



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
1998

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4 June 1998

Legislative Council

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am.

Division 69: Family and Children's Services, \$145 230 000 -

[Hon Muriel Patterson, Chairman.]

[Hon E.J. Charlton, Minister for Transport.]

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

[Mr B. Budiselik, Executive Director, Industry Services.]

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

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

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

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

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearings.

For the information of members, this Estimates Committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily *Hansard* will be available the following morning. Hansard will distribute documents for correction, which must be returned on the A4 documents sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page.

For the benefit of members and Hansard I ask the Minister to introduce his advisers to the committee. It will also greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the Budget Statements volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their questions.

If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for the Minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's advisory research officer within three working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers.

At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses form. Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, would you like to make a brief statement prior to the commencement of questions.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: No. As I am not the Minister directly responsible, it is beneficial to all concerned that I do not set in train new policies for Family and Children's Services.

The CHAIRMAN: As a result of the restructure of the department, a new administration bureau has been created for the central processing of expenditure. Has that resulted in an improvement in efficiency within the department?

Mr FISHER: You are correct. A major restructuring of the organisation occurred over the past 12 months and we decided to look at our service delivery. At that stage, 21 district offices were scattered around the State and each had its own administrative unit. The review identified not only duplication, but that resources could be used more efficiently if we consolidated our administration. This occurred because of two fundamental factors. Firstly, the demands on government regarding our accounting and administrative procedures were such that many of the staff in our regional offices did not have the qualifications that were required. I am referring in particular to accrual accounting when we moved into output based management. Many members of the administrative staff who had financial responsibilities in our district offices did not have the appropriate accounting qualifications. We wanted to put some muscle into our administration. We originally looked at drawing administration out of districts into zones. However, we decided in the final analysis to devise one central unit.

Secondly, a lot of people in administration in our 21 district offices were involved in routine, mundane administrative work. We thought if we could centralise it into one unit we could make better use of our systems because Family and Children's Services has one of the best information networks around Western Australia. We are very well equipped with 1 035 computers for a staff population of about the same number. To receive a better return on our

information systems and overcome a lot of the problems associated with routine work, we decided to give the responsibility to a centralised unit. We took two full time equivalents from each district office which gave us a core number of people to allow us to establish a centralised administration bureau. We were aware that we were going against the trend of a number of other government departments that were devolving all sorts of responsibilities out to the field. When we did that we found there were dangers in devolving administration because of the skills problem and also because of that routine nature of the work. We have centralised it and we have had some teething problems. However, we have found that there has been an improvement in efficiency and we expect that to continue.

A lot of other government departments are looking at the work we have done in this area. One of the key decisions we made in setting up the administration bureau was not to put a financial or systems person in charge of it. We put a service delivery manager from the Northam district office in charge of the administration bureau. That was done to ensure that the bureau is there to service the field and is not internally driven by finance or administrative people.

[10.10 am]

The CHAIRMAN: What security measures has the department put in place to prevent unauthorised uses or accidental losses of highly sensitive information in the child protection services register?

Mr BUDISELIK: In the last year our internal audit branch has examined the child protection services register from that perspective. We are currently rearranging head office so the CPSR can be relocated to a place in head office which is off the passages. It operates on a stand alone computer so the register is not networked. We have examined the CPSR from that perspective, by location and the information technology we use. We believe it is very secure.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I am confused about where my question fits into the budget but I assume it is under the supported accommodation assistance set out on pages 458 and 459 of the program statements. I thought that the budgeted amount in that area last year was \$10.3m but it is about \$10.7m according to page 458. There is some increase. Last year \$1m was budgeted to expand family counselling, another \$1m for at risk children and another \$1m for child care and counselling. Was all that utilised? Is that to continue or to expand those lines? Is there any provision in the domestic violence related budget for the need, that I perceive particularly in areas such as Bunbury and Albany, for children who have been the victims of domestic violence to receive extended counselling rather than simply crisis counselling? This extended counselling may be needed for three, six or 12 months. I have been informed that crisis counselling is not enough. These kids are damaged and need extra help. Is there any intent to provide that extended counselling?

The CHAIRMAN: In order for us to get through the morning session on time please try to keep the questions and answers shorter. Members have a few questions to ask.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: It is a difficult area.

Mr BUDISELIK: We are coming to grips with the new way of reporting. The more appropriate pages to refer to are 448 and 449. Services to families are now described against two outputs. We have provided an estimated actual of out-turn for this year and the allocation for the forthcoming year to enable comparison. The structure has caused some confusion.

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: Domestic violence is funded through the output relating to crisis support - for example, the supported accommodation assistance program funding for women's refuges - and through other outputs. It is better if I answer the question in a more general way. There was a budget increase last year. A significant number of new services have come on the ground. They include Aboriginal family violence support and intervention services, for which we have completed requests for proposals, and the services are now established. An additional service is being established - the south west metropolitan Aboriginal domestic violence support and advocacy service.

We now have a further five domestic violence support and advocacy services. Four of these came about through money made available to Family and Children's Services in the budget last year. The requests for proposals for four of these services were undertaken early in the year, and later a request for proposal was undertaken for the Mandurah domestic violence support and advocacy service.

We are establishing three domestic violence counselling services for children; the budget allocation includes \$170 000 for the metropolitan area service for children. This will be operated by the Pat Giles refuge. In addition, services are commencing in Albany and Bunbury. Anglican Health and Welfare is running the Albany service and the Waratah Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Centre is undertaking the Bunbury service. Those services are in the early stages and we will need to monitor how effective they are. We will have discussions with the agencies as they implement these services, as these are new service specifications.

New services are coming on board in relation to the supported accommodation assistance program, with the

Carnarvon refuge proposal having been completed. That service should be commencing shortly. The request for proposal for a safe house in Newman has been completed, as has the Derby family living centre. In addition, we have undertaken proposals for three domestic violence counselling services for Albany, Narrogin and Hedland-Karratha. There has been a lot of activity and we have fully implemented the provision made in last year's budget.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Discussions with Waratah alerted me to the need for ongoing care after the crisis for young people in that Bunbury area. They were most concerned that they did not have the money to fund an ongoing process in that area. Will that be part of the funding in Bunbury?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: There are other options that that service can explore by coming back to our department at the local level. If there are concerns about particular children, it may be possible for our department to be involved in providing an ongoing service either through our psychological services or through contracting additional services.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: On page 451 under the outcome "Children whose placement has been approved by the department, or who are under guardianship, receive quality care" there are 50 000 child placement weeks. How many children are in care?

Mr BUDISELIK: At any time about 1 100 children are in care, of whom about 800 are wards. Over a full year we issue about 2 000 payments to children in care. There is quite a throughput.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: There are 800 wards among 1 100 children overall. Therefore, 300 hundred of those children are not wards. What are those 300 children?

Mr BUDISELIK: They are children who are not wards who are placed in care by our department.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: What does "placed in care" mean?

Mr BUDISELIK: In consultation with parents a placement is made. It could be a parent who perhaps has a psychiatric illness. We do not particularly require a wardship outcome but we will effect a placement.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Are those wards 800 warm bodies or 800 incidents?

Mr BUDISELIK: Eight hundred individuals.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: How many child carer families are providing the services for those 1 100 children?

Mr BUDISELIK: We would need to get that information. It is considerably higher than the number of children. It is a hard answer to give in the sense that some approved carers may not be active for periods. They may have had a long time placement. We tend to look at availability of foster placements.

[10.20 am]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The number of placement weeks is 50 000 and there are 1 100 children.

Mr BUDISELIK: We would effect a payment placement for 2 000 children over the year.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Yet you cannot tell me how many families?

Mr BUDISELIK: We can, but I do not have the information on hand.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I put that question on notice. I note that the recruitment assessment and support for carers is a priority. Is there difficulty in recruiting carers?

Mr BUDISELIK: Yes. In 1995 when we conducted a review of our out of home care service the problem of ongoing recruitment was brought to the fore. At that time we developed a system of 21 district offices across the State; in effect, there were 21 different recruitment locations. As a result of that review we constructed a metropolitan based foster care recruitment and assessment service. For the last six to eight months a devoted resource has been working across the metropolitan area attempting to attract, select, assess and recruit carers. We estimate a 5 or 10 per cent return on the number of people coming forward. It is a rigorous selection process. When people find out what is involved often they choose not to proceed.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: In other words, for every 100 only five to 10 are acceptable, given the very important nature of child care and sometimes the difficulties of child care?

Mr BUDISELIK: Not only acceptable but also can make the commitment to proceed with their initial inquiry.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: What occurs at the other end, when there is some dissatisfaction? What is the process for breaking the relationship from the department's point of view?

Mr BUDISELIK: If there is an allegation of abuse against a carer, and the allegation is investigated and substantiated, that may result in that carer being given a classification which means they would not be used again.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That would be an extreme case. Are there circumstances in which you simply lose confidence in a carer?

Mr BUDISELIK: Some carers may express a desire to have a certain sort of child, or perhaps are developing a strong emotional relationship with a child whom it is intended to reunite with the natural family. Sometimes those issues need to be explored and would make us wary of using particular people. Foster care is about family support.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Given the importance of the job and the difficulty of recruiting committed carers, the department would be loath to lose a carer for other than extreme circumstances?

Mr BUDISELIK: Yes, as a general statement. We are very reliant on carers.

Mr FISHER: We have about 800 children who are wards of the State. It is interesting to note that 20 years ago there were about 5 000 wards of the State. That number decreased every year until about two years ago when we reached a plateau of around 750 wards. We are now oscillating between 750 and 800. The figure seems to have stabilised. I reinforce what Mr Budiselik said: It is difficult to recruit foster carers. In the past we were able to recruit 5 000 carers at least just for wards, and we also had carers for non-wards. It is much more difficult to recruit foster carers now for a number of reasons. Foster carers are an extremely valued resource not only to the department but also to the community as a whole. We need to be able to treat our foster carers with a great deal of respect.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: What do you attribute the drop in state wards to?

Mr FISHER: There are a number of factors. Firstly, in the old days when an application for wardship was taken to court invariably that was granted until the child was 18. Now the court grants wardship for two years, and if we want to extend it we must continually go back. Also some of the policies in the past in relation to Aboriginal people had an impact in this area. In terms of practice the whole philosophy of the department, and the community, is that children should be brought up in their own homes. In some cases a home might not be what we consider to be perfect but we should work with the family and their children to ensure that children are returned to their families as quickly as possible and brought up in that environment, rather than be taken out of an environment which we might not consider to be perfect and placed with strangers during their childhood. Obviously we will not return a child to what we consider an abusive situation but we have found over the years that if we can put much more effort into early intervention, prevention and family reunification it is valuable from the point of view of the child.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I will add a personal experience. One issue that carers are concerned about relates, as Mr Fisher has said, to the challenge to return a child to his or her home and family. However, it is distressing to carers to see a child going back into the same environment, and the problems being repeated. My experience was that I could not live with seeing the child going back into the same environment. It destroys you. A number of carers find that difficult and do not want to repeat the experience. That is one of the reasons that people are reluctant to be involved in that exercise.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I refer to juvenile offenders who are placed into facilities and communities beyond the institutions of your department. I was concerned to hear that children are coming out of the court process by application and intervention of your department and being allocated to Aboriginal communities and organisations - for example, Karalundi Aboriginal Education Centre, north of Meekatharra - without a funding package comparable to what it would cost the department if the child were left within the institution. That results in an enormous drain on the community and the institution to which the child is being sent. Will the department increase the funding package for children who are located in community facilities and away from institutional placements?

Also, could you table for the committee, subsequently if necessary but within the three day time frame, the regional structure map of your department and the basis upon which that structure has been formulated and whether it was constructed with reference to any other regional structure within any other state department or agency?

Mr FISHER: We will table that. I do not want to push the first question away. However, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. From the way the member framed his question he is referring to children who have been placed in the community as part of an order within the justice system.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is correct. However, that is through the intervention of your department by channelling them in that direction as opposed to an institution.

Mr BUDISELIK: We need an example. The Ministry of Justice would prepare the presentence reports. Our protocols with the ministry give us responsibility under certain circumstances and I think the member is describing a situation within the ministry.

[10.30 am]

Hon TOM STEPHENS: But they are not accepting responsibility for the funding package. Your department is collaborating with the Ministry of Justice on the placement of the children, and the agencies and communities are left with these children without the necessary resources to cope.

Mr BUDISELIK: If they are under a conditional release order or a supervised order of any description, then developing the package would primarily be an MOJ responsibility. If we had an example we could examine it.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Can I place on notice the question of Karalundi and the five placements that the education centre has at the community, and who in government will accept responsibility for the funding pressure that places on such a facility?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: This might not be the best time to make this observation. It may be more applicable to Aboriginal Affairs, which we debated a couple of days ago. However, it has been put to me by people directly involved in the administration of Aboriginal communities that it is about time the Government, the general community and the Aboriginal community found a better way to train the people who are given responsibility for administering Aboriginal corporations and communities - before they take up the job. Currently, people are selected by a community to assist in the management of its affairs; and, in many cases, that is done very badly and inefficiently. That is related to what Hon Tom Stephens is saying -

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I am not talking about Karalundi. I am talking about the principle, based on the question asked by Hon Tom Stephens, that children are placed in the care of a community without adequate funding being provided. There is plenty of evidence that the money already going to a community is not being spent in the most efficient manner for the betterment of the community. I invite Hon Tom Stephens to meet with me to see whether he agrees with the proposal that has been put to me to assist communities' handling their affairs for the betterment of those communities.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will meet with the Minister any time. However, the pressure being applied to communities to take up a departmental responsibility is unconscionable, when they are not resourced and cannot undertake the training to equip themselves to face the pressures which are being applied. It is a separate issue, and I will take it up separately from this debate.

Hon NORM KELLY: I refer to output 7, child protection services, at page 450. The performance measures indicate that 83 per cent of child maltreatment allegations are investigated within five working days. That equates to about 400 cases not being investigated. Why is that percentage so low?

Mr FISHER: I am pleased that you asked that question, because it is a matter of great concern to this organisation. It implies that in 17 per cent of cases where an allegation of child maltreatment is made, we have not responded within five days. As an executive, we have looked at that very carefully. The whole issue is of grave concern to me. It is one of the problems we have when we are dependent on our computer records. We are responding more quickly than the figures indicate. As an example, our computer system is such that if someone makes an allegation at 4.00 pm, say, on a Tuesday, under our guidelines if it is a priority 1 allegation we must respond within 24 hours. That is, we must visit the family or the child within 24 hours. However, our computer closes at 5.00 pm each day. Therefore, if we have not responded by 5.00 pm on the Tuesday, the computer records that we have not responded within 24 hours. If we respond the next day before 4.00 pm the computer still indicates that we did not respond in time. Often we will respond and visit the family, but no-one will be home; and our system shows that we did not respond. We are having a close look at our system and our practice, and as a result of the recent restructure of the organisation, we have teams in the metropolitan area that specialise only in child protection services. They are not distracted by anything else; they concentrate on child protection services.

