

# VERIFIED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2017–18

Melbourne — 1 June 2017

#### Members

Mr Danny Pearson — Chair

Mr David Morris — Deputy Chair

Mr Steve Dimopoulos

Ms Fiona Patten

Ms Sue Pennicuik

Ms Harriet Shing

Mr Tim Smith

Ms Louise Staley

Ms Vicki Ward

#### Witnesses

Ms Lisa Neville, Minister for Police,

Mr Greg Wilson, Secretary,

Mr Shaun Condron, Deputy Secretary, Finance, Infrastructure and Governance, and

Mr Karl Kent, Deputy Secretary, Corporate and Regulatory Services, Department of Justice and Regulation;  
and

Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton, Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR** — Before I commence, today is a very important day. It is the 50th anniversary of the release of the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, but more importantly this is the first time in the history of Victoria, and I think in the history of the commonwealth, that women outnumber men on a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I think that is something that should be acknowledged and celebrated.

I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2017–18 Budget Estimates. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to welcome the Minister for Police, the Honourable Lisa Neville, MP; Mr Greg Wilson, Secretary; Mr Shaun Condron, Deputy Secretary, Finance, Infrastructure and Governance; and Mr Karl Kent, Deputy Secretary, Corporate and Regulatory Services, Department of Justice and Regulation; and Mr Graham Ashton, Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police. Witnesses in the gallery are Ms Camille Kingston, Acting Executive Director, Police and Crime Prevention, Department of Justice and Regulation; and Ms Julie Walsh, Director, Strategic Investment, Reporting and Audit, Victoria Police.

All evidence is taken by the committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege.

Witnesses will not be sworn but are requested to answer all questions succinctly, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard, and you will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

All written communication to witnesses must be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way and cannot photograph, audiorecord or videorecord any part of these proceedings.

Members of the media must remain focused only on the persons speaking. Any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I invite the witness to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the committee.

### **Visual presentation.**

**Ms NEVILLE** — It is good to be here this afternoon at PAEC. I just want to take you briefly through some of the key initiatives that are in this budget and where Victoria Police is sitting in terms of its output funding and the significant investment in resources, equipment and police numbers.

Over the last three budgets we have seen \$2.8 billion in new initiative funding for Victoria Police. This is targeted at more police resources, new police technology and new police equipment and facilities. You will see that the average increase in the police budget in the previous four years from 2011–12 was 5.2 per cent and over the last three years the average is 7.4 per cent. Victoria Police output funding is growing by 16.4 per cent over the forward estimates period.

This illustrates one of the things that the government has been attempting to do, which is to move away from what you see up there — a boom and bust approach to police numbers and police resourcing. What this does not show you is that back in 2000 there was an investment of 1800 police and again we then have another investment, small amounts in 07–08, 08–09 and then a major investment in 10–11 — the last budget of the Brumby government — which saw 1700 police plus a freeing up of 260 police through additional non-frontline staff to free them up from administrative duties.

What you will see is that you have these massive gaps where you have no police funded, and what we are attempting to do — you see it in 17–18, and you will see in the next graph when we get to it how we are starting to try to stabilise that so you do not have a situation where you have a number of years where no new police are basically hitting the streets, aside from attrition. During those years of 11–12 through to 14–15 they were just at

attrition, a little bit below attrition rates — attrition was running at 3.04 per cent at the time and police were recruiting at 3 per cent for attrition. We now have a situation where we have got the lowest ever attrition rate at 2.4 per cent I think it is, and we are recruiting still at 3 per cent. So what you will see going forward is not just the new numbers but also recruiting over and above attrition at this point in time.

The grey line running through the middle of the next graph shows you the current and anticipated attrition rate, so it is about what the average is for Victoria Police. In the out years from 17–18 you will start to see we are recruiting well above the attrition rate and we have got a consistent approach to that. I will talk in a moment about how the allocation model works and the agreement that we have reached with Victoria Police and the TPA — the Police Association Victoria — which is that we are committed to the delivery of the 2729 police out of the allocation model to the 20–21 year, but in the meantime we are also committed to further refinement of that model. That will then determine beyond 20–21 what that number would look like. We are committed to that as a model and recruiting over and above attrition so that you continue to have a reasonable level of attrition that not just meets population but other things which I will go to in a moment.

