.

Mr KOBELKE: Even following that there were still administrative difficulties for unions who were trying to get salary packaging available. I wonder if all those difficulties have been removed or if there is still some administrative issues that have to be dealt with before people can go on to salary packaging under awards or certified agreements.

Mr LLOYD: It is my understanding that all of those difficulties have been removed. Initially when that decision was made there was still some doubt about the taxation department's position on these issues. Those matters have been clarified and therefore the government salary packaging policy and approach applies right cross the board.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, can I ask why is it government policy to discriminate against award conditions for employment in the public sector?

Mrs EDWARDES: In what respect are you talking about?

Mr KOBELKE: In terms of different levels of salary, in terms of some jobs only being offered if you would accept a workplace agreement which clearly discriminates against someone wishing to be employed under an award or a certified agreement.

Mrs EDWARDES: It is not discrimination. The workplace agreements obviously provide for greater opportunities for flexibility than awards in some instances so it is not discrimination.

Mr KOBELKE: I am sure you see it as positive discrimination as you want something. I see it as negative discrimination. Perhaps we can move on to the last question. On page 1146, the last two dot points; "Development of industry profiles" and "Developed private sector agreements database" are two separate issues but I wonder, Minister, if you could explain as to what is entailed there please?

[8.13 pm]

Mr LLOYD: On the industry profiles, we felt it was worthwhile to, if you like, analyse and gather some information about particular industrial characteristics of various industries which were important to us. We assembled information about the industry structure, typical award coverage, agreement coverage, those sorts of issues, the concern being that you often have staff who develop the expertise and are in the particular industry which is important for us, then they leave and that knowledge goes with them. So what we are trying to do is to capture that sort of knowledge and therefore we are better able to advise about industrial relations issues which might merge in those industries and at times to provide assistance if need be and when we talk to employers, unions or whatever, we have got a bit of a better knowledge base ourselves about the industries characteristics.

The other one is a private sector agreement information base. That is just for internal purposes. We are trying to develop a better amount of information, particularly on industrial agreements; features of them, employees covered, term of agreements and those sorts of issues. We have just taken that initiative ourselves to develop a database.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it very much slanted towards Western Australian workplace agreements?

Mr LLOYD: No. I think it is predominantly industrial agreements actually because there is more accessible information on industrial agreements.

Mr BROWN: If I can just ask, too, in terms of your policy position. Is it true that now in a single department within the government where people are employed under workplace agreements that we have a situation where people who are doing identical tasks and employed under workplace agreements are paid different rates of pay, and this is not where there has been salary packaging?

Mr LLOYD: In some departments the wages paid, if they are different under a workplace agreement to an industrial agreement - -

Mr BROWN: No, I am not talking about that. I am talking about two employees doing identical work in the one department and both of them employed under workplace agreements. Two clerks doing the same work in the same department and both employed under workplace agreements. Is it true that there are instances now of those two people doing the same work for the same department, working the same hours and getting different rates of pay?

Mr LLOYD: Nothing has been drawn to my attention.

Mr BROWN: So what is the policy on that?

Mr LLOYD: When there is a collective workplace agreement - -

Mr BROWN: No, individual.

Mr LLOYD: It has not been drawn to my attention but it could be possible with individual workplace agreements. Perhaps one employee doing the same work might have decided to offer more in conditions or to trade off.

Mr BROWN: No, I am not talking about ...(Inaudible).... .

Mr LLOYD: Look, I must say it has not been drawn to my attention.

Mr BROWN: So there is no policy in relation to it?

Mr LLOYD: No policy in relation to it and what you will find is that most employing agencies want to retain cohesion with the workplace culture and I think they have to be very careful about doing anything like that because it can start to fracture the cohesion in the organisation.

Mr BROWN: So in relation to that then it would be fair to say that in your view in terms of good industrial practice ...(Inaudible).... that view that a person who wants to remain on senior conditions will eventually be entitled to more money for doing exactly the same work as someone else should, in fact, be paid the same rate as everybody else? I want to get to this point.

Mrs EDWARDES: You might like to address the questions through to me first.

Mr BROWN: Let me say I am happy for you to answer it.

Mrs EDWARDES: I am not saying that I will. I might pass it across to Mr Lloyd but, however, you should direct it to me.

Mr BROWN: One of the advantages for being employed on a workplace agreement is you can negotiate your own wage. What is your policy position in relation to that? What do you advise the parties in relation to that?

Mrs EDWARDES: It has not been brought to our attention.

Mr BROWN: On page 1147 at the top of the page under Major Initiatives for 99-2000 it says, "Promote quality and creative agreements." I am not sure what that means.

[8.20 pm]

Mr LLOYD: What we are attempting to do, we are now in perhaps the third and fourth phase of people negotiating

agreements and what I think what we are finding is that people are wanting to offer in their agreements more than just the traditional trade offs which are often about hours, working arrangements and things like that, and trying to get into more innovative agreements where they are attempting to take account of the working requirements of the staff to try and get I suppose a win win situation for both the employer and the employee. We are trying to assist them - to guide them, if you like - to work together to get the most out of that process. What we are hoping to do is increase both the profitability of the firm and the productivity of the employees so both can benefit. We are trying to ensure that the full opportunities of the agreement stream are taken up.

Mr BROWN: I do not understand how that is not done at the present time or how that does not apply.

Mr LLOYD: Well, it does in some places. Some agreements are not very sophisticated. They either replicate an award or a previous agreement and we find that when we go out and talk to employer and employees a number of them do take up these opportunities to develop more innovative ones with a lot of flexibility in it. What we are trying to do is encourage more employers and employees to take up the opportunities that the agreement streams offer. It has been done by a number of employers and employees. We would like to see it done by more.

Mr BROWN: I guess if that is the answer then it is the answer but, to me, you have always had very innovative employers, some of whom, you know, under the award system have shares and all sorts of things in relation to their companies and ran a very ...(indistinct)... of operation and you have always had ...(indistinct)... do not do as I say, do as I do. There has always been those two extremes; extremely good to hopeless.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will continue to work with that.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, dot point on page 1142, significant issues and trends states:

The projected slowdown in the growth of the WA economy will be reflected in pressures to moderate wage outcomes.

Does this indicate that the public sector wages policy over the next 2 years will have a lower aggregate wage outcome than the 3.5 per cent set under the current wages policy?

Mr LLOYD: This dot point really refers to the broad. It is, sort of, talking at the broader national and State level and the projections we are getting show that there will be a reduction in the growth and we are saying that is going to change the wages environment; the growth which has been ticking over at about 4 to 4.5, I suppose, and most of the wage index measures will come down and we believe it is going to be one of the environmental factors, if you like, in industrial relations.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, I wonder if you or Mr Lloyd would try and rationalise that with the treasury view contained in paper number 3 on page 44 where treasury's view is:

The gradual increase in growth over the near term is expected on the basis of that total wages as measured in average weekly earnings are currently growing at an unsustainably low rate. Average weekly earnings raised by 1.3 per cent in 1998.

They go on to suggest that they have to go at a faster rate. So we have treasury saying that wages growth is too slow and we have you in your DOPLAR report saying that they are likely to moderate. How do we work out what is actually the situation?

Mr LLOYD: I am not aware of that quote.

Mr KOBELKE: Page 44.

Mr LLOYD: I guess it is trying to predict the future.

Mr KOBELKE: Well, both are.

Mr LLOYD: Yes.

MR KOBELKE: One is saying going up; the other is saying going down.

Mr LLOYD: Probably go and ask somebody else and they will give you another - -

Mr KOBELKE: Thought it was the same government.

Mrs EDWARDES: We work very closely with treasury.

SPEAKER: One is making predictions about economic growth and the other one is making predictions about wage rises.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, can we stop the talking across the table and ...(indistinct)... Minister to answer the question.

Mrs EDWARDES: Madam Chair, whilst Mr Lloyd is actually taking the opportunity of having a look at that quote - -

Mr KOBELKE: I have questions on wages policy if you would like me to continue.

Mrs EDWARDES: That is premised on that.

Mr KOBELKE: Well, no, they go with wages policy.

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes.

Mr KOBELKE: The current wages policy is due to expire next month.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will have another one in place.

Mr KOBELKE: When will the wages policy for the next 2 years be released? Do you currently have a target for the wage growth?