The last figure I saw was a monthly figure - I want to see them every month - which indicated a 97 per cent response rate. Some problems have been created by the system and are of our own making. However, we are confident that as a result of our work on our system and practice, we will come close to meeting our target of 100 per cent next year. I look forward to addressing that issue again next year in this place.

Hon NORM KELLY: I suggest that perhaps the indicator should not be five working days but five days, if an allegation is made. It should not be determined by working days but dealt with more quickly. Also there appears to be no significant increase in funding to enable better resources to be put towards investigations. I note in the annual report that a number of investigations are not undertaken or are not possible. I imagine those sorts of cases would prevent your achieving the 100 per cent rate of investigations being undertaken within five working days. However, your target is 100 per cent. How do you factor in the cases which you decide cannot be investigated?

Mr FISHER: We believe that next year at least, due to the restructure of the department and the concentrated allocation of resources, we will be able to achieve what we set out to do in child protection. I must stress that this is the key output; the protection of children is our No 1 priority for the allocation of resources. This area will receive our full attention. We are confident that we will be able to properly and adequately service the protection of children from resources in the current budget.

As to setting a target of 100 per cent, when in some cases it may not be possible, I presume you are talking about the cases where a person makes an allegation, we do some initial work within the organisation and find it may be a frivolous or vexatious allegation. That situation will still fall within our figures.

Mr BUDISELIK: One of the advantages of the 100 per cent target is that it results in any deviations being examined individually. A note will explain the reasons. Often there is a logical reason. The other point relates to the way the budget papers are formatted. What was previously described as child protection work is now represented in outputs 5 and 6, at pages 448 and 449. A child concern report, for example, which previously was regarded as a child maltreatment allegation, is now part of page 448.

Mr FISHER: If we were to say that we are aware that there will be some complaints or allegations each year which, after we look at them, do not need investigation; and if we set our target at a 2 per cent to 4 per cent variation from 100 per cent - say, at 96 per cent - it would send out the wrong message. I would rather set a target of 100 per cent, and if cases are not investigated within the time frame, the department is structured so that a report will go to the executive director explaining why the target was not met. We would much rather be able to explain why we did not reach 100 per cent on an individual basis than set a target which is lower than 100 per cent in this very important area.

[10.40 am]

Hon NORM KELLY: I assume that all of those arguments apply to the child concern reports in that they have a lower reporting rate.

Mr FISHER: Yes. Our recent work applies equally, because in some cases we do not know that a child concern report will translate into a child maltreatment allegation. We are finding with the work we have done in child maltreatment allegations that we are applying the same rigour to child concern reports. Again, those figures have gone up dramatically in recent times.

Mr BUDISELIK: One of the other things about this reporting is that it allows us to compare ourselves with other jurisdictions, so we can monitor very carefully our response rate compared with other States.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: On page 440 at dot point 2 and dash point 3, you indicate that you are planning to commence the implementation of the recommendations of the review of the Adoption Act. First, what are the priority recommendations for the implementation? Second, is that partly legislative reform? I am very interested there in the lifting of information and contact details, which were part of the recommendations of the review of the Act. It has been drawn to my attention yet again - this has been an ongoing problem since the implementation of the Act - that there is still a three to five month waiting time for people, particularly relinquishing mothers and adoptees, to gain access to identifying information.

Mr BUDISELIK: I do not think I can answer your questions satisfactorily, so it might be wise to take them on notice. As you know, the adoptions review has concluded. We are in the process of compiling recommendations from the public as a response to the report. That is where the process is at the moment. I do not have enough data on adoptions to give you detailed answers.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: May I place those questions on notice?

The CHAIRMAN: They will be placed on notice.

Mr BUDISELIK: May I clarify that the questions are on notice as opposed to supplementary questions? I am not sure how long it will take to turn that information around.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I am happy to wait for the first part of the question. I would be interested in having some fairly quick response to the question of identifying information.

Mr BUDISELIK: If we respond with what we can in the time frame allowed, perhaps any gaps might be dealt with by way of another question.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that the Western Australian drug abuse strategy office has been established in the department with effect from October 1997. What resources has the department devoted to this office to ensure its effective operation within the department?

Mr MURPHY: The drug abuse strategy office was established at the start of this financial year. During the financial year its resources comprised various transfers from the Health Department and the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, as well as additional allocations. As indicated in output statements 9 and 10, last year the net cost of the resources was \$7.218m and this year it rises to \$11.251m for output 10, and \$183 000 this year rising to \$390 000 for Output 9. Some additional cash resources will be available this year to the drug abuse strategy office through outstanding transfers from the Health Department, and they comprise some \$1.3m.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the asset register been updated for movements associated with the restructure and transfer of the Western Australian drug abuse strategy from the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet; if not, when is the update expected to occur?

Mr de MAMIEL: All the assets of the Western Australian drug strategy office are on our register and are reflected in the printed statements for this financial year.

Hon NORM KELLY: On page 440 the last dot point relates to screening procedures for staff, volunteers and students who are employed or placed in the department. I take it that this is in line with the Wood royal commission recommendations to screen for criminal records. Will the costs for doing that screening be borne by the department or by the employees? If the cost is to be borne by the department, where is that shown in the papers?

Mr BUDISELIK: We are still working our way through the implications of the screening. We have now introduced into the department a comprehensive screening process for our employees, including working through the backlog. We are about to embark on a project with the Western Australian Council of Social Service, which will look at the services we fund. What the costs will be is unclear because it depends partly on a police decision on costing. We have not been paying them to date. We aim to get our own access to the national exchange of police information computer, so we will have our own NEPI probity unit within the department. We have a commitment to implement it, but we will be working through those problems as we come up against them throughout the year. Our intention certainly would not be that volunteers, for example, would have to pay for their own screening, but there will be some degree of negotiation with other sorts of employees. For example, people may get a one year or a five year clearance.

Hon NORM KELLY: I understand that the Health Department does it by having a clearance valid for two years, at which time an employee would have to renew it, or until an employee went for a new job. As the department would be the beneficiary, it would be important that the department bear the cost for that.

Mr BUDISELIK: Departmental employees represent such a big sector that we are thinking our way through that. We have not yet got far enough with the negotiations with WACOSS.

Hon NORM KELLY: What sort of time frame are you looking at?

Mr BUDISELIK: I think that we will pretty well have it introduced within 12 months, with the exception of some issues that have been raised by some of our Aboriginal staff of unanticipated outcomes of indirect discrimination. They are concerned that because Aboriginal people will more frequently have criminal records, they may be deterred from applying for work in this sector. Of course, we are interested in criminal record checks for offences against children. There is quite a bit of communication to handle. Initially we thought that it would be simpler, which it is internally, of course. However, once we start dealing with the broad scope of the sector, we will have a few unanticipated problems to deal with.

Hon NORM KELLY: Is any funding for this program allowed for in your budget?

Mr BUDISELIK: It is a priority in our budget. We have not been able to estimate accurately how much we will allocate to the program. Our initial estimate was about \$400 000 but there are a lot of premises in that estimation.

[10.50 am]

Mr FISHER: The issue of safety screening and exchange of information around jurisdictions throughout Australia is something that the various community services must consider. The Ministers involved have this as a standing item on their agenda. Western Australia is chairing the working party that is spearheading this initiative nationwide. The Ministers agreed quickly that it was important that they exchange information around Australia on people who had been convicted of an offence against a child. I think we would all agree with that. The Ministers went one step further and said that each jurisdiction should give consideration as to whether it was possible to exchange information on substantiated cases even when a conviction has not been recorded; in other words, particularly in the child care area, we might substantiate that someone abused a three or four year old child. The police quite often will not seek a conviction in such circumstances because they feel that they would not be successful.

Even though we substantiate it, no conviction is registered. The Ministers spent some time discussing that issue to determine whether they should exchange information on substantiations around Australia, bearing in mind that they

were aware that civil libertarians would oppose it because no conviction had been registered. The easier decision for the Ministers to have made was to say it was too difficult and to back away from it. However, they have not, and they have asked the working party to continue to explore ways in which information can be exchanged on substantiations. A difficulty is that each jurisdiction has different levels of operating and determining whether a substantiation has occurred. This issue, Australia-wide, is being dealt with extremely seriously. It is a gigantic task to screen all staff in all departments and non-government agencies, and all volunteers working in those agencies. We are feeling our way through that at the moment. The Ministers nationally made a commitment that this work will be done.

The CHAIRMAN: Throughout the department there are many sensitive areas. What consideration has the department given to the implementation of the report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their homes? Also, what resources has the department devoted to culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal families?

Mr FISHER: The "Bringing Them Home" report by Sir Ronald Wilson has been addressed by government as a whole. Within Family and Children's Services, an allocation of \$1m has been made for this year to address issues relating to that report and the recommendations that flow from it. Some of the recommendations in the report were initiatives because the report was an Australia-wide report. Sir Ronald Wilson and his team based some of their recommendations on some work that was being done in Western Australia. Specifically, we will look within this State and within our own department at enhancing our tracing system for Aboriginal people or families who were involved in any removal so that they are able to trace their families. We have been doing that work in the department, but we will put more resources into that. We did look at how we could overcome the problem of Aboriginal people in some communities who are reluctant to approach the welfare department for information, particularly in the northern part of the State, where they associate the department with the removal. We are working very closely with the Aboriginal Affairs Department. The Aboriginal Affairs Department is opening 23 offices regionally around Western Australia and it has agreed, as one of its roles, to be the first point of contact for people seeking information. People will go into an Aboriginal Affairs Department office and provide the information they can and give the information that they are seeking. That will be fed into the enhanced tracing bureau which will be established in Family and Children's Services.

The second initiative that we are looking at is the access and maintenance of records. Currently, records in relation to removal of children are not held by one individual organisation. Some of those records are held in the Aboriginal Affairs Department, some are held in our department, and of course many records are held by non-government groups and church organisations. We set up a task force comprising people who are expert in the area of records, maintenance and management; people from the state library, from the individual agencies, and from the church groups, to see how we can better manage that information. Some groups do not want to hand over their records, for example, to us; they want to keep their records, but they are prepared to make the information within them available to us.

The third area that we will be putting funding into is counselling. For many people who go through the traumatic process of tracing, a lot of emotion and stress is involved. It is a bit like adoptions, where people after many years suddenly discover, or are told, that they were adopted, and they want to trace their own family. We are putting counselling services into place. Even though the money is available for us to do this work, the commonwealth Budget has allocated in excess of \$50m to be made available Australia-wide in this area. It is also looking at providing support for tracing, counselling and so on. Much of that money has been provided through ATSIC. It is important from our point of view at a state level that, rather than a commonwealth or an ATSIC program duplicating or overlapping with what we are doing, we set up communications to ensure there is a joint program that will be in the best interests of Aboriginal people throughout this State in terms of a mix of commonwealth and state money.

The CHAIRMAN: I was interested in that part of your answer regarding human rights. I was under the impression that your department was very sensitive to that area 20 years ago.

Mr FISHER: I neglected to answer the second part of the question about things we are doing within the organisation and whether we are providing culturally appropriate services. We obviously are providing those services. We have a commitment to employ more Aboriginal people. We have recently taken on board eight trainees for a period of 12 months, and that will result in permanent positions for Aboriginal staff. The absolute reality is that we have a large number of Aboriginal clients, and the best people to deliver service to Aboriginal clients, in many circumstances, are Aboriginal people. We are very committed to that process in exactly the same way as we are committed to our Aboriginal placement policy. Quite often Aboriginal children, for very short periods or for more extended periods, must be put into care. These are often not wards of the State, but they must be put into care for emergency situations. We have a policy of ensuring that, wherever possible, those children are placed with Aboriginal carers, even for short terms. I must approve each case in which they are not placed with an Aboriginal carer.

Hon NORM KELLY: With regard to the drug abuse prevention services, what level of funding is provided to the WA Substance Users Association, and how long term is the guarantee of funding for that association?

Mr MURPHY: Funding to the association is provided through the Health Department. It is in the order of \$220 000 to the best of my knowledge. Additionally, the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office works with WASUA on some projects. We are currently considering some funding for a project in the area of needle and syringe disposal strategy, but any funding provided by WADASO to WASUA would be on a project basis.

Hon NORM KELLY: Do you know for how long that Health Department funding is to be provided to WASUA?

Mr MURPHY: It was provided initially for a one year period subject to a review at six months. That review is currently taking place.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: My question follows on from the "Bringing Them Home" report. Reference is made to the establishment of an Aboriginal family support service in the metropolitan area. Is that similar to the old community visitor program?

Ms BAGDONAVICIUS: No, it is a generic family support service. We have just completed a request for proposal for the service and that will commence shortly in the Midland and Mirrabooka areas.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you all for attending this session.

[11.00 am]

Division 39: Transport, \$745 825 -

[Hon Bob Thomas, Chairman.]

[Hon E.J. Charlton, Minister for Transport.]

[Mr D.R. Warner, Executive Director Corporate Services, Main Roads WA.]

[Dr D. Whitaker, Director General of Transport.]

[Mr G. Martin, Executive Director, Metropolitan.]

[Ms W. Payne, Principal Finance Officer, Planning.]

The Chairman read the opening statement. [See start of day.]

The CHAIRMAN: I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses form. Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: When is it proposed that the first of those five gas fired engine buses will be supplied pursuant to the proposed contract? Will they be using technology currently in use by Mercedes Benz elsewhere in the world or is it still being developed and not yet in use by Mercedes Benz?

Dr WHITAKER: It is expected that the first of those gas fired engine buses will be supplied towards the end of 1999. They will be electronically fuel injected. I understand that Mercedes Benz has been trialling the EFI technology in Europe for about three years.

The CHAIRMAN: Are they being trialled in a commercial operation or is it the prototype?

Dr WHITAKER: I will provide that answer as supplementary information. Mercedes Benz has told us it has been trialling them for three years.

The CHAIRMAN: Further information is to be provided on notice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Were you satisfied with the outcome of a dredging contract at Shark Bay-Denham in which I understand your department was involved? Did it meet your expectations?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The director general has no specific information. I visited Shark Bay before the contract was let to consult with the local shire council regarding the need for it to be done. We let a contract. It is well known that it took much longer to complete than expected. It is important to acknowledge that not many companies have the equipment that dredging operations around the coast of Western Australia demand. Some of them are very expensive operations and considerable time is involved in putting them on location. I was in Shark Bay recently and the shire is very happy with the job, although it took longer and cost more than we expected for the reasons I outlined.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I understand the Carnarvon Fascine Dredgemasters WA Pty Ltd contract has been purchased by the company that did the work at Shark Bay-Denham. Does that company have the capacity to complete the Carnarvon fascine contract speedily and to the department's satisfaction?