Just to give you a little bit of a sense of what the actual funded intakes out of the 2729 look like, this year we are looking at 1000 people going through the academy. In 17–18 there will be 825 new officers inducted, 709 in 18–19, 794 in 19–20 and 401 in 20–21, and as I said that is on top of the attrition, which is about 420 to 450, and obviously that grows as the police numbers grow over that period.

To give you a bit of a summary over the last three budgets, so the initiatives that have been funded and how they have been building on each other, in our first budget there was \$226 million, of which one of the key parts was the police custody officers. So of those custody officers, we now have 306 of those out. We will have the remaining completed earlier than we had committed to, by December of this year. We have also announced the supervisory positions, which are in the process of being recruited. Those police custody officers have freed up at least, at the moment, 55 000 shifts of police officers, and 80 per cent of police time that was previously spent in managing prisoners in police cells has now been also freed up. So that is a significant boost to getting frontline police out on the force.

In addition to that, in that budget we also funded the regional police digital radio with additional money that has now been added to that program. We also funded, which came into the 16–17 budget, a \$63 million investment in counterterrorism capability, which is both around specialist staff as well as new capabilities and equipment. Most of those staff are now in place, and the remainder are being recruited at the moment.

The 16–17 budget was really a public safety package, so it was our first really significant freeing up of police from custody officer roles to frontline police — the 300 frontline police and 106 specialist police. They are the anti-gangs and they are the public order police. We have recently made some announcements about those frontline police and where they are going. We have got the gang task force about to be announced and on the ground, and the public order task force as well.

We have added additional forensic capacity, and what this has seen is a major change in the ability of the forensic services to turn around particularly drug testing. What took days and weeks is now taking a couple of days — not large amounts of time. So it has been a significant improvement in terms of investigations for police. Police station involvement and crime prevention grants are also a significant part of that 16–17 budget.

Then we come to the end of last year, and through a process of work with Victoria Police, the police association and really talking to frontline police, it was clear that there were a number of really critical things that we needed to address. One was police numbers, and I will come to that in a moment, but it needed to be more than that. To be able to tackle what had been a six-year trend in crime, and I am sure we will talk about crime rates today, but that six-year trend, which in the last quarter and going forward is starting to turn around, what we needed to make sure was not only that we had the right number of police but that we also had the right equipment, the right tools for police but also the right legislation so that we had a comprehensive strategy to reduce crime and reduce harm.

That is the central focus of the community safety statement. It is based on a model from New Zealand and other places in the world. In fact the AFP uses a similar sort of model where you have a commitment between government and police about what the key priorities are, what government is going to invest and what the police are going to deliver for that investment, with the focus being on improved community safety and reduction in harm in our community.

That is underpinned by \$2 billion and significant numbers of initiatives. At the centre of that is an agreement that was reached between Victoria Police, TPA and government — a signed agreement — to establish and accept a new staff allocation model. That does two things. It firstly helps us to work out how many police you are going to need going forward, as well as where and how you then distribute those police. So it was used, for example, in the 300. So that allocation model has been developed with the use of experts. It is more than just population growth and it is more than just crime rates. Yes, they are factored in. It also factors in 25 different offence types, so family violence and the amount of time spent on family violence. It factors in things like traffic incidents. It factors in, in regional communities, travel time. All of those are factored in to understand where the demand pressures are now and into the future.

So again you are planning for the future and not playing catch-up all the time. That was used to determine the 2729. It was then also used to determine how the 300 — that is, the additional 300 — were best allocated, so looking at where the demand pressures are. It would not be surprising to have noticed that a lot of that demand pressure was in those growth corridors that had high crime rates, population growth, bigger demand, family violence, road drug use, and all of that was factored into determining that 300 and working in partnership with the police association in the distribution and the prioritisation of those as well. As I said, that was signed by three parties, and the government remains committed to using that allocation model beyond the current funding period.