Mr MASTERS: Madam Chairman, if I could ask the member for Nollamara - - point of order, I am sorry. To refer to the appropriate page.

Mr KOBELKE: It is still page 1142 on wages policy.

Mrs EDWARDES: The current wages policy is presently being finalised and will be published.

Mr KOBELKE: You do not want to show your hand at this stage?

Mrs EDWARDES: It has not been signed off in a final format. It is being worked on and that will be published by 1 July.

Mr LLOYD: As I read that commentary on page 44 they are saying in the first paragraph under wages that the forecast growth is 3.5 in the coming year followed by 3.2 following 3.25 this year. They do note in the next paragraph that average weekly full time ordinary earnings grew by 5.1 in 1998. So I have read those figures suggesting that there are projections of some reduction in the growth of wages in accordance with what we were saying in our dot point.

Mr KOBELKE: They also talk about an unsustainably low rate. Indicate that there obviously is some complexity in different measures of what wages growth is.

[8.26 pm]

Mr MASTERS: Page 1148, in the middle of the page, Output Measures, output number 2, relating to Labour Relations information services. Could I get background on why the number of calls answered by Wageline are not expected to rise in the coming year and yet the number of publications is going to virtually double, meaning that the number stays the same in terms of production per year? That means 382 publications are available to bamboozle people in the work force. How many publications is enough?

Mr LLOYD: On the number of publications, they are not going to double, they are going to fall by two. We are projecting 192 publications this year.

Mr MASTERS: My point is that this current year you were produced 192.

Mr LLOYD: Yes.

Mr MASTERS: Now, unless you throw all those out, then the ones that you produce in the forthcoming year will double the number of publications that you have available to give out to workers and employees.

Mr LLOYD: The 190 figure is based actually on all external publications which we do in the coming year and that does include reprints. A lot of the publications need to be kept up to date so you have to amend and adjust them slightly. Now, we include in the 190 figure those reprints. Reprints where there is no change would not be included. That answers that part of the question. It is not 190 brand new publications.

Mr MASTERS: Could you give an indication as to roughly what proportion might be reprints, as you suggest?

Mr LLOYD: I cannot off the top of my head. I suspect it would be the majority.

Mr BRADSHAW: On page 1156, under Outcome: Regulate access to material in accordance with the Censorship Act 1996, I notice there is a total cost output of \$315 000, less operating revenues of \$120 000. I would like to know where you get \$120 000 from. Secondly, down the bottom it says that the full time equivalents employed in this output is estimated to be two. How come it costs so much money to run a department for two people at \$315 000?

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not have a breakdown of that figure but I will provide that by way of supplementary information. The revenue is what organisations pay for the assessment of the material. It is not just for two people who also service a censorship advisory committee which meet probably on a seven to 10 day basis to review publications and the like and submit them to myself in order for gazettal as to a particular classification. I will give you a breakdown of the costs by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: Madam Chair, I would like to come back to the area where the member for Vasse was asking question; that is, output to Labour Relations information service, pages 1148 and 1149. Firstly, on page 1149, the second dot point:

Employers and employees have continued to utilise the Wageline service at a rate of approximately 600 callers per day. During 1998-99, 95% of callers reported satisfaction with the service.

I would like to ask as to how that 95 per cent figure was actually obtained and what veracity one might place on it.

Ms CONNELL: You are referring to the second dot point, are you?

Mr KOBELKE: That 95 per cent of callers reported satisfaction with the service.

Ms CONNELL: We survey the callers on a regular basis. We take random samples on a quarterly basis. That is the figure that we aim to achieve. We have been achieving that to date and we suspect we will continue to achieve it.

Mr KOBELKE: So is the assessment done in-house?

Ms CONNELL: No. External consultants are used. We collect the data. Obviously our operators are required to collect names and numbers of people who wish to participate, but it is done externally.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, could you please explain how that fits with - on page 1148, under Quality - the extent to which Wageline callers report that the information provided was accurate, relevant and provided in a professional manner? The answer there is 90 per cent. So are you saying that it does not have to be a relevant, accurate and professional manner and it is still satisfactory?

Mrs EDWARDES: No. The figures there under Output Measures are targets, as I explained at an earlier question.

Mr KOBELKE: That is for 1998-99.

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes, estimated.

Mr KOBELKE: They are for the same period. You cannot change that. They are both for 1998-99.

Mrs EDWARDES: They are targets. However, we have exceeded that target for 1998-99.

Mr KOBELKE: The logic of what you are saying is that if the figure on page 1149 was a completed survey and your target for the whole of the year is 90 you are expecting a rapid drop off in the last couple of months of the year. That is the only way you can interpret what you are saying.

Mrs EDWARDES: No. That is a bit of a cynical approach.

Mr KOBELKE: No, no. I am honestly trying to make rational sense of two different figures for the same period.

Mrs EDWARDES: Member for Nollamara, I will ask Ms Connell to respond.

Ms CONNELL: They are measuring actually slightly different things. The 95 per cent, we actually ask for specific satisfaction level from the clients whereas the other quality measure that you are referring to, we ask things like how accurate and relevant was the information as well, a compound question. So there are a number of questions involved in that 90 per cent target.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, as supplementary information, would you be willing to provide the detailed report on which this is based?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, on the accuracy of the information, do you have any measure as to how often the Wageline gives out incorrect or inaccurate information to people who call in?

Ms CONNELL: Based on our clients, the accuracy level is very high. We are looking at about 84 or 85 per cent accuracy from our callers' perspective.

[8.34 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, what is the situation in terms of rectifying the potential liabilities when incorrect information is actually given to callers? An example drawn to my attention very recently is the fact that the adult apprentice rate for hairdressers, that is, adults over 21 under the state award, since September 1997 has been \$359.40 a week. Up until February this year, Wageline has been telling people who called that it is \$275.60 per week. That is quite a substantial difference. For small hairdressing salons or barbers that actually could be enough to send a company under if, for some considerable time, well over a year, they actually had been paying the wrong wages based on advice given on Wageline.

Mrs EDWARDES: We are not aware of that, and as such if you want to provide me with that information we will investigate it.

Mr KOBELKE: I am aware from talking to people that it has been drawn to the department's attention some time ago.

Mr LLOYD: It has not come to my attention, but we will look into the matter, sure.

Mr KOBELKE: I was informed of that by the Hairdressers Union.

Mrs EDWARDES: Well, provide me with the information and I will investigate it.

Mr MASTERS: Page 1154, Output Measures. The very first line, the quantity under Output 5: Representation of the State's interests in industrial forums; a reduction from 45 to 30. "Number of times DOPLAR represents the State of WA" and so on. Is that a reflection of a more peaceful industrial period coming up or is there some change of behaviour between DOPLAR and the people they advise?

Mr LLOYD: It reflects our anticipation of the number of cases we will decrease but we do not expect any major decrease in the work load. We anticipate that the cases will remain fairly complex, take a fair bit of work, but the number of cases is a falling.

Mr MASTERS: These are cases that go before an industrial tribunal. Are there any factors that would affect the number of cases so as to have a reduction of one-third? Is there anything special happening?

Mr LLOYD: I suppose it reflects a broad trend. A number of these are national wage cases, state wage cases, cases like that. They are fairly constant. Some of the other cases are interventions when there are industrial disputes or significant award matters. As the agreements become more accepted and more pervasive then there tends to be less of those types of cases because people are regulating their affairs through agreements; so fewer cases of a major nature come to the tribunals.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, looking at the outputs across the first five output areas, am I correct in gauging that there has been actually a real reduction of 5.4 per cent in the budget outputs?

Mr LLOYD: In the funds, you mean?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes, taking account of the inflator of 2.25 per cent, I work it out as minus 5.4 per cent as a cut to outputs.

Mr LLOYD: Are you referring to a particular table?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes, the five divisions do not appear as a table, but you can take them and calculate them.

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not understand what it is that you are referring to, but let me take you back to page 1142. You look under "Recurrent" the amount required to fund the outputs for the year, which is what you are talking about?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

Mrs EDWARDES: For 1999-2000 there is actually an increase.

Mr KOBELKE: Yes, but you have to take into account inflation. I have taken the budget of each of the outputs. We have five outputs. I have left out Censorship at 6. Taking the figures off each output, if we go to output 1, you can see it goes from 656 to 632. It is a drop. If you go across to the next page which is output 2 on 1148, it goes from 1521 to 1476. The cost output by each particular output drops. Do you want to come back with supplementary answers to show where I have it wrong, or to confirm it, if you wish?