[11.10 am]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That remains to be seen. The business transaction is outside the control of the Ministry of Transport. The previous owner has transferred the business. We are not sure of the form that negotiated operation will take. Currently it is subject to assessment and review by the department. We have requested the previous operator to show cause why he should not have the contract taken from him because of the lateness in complying with the terms under which the contract was given.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does that mean the termination of the process will still occur, despite the fact that it has been purchased by the new owner; I think that is the Cooper group of companies? Is it the case that the termination of the Dredgemasters contract may not have been successfully transferred to the new owner?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It could be. Before we take a contract from anybody, we must be on very strong ground. We are reviewing the terms of the current sale to see whether it complies with the terms. If it is a clear change of ownership, there is no problem. If it is a transfer of one specific contract work, there could be a problem. We are investigating that to ensure it is done in the right way. The bottom line is that we intend to ensure the fascine dredging contract is carried out and finished as soon as humanly possible.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What percentage of ordinary fare rates have concessional public transport fares reached? Is it still the Government's objective to bring that to 50 per cent of the ordinary rate?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Yes. The Government's policy is to get those concessional fares to 50 per cent of the standard fare. That is the position in most States.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: When will this be achieved? I realise the Minister may need to take this next question on notice: What additional revenue would such a change yield when the 50 per cent rate is reached?

Mr MARTIN: The estimated rate to be achieved in the percentage of operating expenditure in 1997-98 is 30.8 per cent. In 1998-99 the estimate is for a fare recovery of 32 per cent of operating expenses.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Is that the total of the two categories?

Mr MARTIN: I cannot give the detail for the concessional fares. Perhaps we can provide it by way of supplementary information.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I also asked when the objective of 50 per cent will be reached and the additional revenue that change will yield by bringing it to 50 per cent. I ask that that question be placed on notice.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The matter of achieving 50 per cent of fares is reviewed annually. No timing has been put on when that will be achieved. That is the goal in the long term.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I refer to an item mentioned in the introduction of the budget papers relating to the change to photograph concessional cards to address the misuse of the current card. What is the estimated loss of revenue due to the misuse of concessional cards? What will the new photocard scheme cost and what will be the charge for users of the card?

Mr MARTIN: We shall take that question on notice.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I can probably answer the first part of the question. I understand between 5 and 8 per cent of fare evasion comes from the misuse of cards; however, we will take the whole of the question on notice.

Hon NORM KELLY: Note (a) on page 723 states that the number of FTEs in Main Roads is 1 200 for this financial year. Is that the current number of FTEs at Main Roads, or is the target still expected to be that number?

Mr WARNER: At 30 June next year the estimated number will be 1 390.

Hon NORM KELLY: What is it currently?

Mr WARNER: That is only a few days off, but the number is of that order.

Hon NORM KELLY: The line item "Other" appearing under the operating expenses is given as \$177m for this financial year, and it includes salaries and other staff costs. Is it possible to get a breakdown of those costs? It is a very large amount to be included as other expenditure. I will put the question on notice. My next question relates

to the same item under operating revenue. The figure for other expenses is \$230m. I seek some detail on that. Why is there a jump from the figure for this financial year of \$230m to that for the next financial year of \$571m?

Mr WARNER: There has been some confusion because of the new form of the budget papers. The heading "Other" does not relate solely to salaries. It is the cost of services. The main heading at the top of the table of figures is "Cost of services". This is the new format Treasury has put forward. It indicates the cost of services to Main Roads for depreciation and interest. Grants, subsidies and transfer payments relate to payments to local authorities for road works on its roads. The rest of the money spent by Main Roads, including salaries, is on its part of the network.

Hon NORM KELLY: Many agencies show salaries as a separate component. The operating revenues has itemised \$23m for user charges and net profit on the disposal of non-current assets; yet the final figure - 10 times that amount - is just covered under the blanket heading "Other". I also seek an answer to the second part of the question about the jump from \$230m to \$570m between this financial year and the next, specified under other operating revenues.

Mr WARNER: Other operating revenues are the services we get free of charge from other agencies; that is, \$7.7m. Basically they are services we get from the Department of Land Administration. The other item of \$7.5m within the operating revenues is the profit on the sale of assets; that is, mainly computer equipment and the cars that are turned over. The other revenues are those available to Main Roads from the Main Roads trust account.

Hon NORM KELLY: Why is there a \$300m jump from this financial year to the next?

Mr WARNER: One of the major contributions is a change in the size of the revenue from the increased fee.

The CHAIRMAN: It is for the increased vehicle licence fees.

Mr WARNER: Yes.

[11.20 am]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The change in the format does not define the clear picture of how the money has been gathered and how it has been spent. It destroys the opportunity for the general public and members of Parliament to identify clearly what each project is costing and the associated Main Roads administrative costs. I will recommend to Main Roads and Treasury that we retain the reference to each specific project so that everyone knows the construction costs, the maintenance costs and the associated Main Roads costs. If we continue with the format used in these budget papers we will lose the capacity to identify how much is spent on salaries and wages and so on. We should acknowledge the response of accrual accounting but also have an additional line providing this detail.

Hon NORM KELLY: I would like that question put on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is on notice.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Page 1207 contains reference to passenger and freight services and infrastructure development. Which of those line items details the funding for the reconstruction of No 1 and No 2 berths at Geraldton and the refurbishment of the bulk handling facility at No 4 berth, or are those details in the capital accounts?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That information will be in the Geraldton Port Authority's budget. I will take that question on notice.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I noted that detail in the port authority's budget at page 504. However, is it not counted out of the appropriation summary?

Dr WHITAKER: The Department of Transport operates the ports at Wyndham and Broome, so only moneys relating to those ports are in its accounts. The accounts for authorities such as the Geraldton Port Authority are separate.

The CHAIRMAN: I am prepared to accept the question because it is a Department of Transport issue.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I have a number of questions that are part financial and part policy relating to the request for tender.

The CHAIRMAN: The member should ask the questions and the Minister will decide whether to answer them or put them on notice.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I understand it is intended to privatise the operation of the bulk handling facility at No 4 berth at Geraldton. Does the request for proposal document referred to on page 16 at point 5.3 specify that any tender that does not involve contracts of employment or workplace agreements will be deemed to be non-conforming?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Yes.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Has the Minister given a formal directive to the board of the Geraldton Port Authority on this or any other matters since 1 July 1995?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is not a formal directive. The port authorities are attempting to improve their service capacity. Continuity of operation and service at the highest efficiency and lowest cost are requirements of the tender. This process does not involve privatising the facility in the sense of selling off something. It is inviting operational groups to express an interest in carrying out this work for the port authority. The port authority will retain control of the real estate; that is, the berths, channels and so on. The tenderers must demonstrate that they can carry out that work within those requirements. If that is not possible, the port authority may find itself in a situation wherein a tenderer initially says it can deliver, but then finds it cannot because the MUA initiates industrial disputation and it cannot do anything about it. The Government will not go down that path if the tenderer cannot guarantee delivery in accordance with those specifications.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Is it not true that page 3 of the request for proposal document states that the successful private tenderer will be required to provide stevedoring services through its own in-house work force capability, including the ship loading and loading supervision, but not including the mooring and unmooring of vessels? Would that operator not be exposed to the unlikely event of MUA action at Geraldton? It has happened only twice since the Second World War.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Anyone associated with providing a service to the operator of the bulk handling facility will be required to guarantee that the operation will not be impeded in any way, whether or not he is part of the current Geraldton work force.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Have these arrangements been discussed with the Maritime Union of Australia in Geraldton?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I cannot answer that question. The Geraldton Port Authority has determined that that is the way it wants to proceed. Other port authorities have different approaches to improving service.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many FTEs in Main Roads, the Department of Transport and the Minister's office are responsible for coordinating answers to parliamentary questions?

Mr WARNER: One Main Roads officer is attached to the Minister's office and he works part time dealing with parliamentary questions.

Dr WHITAKER: The answer is similar for the Department of Transport.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: As is the case in all Minister's offices, when questions come to my office they are automatically sent to the relevant agencies, which have staff who gather the appropriate information. Depending on the question, several people might be involved. It is then returned to my office and if the answer is accurate I provide the information to the House.

[11.30 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: On Tuesday, 26 May 1998, I received responses to 18 questions of 19 I had on the Supplementary Notice Paper. The questions related to the northern city bypass project. The questions sought information about accountability, contracts, whether a business analysis had been conducted, whether it included a comprehensive cost benefit analysis and, if so, what it revealed, what were the inherent risks for Western Australian taxpayers, what options were considered and were due diligence checks carried out. These are fundamental questions prior to the contracting out of any service or project.

The Minister said that it might be a Main Roads question. Fundamentally, the Government is not prepared to commit scarce resources to provide the information required. This is an issue of accountability. The Minister says he will not answer my questions on behalf of taxpayers because the Government does not have the resources to do so. The Minister is overstepping his mark as a member of Parliament and it is beholden on him to provide that information.

The CHAIRMAN: Please direct the question to the Minister now.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why is the Minister not providing the information on behalf of WA taxpayers?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The answers are available without asking questions. It is not appropriate to ask staff at Main Roads to extract components of contracts because the northern city bypass - the Graham Farmer freeway - is a transparent project.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We cannot get the contracts.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Each component is let by contract with a set price which includes a 10 year maintenance program. The contract and its costs are public; everyone knows its cost. If there is any part of the contract that varies then it is appropriate for any member to ask why that has occurred.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you prepared to table those contracts or were they commissioned in confidence?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is not for me to judge which component I am allowed to publicise. That is a decision for Crown Law from whom we take advice.

The CHAIRMAN: There is opaque transparency!

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The only area of conflict is in competitive tendering and those decisions are outside my jurisdiction.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In each of these 18 contracts, was a business case conducted? Did it include a comprehensive cost benefit analysis? What did it show? What were the inherent risks? What options were considered? Was a due diligence check carried out? All of these things should be carried out as government policy prior to letting any government contract. I do not ask the Minister to perform this work again; the work should be available and be presented in the form of responses. Have these items been carried out on all of these government contracts?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is a matter of opinion about which process to follow. The Government decided to build a road linking the Mitchell Freeway with Great Eastern Highway. It sought a great deal of public consultation about the type of infrastructure.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister should answer the question.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: This is the whole thrust of answering the member's question, if the committee wants me to answer it.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot see the relevance. However, continue.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is fair for members to know about the task confronted by everybody in completing it. For 30 years there was a plan to link those sections of the metropolitan area. Initially, the plan was to build it above ground. After consultation, it was decided to have a section below ground otherwise the freeway would create a division within the area north of the railway line. Consequently, it was split up into sections for various components to be delivered to Main Roads, the agency required to build it. Therefore, it was built in the way it appears now. Was there a case study done? There was an outcome required to be met.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The Government has not done all those things?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Quite frankly, I am trying to be nice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: So am I.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The question that the member is asking is rubbish.

The CHAIRMAN: I prefer the Minister to be precise.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We can give all those answers: Yes, no, we did it some other way.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The Minister says that but he did not.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It does not mean anything.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Show us the contracts.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The member should be interested in how much does it cost and how many tenders were called.

The CHAIRMAN: We have heard enough on that, Minister. If Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich wishes to pursue that issue, I recommend that she write to the Estimates Committee requesting it to be considered as a term of reference.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I shall follow your advice.

The CHAIRMAN: My question is directed to Main Roads. Under the Transform WA program, the amount of money to be spent on country roads will fall compared with that projected under the 1997 10 year program. Main Roads has taken out extensive advertising in country areas. The Minister should take this question on notice. Can details be provided of advertising paid for or booked in the next few months to promote Transform WA in regional centres? How much money is being spent on radio and newspaper advertising?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I make a brief comment. Yesterday, I understand that the Labor Party candidate for Forrest made some accusations against the Government along the line of that question regarding the amount of money being

spent in the Great Southern area. It is unfortunate that someone in that position would make that accusation without having the full facts. The budget for the previous program five years ago was \$320m when we came into government. It is now \$630m or \$640m.

The CHAIRMAN: In the Great Southern area?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That is the state total. We had a 10 year program which we have enhanced with additional funding. For various reasons - land clearances, local government and so forth - some projects have been brought forward and some past projects have been agreed to. Consequently, to say that there will be a reduction in the Great Southern area budget or anywhere else is incorrect. It is about doing a job. When \$40m or \$50m is spent one year on such a project, then that amount will not be spent again in that area the following year. However, as part of the 10 year plan it is probable that two years later there could be another major project. For example, the community wanted Mowen Road sealed, which cost \$20m. We will not spend \$20m in that area every year. It is misleading to the community to perceive that this year there is a lesser allocation of money. The figures of five years ago show that the figure has doubled.

The CHAIRMAN: The question will need to be taken on notice. How much is being spent to promote Transform WA in the country media?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The estimated total of over \$400 000 has come from the coordination of all the transport agencies to promote Transform WA.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is quite specific. How much is being spent to promote Transform WA in the Press in regional areas? Can it be detailed by region; for example, South West region, Great Southern region, etc.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Yes, we can.

The CHAIRMAN: In the Great Southern region, how much has been spent on advertising in the *Albany Advertiser*, in the *Goldfields Weekender* etc?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I will take that on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: In 1997 the 10 year program estimated that \$305m needed to be spent in the Great Southern area; in 1998, \$248m will be spent on Transform WA. That is a drop of \$57m. The amount to be spent on road preservation falls from \$232m to \$118m. I do not accept the Minister's previous answer.

[11.40 am]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Mr Chairman, whether you accept it is up to you. The great southern will get \$323m over the 10 year program. I invite you to look at what the great southern got when you were in government and make an assessment of who is doing the best job for the great southern.

The CHAIRMAN: You know that is not comparing apples with apples because of the different revenue raising mechanisms that you have now.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can we also have the Transform WA expenditure on advertising for the metropolitan area?

The CHAIRMAN: That is also on notice.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Specific advertising has gone into the various country regions of Western Australia, but it was also advertised in *The West Australian* and the *Sunday Times*, which obviously go to those regions as well.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Just tell us what you have been up to!

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It will cost between \$400 000 and \$500 000 to do the total advertising; and if the Labor Party keeps misinforming the public, I will need to spend \$1m.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a value judgment, and I cannot accept value judgments.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Did the Minister go to Germany to look at the Mercedes operation?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Yes, more than 12 months ago.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How long did you spend with the Mercedes organisation? By whom were you accompanied during that visit? Can you table a report detailing the itinerary of that visit? Which other manufacturers did you visit while you were in Europe? Have you had contact with Mercedes on a personal basis since that visit?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I was accompanied by Graeme Harman and Hon Murray Criddle, and I gave a report to the Parliament about that trip. I visited Mercedes, Renault, Scania and MAN, and at each of those locations I had discussions with their personnel.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Did you spend a disproportionate amount of time with Mercedes in comparison with the others?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Not at all. Part of the equation was to look at the product that they had on sale. My visit was predominantly not about the types of vehicles but about the plan that we were pursuing to have a long term contract. I wanted to ensure that the State would benefit by having a committed supplier that could supply the latest technology and backup for a public transport system that would benefit the users. I wanted to talk about the financial components, and the types of vehicles that we wanted in the system, because we did not want to have just one size and type of bus at our disposal. When I returned from that trip, I reported to Dr Chris Whitaker and Mr Greg Martin from Metropolitan Transport, and they took further that consultation process with those suppliers. No initiative has been taken with one supplier rather than another.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Has the personal contact between you and Mercedes continued since that time?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is no different from my contact with all the others. I take a great interest in talking to the operators and suppliers of the vehicles. I know from my experience with people in the trucking industry that they lease their vehicles rather than pay cash up front. They have a system where fuel is about the only thing they buy themselves; the remainder is supplied as part of the leasing contract. I wanted to ensure that when it came to the supply of buses to the State there was an opportunity for that process to be in place.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Can you table a copy of your report on that trip and the itinerary of that trip so that is available to the committee?