Just to give you a feel for the other things that are contained in the package beyond frontline police, there are the additional 100 PSOs, which will be to establish mobile teams, and we have got legislation in the Parliament at the moment to enable a more flexible approach across the public transport network, and a commitment to a 24-hour police assistance line and online reporting. We are the only state that does not have one of those, so it will play a significant role in making sure that those sorts of non-urgent calls from community members are dealt with and people get the information and support they need. We are replacing 10 police stations. I think all up over the three budgets it is about 43 police stations that we are upgrading or rebuilding, including some 10 residences as well.

The numberplate recognition technology across all our highway patrols: I think there are six at the moment in Victoria. This is a really significant investment in getting off the road people who are unlicensed, have an interlock or are unregistered. Basically they are the drivers that we know are the biggest contributors to our road toll. That will commence rollout very shortly, and the procurement for that is going on now.

Safety networks: this is about how we better engage, particularly police engaging communities, so there will be 12 community safety networks. We have got new air wing helicopters and fixed wing. We have got improved mental health support for our police officers, a dedicated training facility for our SOGs team, who do an incredible job, and we saw it overnight. We have got also resources for new police youth resource workers and Aboriginal community liaison officers as well.

Then the other part of the package, as I said, is things like the laws banning cash for scrap; new offences around firearms; the firearms prohibition orders for making sure that those who should not have guns do not have them and are prohibited from doing that; and giving police additional powers. There are additional changes around the quantity of ice, for example, in terms of what is considered commercial trafficking; banning synthetic drugs; new powers for police around sex offenders; new public order laws; and youth control orders. That again is in the Parliament at the moment.

This is about tackling some of the challenges we have in relation to youth offending. We know that we have seen a significant reduction in the percentage of offenders who are young people, but the ones that are offending are offending at a greater level of harm. The youth control order is about making sure young people — whether they are locked up or there is intensive, supervised bail, and that is something police have really wanted for a while, or there are these youth control orders that require participation in education, participation of parents et cetera.

As I said, PSOs — new powers for those. We have done the carjacking and home invasions. I think one of the really important ones is around DNA testing. At the moment Victoria is a bit of an outlier in relation to DNA testing. Although we probably led the way when it was first introduced, we are now out of step with the other states. So this will enable — like we do with fingerprinting — people who are charged with indictable offences to have their DNA taken at the time. It is very useful in solving high-volume crime, particularly, and a lot of

past crimes — and sexual offence crimes is one of those — and like fingerprints, the same rules will apply if somebody is found not guilty of a crime.

As I said, the community safety package is the first that we have done in Victoria. It has been signed up by the Victorian government and Victoria Police for us to do our part and for Victoria Police to do their part. I think it contains perhaps the most comprehensive set of laws and actions and investments that we have seen to really make sure that not just now we are reducing crime and harm, but that we are in the best position we can be into the future to keep that downward pressure on community harm.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, I refer to your presentation and the community safety statement and your comments in the course of that presentation about additional resourcing for the special operations group. Obviously overnight there was an incident at Melbourne Airport. I was just wondering whether you might be able to advise the committee in a little bit more detail about that particular event.

**Ms NEVILLE** — A lot of the operational matters I will ask the chief commissioner to take people through. Firstly, I would like to say one of the significant investments we have made is the money into counterterrorism, so there is the \$63 million which is to build a specialist counterterrorism capability, and to have that link between our counterterrorism team; our SOG, our special operations group; our CIRT teams; our bomb squad — you know, everyone working together with the commonwealth agencies. Probably it would be considered that we would have some of the best arrangements in place and some of the best skilled and trained people, and we have got the specialist facility that we have committed to building as well.

What I am extremely disappointed in hearing today, Chair, is that without any briefing, without seeking any information on the incident that occurred overnight — an incident that caused a huge amount of trauma for people who were stuck on the plane in that situation — that also had from the minute it commenced and that police were alerted the full attention and activity of Victoria Police, it has come under criticism by someone who has not sought any operational information. That is a huge disappointment, and I am sure that the team that was out there at the airport within 20 minutes of the AFP calling them in — because it is a federal airport run by the AFP — that every single effort, every focus, was on saving lives. One would have to say that all the lives of the crew and the passengers on that flight were saved. To question the operational tactics, Chair, I think is appalling. In my view unless you have had a briefing and understood the decision-making of Victoria Police and the operational team on the ground, then I think that those staff need an apology.