Mr LLOYD: Yes. We have a net increase of \$199 000 in our appropriation.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide it by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: Yes, but you are adding in censorship. Perhaps that is a new line that covers - -

Mrs EDWARDES: It would do because it is all the outputs for the area.

Mr KOBELKE: I am taking the five outputs that relate directly to labour relations.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide you with a break-down by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Of what, specifically, Minister?

Mrs EDWARDES: Of the appropriation of forward estimates of division 46. Sorry. The first line under the amount required to fund outputs for the year.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that not on 1144?

Mrs EDWARDES: That is on page 1142.

Mr BROWN: I think the question is, has there been a real reduction in the allocation for the next financial year, 1999-2000, in terms of the services that have been traditionally provided by Productivity and Labour Relations excluding censorship, which is now included in this budget.

Mr KOBELKE: It was not in last year's.

Mr BROWN: Under this amount and it was not included previously and is not a traditional role carried on by Productivity and Labour Relations. If you exclude that figure, we are only going to be arguing about whether we should do it or not, but that is not the argument. You exclude that figure.

[8.42 pm]

Mr LLOYD: We have a fairly stable budget. It is mainly in salaries of course and this year the main impact on the budget has been the government's general policy allowance of a two per cent cut, but outside that that is the main change to our budget.

Mr KOBELKE: And relating to that, Minister, on pages 1150 and 1151 which is Output 3, Advisory Services, you will see there that the actual cost output drops slightly and if you take into account inflation there is a very real drop but I want to relate that to the first dot point under Major Initiatives and that dot point reads:

The Workplace Liaison Service will be expanded to provide an enhanced advisory information service.

I would like to know how it is going to be expanded and provide an enhanced advisory information service if the money has actually been cut.

Ms CONNELL: What the department is looking at with regard to the workplace liaison service is - - there are three major roles that are played. It provides information. It provides some guidance and advice to compliance issues and it provides education. That expansion will be in line with the needs of local business, both metro and in the regional areas. It may not require actual expansion in terms of dollars or people but it will be an expanded role in terms of the deliveries of service.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, there is no additional FTE's. It is still 52 for advisory services. There is a lesser budget so they are going to have less money for petrol and other costs. How is it anticipated that the service will be expanded and enhanced?

Mrs EDWARDES: Good economic management.

Mr KOBELKE: So you are accepting you had bad management up until this year and there is a lot of dead wood you are going to get rid of?

Mrs EDWARDES: It is continuing good economically.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, on the same point, do liaison officers have the powers of inspectors?

Ms CONNELL: No, they do not.

Mr KOBELKE: So they cannot undertake inspection duties and take action where they find flagrant breaches of the law?

Ms CONNELL: That is correct. They cannot act as inspectors in those situations.

Mr KOBELKE: And as already pointed out, Minister, there are 52 officers in that role whereas the next outcome which is "Outcome 4, Industrial Complaints Resolution" has only 24 officers.

Mrs EDWARDES: Can you point me out where you are?

Mr KOBELKE: Page 1152. Are we going to see a further restriction in the compliance requirements by the department?

Mr LLOYD: On the first one, the 52 figure you mentioned for the output measure for advisory services, it covers a lot more than just the Workplace Liaison Service. The Workplace Liaison officers currently number five of that 52 and the others come from various parts of the department including a corporate overhead.

In relation to the reduction in the industrial complaints area - -

Mr KOBELKE: Mr Lloyd, through the Minister, I do not want to make a big thing of the reduction. I am really just making the point. There is no expansion and you are going to have to trim back at least a little. The point I am making is are you going to maintain the current level of outputs because it would seem that you would have to prune back a little given that your resources are being pruned back a little?

Mr LLOYD: What we are going to address, as you will see under the Major Initiatives for the coming financial year, we will be looking at re-engineering initiatives.

Mr KOBELKE: If I take that dot point in the middle of page 1153, do you, because I was going to ask that later?

Mr LLOYD: Yes. Yes, 1153.

Mr KOBELKE: I will just read it into the record:

Re-engineering of compliance services will be undertaken to increase efficiencies and reduce time and resources required to resolve complaints.

I think Sir Humphrey would be happy with that double speak as telling you it is going to do exactly the opposite of what it is supposed to say or what people want to read it as. Surely that is Sir Humphrey saying there is going to be cutbacks.

Mrs EDWARDES: No, you are being very cynical. Do you not believe that you can achieve efficiencies?

Mr KOBELKE: Yet to see it from your government, Minister.

Mrs EDWARDES: No, I do not think so.

Mr KOBELKE: So you actually think that that dot point is going to be read as re-engineering means you are going to do more with less?

Mrs EDWARDES: I have a few books that I will lend to you over the next few weeks for you to read.

Mr KOBELKE: So you are saying, Minister, that you are going to do more with less in Output 4 for industrial complaints resolution?

Mr LLOYD: Certainly. The re-engineering is really about how we go about handling a complaint when it is received to

when the file is finally closed and there are always opportunities to make that more efficient to reduce duplication, double handling and those sorts of issues. That is a pretty fundamental way of running an organisation and we will be attending to that this year to deliver those efficiencies.

Mr BROWN: Just on the same page, 1153, the first dot point:

99% of matters were resolved without the need to resort to prosecution.

Can I ask this? When a person lodges a complaint and ...(Inaudible).... certified agreement or whatever, does the department calculate the wages that should have been paid when that award was certified?

Ms CONNELL: Yes, they do.

Mr BROWN: And when you talk about 99 per cent of matters being resolved without the need to resort to prosecution, does that mean the department's calculations are generally accepted by employers and that that amount of money ...(Inaudible).... calculated is paid?

Ms CONNELL: That is correct.

Mr BROWN: Does that mean that there is no compromise in terms of that? As it has been put to me, there is a hesitancy on the part of the department to prosecute and if someone offers 80 per cent or 90 per cent of the amount that is due, even though clearly in the department's view 100 per cent of the amount ...(Inaudible).... the department would recommend settlement of that amount?

[8.50 pm]

Ms CONNELL: That is correct. The actual amount that is owed is calculated by the department. The parties are advised that that is the amount that is owed, that is entitled to the complainant, and is owed by the employer. If the parties agree to a lesser settlement, they are required to withdraw the formal complaint from the department.

Mr BROWN: Do you advise them in relation to that?

Ms CONNELL: Absolutely not. We advise them of the correct monies that are owed and that is role of the inspector to do that.

Mr BROWN: Do you enforce that if someone will not pay?

Ms CONNELL: In 1 per cent of cases that does occur and, yes, it is enforced through prosecution.

Mr BROWN: What about where an offer is made? Do you indicate to the complainant due that money that they do not have to accept that offer and that you will prosecute unless the full amount is paid?

Ms CONNELL: We tend not to get involved in discussions for lesser amounts in settlements outside the monies owed. That is a private matter between the parties.

Mr BROWN: Many of the complainants do not have the capacity to prosecute so they need to know what attitude the department will take. That gives them a bargaining stance.

Ms CONNELL: We advise the complainants of exactly what is owed to them.

Mr BROWN: And that you will enforce that amount if the company or whatever - -

Ms CONNELL: That is right. If they are seeking full recompense of those monies, we will continue until the monies are paid.

Mr BROWN: There is no compromise?

Ms CONNELL: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, could I just ask a question of clarification? So the 99 per cent of matters that were resolved without the need for prosecution, were they resolved and the full amount, the award amount, provided by the employer?

Ms CONNELL: Unless the matter is settled outside and the matter has been withdrawn, yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What percentage of that 99 per cent is matters that are withdrawn and settled out of the domain of your department?

Ms CONNELL: I am sorry. I could not tell you that. The vast majority are settled to the full amount. I do not have the figures.

Mr BROWN: We ask for that by way of supplementary information.

Mrs EDWARDES: If that information is recorded as such then we will provide it by way of supplementary information or an explanation.

Mr KOBELKE: Could I ask if you would expand on that? How many complaints were lodged both last year and this year

up to whatever date the records are easily available? That is, how many are lodged, in how many of those have we had the files closed; then of those that are closed, how many are going to prosecution; then of those that are closed, how many settlements were reached that were satisfactory to the person who made the complaint?