In view of your answer about contact with companies, are you aware of the concerns that have been expressed by Renault about the Department of Transport's bus operations in Perth? I rarely look at the engines on cars, so forgive me if I miss some of the technological references, but apparently Renault has requested that an engine encapsulation tray be maintained on its buses in Western Australia in order to reduce the noise levels and ensure that the buses operate appropriately and are not subject to early breakdown as a result of inappropriate use.

Renault has claimed that, despite its request, those trays have not been maintained on its buses for some time and that as a consequence of that mode of operation of the Renault buses, some resistance has developed to the Renault product in the consultations about whether Renault will be a successful tenderer. Renault has claimed also that, contrary to its advice to your agency, an engine cooling inhibitor has been installed on those buses. If you have maintained such good contact with all of the bus manufacturers, why have those issues that have been raised with your agency not produced some change in the way it operates the bus fleet?

The CHAIRMAN: The question is: Has the encapsulation tray been removed, contrary to the wishes of Renault, which believes it improves reliability and efficiency; and is an inhibitor being used, contrary to the manufacturer's specifications?

Mr MARTIN: I understand that those trays have not been on the Renault buses in recent times, but I will provide as supplementary information a more complete answer to the question. I am not fully conversant with all the technical details.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you table with that answer any instruction from Transperth that those two things no longer be complied with?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I do not know anything about the issues that have been raised by Hon Tom Stephens, but the question implies that Renault has been treated unfairly by this Government or by me, or that I have some bias against Renault.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think there was any reference to you. I did not hear any reference to you. I do not think you need to answer that.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Mr Chairman, it is not matter of what you heard or did not hear. I am just telling you for your benefit -

The CHAIRMAN: I am in the Chair, and I will take the questions and the answers. There was no reference to you, so I do not propose to allow you to answer that.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I am very sorry -

The CHAIRMAN: You will have to be sorry; I will not accept that answer because it does not relate to the question.

[11.50 am]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: With due respect, Mr Chairman, it relates absolutely to the question. What I want to make

known to you, and to the member who asked the question, is that there was a probity auditor associated with the purchase and tender process. If the Leader of the Opposition is inferring that I, or the Department of Transport, did not carry this out in a very creditable way, then he should say so. I totally reject any inference that Renault was treated unfairly. As a matter of fact, Renault has asked to see me and I am looking forward to that discussion because it will learn a few things.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Perhaps, Minister, you might learn a few things as well.

Hon NORM KELLY: During the Minister's visit to Mercedes in Germany last year, did he observe any Mercedes EFI gas fuelled buses, either in a static display, in a trial on public roads or in a test track situation?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I had a full briefing on all the manufacturers' trials and technology. I was most interested in the electric development by Scania and its belief that hydrogen would be the fuel that we could use in the future. Yes, I had three opportunities to ride in a vehicle that was currently being developed, but no to the specific fuel types.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Under which output are the Department of Transport licensing centres?

Dr WHITAKER: Fundamentally, they come under revenue collection services.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Why are no performance measures involved in that output regarding the public's perception of the functioning of the licensing centres?

Hon JOHN HALDEN: They are standing in queues.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is a very important question. Members will appreciate that we took over the licensing operations from the Police Department some time ago and we were not happy with the process that was in place. We continue to make significant changes to that process. I am disappointed that it has taken as long as it has to make changes for the benefit of the community. The real issue is that the technology needs to be changed to provide that service in a quick and efficient manner. A change in the computer technology has taken place right across the board. I will not go into the detail but the department will provide an opportunity for any members who would like to go through the changes that have been made and the changes that are still to come. I hope that by the end of this year those changes will be in train.

The only way to prevent the queues that exist at licensing centres is by changing the overall system. Therefore, people will not be required to line up in one queue, go to a financial counter and then line up in another queue. We could provide some figures on the issue of the changes that have occurred in the answering of telephones. One example is that recently the department sent out 50 000 letters to people who had not handed in plates. Those sorts of regulations were not followed up previously. The backlog of a whole range of initiatives that were not addressed has generated an enormous workload and that has had a bearing on our performance.

Dr WHITAKER: Varying the answer I supplied earlier, the licensing function is partly under output 5 which is the revenue collection services on which the indicators are narrowly focused. I should have said that much of the activity is also under output 2 which is education and regulation. At the bottom of page 1210 of the budget papers are a number of indicators that get to the heart of your inquiry.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Nothing specifically relates to the public's acceptance of the quality or timeliness of the services and as your clients they should be one of the key outputs. I appreciate the Minister answering my future questions when he answered this one. When will a Department of Transport licensing centre open in Joondalup?

Dr WHITAKER: Firstly, we must recognise that some of these indicators need further development. This is the first year we have gone along these new outputs and, in common with other agencies, developmental work must be undertaken. We have customer service charters which apply across the whole suite of our operations. They are not repeated in these outputs but are regularly monitored. Our annual reports provide significant information on that issue. A whole suite of things are under development now. For example, as of yesterday, bills can be paid by credit card, over the phone and so on. We are making the whole range of services much easier. We have had problems in the past because people believed that the only way to transact business was to visit one of our licensing centres. We have had problems with queues. We are now making the whole system simpler. Consequently, people do not have as many questions, but more importantly it makes it easier to pay bills.

The operating of licensing centres has been under review in country areas, particularly in the southern part of the State. The metropolitan area will be looked at in the future. I cannot give the member a definitive answer whether there will be a centre opening in Joondalup. As the need for licensing centres changes because people do not need to visit us that often, we will review the distribution, function and location of the licensing centres.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I would like members to build a picture of how it can be and that is what we want to achieve

as soon as possible. People can do all their renewals by telephone, by credit card or by paying at a post office and various other areas, such as the chemist or the service station. New motor vehicles can now be licensed at the premises at which the vehicle was purchased. The need for licensing centres will decrease and every facility that is currently in a licensing centre will be provided to the public either in another location, additional locations or in other forums, such as the electronic opportunity that now exists. These changes could not be achieved sooner because the licensing department did not have the technology to receive that information.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I have a two part question about the reliability of the EFI gas buses. During the Estimates Committee hearing on 27 May, a Transperth officer - I think it was Brett Inchley - said that there had been problems with the reliability of both the carburettor-gas system buses and the Transcom EFI direct injection buses. Did Transperth contact Transcom and ask it to correct this or relay to it that there was a problem with that bus? If so, will the Minister table any written advice from Transperth to Transcom? Secondly, Dr Whitaker said earlier that he believed Mercedes had tested an electronic fuel injection bus and they have them in operation somewhere - I do not know where.

[12 noon]

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we could deal with the first question and then you will have a chance to answer another.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is time we made it clear that the Transcom technology was introduced some years ago to some buses in the Transperth fleet. There are also some carburettor buses in the Transperth fleet. None of those buses has performed to the expectations of the Transperth operation or in comparison with the diesel fleet. As a consequence, those buses have often required maintenance to get them back on the road and to continue to operate. That is why the Department of Transport is being careful with the purchase of any new gas operated vehicles. While we all agree - and it is important - that that technology has improved, we want to be sure that the new technology can be compared. We cannot compare the old diesel buses with today's diesel buses. Enormous advances have been made there also.

In answer to Hon Jim Scott's question, I think there are 47 gas operated buses. Some are carburettor operated, some are fuel injected and some are Transcom technology. Four are now the new Transcom technology. If there could be any criticism of me in this equation it should be that I went out on a limb for Transcom in order to get its technology used on 100 buses.

I am surprised that members of the Opposition have not been critical of me for committing the Government to \$30 500 per vehicle for the new technology to be used in those buses as a trial for the benefit of Transcom. That was the whole thrust of doing it. I wanted to ensure that we, as a Government, provided an opportunity for Transcom to develop its technology and have it trialled in the workplace. This way Transcom can tell the world that its technology is in use on a vehicle in service. I find it extraordinary that the company now seems to think that I failed to direct the department to require Transcom technology. I am looking forward to this being brought out in the public arena because I think Transcom need to get its facts straight.

The CHAIRMAN: We have a lot of questions and I thank you for that information. Can Dr Whitaker answer the question?

Dr WHITAKER: Could I have it repeated?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Could the Minister or the department table any information they have relating to the unreliability of the Transcom EFI direct injection buses including any letters they have written to Transcom informing them of problems with the reliability of this latest technology? I also -

The CHAIRMAN: We will deal with that one first; you will get the next question.

Dr WHITAKER: With the Minister's indicated concurrence, we will provide whatever correspondence we have in that regard.

The CHAIRMAN: It is more than correspondence. Hon Jim Scott is asking for some analysis of their performance plus correspondence about it.

Dr WHITAKER: Understood.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Together with the time that those vehicles are off the road - that sort of information will be made available. Anything that is documented will be made available. I think, and I am only guessing here, that if a vehicle breaks down this morning it may not be documented as "that Transcom gas vehicle broke down and was off the road for seven hours" or whatever. We might not be able to provide that information. Whatever we can provide we will.

The CHAIRMAN: Whatever you can. We have a lot of questions to get through.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I think only one bus has been operating for 18 months or thereabouts.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That is not right.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is on notice. Hon Jim Scott had a second question.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Dr Whitaker said earlier that he believed there were Mercedes EFI buses in operation which had been trialled. I would like to know whether the direct injection EFI - there is a difference between injecting into a carburettor and injecting directly into the cylinder -

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Could you explain the difference?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: One injects into the carburettor and has to go through the manifold.

The CHAIRMAN: Please just ask the question.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I can explain to the Minister later on.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Thank you.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Was it utilising direct injection? Further, what trial results does Mercedes have to compare with the Transcom technology? Can the department provide a statement from Mercedes that they currently have direct injection EFI systems in operation and that they can provide such technology in the first batch of buses, on time, so that we know we will get these direct injection buses?

The CHAIRMAN: Can you answer that question, or would you like to take it on notice?

Dr WHITAKER: I would like to answer in part, if I may. My attention has been engaged more in the difference between carburettor and fuel injection; the details of different forms of fuel injection are a mystery to me. I need to check that part for you. I used the words "it was under testing". It has been for three years. We agreed to inquire into the circumstances of that testing - whether it involved a regular fleet vehicle or whatever. I recently confirmed the advice that Mercedes will be in production with EFI buses next year. I will clarify the details in the statement we will provide.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, before this tender was let, did you write to the Department of Transport giving any directions in relation to this tender?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Not at all.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Not a nudge and a wink?

The CHAIRMAN: Seriously -

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I find this -

The CHAIRMAN: Please do not answer his interjection. Just answer my question.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: No.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Does the department have, and will it provide, test results to show that Mercedes' EFI is an efficient system?

Dr WHITAKER: Again, to the extent we have or can get that information we will certainly supply it. Mercedes told us that its decision to go into production with these EFI buses next year was clearly based on this detailed testing and it now has the confidence to make it part of its regular production line.

[12.10 pm]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: No other organisation in the world has a better opportunity to test the performance of injected gas operated vehicles. We have given Transcom Gas Technologies Pty Ltd an opportunity to test these vehicles; nobody else in Western Australia will do that. We have tried to assist Transcom in this process, so it can prove whether it has a viable product.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What funds have been sought from the Commonwealth, presumably from the roads of national importance fund, for the completion of the Kwinana Freeway? What funds have been granted? When will the freeway reach Pinjarra Road firstly, with the requested level of commonwealth assistance, and secondly, without that assistance?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The Premier has written to the Prime Minister seeking funds from the roads of national importance program. That includes assistance for the extension of the Kwinana Freeway. We have not had any indication at this stage whether that request has been successful. This is not the first time we have made that request.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What was the amount of the request?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I will check the exact amount, and provide the information on notice.

I am not sure whether we requested a specific amount. We advised the Prime Minister of the total project cost and of the need for federal government assistance towards that total contribution. Funding has not been allocated on the basis of completing that project in a certain time frame. We are currently making a determination on the need for the Peel deviation. Most people with whom we have consulted in the region agree that it is pointless to extend the freeway to Pinjarra Road if southbound traffic must then turn right and travel through Dawesville. It makes more sense for traffic to continue on to the Peel deviation. The Peel deviation should be completed as soon as or before the Kwinana Freeway is extended to Pinjarra Road. It is estimated that traffic on the existing dual carriage-divided road to Mandurah will increase by 7 per cent each year, so there will be traffic congestion on the Dawesville to Mandurah section.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Are there any estimates of when the road will reach Pinjarra Road with or without commonwealth assistance?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: No time frame is in place to extend the freeway to Pinjarra Road. The Government has set targets in its 10 year plan. We want that to be as soon as possible. However, a decision on the Peel deviation must be made before we make that commitment.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Perhaps I could have those times as supplementary information?

The CHAIRMAN: That is taken on notice.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What savings could be made by scrapping the Dawesville realignment, the dualling of the highway north of Lake Clifton and the scrapping of the new Mandurah traffic bridge? What impact would the diversion of these resources have on the timetable for the Peel deviation?

Mr WARNER: As part of the study of the Peel deviation option we are examining the cost of extending the existing route. Bearing in mind that we would need a new bridge at the estuary and a major interchange at the Pinjarra Road, the cost difference is about \$30m.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I would like you to provide those figures because, if the through Mandurah route is scrapped, what funds will be devoted immediately to the deviation and how far forward will that bring the project?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: The Peel deviation is the more costly option.

The CHAIRMAN: Is a 7 per cent increase in traffic a conservative estimate? What is the high estimate?

Mr WARNER: It is the projected traffic growth in that region which we have extrapolated from current operations.

The CHAIRMAN: I think it might be conservative.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Has the Government moved to secure a railway site in Mandurah?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That is being developed as part of the master plan that I spoke about previously. The Government takes the development of this master plan seriously and any member is welcome to request an update of that plan at any time. That master plan should be completed by about November. As a consequence, all the detail to enable the project to go ahead will be available, including location of stations, and associated community infrastructure. When tenders are called on the interchanges on the Kwinana Freeway, those tenders will indicate at which point the railway line will cross the freeway.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: I asked that as a serious question, because the number of suitable sites decreases year by year. The best sites disappear.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That is true. The thrust of the master plan is to consult with people at points along the way, including Rockingham and Mandurah, to try to determine those issues. The location of those sites will be a significant issue. We do not want the community to say the station is in the wrong place; we are trying to get it right. However, there will always be conjecture on whether it is in the right spot.