As I understand it — I stood next to the chief commissioner today as he provided reassurance to the community about the incident, and it was not a counterterrorism incident, which is good — there was significant intelligence and information that needed to be sought to ensure the safety of everyone on that plane, and that is what they did. I would offer my 100 per cent confidence in those members who were there and in their decision-making, and I think they deserve an apology from the Leader of the Opposition. Now, I am not going to ask the chief commissioner to comment on that. I will ask him, however, to provide a little bit more detail to the committee on what was a significant incident that occurred overnight.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In relation to that question, as you know, it has been in the media this morning that there was an incident last night at Melbourne Airport. Initially we responded to that as a counterterrorism incident, because we had a report of someone making a threat to blow up the plane. They attempted to enter the cockpit of the plane carrying some sort of object. The plane returned to Melbourne Airport and counterterrorism protocols kicked in. As the minister pointed out, the Australian Federal Police have that primacy at the airport, and we were contacted very quickly on it. We had our specialist resources there — both the critical incident response team and the special operations group were there to deal with the matter.

The matter was dealt with. I was up through the night dealing with the matter as well. From the way it played out it was really quite a textbook counterterrorism execution of the operation. I am not seeing anything particularly problematic from our point of view around the issues. There was certainly concern raised around the time between the plane landing and passengers getting off the flight. That is very understandable to have those sorts of concerns. If you are sitting on a plane in that scenario, you are going to be really concerned and you are going to be really frightened and upset and obviously fearing for your own safety, so I absolutely get that. All of the decisions that are taken by the forward command in that situation are really around providing the safest result for passengers. For us, we had to certainly turn the unknowns into more knowns and to try to make sure that the intel we had we could get as quickly as we could to make that assessment about an armed threat to the passengers. So it was really always about what was the safest option for the passengers.

We had our press conference this morning where we dealt with this at some length. That question came up, and certainly I gave extensive answers at that time to the sort of things that go through the mind of the forward commander in assessing and making those decisions. As lengthy as that was, I would much rather be doing that scenario, where we did things right and everyone got off the plane safely. If it had been a genuine terrorist event, things had gone badly, we had a mass casualty incident, that would have been a different conversation with the community.

If we had rushed in without doing those necessary safety assessments for the passengers, it would have been a case of, 'Why didn't you take into account the possibility of remote detonation? You were dealing with electronic devices, don't you know about that? Did you check the passenger manifest? Did you check the counterterrorism intelligence for the passengers? Did you check all that?'. They would all have been the questions that would have been legitimately asked of us if there had been a mass casualty incident there. So while this was an event that was extremely trying, and for some I have no doubt traumatic, last night, it was certainly our intention to get people off as quickly as we could, as safely as we could, and I believe that we did that effectively last night.

**Mr MORRIS** — On the same subject, can I ask: Mr Ashton, how long did it take the special operations group to get to Melbourne Airport?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — The arrival was about 20 minutes.

**Mr MORRIS** — And what time did they actually arrive?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I have not got that chronology in front of me here about last night's incident. I have not got that in front of me now, but I can have a full chronology of the incident, and I am happy to provide that to you.

**Mr MORRIS** — I am just trying to establish: if they got there in 20 minutes, why did it take them an hour or longer to actually get into action?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I have explained some of that already, but there is quite a detailed explanation to that, and it goes into how you really assess the risk factors that you are dealing with at the time.

**Mr MORRIS** — I am happy to hear it.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — For us, you are arriving at the scene and it is not just a case of waiting for the specialist SOG or the CIRT to arrive — forward command is making that decision as that is happening. So you are very much assessing, on the ground: what are the risks we are looking at and what is the information we are dealing with? If we are dealing with someone that has tried to get into a cockpit and has threatened to blow up the plane, has some sort of electronic-looking device, you then have to go through a whole series of assessments and checks.

In relation to aircraft aviation security, we know we have got a highly volatile vessel that we have got passengers on. We know if there are further alleged terrorists on the flight, that creates a risk that is then very unknown if there is an immediate attempt made to remove the passengers. You do not know if there could be someone else looking to detonate a device, and the fact that there was discussion about there being some sort of electronic device blows that whole thing into a realistic scenario at that time. Yes, with 20-20 — in hindsight — we know that there was not an explosive device on the plane; they did not know that at that time.