Mrs EDWARDES: To the extent that we can provide that information, we will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: Here and now, Minister, can you say how many prosecutions there have been this year?

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: There were only two last year. Has it grown very much from the two last year?

Ms CONNELL: No. I do not believe the figures have increased significantly.

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: If it is to the level of two or half a dozen or a dozen, Minister, then you would be asking us to accept that with over 800 000 employers in Western Australia, from the Bureau of Statistics, there is only half a dozen cases, where there is actually poor employers who need to be taken to court in Western Australia.

Mrs EDWARDES: The facts that you have asked for we will provide to you in terms of the exact numbers of complaints through the files.

Mr KOBELKE: What I am putting to you, Minister, is actual fact; that there are over 800 000 employers in Western Australia.

Mrs EDWARDES: You would be best to wait for the actual factual information.

Mr BROWN: I ask the Minister is it true that people who are employed under workplace agreements have suffered quite significant reductions in wages and conditions, not all of them but some of them?

Mrs EDWARDES: Workplace agreements provide flexibility in terms of wages and conditions. You tend to presume that is not to the benefit of the employee. In some instances it is to the benefit of the employee. They are actually the ones who are wanting increased flexibility in their workplace.

Mr BROWN: Do you consider that some employees are worse off as a result of that arrangement?

Mrs EDWARDES: Workplace agreements are by agreement.

Mr BROWN: Let me put it this way. Let me give you one example. Here at Parliament House we had security officers employed by Chubb Security. They were employed under the award; that is, the security officers award. Chubb Security lost the contract and New Breed Security got the contract. It went to those security officers, in particular one of them, and said "Here is your choice. Your boss has lost the contract, so you are on your way. You can have a job with us. We do not pay under the award. Our contract is struck on the basis that we pay under workplace agreements. If you want the job then you need to sign a workplace agreement and -"

Mr MASTERS: Point of order, Madam Chair. Point of order.

Mr BROWN: Let me - -

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Bassendean. What is the point of order, member for Vasse?

Mr MASTERS: Can I ask which section of the document - -

Mr BROWN: I am not referring to the advice in terms of this matter.

Mr MASTERS: This is the Budget Estimates Committee.

Mr BROWN: That is right. Yes. That is right. That is right.

Mr MASTERS: We all take opportunities to make political statements, Madam Chair.

Mr BROWN: That is right. Yes, yes.

Mr MASTERS: I am suggesting that - -

Mr BROWN: There are other people who want to shut us up.

[8.57 pm]

Mr MASTERS: I am suggesting that we have got a long night ahead of us covering a lot of other issues.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, I read out at the beginning of this division that questions are to be related to the budget. There is a latitude in that but if there is a budget item then go ahead.

Mr BROWN: Let me say, madam chair, on page 1151, if members care to look, under the heading of major initiatives it talks about the workplace liaison service which provides advice. Which provides advice. I am talking about - -

Mr MASTERS: Madam Chair, we need to talk about the service and not about impossible problems.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Vasse, I think the member for Bassendean is referring to that item. I do not think there is a point of order but I would ask the member for Bassendean to bring his - -

MR BRADSHAW: I thought I read somewhere it said about generalised - -

Mr BROWN: Yes. Well, I - -

The CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, member for Murray-Wellington. If the member for Bassendean would come to the question then we might be able to cover other areas.

Mr BROWN: I am talking about liaison service. I understand that people obviously do not like this issue when it actually brings back it is a real people thing, but I am talking about a liaison service that provides advice to employers and the Parliament is an employer. Do you or your department provide any advice in relation to this matter in terms of reduction in wages suffered by security officers here at Parliament House under workplace agreements? If you did not provide advice have you provided any similar advice to any other department or agency?

Mrs EDWARDES: This is probably a matter that is more pertinent to the commissioner for workplace agreements because they are the ones who actually - -

Mr BROWN: Make a grievance on it. That's what you should do with that. That is what that is there for, Madam Chairman.

Mrs EDWARDES: Many of those issues are particularly in respect to the fact of whether or not somebody is presumably being forced into signing an agreement which they do not accept, which is the point that you are trying to get to, and as such it is really not under workplace liaison service. However, Mr Lloyd advises me that as far as that particular security officer it is not within his knowledge that that particular security officer sought advice and was given advice by the workplace liaison service.

Mr BROWN: Or the department?

Mr LLOYD: Or the department.

Mr BROWN: Or the Parliament?

Mrs EDWARDES: Within our knowledge.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, one I cannot find in the budget papers is the Ayres report which you received in October 1998. Are there any changes envisaged which would be reflected in these budget figures at all?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will get Mr Lloyd to respond in respect to that. We are still working through the respective CEOs in respect of portfolio agencies as to how some of those recommendations can be achieved. There are a couple already been put into place, such as the long service leave construction industry one. It is progressing at the moment.

Mr KOBELKE: Progressing to where? What are you hoping to do?

Mrs EDWARDES: In accordance with the recommendation. In respect to the building industry task force I am not proposing to abolish it. It was moved under the Department of Productivity and Labour Relations and will stay under the department's ambit.

Mr KOBELKE: Could you say which output it is under in the budget?

Mr LLOYD: It is not in these papers.

Mrs EDWARDES: It does not start - -

Mr LLOYD: Until 1 July and we are still consulting with CAMS about the final funds transfer, so for these papers we had to go ahead and prepare it on the basis that it was still with CAMS.

Mr KOBELKE: So, that transfer takes place from 1 July?

Mr LLOYD: That is our intention.

Mr KOBELKE: This budget is supposed to be operational from 1 July but there is no mention in here of that.

Mrs EDWARDES: There was not a finalisation in terms of the discussion with CAMS but we are working towards a 1 July date for the industry task force. There is also the regional services which is one issue which the respective departments and agencies are working through and will come back to me with advice on. There is potentially an opportunity for Worksafe and Workcover to be collocated and that again is still being worked on to come back to me with advice. As far as the Industrial Commission is concerned, there was some concern with contracting out any of their services to, say, the department who sometimes represents me or others before the Commission and as such that is not going to occur. So, therefore, many of those issues are still being worked through and will come back to me.

Mr KOBELKE: I come back to output 1 on page 1145, which is general policy advice and I would ask, Minister, as to what extent has the third wave industrial relations legislation been implemented? Is it fully; or to what extent you do not think it has been implemented? What gauge have you of its success or failure?

Mrs EDWARDES: Sorry, what point are you talking about.

Mr KOBELKE: I am talking about general policy advice which is provided to you. I think it is fairly broad there on output descriptions which I think - -

Mrs EDWARDES: Very general, member for Nollamara.

Mr KOBELKE: - - clearly should cover the third wave legislation seeing as what the Parliament and the people of Western Australia have been put through.

Mrs EDWARDES: Yes. Sorry, what was your question again?

Mr KOBELKE: I am asking you the extent to which you judge it has been implemented and your judgment as to its success or failure.

Mrs EDWARDES: It has been fully implemented.

Mr KOBELKE: And your judgment as to its success or failure?

Mrs EDWARDES: Successful.

Mr KOBELKE: Very successful? So, you do not think there is any problem with the bus drivers' striking this week without going to a secret ballot?

Mrs EDWARDES: That is a matter which is presently - -

SPEAKER: ...(indistinct)... on the subject, are we not, Madam Chair. Is that not a strike?

Mrs EDWARDES: We are obviously keeping an eye on that but as to the government we are not directly involved in it as far as that particular issue is concerned.

Mr LLOYD: I am pretty sure the Federal award covered employees so a lot of third wave ...(indistinct)...

Mr KOBELKE: So, there has been no directive go out to the State public sector regarding what action should be taken with respect to strikes or industrial action?

[9.05 pm]

Mr LLOYD: Yes. We issued a circular when the legislation was implemented advising employers about how they should react and respond to industrial action, the number of possible courses to take. That went out to every agency.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it not true, when people came forward from some Government agencies, suggesting action to be taken because of industrial action taken by employees, they were hosed down and told not to take any action?

Mr McNEE: Madam Chair, I thought you were supposed to say which page you are on and which dot point you are on.

Mr KOBELKE: I did.

Mr McNEE: Which one are you on then?

Mr KOBELKE: 1145, Output 1, Policy advice.

Mr McNEE: It sounds to me as if you are a long way wide of the budget.