The CHAIRMAN: We have only 10 minutes left and another eight people want to ask questions. I propose to accept written questions and to incorporate them in *Hansard*. I ask members to provide me with their handwritten questions, and to email the typed question to the committee office.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: My question relates to the metropolitan passenger service and the concerns expressed about fare evasion, particularly on trains. What problems have been associated with stopping fare evasion and what will occur in the future?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Our security personnel are the best people to eliminate fare evasion. There are 100 security personnel at present. The current intake at the school is 20 and there will be a further 20. Intervention by security officers on trains and stations will be more successful than closing stations.

[12.20 pm]

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Are you suggesting that those officers check tickets on the trains?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Yes.

Hon GREG SMITH: I refer to output 3, passenger and freight services, at page 1212. The estimated actual net cost of output is \$242 811 000. Can you provide a breakdown of that figure to indicate the cost of the bus system, the passenger rail system, and freight?

Mr MARTIN: In 1998-99 the subsidy to ferry services is \$230 000; train services, \$111m; and bus services, \$71 796 000.

Hon GREG SMITH: Is the subsidy to all train services, not just passenger trains?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: It is for metropolitan passenger trains.

Hon GREG SMITH: I refer now to the sitting fees paid to Aboriginal consultants for, say, the widening of the Narrows Bridge. Are these people representatives of native title claims or specific bodies, or just interested persons?

Mr WARNER: The Aboriginal Affairs Department identifies groups of people who have an interest in any site on which we propose to work. That department gives advice about the people involved in any group. We write to them inviting them to attend meetings. We pay \$300 for that attendance because some people must travel a considerable distance and be absent from the workplace. We have experienced some breakdown in procedures in the department, in that the guidelines have not been strictly adhered to. We have taken steps to draw to the attention of the officers the need to ensure that the guidelines are followed. However, overall the guidelines are satisfactory. We believe that there is a need to make these payments, and we must comply with the Aboriginal Heritage Act. The question of whether people should be paid is a policy decision. Other agencies pay that fee, as do private contractors. The issue is reviewed from time to time. Our assessment is that if we do not pay the fee and people do not provide information, we would have to engage a consultant. It would cost considerably more to engage a consultant to get the information we need to comply with the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Therefore, we have adopted this course. As a result of recent publicity in the newspapers we have undertaken an internal review of the procedures, and we will let the Minister know the outcome shortly.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I do not think that the payment of fees to attend meetings is the right way to go. It may have been appropriate in the past, but there is a better way to proceed now. I have asked Main Roads to assess the situation. Mr Warner is correct. We are required to consult and receive a decision from Aboriginal people regarding Aboriginal heritage, but the process would be more transparent and accountable if we employed an Aboriginal person with a knowledge of the situation, who could be responsible for consulting Aboriginal people and groups, and thereby provide us with a determination, rather than doing it this way. We will never know how many people receive a payment for simply turning up to a meeting.

Hon GREG SMITH: Are any other community groups eligible to receive sitting fees? Is Main Roads required to consult in this way regarding other projects, or is the Narrows Bridge project the only one?

Mr WARNER: The Aboriginal Heritage Act applies across the State to all projects in which we are involved. No other community group has a legislative right that we follow in the same way.

Hon NORM KELLY: A desired outcome is an integrated transport system that is safe, accessible and environmentally sustainable. How does the department define "environmentally sustainable"?

Mr MARTIN: The purpose of that desired outcome is to consider the big picture, so to speak. That means we are looking at the entire transport system. We must consider the needs of all people - the mobility of people or their ability to transport goods or to transact services. We must provide the mobility but in a way that does not cause undue harm. In other words, it will be as environmentally responsible as possible.

Hon NORM KELLY: How does Transform WA fit with that criterion? What performance measures will be applied to that criterion? There is a big difference between "environmentally sustainable" and being environmentally efficient.

Mr MARTIN: The basis of the work in the metropolitan division of the Department of Transport is the metropolitan transport strategy, which was launched by the Minister in December 1995. It is a 35 year plan to shift mode-share away from single driver cars towards more environmentally friendly modes. That includes cycling and walking, using public transport or achieving higher occupancy in vehicles. Our aim is to give priority to higher occupancy vehicles - that is, motor vehicles. Transform WA includes road based projects, which is still the predominant way to shift most public transport passengers. Specific provisions in the program will allow higher priority for public transport. That is the way in which the project will contribute to environmental sustainability.

Hon NORM KELLY: Does the department accept that new roads increase the number of vehicles on the roads?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Absolutely not. The Transform WA package dedicates more than \$200m to public transport. We cannot say that this is just for cars or that more roads will encourage the use of cars. We have a dedicated bus lane from the city -

Hon NORM KELLY: I am talking about the private vehicle component of the package.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: You are underestimating the fact that the extension of Tonkin Highway and putting in Roe Highway will remove heavy haulage vehicles from suburban streets. That will be better for public transport. Nothing destroys the efficiency and potential use of public transport more than buses being locked into peak hour traffic. All our work is dedicated to the strategy of trying to achieve a balance to ensure we maximise the use of public transport. People must acknowledge that we cannot change the situation overnight. We must set in place a plan to ensure the best outcome.

[12.30 pm]

Mr MARTIN: The new public transport initiatives with Transform WA involve dedicated routes. There is the busway, which the Minister has described, the transit way between Rockingham and Fremantle and other provisions for giving priority at traffic lights. The aim is to dissuade car users from using those routes and to give advantage to public transport users.

Dr WHITAKER: This is a complex issue and the member has asked a complex question. Plenty of evidence shows that emissions from vehicles - we are still moving most people by car - are far higher in very slow moving traffic, which we often have in parts of Perth. One of the initiatives in Transform WA is access to the city for people. That is about relieving the congestion because congested traffic is really high on emissions. If we keep traffic moving, emissions drop off dramatically. That is another dimension of the proposals.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you all for your participation.

Committee suspended from 12.32 to 2.15 pm

Division 76: Police Service, \$405 876 000 -

[Hon Simon O'Brien, Chairman.]

[Hon Peter Foss, Attorney General.]

[Mr B. Brennan, Deputy Commissioner (Operations), State Commander.]

[Mr K. Porter, Deputy Commissioner (Administration).]

[Mr T. Atherton, Assistant Commissioner (Crime Support).]

[Mr S.W. Jones, Director, Asset Management.]

[Mr J. Frame, Director, Human Resources.]

[Mr R. McDonald, Director of Finance.]

The Chairman read the opening statement. [See start of day.]

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I welcome you to today's hearings. I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses form. Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What resources was the Western Australia Police Service required to devote to the Patrick stevedores and Maritime Union of Australia dispute?

Mr BRENNAN: The total cost in financial resources for Operation Port 98, as it was known, was \$2.168m. The police presence and contingent at the port varied from 50 at some stages through to approximately 500. The larger number of 500 were there only at times when we were expecting that we would move to break the blockade so that people could go about their lawful business. At times when there was not a lot of protester presence, we reduced our numbers accordingly.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the allocation of resources to that dispute impact on the funding that is available to other police operational areas, and if so, how?

Mr BRENNAN: At this time, that allocation will be subject to a supplementation application to the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the new Murdoch Police Station to take the place of the former Hilton and Brentwood Police Stations?

Mr BRENNAN: It is partially. Murdoch is a police centre for that part of the Cannington-Fremantle district. A difficulty is that Hilton still requires a policing presence, so we will maintain the Hilton Police Station as a nine to five facility Monday to Friday. Brentwood will be policed in a similar manner. A greater presence exists through the Murdoch centre. The actual patrolling hours will be greater in those two suburbs after hours than it has ever been when the police stations were dedicated for that police subdistrict.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that two cars would generally be on patrol from both Hilton and Brentwood in the past, whereas three cars will be on patrol out of Murdoch in the future. Is there a decline in police patrols or available response presence in that area, or is something else the case?

Mr BRENNAN: I cannot confirm whether two or three cars will be available. I can confirm that if you are talking about vehicles available out of a particular police station, that being Murdoch, they would be general duty cars. However, there are other vehicles - the district support squad vehicles, traffic vehicles, crime vehicles, and district detective vehicles. Rather than look at it in isolation, we need to consider the whole policing response that we can provide in that geographical location within a 24 hour period. The assistant commissioner, metropolitan operations, has advised me that he expects a greater presence in those suburbs.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Will police be in a position to answer the 200-odd questions I asked three years ago with regard to the Brennan case when the Ombudsman finalises his report, which I understand will be fairly soon?

Mr BRENNAN: I am not in a position to provide you with those details. I do not know what the current situation is, apart from the fact that the report is with the Ombudsman. The Richard Brennan case has been overseen by the assistant commissioner, professional standards, Mr Jack McKaay. I am aware that you have asked a number of questions over a considerable time. The Ombudsman is currently overviewing it. Hopefully some of the answers that you seek and some of the issues you raise will be dealt with.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I understand the Ngaanyatjarra Council in the central desert must pay for their own police stations, travelling allowance for police to visit the area, and air charters. Is that standard practice? Why can Aboriginal people in remote areas not have a police service that is similar to those in other areas of the State without having to delve into their own scant resources to pay for it?

Mr BRENNAN: Many Aboriginal communities are in isolated areas and it is difficult to respond to the requests for police services from various Aboriginal communities to provide the level of service that they desire. For many years the Balgo establishment has been requesting a permanent police presence. It formerly had a large population which has spread to Yagga Yagga, south west of Balgo and other small communities in the Kimberley region. We put in a police post at Balgo because the community desired it. It was never our intention to provide a permanent policing presence there. We do not want to send staff on lengthy postings to places like Balgo. We prefer to do what we call back-to-back patrols, which provide a fairly continuous presence in the community. It involves a group of two or three police officers - a patrol - at the community or one of the satellite communities. While on their way back from completing the patrol another patrol leaves Halls Creek to go to Balgo.

The same applies to the Central Desert community at Warakurna and all the other settlements towards the south of Warakurna. In 1991 the Warakurna community sought a permanent presence there. They were not happy with the Laverton back-to-back patrols. We said that we were not in a position to provide a permanent police presence there because of the number of requests we had received from communities throughout the State. It was agreed between that community and the Police Service that we would build a police post at their expense. They undertook to provide accommodation to allow officers to remain there for a few days rather than having to live out of their vehicles. Various derivations of that have occurred since. I understand through the Kalgoorlie regional commander that an arrangement was reached with the desert community, which was happy to provide that facility. That situation continues to be the case in the north of the State.

The people on the Dampier Peninsular have also asked us for a permanent police presence. It has been difficult for us to come to grips with that. People at Bidyadanga, Oombulgurri, Kalumburu and various other places want their own policing presence. At this stage people have been prepared to build a police post. We try to put in extra hours but we cannot always do that.

I appreciate the nature of your question. It is a matter of logistics. We have made an operational decision to deal with it through the use of back-to-back patrols.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Has the Balgo community been asked to pay \$50 000 towards an improved service to the community?

Mr BRENNAN: That may be correct. I am not aware of that.

Mr JONES: Some repairs are needed at the Balgo police post. At this stage the Police Service intends to meet those costs - to the facility only - rather than expect the community to meet them.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: What is the Police Service doing to hasten the implementation of DNA technology in the solving of crime in Western Australia?

[2.30 pm]

Mr BRENNAN: That is one of the Police Commissioner's favourite hobby horses at the moment. He is a champion of DNA. Having said that, we know from research carried out in the United Kingdom that using DNA in a positive way and developing a DNA database has lifted the resolved rate of burglary from between 12 per cent and 14 per cent to 40 per cent. That is particularly attractive to us. It will not come as any surprise to any member that our burglary rate at this time is unacceptable. It is the highest in the nation, and we are concerned to reduced that shocking rate. If we can develop a national DNA database, we will use it not only for offences in which biological specimens are involved - here I am talking about a range of sexual and assault offences - but also some of the garden variety offences. To that end, the commissioner is raising the issue at a national forum in the near future. I understand he is presenting to the Australasian Police Ministers' Council in Wellington next week a paper on DNA, in conjunction with Dr Alistair Ross, probably one of the foremost authorities on that topic in Australia. In establishing this database, it is not intended to use the DNA from newborn children or anything of that ilk as was suggested recently in the local newspaper, but rather to deal with only convicted criminals, those who come through the hands of the police.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Surely it would be beneficial for the innocent as well.

Mr BRENNAN: Absolutely. It is a screening out device as much as it is a screening in device. We know mistakes have been made in the past. It is one of the great problems with relying solely on people's admissions or any other statements of guilt. Sometimes information is made up. A biological specimen can be compared, and we can confirm or deny a situation. It can be a screening out device as well as one for culpable offences.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: How does the Western Australian police population compare in ratio with that in other States?

Mr FRAME: The police population ratio in Western Australia is the second best in Australia, and follows that of the Northern Territory. The current ratio is 375 members of the population per police officer, compared with that in the Northern Territory of 225. In the other States of Australia the ratio is about 400 to 500 members of the population per police officer.

The CHAIRMAN: Questions have been raised about the committee starting at 2.15 pm, instead of the scheduled two o'clock commencement time. If the members see a need, the committee intends to continue until 4.15 pm to facilitate any questions that may not have been asked. Perhaps it is also timely to suggest that questions be kept reasonably brief and for answers to be kept to the point, to the extent that they can be.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Have any evaluations been conducted recently to determine the relative performance of the Western Australia Police Service against that of police services in other Australian jurisdictions?

Mr BRENNAN: The recent Council of Australian Governments report published earlier this year addressed the public's satisfaction with their last police contact. The report indicates that 84 per cent of people were satisfied or very satisfied with their last contact. That figure is equal to the best in Australia. A Morgan Gallup poll sought the public's view of police in matters of honesty, integrity and ethics. As a profession, the Police Service rose several percentage points on its standing three years ago, when it was languishing at third from the bottom. I am very happy that this year the Western Australia Police Service rose 17 percentage points to achieve a rating of 70 per cent, which is equal with that of the Victoria Police Service and second to the service in South Australia. That increase in

acceptability has gone against a falling national trend. It is satisfying to the service that in matters of ethics, honesty and integrity it has increased its rating. However, it is not resting on its laurels; it intends to improve that rating even further. That is the role of the recently appointed assistant commissioner, professional standards, although all officers must make a contribution. I am sure that if the board of any corporate entity heard that its employees had performed at that level it would be very pleased.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Were any officers taken away from the child abuse unit and allocated to police operations at the Fremantle wharf during the recent dispute?

Mr BRENNAN: A detective sergeant from the child abuse unit was sent to the Fremantle wharf during the dispute. The time he spent there was in addition to his rostered working hours. He then returned to the child abuse unit to carry out his regular duties. It has been previously indicated that no officer from the unit was sent to Fremantle. The officer served as a rostered negotiator, not on the front line

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I am happy for the rest of the answer to be provided on notice.