So you are dealing with a whole range of scenarios there around how you isolate that. What is immediately known about the offender and the realism of such a threat? Who is he? What do we immediately know about his background? That all really has to be ascertained. We need to know thoroughly what was said and what was said to and by the alleged offender on the flight. That has also got to be assessed. We have also then got to make sure that we have, through the counterterrorism arrangements, and this is done pretty quickly — information about: who is on the flight? Do we have any links that might suggest this has any genuine aspects of terrorism in it? And what we know about either the individual or everyone on that flight as well. We really are dealing with a situation where your forward commander is making decisions at that time with a lot of unknowns, and it is an environment where the wrong decision — if it had been a real situation, it could have been a serious mass casualty incident.

So these are the sort of factors you are trying to deal with at the time when you are making that decision about getting people off the plane. It is always balancing that up. You want people off that plane as soon as possible, but you also want them off that plane as safely as possible. It is always a question of getting that balancing act right.

**Mr MORRIS** — If I understood you correctly, one of the considerations was whether there was another device on the plane. Is that correct?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes.

**Mr MORRIS** — What brought you to conclude that there may be another device on the plane?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — At the time there was a lot of information coming in from the plane and also from the cockpit, and one of those pieces of information was suggesting to us there could have been the threat of more than one device. It took a bit of time to isolate that information.

**Mr MORRIS** — Okay. I am just trying to put together the time line. You said you do not have with you the time that SOG were on the grounds at Melbourne Airport. But as I understand, the plane departed at 11.11 p.m. and returned to the airport at 11.47 p.m. Presumably SOG would have been alerted to a potential hijack or terrorism event around about 11.30, which means that if they had deployed immediately, they would have been pretty close to the airport at 11.47. Is there any way of finding out what time they actually did arrive?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, I know exactly what time they arrived, but I do not have that chronology. I did not bring it. I was not expecting, I guess, to be questioned on this this afternoon. I thought we were dealing with PAEC matters, so I did not bring the chronology with me, but I have got a full chronology of the times. And I should point out these are the subject of a full review and debrief that we go through on every one of these operations, and those time lines are gone right through, and we always look at where we can improve on them. They involve not only us but all the other stakeholders that deal with these matters as well, including the commonwealth.

**Mr MORRIS** — I appreciate that, but obviously 300 people — a big and obviously very current event. So is it possible to get advice as to when SOG arrived?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Absolutely, and if you want a briefing on the entire matter, I am more than happy to give you a briefing on the entire thing.

**Ms NEVILLE** — And I am pretty sure that if the opposition leader had asked this morning for a confidential briefing, absolutely it would have been provided. There are operational matters that are associated with this as well.

**Mr T. SMITH** — I am sorry, Minister, but it is completely unbelievable. This is an international incident. You and the chief are fronting a parliamentary committee this afternoon and you cannot provide us with the chronology.

**Ms SHING** — A point of order.

**Mr T. SMITH** — I mean, I just find that unbelievable.

**The CHAIR** — Point of order, Ms Shing.

**Ms SHING** — In the first instance the minister and the commissioner have both indicated that this is the subject of a process including a debrief, given the currency of the situation that Mr Morris has referred to. In addition to that, the commissioner has also indicated that he thought that he was coming here to talk about the budget and not about the detail of a chronology for an operational matter that is currently the subject of that debrief. So on that basis, and given that he has offered to provide that information and the debrief that should have been asked for earlier, perhaps we can in fact just take that answer as given and move on —

**Ms STALEY** — So you are just going straight to the gag? Straight to the gag — that is where you are going with this? As soon as we ask questions —

**Ms WARD** — No, it is not actually about going straight to the gag; it is about you guys actually asking questions that can be answered.

**The CHAIR** — Order, Ms Ward.

**Ms SHING** — I had not finished my point of order, sorry. Given that the information has been indicated as being able to be provided as part of a briefing and that in fact this has been the subject of a number of questions now, I would suggest that in fact it is a better use of this committee's time to take the fact that that has been offered and is available for you to accept, as it may have been accepted by the opposition leader had it been asked for this morning, and to move on in relation to the issues that are the subject of this particular estimates hearing.