Mr KOBELKE: Read under Output description.

Mr McNEE: Which page?

The CHAIRMAN: 1145.

Mrs EDWARDES: Sorry, what issue and what department are you talking about?

Mr KOBELKE: I am not going to give you specific ones now because it will dob people in, but people have advised DOPLAR, going back some months ago, that industrial action was being taken. In their view, the third wave legislation was not being adhered to and they were simply fobbed off.

Mrs EDWARDES: Well, I am not sure of the circumstances that you are talking about.

Mr KOBELKE: So of all the industrial action that has taken place since the legislation was put in place, there has been no basis on which action should have been taken under the third wave legislation?

Mrs EDWARDES: There has been no basis for us to take any action.

Division 48: Registrar, Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, \$6 183 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for Labour Relations.]

[Mr J. Spurling, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Department of the Registrar, Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.]

[Mr A. Watt, Director Corporate Services, Registrar, Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.]

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, page 1206, the dot points at the bottom, the first one:

Anticipated changes to Industrial Relations legislation did not eventuate.

What particular changes is that alluding to?

Mrs EDWARDES: There were a number of recommendations that came out of the bill, the Fielding review, that we are not proceeding with.

Mr KOBELKE: So they were anticipating implementation of some or all of Fielding and nothing has happened?

Mrs EDWARDES: A lot of discussions had taken place prior to my coming into the portfolio. However, there were still a number of areas where there was not agreement on it and as such where there was no agreement we are not proceeding with those.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you, Minister. Second dot point:

There is an ever increasing number of inquiries and applications regarding unfair dismissal causing a greater demand on staff to assist parties effectively.

Can we have some explanation as to what is the nature, quantity and quality of those changes?

Mr SPURLING: Simply that a very high percentage of the Industrial Relations Commission work relates to unfair dismissal claims rather than the traditional industrial stuff that used to go on in the past.

Mr KOBELKE: So does that mean there has actually been an increase in the number of lodgments of unfair dismissal applications?

Mr SPURLING: Yes.

Mr KOBELKE: Can we actually have numbers? Say, what was the number last year and the current year?

Mrs EDWARDES: I can provide that by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you. My next point goes to leave entitlement which is on 1207. A 10 per cent reduction in overall leave liability. It points out that the commissioners are largely responsible for that, so it may be difficult to actually bring it under control. Minister, either now or in a supplementary, could we actually have what is the leave liability figure for 1997-1998, for 1998-1999 estimated actual, and 1999-2000 estimate?

Mrs EDWARDES: I can provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you. Would it be possible, Minister, to also split that up so that we could have it for both the commission and the registry and further, if we could actually have it for each individual commissioner?

Mrs EDWARDES: Wherever possible, I am quite happy to provide that information. It might be something that I would need to check with the President and the Chief Commissioner as to the break-down in terms of the commission, as you would be aware, of what their status is.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you, Minister. I hope when we have gone through some of the other matters here, you might be willing to accommodate that. It does connect with something later. Page 1207, where we actually have the total net cost of outputs, which go from 7 157 000 to 7 011 000 in the middle of the page, that would appear to me to be a real reduction of 4.2 per cent. That being the case, what functions are being cut out or what efficiencies, in order to be able to maintain the organisation, because the FTEs basically stay the same, with a real cut of 4.2 per cent in its outputs?

Mr SPURLING: There have been no services cut out or no other reductions. We are putting a lot of time and effort and money into technology to try and have faster and quicker ways to do it and we are trying to improve the way we do things all the time.

Mr KOBELKE: I am sure you are, Mr Spurling, but I appreciate that any Government agency which has been undertaking stringencies for the last few years, finds it difficult to take a cut of 4.2 per cent in real terms and maintain the same level of service without over-pressuring people to the point where they simply cannot cope.

Mrs EDWARDES: Is that a statement or a question?

Mr KOBELKE: It is a question.

Mrs EDWARDES: I think it was more of a statement.

Mr KOBELKE: The answer is, we are just getting more efficient. We have seen Government agency after Government agency for years and years. We are now seeing the amount of break-downs, the stress that people are under, the drop in the level of services, which are all well quantified, and that is what is happening when we continue to tell people do the same with less.

Mrs EDWARDES: I think Mr Spurling has identified that they are always looking at ways of being able to achieve that and some of it is able to be achieved through technology.

[9.12 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: On page 1207, halfway down the column, employee entitlements go from \$172 000 to 1997-98 to \$14 000 in 1998-99 to zero. Can we have some explanation of that please, Minister?

Mr WATT: Yes. This is a balance sheet item or adjustment for balance sheet items. The net effect is that there will be no change. Last year there was an increase of \$14 000 and the previous year there was an increase of \$172 000.

Mr KOBELKE: I turn now, Minister, to page 1213; Output 5: Activities of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, which I appreciate the registrar has no control over but gives support services to. The major achievements claimed there for 1998-99 is that the commission has attended to matters of industrial relations conflict in a timely and efficient manner. I find that hard to believe, Minister, and I am wondering whether you would share my doubts or whether you find that to be an accurate and factual statement.

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not have any information to suggest otherwise.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, what I wish to put before you is that that is a totally false statement. I do not wish to disparage the many fine commissioners but unfortunately one commissioner, Commissioner Parks, has really given the commission a bad name for many people who have been before him. I realise that you are not in a position to remove him but I am hoping that by answering the questions I put to you fully and frankly you will so embarrass Commissioner Parks that he will resign. He has delayed - -

Mr McNEE: Madam Chair, I cannot see the relevance of this. If the member wants to go and make a grievance debate, so he ought to next week. This is, I am sorry - -

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Moore, are you taking a point of order?

Mr McNEE: Yes, I am taking a point of order. I am telling you this is not relevant to the budget.

Mr KOBELKE: Page 1213.

Mr McNEE: I do not care about 1213. You are talking about sacking a commissioner. You are getting well broad of the subject matter.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Moore, there is no point of order.

Mr McNEE: I think there is, Madam Chair. I am sorry about that.

SPEAKER: Madam Chair, can I ask a question for clarification purposes? Is this committee covered by privilege?

The CHAIRMAN: This is a committee of parliament. Yes, it is.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, if I could just give you one case of the many brought to my attention - -

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I could just counsel you also, member for Nollamara. It will help in resolving the conflict between the two sides. You can pose questions that will elicit the answers you hope to get.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Chair. Minister, I will be very brief in giving you a little bit of information of the many cases that have come to me. Mr Graham Feltham was dismissed in December 1992. He put in a claim for unfair dismissal which was allocated to Commissioner Parks back in 1993. Commissioner Parks brought down a determination in April this year in which he stated that Mr Feltham had been unfairly dismissed but because of the passage of time and other technical issues made no award in his favour. Now, I find that totally unacceptable and a total denial of justice. While this is one of many cases brought to me it is the most extreme. I would like to ask a question, Minister. Can you, through the registrar, provide details as to how many cases for each commissioner in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission have not been determined within six months of allocation to each commissioner?

Mrs EDWARDES: It will not be something that I can provide by way of supplementary information. I am advised by registrar that it will take longer than the 14 days so if the member would like to put it on notice, and you will need to do that, I will seek that information.

Mr KOBELKE: I will do that. I have one further question. Commissioner Fielding in his 1995 review, which you have already alluded to, recommended an amendment to the Act to require the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission to bring down their decisions and reasons promptly. Are you going to take up that recommendation?

Mrs EDWARDES: I would support that, absolutely. It is incumbent upon anybody in that position to provide a judgment to people in a timely fashion.

Mr KOBELKE: When might you actually move in parliament to introduce that legislation to have that effect?

Mrs EDWARDES: That I do not know, in terms of dealing with legislative amendments, but that may not necessarily need legislative amendment. If what you are saying is true, and I will certainly get that information, then I will be having discussions with the commission as to how they can provide timely judgment.

Mr KOBELKE: So what you are saying is that following the Fielding report given to you in 1995 you are still considering taking action with respect to commissioners giving their decisions and reasons promptly.

Mrs EDWARDES: There are a number of recommendations in that whereby they are agreed and that is obviously one whereby there is agreement. As to bringing it before the parliament, you would be aware of the legislative timetable and as such I am not proposing to be bringing forward amendments for Labour Relations.

[9.19 pm]

Division 49: WorkSafe Western Australia, \$12 203 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for Labour Relations.]