[2.40 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: There is some concern about the phrase "taken away". It is not commonly used in this context. "Seconded" and "made available" we understand. However "taken away" is difficult to understand. It is hard to answer that. Answers have been given principally under the headings "seconded" or "made available". One of the points made by the Police Service is that normal administrative arrangements result in officers from all areas necessarily being absent for the purpose of holidays, training courses, court commitments, interstate duties, etc. That may be encompassed under "taken away". Therefore, it has been left under that general heading as the reasons for their absence. In order to cover those absences, the detective sergeant performs extra work.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I appreciate the Attorney's assistance with that.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Attorney tabling that paper?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will provide a copy of it as the Minister for Police had the other one sent to him.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I have questions relating to the child abuse unit. A paper was recently tabled in the other place on proactive policing. In that document, reference was made to the current inability of the child abuse unit to conduct any proactive work due to the consuming demands of complaint based investigations. Currently there are approximately 226 outstanding complaints, which equates to an average individual workload of over 30 files per investigator. Was that observation correct? What is the current position?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will ask Assistant Commissioner Atherton to deal with that.

The CHAIRMAN: It is appropriate to welcome Assistant Commissioner Atherton to Western Australia as he has recently arrived. Would he please take the hot seat and answer the question.

Mr ATHERTON: At the time the report was written - at the end of December, early January this year; five and a half months ago - the details were correct. I sought information late last week on the number of outstanding investigations waiting to be detailed to officers. That number is approximately 93, of which 68 have recently been identified as matters which could and should be dealt with at district level. What I mean by that is we are moving to a system of district ownership of crime. The crime support portfolio, of which I am now the head - and thank you, Mr Chairman, for your good wishes - will be taking over specialised crime investigation and also cross-jurisdictional investigation; in other words, crime that affects the whole of the State or across state boundaries. The initial investigation of crime will be the responsibility of district detectives.

Until recently, when an investigative practice report was produced by the management audit section of the Police Service, the tendency was to refer any child abuse matter to the child abuse unit as the centre of expertise. We are trying to return that backlog of cases to the district so that the child abuse unit can concentrate on two things - proactivity, and the more important and more widespread child abuse investigations.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Reference is made in the same document to the limitations placed on the bureau of criminal intelligence crime analyst attached to the unit due to the lack of investigative resources and technology available to fulfil any leads introduced. Was that observation correct? What is the current position on operations of the BCI crime analyst stationed with the unit?

Mr ATHERTON: I am afraid that because of my current appointment to this portfolio, I cannot answer that question in detail, but I can certainly seek further information. Are you talking about the proposal to obtain an Internet connection for the investigation of Internet pornography?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Not precisely. The allegation was that the analyst was deprived of sufficient resources, particularly with regard to technology, to enable him to do his job. What has been done to rectify that?

Mr ATHERTON: At present, there is a vacancy for an analyst with the child abuse unit. That position has been advertised, and we trust it will be filled within four to six weeks. Currently no analyst is attached to the child abuse unit.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: For how long has that been the situation?

Mr ATHERTON: I am not aware.

Hon PETER FOSS: I think that has been tabled in the House.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I have asked the question, and if the answer cannot be given now, can the question be taken on notice?

The CHAIRMAN: That will be taken on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: Mr Atherton may be able to tell us the situation with regard to the suggestion that the unit lacked a computer, because that has been investigated by the assistant commissioner.

The CHAIRMAN: As I understood it, the question was not about whether an analyst was in situ but whether the hardware was available for that person to do the job.

Mr ATHERTON: I understand that the report suggested that there was a lack of computer resources at the child abuse unit. On Monday, 25 May, when I commenced duty with that portfolio, I met with the child abuse unit, and that concern was expressed to me. My reaction as a manager was to inquire, because we were approaching the end of the financial year, whether a submission had been made by the management of that unit for additional computer equipment to be considered in this year's budget allocation. To my surprise, it had not. However, I give this committee an undertaking that I am certainly looking at what computer resources can be given to the child abuse unit in the short term. My advice as of late yesterday from my finance officer is that some funds are available to enable the unit to upgrade some computers and acquire a number of new computers.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Is the allegation correct that a combined total of nine computers was shared between 17 sworn and three unsworn staff?

Mr ATHERTON: I am not aware of the exact figures, but there certainly was a fairly substantial ratio of staff to computers.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I take it you have read the report about the allocation of computers. Is the substance of the report correct with regard to its criticism of a lack of computers and technology?

The CHAIRMAN: To which report are you referring?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am referring to paper No 1629, which was tabled in the House last week and has relevance to page 911 of the budget papers.

Hon PETER FOSS: Regardless of whether the substance is correct, the fact remains that there are processes by which people who want to have extra computers or staff can ask for them. It appears that no request had been made for extra computers; therefore, no extra computers were allocated. I understand also that the human resource people are still awaiting the appropriate application for extra staff resources. The important point is that the thrust of what has been suggested is that the requirements of the unit were not met. Someone must first request those things.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Attorney General is suggesting that they had to be asked for. I know that when I last asked the Attorney General this question, he had not read the report that had been tabled, but contained within that report are memos from officers associated with the unit to officers in charge of No 5 division requesting precisely that, but they had received unfavourable replies.

[2.50 pm]

Hon PETER FOSS: I have not seen those. My understanding is that no indent was made for a computer within the normal processes.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: The tabled paper refers to a suggestion that a web site hotline be developed. Will that be developed in Western Australia; and if so, when? Will that be provided with appropriate resources to enable it to be utilised?

Mr ATHERTON: That is a resource which has some merit. I will be looking at that in my recently acquired capacity

as the new assistant commissioner. However, concerns exist about the utilisation of proactive Internet computers to access pornography. One issue is whether police are acting illegally in accessing pornography. That is a legal question and must be considered by our service legal advisers. The other issue was raised by two other officers in charge of child abuse units; that is, the child protection agency in New South Wales, and the head of the child abuse unit in the Queensland Police Force, from which I came. It is very time consuming to establish credibility in the use of the Internet connection. It is not a matter of a police officer occasionally accessing the Internet. An officer must establish credibility on the Internet with people who peddle child pornography to develop connections with them before some benefit can be gained. Those two issues must be addressed. I will be looking at the aspect of the investigation of child pornography, particularly identifying people who deal in child pornography in this State, and I give the committee that undertaking.

Hon PETER FOSS: I will clarify something that I think has been blown out of proportion. The child abuse unit is concerned with child abuse. Pornography is not a matter of child abuse except in the place where pornography is created. The mere supply of child pornography is a matter for the vice squad, rather than the abuse squad. If someone uses children to produce child pornography in Western Australia, that is a matter of child abuse and is of considerable concern to the Western Australian child abuse unit. Searching the Internet for pornography is not the role of the child abuse unit. While it is an interesting idea to have a web site where reports can be made, Crime Stoppers already exists as a way in which people can give that information through the web site. They can also telephone and provide that information. We should not overestimate the capacity of a web site in Western Australia as a way of reporting child abuse. It may be a good idea, but before we go overboard on it, we must recognise its limited application.

Authorities have responsibility for the international trafficking of pornographic material which is handled on a national basis. As a policing authority in Western Australia, we are interested in people who are using - in other words, abusing - children to produce pornography; they are of considerable interest. The question is whether, on a national basis, any of those people are identified as being in Western Australia. Anyone who has used the Internet will know that sometimes it is extremely difficult to find the source of material.

Mr ATHERTON: The Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, which is based in Canberra, is the central Australian law enforcement authority investigating the issue of child pornography on the Internet. The National Police Research Unit is also liaising with the ABCI regarding Internet pornography. The Western Australia Police Service will be in contact with the ABCI on a constant basis to identify any issues regarding child pornography. As I said earlier, I will be considering the issue of whether the child abuse unit obtains an Internet connection for the purpose of covert pornography screening.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am glad the Attorney General raised the issue of the vice squad. With regard to the child abuse unit and child prostitution, the observation is made in the tabled paper that the information from the vice squad is that it does not currently investigate this area of criminality. According to the report, the child abuse unit is the appropriate investigative body to explore this area of investigation because of the direct link to paedophiles who actively seek out children to fulfill their sexual preferences. Is it the view of the police that this matter should be dealt with by the child abuse unit or is it purely a matter for the vice squad? If it is a matter of concern for the child abuse unit, what further resourcing is being provided to that unit to do the job?

Mr ATHERTON: From my point of view, prostitution should be the role of the vice squad. The child abuse unit would probably be consulted in any investigation which identifies that children are being taken advantage of by individuals. I would have thought from a management perspective - bearing in mind this report was not written by senior management; it was written by an acting detective senior sergeant - that prostitution of any description should be the premise of the vice squad.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I invite you to tell me when to stop, Mr Chairman, but I have a number of questions about the child abuse unit.

The CHAIRMAN: I will give you a moment to collect your thoughts.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I have my thoughts here entirely, Mr Chairman, and I want to move on to another area of the child abuse unit.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask you to hold off and I will give you the call again shortly. We will involve some other members.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I am obliged to you, Mr Chairman.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I understand the new Police Academy is to be located in the Midland district. Will the Minister, or the appropriate person, outline the process and outcomes of the research which established Midland as the best place for the Police Academy, bearing in mind the facilities available at Joondalup with the tertiary unit?

The CHAIRMAN: Also the locations available in the South Metropolitan Region.

Hon PETER FOSS: The decision about Midland relates to police operations support, not the academy. I do not think there has been an announcement on where the academy will be located.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That will be next.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I am jumping the gun.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am sure Hon Derrick Tomlinson could tell you all the very good reasons why it should go to Midland.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: You are supposed to as well; you represent the region.

Hon PETER FOSS: I know; I agree.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps Hon Derrick Tomlinson will appear before this committee at some stage.

Hon GIZ WATSON: On page 907 it is claimed that the proactive problem solving approach to addressing safety and security issues at a local level is delivering some outstanding successes in solving local problems. Will you outline that approach?

Hon PETER FOSS: The question was "what are we doing about it?".

Hon GIZ WATSON: Yes.

[3.00 pm]

Mr BRENNAN: We are looking at what we have to do to create a safer Western Australia and the things to achieve in that regard. We are working with the community as a whole because crime is not just a police matter; it is whole of community matter.

This year we are targeting four prime areas: House burglary - that is, breaking and entering; assault, because a great number of assaults occur in our community; armed robbery and robberies of all description; and motor vehicle theft. Drug use and drug trafficking continue to receive considerable attention. In an endeavour to try to bend those negative trend lines we are trying to lift the resolve rate of burglary, robbery, assault and motor vehicle theft. In each of the 15 districts throughout the State - six in the metropolitan area and nine in the country - we are working towards a specific objective and, in each district in which those issues are a problem, to reduce them. We want to reduce burglary to the national average. This year we are working towards a greater resolution of crimes in those four specific areas.

We cannot control the incidence of crime in the sense that, try as we might, people who have a propensity towards criminality will continue to commit offences. We try to be proactive and are involved in crime prevention and those sorts of issues. The bottom line is that when we can do something about the resolution rate, we are doing that. Each metropolitan district is addressing the backlog of crime offence reports which have a suspect or person of interest on them. We are reducing the backlog and trying to target the criminal element so we can improve community safety and security.

Hon PETER FOSS: It is not only what is the crime rate but also what people's perception of safety is as well. It is no good reducing the crime rate if we do not give people some reassurance about their perception of safety. We know there is a distinction between the two. One of the places that people indicate they feel unsafe is travelling on public transport at night. The interesting thing about that perception is that it is much higher among people who do not travel on public transport at night than among people who do. To some extent people do not travel on public transport because of that perception, and if they did travel their perception would change. It is an important role not only to reduce the crime rate - obviously that is an important factor in people's perception - but also to make certain that people believe that they are safe. My view from travelling to other places and speaking to people from other places is that we live in a society that most people would regard as reasonably safe. Strangely enough as a society we do not necessarily perceive it that way. I do not think the second point is unimportant. People must not only be safe but feel safe.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: On a point of order, I am deliberately not asking questions in this area as I know my colleague wants to ask questions on the child abuse unit, which is of particular interest to members in the place. I am proposing not to ask questions until child abuse questions are out of the way. I hope that is a procedure that other members might be persuaded to fall in with.

The CHAIRMAN: The member has made his point. However, it is not a point of order.

Hon GIZ WATSON: To what extent is there a relationship between drug use and armed robbery? You spoke about prevention, and not being able to do much on the prevention side. I seek a comment, because I understand that a large proportion of home burglaries and armed robberies are drug related. Therefore, it is possible to prevent those crimes.

Mr BRENNAN: It is our view that there is a direct correlation between motor vehicle theft, home burglary, armed robbery and drug abuse. We see patterns now which suggest there is a direct correlation. People may have some greater research and figures that would deny that; but my operational officers tell me that they are seeing a direct correlation. To that extent, we are involving our community policing and crime prevention committees. They are located throughout the State. We also have an innovation known as PC COP, which is an electronic Neighbourhood Watch, for want of a better description, from which we hear about car theft or burglary, by dialling a number. Neighbourhoods pass on information to blocks of 600 people who can alert their fellow neighbours about incidents of crime. There is a direct correlation.

Hon PETER FOSS: Information from overseas - particularly from Canada and the United States - indicates a similar state of affairs. It is also a rather worrying trend of drug abuse, and drugs which are being used, which follows. There is a progression of drugs, a progression of abuse and a progression of how people are involved - such as bikie gangs, and so on. The progression we have had here is almost identical to trends in the United States some five to 10 years ago. Here, the relationship between how and what drugs are sold, and the relationship to crime is uncannily like following in the footsteps of the United States.

Hon NORM KELLY: I refer to page 920, and the outcome that the regulatory requirements and information needs of external clients are satisfied. I specifically refer to clearance certificates and conviction record searches. I note there is no increase in the estimates for the next financial year for the number of searches and certificates that are required. In the light of the Wood royal commission recommendations and the fact that various government agencies - such as Health, Justice and Family and Children's Services - require a substantial number of clearances, it seems to be an underestimation of future demand for the service.

Mr BRENNAN: I can only say that these estimates have been provided in good faith, on the basis of information and intelligence provided to us. You can forecast as you will, but there will be times when we do not call it correctly. If the member wishes, we can check that figure and provide information later.

Hon NORM KELLY: I appreciate that, because the changes were implemented in the Health Department last March.

Hon PETER FOSS: I can assist here. We are carrying out a review of the Spent Convictions Act because I am receiving constant requests from various bodies for exemptions under the Act. One request was recently sent to the Delegated Legislation Committee, and it has become such a common event that I must look at the Act as a whole. I will be reporting to Parliament, because so many people say they must have an exemption, generally on the basis of paedophilia; but it is also on the basis of trust and positions of responsibility. It could very well get out of hand unless Parliament has another look at the Act.

[3.10 pm]

Hon NORM KELLY: I will put that on notice.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I should like to follow up the question Hon Giz Watson asked about the Police Academy. I refer to page 929 of the Budget Statements which refers to capital. The Police Academy is shown as an estimated total cost of \$35m; \$100 000 has been spent to 30 June and \$8m is to be spent in the financial year commencing 1 July. I understand that approval was given to further investigate two of the preferred locations - the collocation with Edith Cowan University at Joondalup and the collocation with Murdoch University. Given that \$8m is to be expended in the capital program for the next financial year, when can we anticipate the final decision on the site to be announced?

Hon PETER FOSS: I imagine the Minister will make the announcement very shortly.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: On 1 July?

Hon PETER FOSS: Very shortly.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I refer to the existing Police Academy and the profound changes which the Delta program is about - not the radical changes in organisation but profound changes in attitude. What resources are allocated to the Police Academy for ethics training, both pre-service and in-service, for members of the Police Service?

Mr FRAME: It would be very difficult for us to extract and provide details about numbers or resources. From the

time when people are recruited to join the Western Australia Police Service, as part of their recruit training we have a significant commitment to ethics and community training which continues through their career. At the time they join we have a lecture and role scenarios in which our recruits participate in their first 25 weeks. They then spend 18 months as probationary constables. Throughout that period we have ongoing assessments of their behaviour, responses and what we would see as the expectations of their ethical behaviour in the workplace. That forms the basis for the agency to make a determination of whether they are appointed as constables. Following their probation, they have an ongoing training program which continues through a nine year period for constables, during which time they are expected to attain a range of educational qualifications to make them eligible for promotion. Part of that educational program is to do with ethics and integrity in the workplace. If I may make the point, it is not so much dollars or resources that we commit to training and development at the academy as an ongoing commitment in the agency from the time members join right through to their senior promotion. With all of our positions and all the positions we have advertised in the current phase of restructuring the Police Service, which involves every rank from deputy commissioner to sergeant - we are concluding the selection and appointment process for 190 sergeants at this time - an essential selection criterion relates to ethics and integrity. Therefore, it is not about a brief exposure to some training; it pervades the whole culture, behaviour and attitude of members of the Police Service. That approach is reflected in the positive trend highlighted by Mr Brennan earlier about the community's view of the ethics, integrity and behaviour of members of the Police Service.

Hon PETER FOSS: It might help the member if you could give some more specific information.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The question of resources allocated to both pre-service and in-service training of police officers is very important to this question. A couple of years ago a select committee of this House prepared a critical report of the inadequacy of resources allocated to in-service training. The Delta program was to have two prongs, using Professor Rohl's term: The radical transformation and the profound transformation. I notice on page 909 that profound transformation is now the organisational change; that was the radical change. The profound change was the attitudinal change. You do not have a profound attitudinal change in the Police Service if you do not allocate sufficient resources, both personnel and financial, to changing attitudes. I am pleased that the Police Service is held in such high regard; it deserves to be. However, there are also some deep seated problems, attitudinal problems, which I think have been acknowledged by the Police Service. I do not want to hear that we are doing something about it; I want to hear what resources are being allocated to do something about attitudinal changes within the service.

The CHAIRMAN: It is important at this time that we do not allow too much by way of general discussion to displace the process of question and answer as a way of obtaining information. Hon Derrick Tomlinson posed the question as directly as he can with regard to what resources have been allocated to this matter. Can that be answered now, or do you wish to take the question on notice?

Hon PETER FOSS: The question needs to be answered.

Mr BRENNAN: I think I can provide an answer. The amount of expenditure allocated to training generally has increased from approximately \$300 000 to approximately \$3m. That may be an indication of the attitude of the organisation to training. That is where attitudes are formed and nurtured on a much higher scale. When I was principal of the academy in 1990, approximately \$287 000 was available to deal with all of the training in-house as well as recruit training; it has now increased to \$3m. That is indicative of the importance that the organisation places on that very issue.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is very encouraging. Perhaps I can put a question on notice for a breakdown of the allocation for training to in-service as well as pre-service training, and what proportion of the in-service training is directed towards ethics and attitudes of officers.

The CHAIRMAN: That question is on notice.

[3.20 pm]

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I return to the child abuse unit and the content of tabled paper 1629. Three concerns about security and accommodation were raised: First, limited security on the premises of the child abuse unit in that the office was not alarmed. Second, the exhibits and storeroom which, as referred to in the report, "Currently hold numerous items of seized illegal and highly sensitive material and staff firearms is also not alarmed." Third, a concern for security in that at any time, any person can walk into reception without first identifying himself. These matters present an unacceptably high risk given the potential threat to both staff and victims. Were those concerns accurate when they were put on paper? Have the concerns been remedied; if so, when?

Mr ATHERTON: The situation regarding alarming of the building is accurate. I have taken action in the past week and a half to have that matter addressed. I am hopeful that a security system will be installed in the child abuse unit

in the near future. Regarding security of persons entering the building, when I visited the child abuse unit last week as assistant commissioner in uniform I had to report to reception and register myself into the building before talking to staff. From my observations and information that last aspect has been attended to.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: What about the alarming of the room where the exhibits are held?

Mr ATHERTON: At this stage I am looking at perimeter alarming for the unit. Entry to any of the access points to the building itself will be alarmed.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: The Budget Statements indicate that the amount allocated for 1997-98 was \$60 100. I understand from matters put to the House last week that that was increased to \$72 600. I take it that that figure is to include overtime, shift penalties, meals, travel, consumables, maintenance repairs and miscellaneous expenses. Given what has been pointed out concerning the child abuse unit in the public arena in the past couple of weeks, what further budget allocation will be made for 1998-99?

Mr ATHERTON: You are correct - an adjustment was made to the recurrent budget of the child abuse unit by \$12 500 from \$60 000 to \$72 500. How much of the allocation will be split to child abuse will depend on the outcome of the proceedings in the lower House and this House and the allocation to my portfolio in the near future. I will certainly be looking at that. Since last Friday the child abuse unit has not exceeded its recurrent budget. I emphasise that the \$72 500 to which you referred is for recurrent expenditure on items such as overtime, etc. The total expenditure on the child abuse unit this financial year includes approximately \$850 000 for payroll, \$20 700 for equipment, \$72 000 for the lease of the premises, approximately \$14 000 for utilities, a carryover of \$17 000 for relocation expenses to the new premises, \$14 000 for the lease of five vehicles and approximately \$20 000 for vehicle running costs.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: With respect to that narrow question of recurrent expenditure, has no amount been determined for the forthcoming financial year?

Mr ATHERTON: That is right, not at this stage.

Hon PETER FOSS: That is true for the whole organisation. It is dependent upon the Parliament's approval of the head Budget.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: That is true of all budgetary papers. What has been budgeted?

Hon PETER FOSS: At this stage?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: When the Budget passes, presumably the Police Force has a sum of money in mind to be used by the child abuse unit as recurrent expenditure. I wish to know what that figure is.

Hon PETER FOSS: I think the officer is saying that at this stage it has not been reached; that it will be done after the Budget passes through Parliament.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: Under the heading of training - I do not know whether Mr Atherton has a copy of the tabled paper; it would make it easier for him if he did - it is said that Western Australia is one of only three States that do not have a training officer in this field of investigation. It asks that consideration be given to providing an extra position within the unit to enable this function to be carried out. Will that take place in the forthcoming financial year, or has it already taken place?

Mr ATHERTON: I am not aware of a training officer being attached to the child abuse unit. The recommendations in this report have been referred to a working party which has met on two occasions since the report was submitted to senior command. It will continue to meet. The question of a training officer will be for the working party to make recommendations to me and, in turn, for me to make appropriate recommendations to the commissioner.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: The report contains criticism with respect to interviewing officers. Will the observation about interviewing officers be the same as that just made with respect to training?

Mr ATHERTON: Is the member referring to the training of interviewing officers?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: No. As I am trying to speed up this matter to cover all the issues, rather than delay the committee, I will elaborate: The report makes reference to interviewing officers, no training being in place, lack of training and guidance by more senior staff, and new interviewing officers using child victims as guinea pigs. It points out that there are no experienced officers to provide training and that we are relying on detectives to do this. The report points out a need for immediate action to be taken to appoint a permanent interviewing officer. What specifically has been done with respect to those issues concerning the interviewing officer, or is that being considered, in contemplation?

[3.30 pm]

Mr ATHERTON: I emphasise that all aspects of the issues raised in the report are being considered by the working party. Nevertheless I draw the attention of the committee to the fact that the rationale behind the interviewing officers attached to the child abuse unit is for selected district staff to be given contact and training in interviewing techniques in child abuse matters. They will be rotated through the unit for about 12 months and then be returned to the districts to enable the districts to manage the initial investigation of child abuse matters rather than their being referred to the unit. It is designed to reduce the workload of the central child abuse unit.

Hon PETER FOSS: This is consistent with Operation Delta. It is designed to devolve and spread responsibility to the local level. That is a management change and it involves one of the attitudinal changes to which Hon Derrick Tomlinson referred. Taking resources from the central office and placing them in the districts does not necessarily attract universal support. However, it must be accepted that responsibility does not necessarily reside only in the central office. Police officers in a district must accept that it is their area and they must take responsibility for the crime level in that area. That is a philosophical approach and it is not necessarily accepted by those who have worked within the old system. I understand that they might not like people moving through the unit and then out to the districts. However, the decision has been made, and I believe it is sensible. Obviously, if problems arise, they must be considered by management. The philosophy is good and it should be embraced.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I appreciate the assistance Mr Atherton has given to the committee, and to me in particular. Was the report prepared by Acting Senior Sergeant Branchi commissioned by the police hierarchy and was that officer requested to prepare it?

Mr ATHERTON: The process predated my arrival in Western Australia. However, I understand that it was commissioned by the deputy commissioner, operations and was referred to the head of the child abuse unit, Detective Senior Sergeant Miller. Acting Senior Sergeant Branchi was asked to address the issue when Detective Senior Sergeant Miller was assigned to assist the Shoalwater task force.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does the police hierarchy accept the recommendations in the report? I note that changes to security have already been implemented and other issues are being addressed. Is the service rejecting the report?

Mr ATHERTON: Certainly not. However, it must be seen in context. I have said in the media that some elements of it are subjective, but that is not a criticism of the officer involved. The service is a learning organisation and it must take criticism as well as praise. It accepts that the report raises issues that must be addressed. That is the reason it has been proactive in establishing a working party that will make recommendations to me. It will consider operational matters and legislative changes and its recommendations will go through me to the commissioner and eventually to the Minister.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will table my remaining questions.

Hon PETER FOSS: When you have a report you deal with it. You do not accept it as gospel. You do not accept that it is the word of God and everything in it is correct.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Or dismiss it either, Minister.

Hon PETER FOSS: No. It has been made quite clear that it is not being dismissed. However, it is taken for what it is; that is, a report made by somebody. Any point that he makes will be examined. However, it is not necessary that the solutions or problems identified by him are accurately identified.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Minister's comments during last week could have been seen as dismissive comments on his part speaking on behalf of the Government.

Hon PETER FOSS: No. My comments were that they have to be seen for what they are. It is not a management report but a report by someone in the system. One does not ignore it. However, on the other hand, it is not seen as the gospel on what to do or an appropriate level of identification of the problem. The Police Force is undergoing changes. Many things which were previously done in a particular way have been changed to a totally different way. Not everybody likes a new way of doing things.

The CHAIRMAN: I guarantee that any member who wishes to ask further questions will have the opportunity to do so. Hon Tom Stephens has indicated he has more questions.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will ask them at the end of the session, if there is time, so that I do not cut across anyone at the moment.

The CHAIRMAN: That is appreciated by members. The committee asks the Minister to ensure that questions taken on notice at this hearing are answered within three days so that they can be incorporated in *Hansard* and form part

of the substance of our report. I ask any Minister here to indicate, when taking a question on notice, if he feels unable to meet that deadline. Members should be aware that if they propose to table questions at the end of the session, although they will be received and referred to the Minister by this committee, they may not be answered in three days; a few days extra may be granted to the Minister to answer them.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: It is important for members to note that if they have a quick question that needs to be placed on notice, they should ask the question now. That will allow the question to be taken on notice and ensure its inclusion in the report.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What, if any, funds are appropriated in this year's Police budget for the planning and/or conduct of municipal security patrols? Will the police have any ongoing role in the development of municipal security patrols?

Mr BRENNAN: There was publicity that \$4m would be provided through the Police budget to local government for municipal patrols. That \$4m was not made available through the Police budget but through some other process. Therefore, no funds have been provided for that purpose within the proposed Police allocation.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: Will the police have any ongoing role in the development of municipal security patrols?

[3.40 pm]

Mr BRENNAN: Yes, we will. We are working as closely as possible in consultation with local government to provide the best possible involvement of local government security patrols where they decide to opt for it. The officer that we have appointed as our liaison officer is Assistant Commissioner, Traffic and Operations Support, Mr Mel Hay. He is working and meeting with local government representatives to provide advice.

We believe that should be police led to ensure that proper policies, procedures, ethics and associated standards are applied across-the-board. We believe that rather than work against or in opposition to any private security arrangements, it is better to provide a leading role, guidance and direction and to have them work with us to a prescribed set of standards so that we can be assured that across-the-board we will get an even and consistent coverage from those people; and Mr Hay is working towards that end.

Hon J.A. COWDELL: What is the budgetary allocation for this and the following financial year for the public sector investigation unit within the professional standards portfolio; and how many complaints has the public sector investigation unit received and investigated so far this financial year?

Mr BRENNAN: I will take that question on notice.

Hon NORM KELLY: Page 915 refers to the timely and appropriate police response to calls for assistance. The performance measures contain no criteria for timeliness, and I note that this matter is currently being addressed. How is it being addressed, and when will that be finalised?

Mr BRENNAN: I would like to take that on notice also, because our policy planning and evaluation portfolio would have some detail on that matter, and I cannot speak off the cuff with any certainty.

The CHAIRMAN: That will be on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: It seems to indicate that the biggest problem is getting reliable data. I know that the police are planning a major investment in a computer, and I assume that will deal with this matter, but for the moment the problem is not so much determining what will be a suitable measure but that they do not have anything to measure it with.

Hon NORM KELLY: Does the Police Service have any data to indicate whether average response times are reducing or increasing, mainly for incidents of burglary and danger to personal safety, and has any comparison been made with other States about the response times, because often single incidents are highlighted, but I want to get a general picture?

Hon PETER FOSS: That will be taken on notice, but if we do not have data for timeliness, it is unlikely that we can tell whether response times are increasing or decreasing.

Hon NORM KELLY: I am sure that when the police determine the number of patrols they should have, they will need to have some indication of response times, so some data must be available in that area.

Mr BRENNAN: Timeliness is certainly an issue, and through our investigative practices review we are establishing a district crime desk in each of our districts, and that will certainly address the issue that you raised. However, rather than timeliness of response, what is often important is the quality and adequacy of the response, because in the 1990s

and late 1980s the police had a tendency to rush to the scene in a fast car, respond to a complaint by just taking the details from the complainant, and rush away to somewhere else.