[Mr B. Bradley, Commissioner, WorkSafe Western Australia.]

[Mr B. Dellar, Director Corporate Services, WorkSafe Western Australia.]

Mr BRADSHAW: On page 1558 under Significant Issues and Trends:

The Government has a vision for occupational safety and health in Western Australia which aims that by the year 2000:

- to achieve the lowest work-related injury, disease...

Some of the businesses in my electorate claim that the demands put out by WorkSafe are unworkable and very difficult to achieve and I just wonder what can be done to try and get a resolution where workable scenarios can be put in place rather than what they believe to be unworkable?

Mr KOBELKE: Are we talking about industry sectors like primary industry or a whole range of industries?

Mr BRADSHAW: I am talking about people working on machines like caterpillar tractors and front end loaders, etcetera, bulldozers.

Mr BRADLEY: The best response I can give there is that within the last six months we are working with the industry peak bodies to address those very concerns, so much so that particularly in terms of the farming community the department, in conjunction with the peak body, are piloting inspection activities on farms to try and identify the main areas of concern and the results that I am getting back are very positive. I trust that the working relationships there have improved over the last six months and I believe that we will continue to make substantial improvements in that regard.

Mr BRADSHAW: This is not necessarily rural. This is also contracting, road making and maintenance of those vehicles in the workshop.

Mr BRADLEY: I have not really gone to that extent but I know I concentrated fairly heavily on the rural sector when I first moved in and I am seeing some results but I will take your point and have a look at that as well.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that by way of supplementary?

Mr BRADLEY: No, I just think it is an operational thing.

Mr KOBELKE: I would like to continue on the same dot point but a slightly different issue; that is the dot point one under Significant Issues and Trends. It says:

The Government has a vision for occupational safety and health in Western Australia which aims that by the year 2000:

- to achieve the lowest work-related injury, disease and fatality rates in Australia...

Minister, that is obviously a very fine objective. I am concerned that it is not being objectively measured. Do you have any objective measures as to how we are going in terms of reducing our statistics for work related injury, disease and fatalities?

Mr BRADLEY: The compendium that was produced by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission in 1998 would suggest that we are equal lowest in terms of our fatality rates. The work related injury and disease is far more problematic as you will see from further descriptors in the budget papers. We only achieved a 3.9 per cent reduction. From that Labor Minister's report that came out in December, you will also note that we were ranked fourth but I stress in that context that we are not comparing apples with apples either so it is a very difficult assessment to make. In terms of that particular dot point, it will be very difficult for us to achieve the 50 per cent.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, I will come later if I am given the opportunity to talk about actual reductions and percentages but just that objective as being the lowest in Australia. The most recent NOHSC report that Mr Bradley referred to actually showed on a standardised incidence rate for new injury/poisoning cases that WA was the worst in Australia, not the best, at 22.4 per thousand wage and salary earners. We were slightly ahead of all the other states with the Commonwealth down at 16, so I am very concerned, Minister, at these statements that have been put out for some years. They continue to be put out but, really, there is not the justification there for it and I am hoping that you will work a bit more vigorously with your counterparts in other states - because I know it is on the agenda, Mr Bradley has referred to it - to see that we have a better collection system which actually has some veracity and not just - -

Mr McNEE: You better get some employees that use their brains then. I employ them. I know what they are like. I am the poor bugger that will finish up in gaol over some of your bloody nonsense.

?: I do not know about the bloody nonsense. It is savings people's lives.

Mr McNEE: That is bloody right. I employ them and you try and tell them to use their brains.

?: It is saving people's lives, member. That is what we are about.

Mr McNEE: I would be interested in saving their lives but they are not, I can tell you.

Mrs EDWARDES: At the LaboUr Ministers' Conference last week, one of the commitments we agreed to was to actually continue to work on the production of that data on a comparison basis. We do find it useful although, as Mr Bradley says, it is not necessarily comparing apples with apples and there are differences between each of the states which is not necessarily taken into account fully, but we will improve upon that statistical data being developed and being put out to the public but we will continue to do that.

[9.26 pm]

Mr MASTERS: Minister, page 1559, the second last dot point:

WorkSafe Western Australia is a world leader in Internet delivery - -

Can I point out to you that in my electorate, and I suspect in other rural electorates, farmers are not the group of people that have the highest level of access to, firstly, computers and, secondly, to an internet service. Even if they do it becomes a very expensive service, either by satellite or by TV. Is WorkSafe WA considering other ways of getting the information direct to farmers other than internet in order to make sure the fullest range of information is available?

Mrs EDWARDES: I will ask Mr Bradley to comment specifically but you will note the second sentence of that dot point is that there is going to be an increased emphasis on hard copy publications because what we do want to have is the hard copy in front of the tractor as they are going about their work so that people actually know what it is that they ought to be doing in terms of best practice. As such, you are not always going to have the accessibility to the internet. However, it is more than just farmers. It is everybody; whether you are out on a construction site, whether you are in small business or small industry. People need to have the information accessible and being available on the internet is not necessarily accessible to everybody and that is the reason why, in the forthcoming year, there will be an increased emphasis on hard copy publications.

Mr BRADLEY: There has been a shift back to hard copy publications and it will focus fairly heavily on codes and guidance dates and fact sheets. Just recently the WorkSafe Commission commissioned some research on workplace change and culture and the results for that were only released last week or the week before last. Now, clearly one of the questions we sought information on was how widespread people were accessing the internet and really the information that came back was that it was being accessed but it is mainly the academic institutions which are using it. In terms of small business and other workplaces; for example, farmers, they were not really getting the information. So, it sort of vindicated our position to return to hard copy publications.

Mr MASTERS: Once you have produced the hard copy publications, do you have a specific plan in mind as to their distribution to ensure that there is the most effective distribution to the farmers, remembering that for many in city-based workplaces it is quite an easy matter for people from those workplaces to maybe call into an office or gain that hard copy information in some other way.

Mr BRADLEY: Well, we do but, I suppose, from where I am sitting it is probably fairly ad hoc. What is on the commission at the present time is a promotions strategy to address that very issue. We also are working very closely with Farmsafe in terms of getting information out through that network as well.

Mr BRADSHAW: On page 1159, the first dot point on the page, where it says:

Firm and fair enforcement of the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

One of the other issues that have arisen with some of the employers out in the industry and the electorate is that if somebody does get injured the onus goes back on the owners or the employers - -

Mr McNEE: That is correct.

Mr BRADSHAW: - - of the employees when, in fact, they might have provided all the safety equipment and all the advice and everything.

Mr McNEE: That is correct. You cannot make them wear it. That is the trouble.

Mr BRADSHAW: The employee, you know, does not do the right thing and gets injured in some way or other. If that is occurring I do not see that being firm and fair enforcement.

Mr BRADLEY: There is a prosecution policy which we enforce and that is fairly well available out in the workplace. From where I sit, I get criticised if I do not take prosecutions, as you well know. So, it really is difficult. It is not always black and white. Often these things fall into a grey area and you use your best judgment at that particular time. Interestingly, less

than 50 per cent of our prosecutions are taken resulting from injuries or from fatalities. Over 54-55 per cent all result in terms of prevention. So, you may just be hearing the odd isolated ones.

Mrs EDWARDES: And it is not always employers that are prosecuted. Some employees actually get prosecuted.

Mr McNEE: Well, I would have to tell you, Minister, that most employers are looking anxiously forward to the day when they do not employ anybody. That is what I can tell you my neighbours are working towards. That is why they are investing heavily in big gear - so that they do not have to take that risk - because we are Goddamned sick of being responsible for everybody and anybody that turns up. So, it is good for your employment rate.

Mr KOBELKE: At page 1561, the output 1 regulatory services, the total cost outputs there go from \$10.025m to \$9.505m. I calculate that as a real reduction of 7.3 per cent in your regulatory services and I want to know if that again is going to mean a reduction in the level and quality of services. Is that why we see a reduction in the number of investigations to be completed from 9 910 to 8 100 because this particular part of the WorkSafe is not being resourced adequately and therefore having to reduce the number of investigations?

Mr BRADLEY: No, I do not believe that is the reason that you see the reduction. The reduction really is turning upon the fact that we are now asking inspectors to provide more advice when they go out to do an inspection. They were in to a culture mode where they went out and just inspected the activity. Inspectors are now being encouraged to provide an educative function as in many cases they are the font of all knowledge in regard to certain processes..