Our research data indicates that the people do not want that sort of response. When we attend at their places they want us to spend some time with them. They want us to respond in a fashion that is appropriate to the nature of the call. If somebody is in a life threatening emergency we endeavour to attend as fast as humanly possible, to the extent of leaving something half done that may be important but not urgent and attending to the life threatening emergency. Having said that, even when a matter is important but not urgent the complainant wants the police there. They want to feel as though they are being given a service that is appropriate and adequate to the circumstances instead of people rushing here and there. We tap into police services in the United Kingdom, Canada and various other places across the western world and the tendency is to provide a quality and adequacy of service rather than to attend in a split second, taking particulars then leaving people suspended in midair with an inadequate response. Our intention is that the investigative crime desk and crime cars will be one stop shops. They will take statements from the complainant, not simply an offence report. They will take an incident report, offence report, and a statement from the complainant. If there are neighbours to be interviewed they will do that, and if there is evidence to be gathered there will be a scenes of crime officer in the crime car who will gather evidence that is appropriate to that offence at the time. If the offender is apparent, rather than put it off and delay it and give it to another inquiry team later, they will have the wherewithal to deal with that on the spot. That will be managed and resourced at a district level. In relation to reducing or increasing timeliness we can give you some indicators, if the member still requires that to be provided on notice. The issue is adequacy of service.

Mr PORTER: The capital investment statements indicate that considerable funds have been set aside for our emergency service call taking dispatch. The first leg of that is to establish the police CADCOM project. One of the outcomes of that project is to enable online, ready indicators of trends and specifics on reporting and responding time. The sophistication of the data that is available now is not such that we can provide timeliness indicators. By the completion of the CADCOM project, particularly as its first kick off is in the metropolitan area where the greatest number of incidents occur, we will be able to provide more sophisticated data.

Hon NORM KELLY: When will that be in place?

Mr PORTER: It is an extensive project and the issue is more complex than just timeliness of response. It should be operational by February 2001. It will incorporate digital trunking radio network services, a call taking dispatch system, automated vehicle location systems and mobile portable data voice and data terminals.

Hon NORM KELLY: I would like the data that is available as a question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank Mr Porter and Mr Brennan for their explanation of issues related to development of that performance measure. I am aware from some of the other work of the committee in which we have approached the Police Service that it is difficult to obtain and collate statistics on crime. I am sure that the member would not want it to appear to be a straightforward question, when it is a very difficult one. Would the member like to state his question again, so that the officers are clear about what to provide in the answer?

[3.50 pm]

Hon NORM KELLY: I would like the Minister to table the data that are available to police, regarding response times - to determine the level of patrols, etc responding to incidents of crime.

The CHAIRMAN: Can that question be taken on notice?

Hon PETER FOSS: The general intent is understood. The member wants to know what is available. He does not want officers to spend 15 man days giving an example -

Hon NORM KELLY: I seek the information that is available to the police to enable them to make their decision.

Hon PETER FOSS: And a qualification relating to how useful it is.

Hon NORM KELLY: With CADCOM coming on line, surely you would need baseline data.

The CHAIRMAN: That question will be placed on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: It is a matter of providing what we can, within a reasonable amount of inquiry.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand that on a number of occasions the Supreme Court has criticised the police for failing to video record the entirety of a suspect's interview. What resources are devoted to ensuring that police are competent and confident in the use of video recording facilities?

Mr BRENNAN: The Director of Public Prosecutions and District and Supreme Court judges have been critical, to

some extent, of the "warm up" period prior to turning on a video recorder. The initial standard procedure was to make the interviewees as comfortable as possible; to give them basic familiarity with the topic. We then ask interviewees if they wish to participate in a video recorded interview; and with their agreement, the interview commences.

Judges were of the view that some of the material and the matters raised in the preamble were not being given in evidence. They held the view and commented on a number of occasions that when a suspect or a person of interest was being interviewed, the interview should commence in the formal sense without a "warm up". However, if someone is caught climbing out of a window of a burgled house, the detective grabs the person, but the officer does not have the video rolling at the time. When we return to the office or a place where there is a video recording facility, we have been asked - as soon as the person agrees to participate - to ensure that the process is videoed. That is being done.

A commissioner's order has been issued, directing that there will be no "warm up" approach to video recording. In other words, officers should enter straight to the VCR, put the interview on tape, and the product in its entirety will be presented to the court. That is being dealt with at detective training level, at crime support, and throughout police stations which have video recording facilities. That instruction is being complied with. Does that answer the question?

The CHAIRMAN: That is an excellent answer because it tells me the nature of the problem. At first glance it would appear that the problem has been one of people running out of tape or accidentally hitting the off button; however, apparently that has not been the problem. You have told me that it is something different and that the commissioner's order has been promulgated to address it.

Mr BRENNAN: There has been an instance in which the off button was pressed, I suppose, in error. We understood that to be a genuine error and not one involving a deliberate purposeful action.

Hon PETER FOSS: This House quite radically extended the requirement for video recording of interviews. The move was very positive. The police at first were somewhat reluctant to adopt it, but having seen the results, they have been quite enthusiastic. It is hard for people to allege that they have not burgled or anything else. As one would expect, people are looking at ways around those tapes, because a taped interview is very hard to defeat. They are looking at opportunities when an interview is not on tape to say that something else happened. One would expect that whenever defence counsel are involved. The police quite properly have responded by saying they will put everything on tape. I suspect that defence counsel must look for some other opportunities of saying that things occurred off the record. That has proved to be a very positive move by the police and by this House's encouraging the police to do it.

Hon MURIEL PATTERSON: Has the Police Service achieved any significant outcomes from recent large scale operations into key policing areas, such as burglary and illicit drug law enforcement? We have read in the newspaper recently that you have confiscated several large caches. What advantage has this been to you in your overall drug strategy?

Mr BRENNAN: We have had an operation known as Operation Barrow being conducted in the past three months. Operation Barrow has been directed towards trying to crack down on burglary, drugs, robbery and those sorts of crimes. I have some statistics which may be of interest to the member, if I may be permitted to refer to them very rapidly. Specialist groups brought into this operation were the tactical response group, mounted section, air wing, technical group for radio and video, computer support, independent patrol group, water police, intelligence groups, prosecuting branch for legal advice and the legality of the operations, and our traffic operations group. The number of offenders dealt with is in excess of 757. People have been processed for a variety of charges since the operation commenced on 27 April 1998. It is currently in its sixth week of operation. The police resources committed at one stage to Operation Port 98 had some effect on Operation Barrow during the first two weeks of operation. However, the campaign has been conducted fairly vigorously since. Preliminary indicators suggest a 10 to 15 per cent reduction in the reported incidence of targeted crimes during May 1998. Those figures will be not be confirmed for a couple of days but there have been significant achievements. Quite a deal of money has been expended on the operation collectively from all areas of this service. It is somewhere in the vicinity of \$800 000, I understand. The director of finance could probably give me an indication.

[4.00 pm]

Mr McDONALD: Operation Barrow is currently estimated to cost approximately \$500 000. We are reviewing our cost at present and it will be confirmed as the financial year draws to an end.

Mr BRENNAN: It states that we base our expenditure at approximately \$82 000 per week commencing on 3 May. This operation is due to wind down. As we come to the end of one financial period, we wind down and then reshape

that operation under some other name as we move into our next phase. Every district has committed between 40 and 60 officers to the objectives of Operation Barrow. That is directing our intelligence into the areas of known criminals, targeting criminals, and concentrating on those four areas to which I made reference earlier - robberies, burglaries, assaults, and car thefts. It has been a significant operation. With regard to drug trafficking and drug abuse, we conducted Operation Final Dose which received a lot of publicity. It took quite an amount of our resources. The figures are astounding. The total number of adult juvenile and all style of offenders - people who have been processed, summonsed, arrested etc for Operation Final Dose - for this year was 1 425. There were huge amounts of various types of drugs ranging from marijuana, amphetamines, heroin and cocaine.

The CHAIRMAN: What is that document you are quoting from?

Mr BRENNAN: This is our final statistics report that has been produced from Operation Final Dose. It is provided to the police management team who were controlling and coordinating that operation.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Does the WA Police Service collect statistics or data, or has it done any research which would indicate the number of people that are arrested for offences who have previously been arrested and released on bail at the time of arrest for the second offence?

Mr BRENNAN: That is an interesting point because it is a question that the commissioner raised at our command table not long ago. Our OIC prosecutor, Superintendent Green, is currently collecting that sort of data and we would be in a position to provide the member with at least preliminary information if we were able to take that question on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: I have an interest in the very same question. The other question I asked is who has been giving them bail, because that could be a very interesting question to answer. The Government has been doing a review of the Bail Act for some time and recommendations have been brought forward. The most important ones will be how will they get bail, who will give them bail, and why are they being given bail. I have a great interest in that same question.

The CHAIRMAN: It is unanimous that we would like that question taken on notice.

Hon PETER FOSS: A very good question.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What is the current number of staff at the child abuse centre? The report tabled in this place the other week indicated that interviewing officers would be leaving the unit in April 1998. Is that the case? What is the level of experience of the interviewing officers in the unit?

Mr ATHERTON: The authorised staff level for the unit is 20. A detective senior sergeant who until recently was assisting the Shoalwater task force resumed duty on 27 May. The unit comprises three detective sergeants, seven investigators, one of whom is on maternity leave, six interviewing officers, a crime analyst - as I explained earlier that position is in the process of being filled - and two typist/receptionists.

All investigative staff with the unit have a minimum of 13 years police experience including six years criminal investigation. All detective staff have completed at least two, four-week detective training courses of which child abuse and sexual assault matters were components. They all had extensive experience in investigation of criminal offences, including child sexual abuse, prior to attending the unit. Five of the six interviewing officers successfully completed a four-day sexual assault investigators' course. One officer in the unit has a bachelor of arts in psychology and five officers participated in last year's Australasian conference on child sexual assault investigations held in Perth.

My understanding is that the investigators are rotated piecemeal after 12 months with the unit. I am not aware that all investigators will be transferred out of the unit in April 1998. I would be very surprised if that were the case.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Will you confirm on notice whether that prediction in the report is true? What length of time has each officer, particularly the interviewing officers, spent in their current position or in similar positions?

The CHAIRMAN: Those answers will be provided on notice.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: The keep to the left rule has been in operation for some time. Do you have any evidence of the extent of the problem, particularly crashes and more important, road rage? Is there any intention to enforce it in greater measure in future?

Dr BRENNAN: I am not clear whether we are keeping statistics on the effectiveness of the keep to the left rule. I would be surprised if some information were not available that would satisfy the member's question. Generally, our anecdotal advice is that the keep to the left rule is working quite well. Instances have been reported of people still holding on to the right-hand lane and the so-called road rage being evidenced by people flashing lights and impatiently trying to pass those vehicles. Advice from the assistant commissioner traffic and operations support is

that anecdotal evidence suggests that behaviour on our freeways and major highways has improved. Off the main arteries in the hamlets and villages, I am not certain. Our advice anecdotally is that yes, it is better than before.

[4.10 pm]

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: Obviously an eye is being kept on that matter.

Mr BRENNAN: Yes.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: People are aware that when they listen to certain radio stations, they can find out where the Multanova speed cameras will be located. Has that had any impact on the effectiveness of the Multanovas and does it affect the amount of income that is being generated?

Mr BRENNAN: This is an interesting question. First of all, warning people about where the speed cameras are situated received quite a bit of criticism, internally and externally, when it first happened. We find it is calming traffic and people are tending to slow down. If they watch the television or listen to the radio station that makes those announcements, they cannot keep all of the locations in their mind. It has not made a great deal of difference to the incidence of people going through the Multanovas at speed.

The revenue is not of concern to us. We do take out figures on who is going through the speed cameras, the incidence of that, and by how much drivers are exceeding the speed limit, and then compare figures month by month and then one month this year with the same month in previous years to see whether we are having an effect on slowing traffic. The AC operations and traffic support has advised that the trend is that traffic is slowing down. The booze bus figures show that the number of people who drive with an excessive amount of alcohol in their bloodstream is reducing slightly. We believe these programs are having an effect. It is water on a stone; we must continue to do things that we believe will reduce the road toll and the horrific crash trauma that our hospitals and community must deal with.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: This question relates to the operating revenues associated with traffic management and road safety shown on page 916. Those revenues are expected to be less than 50 per cent of what they were during 1997-98. No reason is given for that variation. I seek an explanation for that.

Mr McDONALD: The main reason for the variation is that we have received money from the Office of Road Safety for certain traffic items - breathalysers and so forth. We have had no indication that we will receive funding for next year. At the time the estimates were prepared, they were based on known information.

The CHAIRMAN: We have more than exhausted the list of members who indicated they had questions. I hope we can fit in the last couple of questions very quickly. Hon Tom Stephens, Hon Nick Griffiths and Hon Giz Watson have indicated they wish to ask questions. I ask that they keep those questions brief or, if that is not possible, that the questions be placed on notice. Likewise, I ask that the answers be as short as possible.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I refer to the relationship between the professional standards portfolio and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations. In that context are complaints against police, investigated by police, taking longer to complete; in particular, in 1996-97, of finalised matters, did 42 per cent take more than the allotted six weeks? As at 28 May 1998, 46 per cent have been investigated within six weeks; that is, the number not being dealt with within the allotted six weeks has increased to 54 per cent. If those figures are inaccurate, where are they inaccurate and what are the reasons for that? Has there been a diminution of resources or an increase in complaints?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will take the questions on notice.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I am happy to place my questions on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: Because the Minister is not in a position to know the extent of the questions, I ask that they be responded to within the three days if possible. Officers should liaise with the committee if there is a problem and further time is required to answer the questions.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Public perception of lack of safety on public transport after dark is greater in Western Australia than in other States. Is that due to reports of more significant crimes of violence on public transport than in other States, or has it occurred for some other reason?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is a matter of opinion. I suspect it is because we have fewer people travelling on public transport, therefore the percentage is high. I would like to see figures indicating the perception of people in other States who travel on public transport as opposed to those who do not. It could be a matter of the number of people travelling by private transport rather than public transport. This appears to be based on opinion; I do not think there is hard evidence on why such perceptions develop.

Hon GIZ WATSON: What type of survey was conducted to establish that Western Australians are more likely to report crimes? What statistics demonstrate that Western Australia has a far higher rate of robbery offences and in some instances as much as 1.5 times the rate of other States? Might this not be an indication of high incidence, fear of further incidence if people are left to their own devices or fear of a greater level of violence involved in the crime? Could those factors lead people to worry more rather than any belief in the validity of the Police Service?

Hon PETER FOSS: People report crime if they think something will be done about it, therefore a higher incidence of crime reporting is a measure of confidence that the police will do something. People stop reporting crime if they think nothing will happen.

Hon GIZ WATSON: On what is that statement based?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is hard to answer, but we will investigate it.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Page 909 refers to continuing the development of a problem solving approach to local policing in response to community needs, supported by the continued devolution of functions. What is meant by "devolution of functions" and to what does it refer?

Hon PETER FOSS: The most detailed account of that is contained in the literature from Operation Delta. A large packet of information can be provided to the member and any other member who wishes to have a copy.

The CHAIRMAN: Those questions are on notice.

Committee adjourned at 4.20 pm