Mr KOLBELKE: I hope you will look at it very carefully, Minister, because I have great concerns that that deregulation approach that has been taking place for some years now, even before you came to government, has got to the point where we are going to have more accidents through people not being adequately trained and having bits of paper that are worthless.

[9.33 pm]

Mrs EDWARDES: It is a national standard. It is a national review that is being undertaken. If we need to strengthen it, then we will move to do so.

Mr MASTERS: The top of page 1562 continues from where the member for Nollamara was talking about output measures relating to regulatory services. Minister, why would you not in this section have a goal - in other words, an output measure - which stated the number of inspections to be carried out from one year to the next, the number of workplace inspections, as being a goal or an output measure, and as a second output measure the reduction in the number of prosecutions?

Mrs EDWARDES: The number of investigations completed includes inspections.

Mr MASTERS: Can I ask the difference then between an inspection and an investigation?

Mr BRADLEY: We had better take that on supplementation.

Mr MASTERS: I will surmise that an investigation is an investigation of an incident whereas an inspection is a proactive visit to a workplace to make sure there is compliance with WorkSafe regulations. Is that a fair comment?

Mrs EDWARDES: In respect to the breakdown, we will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr MASTERS: I am just trying to understand the difference in definition between an inspection and investigation. Does that need to be supplementary information as well?

Mr BRADLEY: I would like to give it by way of supplementary information because there are a number of categories. It will start off with a complaint, where they go out and probably do not issue a notice, then they could go out where they do issue a notice. There are a cascading number of categories.

Mr MASTERS: I hope there are not 113 inspectors, which is the number of FTEs listed. I am assuming it is a smaller number than that, but I hope that inspectors would go out on a proactive basis on occasions. Could I get those numbers as well?

Mrs EDWARDES: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr KOBELKE: I would like to continue on from where the member for Vasse was, on prosecutions, a different aspect though. Minister, what is the period of time available now for WorkSafe to initiate a prosecution following an accident or incident?

Mrs EDWARDES: Under the amendments to the legislation?

Mr KOBELKE: The legislation as it now stands.

Mrs EDWARDES: We have proclaimed that and it is three years.

Mr KOBELKE: So what was the impact on the statistics then, if perhaps not any, at the current time?

Mr BRADLEY: It could do but basically we are trying to get our inspectors to finalise all their prosecutions within six months. We lifted it, you will see in the papers there, from 80 to 85 per cent of our prosecutions must be completed within six months.

Mr KOBELKE: So in cases like the Michael Hill death, which I know you are well aware of from the letter from parents

and friends, it is still open then potentially for a prosecution to take place if the government or the correct authorities so judged it?

Mr BRADLEY: It occurred before proclamation.

Mrs EDWARDES: You would remember my commitment to the parliament which was that we would not utilise the extension of that retrospectively except for those matters which I identified in the parliament.

Mr KOBELKE: I agreed, and thank you for giving that undertaking, but I do not think it applies in this case because the amendments to the legislation were proclaimed in January 1999, the 12 month period which would preclude prosecution did not expire until March 1999. So in that sense you would not be acting retrospectively. That is perhaps a matter for another day. Minister, I move on to page 1562, the second dot point under Major Achievements For 1998-99.

The Government's target to reduce the rate of work-related fatalities by 50% between July 1995 and June 2000 by means of prevention strategies related to tractors, forklifts, falls, electricity and logging is working. During 1994/95 there were 31 work-related fatalities in Western Australian workplaces, which reduced to 26 in 1997/98.

That is the dot point. Minister, why was 1994-1995 chosen as the base year?

[9.40 pm]

Mr BRADLEY: I would have to find out.

Mr KOBELKE: Can I put to you, Minister, that it was chosen quite deliberately to cook the books because 1994-1995 is the highest number of fatalities going back a decade. So, if you start from such a high base - - I mean, why did you not start in the last year of the Labor government because there was only 22 deaths in that year.

Mr McNEE: Well, there was nobody employed then at all.

Mr KOBELKE: There was only 22 deaths in that year.

Mr McNEE: That is why. Nobody had a job. Yeah. No worries; and that is the way you will have it again.

Mr KOBELKE: Compared to the employment growth under Labor you only achieved two-thirds of it.

Mr McNEE: A total bloody disaster.

The CHAIRMAN: Order. Order, members.

Mr KOBELKE: In the first 5 years you gained two-thirds of the employment growth under Labor, so you have got a long way to go before you catch up to us in creating jobs.

Mr McNEE: Does not take much catching, nothing much to beat.

Mr KOBELKE: So, is it not true, Minister, that 1994-1995 was chosen simply to make the figures look good because you can give no other reason why you would choose that year.

Mr BRADLEY: The only answer I can really give to you is essentially that it was a 5 year plan and it was about that time when the department established the 2000 vision, so it was an appropriate year to start. I cannot really give you a better answer but I will add that this year the fatality rate is tracking reasonably well although any fatality is a bad result. We are down to 13 at the present time.

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, the next dot point gave figures for improvement notice, prohibition notice and prosecution notices, again looking over the years which were particularly beneficial to the view you wish to put. Can we, in terms of having an honest assessment, get by way of supplementary information the number of improvement notices, prohibition notices and prosecutions for each year from 1988 up until the last available figures?

Mrs EDWARDES: We can provide a breakdown of the amount expended over the last four to five years. However, it may not be possible to just focus on the training aspects.

Mr KOBELKE: But it is highly misleading when you - -

Mrs EDWARDES: But if he would like a breakdown - -

Mr KOBELKE: - - take a blimp as your base to start off from.

Mrs EDWARDES: Member for Nollamara, if you would like a breakdown of it we are happy to provide it.

Mr KOBELKE: I thank you, Minister.

Mrs EDWARDES: But do not suggest that we have been less than honest.

The CHAIRMAN: From 1988 - -

Mr KOBELKE: Up to the last year where figures are available.

Mr KOBELKE: Page 1563, Minister, prevention strategies for particular areas. It is the very top dot point. Mentioned in there is that one of the areas you will be targeting is demolition. It is an issue that I have a real interest in, Minister. I think it is very important and I would ask you if you can give some explanation as to what you are thinking of doing to ensure that we improve safety in the demolition industry.

Mr BRADLEY: We are looking at our regulations to see if we need to strengthen the regulations in terms of whether or not we licence demolition contractors or licence demolition work; whichever is applicable. The commission is conducting a forum which will be held mid July to receive submissions and to see which strategy would be the preferred option to move. So, we would anticipate that there will be some movement in terms of the regulations there by the end of the year.

Mr KOBELKE: I thank you for that, Minister. Can I urge you to ensure that there is some form of regulation or licensing for the demolition industry. Again, just in my local paper this week, there was examples in a local suburb with people demolishing an asbestos house without taking due regard of the need to handle asbestos properly. I really think we do need to regulate or licence all demolition contractors.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just bring to the attention of all the committee that it is now quarter to ten. We are entirely in your hands but we do still have another division to do. Member for Nollamara.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you. Minister, page 1563, the third dot point. The department will implement strategies to reduce exposure to health hazards to minimise diseases which manifest in the longer term. Can we have some explanation so that we have a more specific understanding of what those strategies are likely to be that are being developed?

Mr BRADLEY: Yes. I felt that when I returned to the department late last year that a lot of emphasis was being placed on the safety components only and not on the health components. So, we are looking at the long duration rate injuries and focusing back onto manual handling across all sectors.

Mr KOBELKE: I wish you well in that, Mr Bradley and the Minister. I think that is very important. My concern is if you are reducing the potential for inspections then that is going to be a problem because we have already had the major disaster at Wittenoom. So, there will be employers who will seek to gain commercial or financial advantage if there is not a compliance requirement and there will be a very small number of employers who will take advantage of workers to the detriment of their long term health.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there further questions, members?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Nollamara.

Mr KOBELKE: Page 1564 moves now on to output 2, industry and community awareness and I note, Minister, that this budget actually does increase in real terms as opposed to the budget for output 1. The second bottom dot point on page 1564 relates to the market research showing a high level of recognition of Think Safe campaign. Minister, are you able to make available to us the details of that market research or is it something you need to keep in confidence?

Mrs EDWARDES: I would be only too happy to provide it by way of supplementary information if that is possible. I think that whenever you go to your next local school just ask about it because you will get an immediate response.

[9.48 pm]

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, your suggestion is that it has been very successful with schools I think, is correct but the difficulty is the only objective data I have on the whole advertising program was the Yellow Pages survey which shows that WA ranked clearly last with small business in terms of their perception of safety in the workplace and the importance they placed on it. You may be able to pick holes in the methodology of the Yellow Pages survey, but it is clearly objective data where we come out very poorly. While it is important to get the message through to children, it is equally important to get it through to small business.

Mrs EDWARDES: I do not want to comment extensively in respect to that survey but there were some flaws in respect to that. In terms of the market research, if it is available, I will provide it by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister.

Mr KOBELKE: Just on that, Minister, is the market research directed to gauging the effectiveness of simply the communication strategy to particular sectors or does it really do an overall analysis as to whether the money has been well spent in getting the message out to the areas where we do need to improve health and safety in the workplace?

Mrs EDWARDES: That is something that will obviously be evident in providing that information.

Mr KOBELKE: Across on 1565 there are new television advertisements in the last dot point. Can we have what is the actual budget for television advertising in the 1999-2000 year?

Mrs EDWARDES: I can provide that by way of supplementary information?

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you, Minister. Can you indicate as to whether the payment to Glen Jakovich remains as what we were told last year, or whether that has been renegotiated? Any changes?

Mr BRADLEY: I do not know what you were told last year, but it was renegotiated in September.

Mr KOBELKE: From memory, it was \$90 000 but I stand corrected.

Mr BRADLEY: It has not changed.

Mr KOBELKE: Page 1569. At the bottom of the page we have Controlled Grants, Subsidies and Transfer Payments. The

grants to Trades and Labor Council and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of \$60 000 in the forthcoming year, Minister, can we have some explanation as to (a) what it is for and (b) the break-down between the TLC and the CCI?

Mr BRADLEY: There are two grants there of \$30 000 each. They are being provided to support the servicing by those organisations of the commission and its advisory committees.

Mr KOBELKE: The grant just above that to Farmsafe Inc, what are the expected outcomes from that grant?

Mr BRADLEY: Training.

Mr KOBELKE: What happened to the grant to the West Australian Farmers Federation which clearly is not being continued? Did they finish their project?

Mr BRADLEY: They have completed their project and have submitted their code of practice.

Mr KOBELKE: What is now happening with the code of practice?

Mr BRADLEY: We are looking at it.

Mr KOBELKE: At the very bottom of page 1570 we see quite a large reduction in the retained revenue that will be available to WorkSafe. One falls by over 50 per cent and the other one, I think, by about 40 per cent between 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. Can we have some explanation as to why there is such a reduction in revenue raised through WorkSafe?

Mr BRADLEY: The bulk of that decline we have assessed is as a result of the number of certificates of competency, which we think is tapering off. I think, if you go back to an earlier page that fact has been pointed out; 1561.

Mr KOBELKE: Do you have any figures which subdivide that into whether or not the WorkSafe International which was promoted for some years is still a going concern and is likely to return some funds or not?

Mr BRADLEY: It will return very minimal. I think we have budgeted, from memory, \$10 000 only.

Mr DELLAR: With regard to certificates or internationally - -

Mr KOBELKE: No. The overall effort to sell our training services and health and safety services in the training area internationally.

Mr BRADLEY: We are out of selling training services completely, but there is still scope for other providers to bring people in and they pay us money to do that. So there is a minimal amount of money.

Mr KOBELKE: Do we have a number for the amount of money which WorkSafe has expended over the last five or so years?

Mr BRADLEY: On international training?

Mr KOBELKE: On trying to develop an international market for our services in work safety?

Mr BRADLEY: I think I can give you the totals that we have allocated to that program. There are other things that happened in that program as well. If you are just trying to focus on training then I am not sure I can come back to that level of detail.

Mr KOBELKE: It is the provision for return or profit on health and safety advice or training.

Mr BRADLEY: Okay. I will try and give you that.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Minister committing to providing that information?

Mrs EDWARDES: Again, we will provide whatever information is available by way of supplementary.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr KOBELKE: 1566, the final one. This gives an indication of the ten year strategy. Do we have any costing overall on the ten year strategy and particularly how much will be allocated in this budget towards that ten year strategy?

Mr BRADLEY: No. It is a concept which we are developing at the present time. Primarily, what we are trying to do is get back to basics. We have already touched on hard copy publications. We are trying to get the department back to core work and that is focusing on inspections and investigations. We are also going to look at promoting the self-regulatory concept of employers and employees in the workplace, taking charge of their own health and safety, and using the consultative mechanisms within the legislation. Then to develop that further, picking up on the safety management systems which is a further development for those companies or small business which are further down the track.

Mr KOBELKE: It also goes on to mention there the role of safety and health representatives and I take it that is what Mr Bradley was alluding to.

Mr BRADLEY: That is it.

Mr KOBELKE: Does that indicate that really we should be doing more, because there was certainly a high expectation and profile of the health and safety representatives some five, eight years ago but I generally do not get much feedback these

days. It is something that is looked on as important and to which resources and effort must be placed by particular enterprises.

[9.56 pm]

Mr BRADLEY: I can give you a figure of how many Health and Safety reps are currently - - because the last Act amendments in 1995 now require registration so we can give you some figures if you wish.

Mr KOBELKE: If you would please, Minister.

Mrs EDWARDES: I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Division 47: Commissioner of Workplace Agreements, \$1 905 000 -

[Mrs Holmes, Chairman.]

[Mrs Edwardes, Minister for Labour Relations.]

[Mr B. Cooper, Commissioner, Commissioner of Workplace Agreements.]

[Mr A. Scott, Assistant Commissioner, Commissioner of Workplace Agreements.]

Mr KOBELKE: Minister, page 228, Output 2:

Statistical and other information about workplace agreements is prepared for the Minister and the community.

We have not seen for some years a report which went into any detail with respect to levels of remuneration. I am just wondering when we will see a further report.

Mr COOPER: We will be publishing a further report of trends in wages and conditions on workplace agreements. They will be distributed next Wednesday.

Mr BRADSHAW: Page 225, Significant Issues and Trends:

The Workplace Agreements Act enables local employment arrangements, termed "workplace agreement", to be registered and to prevail over other employment law.

Are there many places that you have come across that have put workplace agreements into place which have not been registered?

Mrs EDWARDES: Are you talking about in Western Australia?

Mr BRADSHAW: Yes.

Mr COOPER: We could not give any definitive answer on that. Our role is to deal with applications that are forwarded to us so they are agreements that have been signed and lodged.

Mr BRADSHAW: Do you not prevail over ones that have been put into place but not registered?

Mr COOPER: No. If they are not registered then they do not prevail over other employment law.

Mr BRADSHAW: I am looking at an employee who thinks he has signed a workplace agreement is under the impression that it is all ridgy-didge but may have been misled maybe through not knowing the law.

Mr COOPER: People will ring and inquire whether they have got a registered workplace agreement and we check our register and advise them accordingly. We also in those instances take an extra step and advise the employer that, for it to be a workplace agreement and valid and prevail over other employment law, that needs to be done. In our information services we try to make clear to people that they do need to have a workplace agreement registered for it to be valid.

Mr MASTERS: Minister, on page 227, towards the bottom of the Output Measures, under Timeliness, "Average time in calendar days to register an", I presume the word missing is "agreement". I would have thought 29 days is a fairly long period of time to leave an employee wondering whether a document has been registered or not. Is that a fair statement on my part and is it reasonable for the commissioner to aim to reduce that 29 days?

Mr COOPER: We are aiming to reduce that time, bearing in mind that many of the agreements that are lodged with us are either individual agreements or additions to collective agreements which can operate from the date they are signed by both parties, so the point you make is important. The reason we have that sort of time involved is the processes we currently use of communicating with the parties. In the first instance a letter will issue which would say we have received it, "If you have any questions or concerns, get back to us". We do not want to make that process too quick which means that people may miss the mail and not get back to us. That is a governing element of that 29 days. We have introduced other processes, which we use in some instances, where we require information up-front and we do not rely as much on that type of letter. I would expect when we next publish that figure that there could be some reduction but it is something that we are continually working on.

Committee adjourned 10.00 pm