**Mr MORRIS** — On the point of order, Chair, two points: firstly, the first Dixer of the afternoon was from a government member — yourself — on this very incident, and the second point is the opposition does not take advice from Ms Shing on what questions we might ask.

**Ms SHING** — Nor from the chief commissioner, it would seem, either — taking advice in relation to operational matters.

**Mr MORRIS** — No, frankly. No.

**The CHAIR** — Order! Is there a question from the opposition?

**Mr MORRIS** — Are you going to rule on the point of order?

**The CHAIR** — There is no point of order.

**Mr MORRIS** — Thank you, Chair. The key thing here is we had 300 people on the ground effectively for 90 minutes. There may have been a bomb on the plane. The plane, while it was not pulled up to the airbridge as I understand it, was not that far away from the terminal and it was surrounded by police. If there was a risk of a bomb going off straightaway, why would you not try and get the people off the plane straightaway? I mean we have passengers who were on the plane saying, and I am quoting:

If there was a bomb on that plane we should have been communicated (to) ... instead, we sat there for another hour and a half.

...

There was no communication.

They literally left us waiting and wondering.

I take the point that it has all turned out okay, but that is because there was not a device there to start with. That is why it has turned out okay.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Again that is very speculative, if I may respectfully say, because if there had been a device on board, if we had off-loaded people immediately without properly going through the processes that I just talked about, we could have had a very serious mass casualty incident on our hands.

**Mr MORRIS** — And if you had not off-loaded it and the bomb had gone off, we would have had an equally serious incident with 300 people dead.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Exactly. And in the cold light of day people can suck their teeth about, 'You should have done this. You should have done that'. But at the end of the day these are the decisions that forward commanders have to make. They are always weighing up. You are damned if you do and you are damned if you do not in these situations, and you have always got to make that judgement call when you have got that many lives in your hands. They are there playing for sheep stations and the lives of people are in their hands. They are making those judgement calls at the time, and I am very confident that they went through a very professional process in doing that.

We are doing the reviews of that. If there are areas to improve, we will improve them, but from what I am seeing the police side of this went well. That meant that people were on that plane for periods of time that they were not happy with, and that is part of this process. You want to minimise the time they are on there. I have

every sympathy for what they went through last night, but the entire object of what they went through, our actions, were really designed absolutely to keep them as safe as possible.

**Mr MORRIS** — We have had a series of eyewitness accounts saying that the offender was secured. We have had that quote I just read to you, ‘no communication’. What was happening — and we may need to come back to this in the next session — in terms of communication? Were there communication problems between the aircraft and the operational end?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — One of the protocols is we have a communication set up with the pilot in the cockpit and the tower and then forward command, so that communication was taking place through that. The captain communicates with the passengers on the plane. The police officers do not immediately do that; that is normally done by the captain on the plane through the loudspeaker system on the aircraft.

**Mr MORRIS** — Through the loudspeaker system, yes. So was the communication intact at all times?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, from my understanding last night, from what I saw —

**The CHAIR** — Order! Ms Pennicuik until 1.55 p.m.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Thank you, Minister. Good afternoon, Secretary, deputy secretaries, commissioner and other staff, thank you for coming today. If I could change the subject and go to the community safety package that is listed in budget paper 3 pages 98–99 and also in your presentation. I ask first off about the four new Aboriginal community liaison officers. Firstly, I want to ask why four? It seems a very small number given the problem we have with too many Aboriginal people being incarcerated and engaging with the police and justice system. What is their type of engagement, and is it differentiated between adults, women, young people et cetera? And also where?

**Ms NEVILLE** — I will get the chief commissioner to give you a bit on how it works on the ground. We have got more than four at Victoria Police. This is adding to the current capacity —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Yes, I got that — additional.

**Ms NEVILLE** — and this was what Victoria Police had asked for. They had identified a particular need for an additional four. So it was not saying, ‘We do not need more or less’. That was the particular number that Victoria Police were seeking through this package. I have met a number of the Aboriginal resource workers from Victoria Police, and their role varies, I suppose, depending on the challenges that are faced in the communities in which they work. Most of them are very embedded and work very closely with the local Indigenous communities — it might be on youth crime, it could be on prevention issues or drug issues in the local community. They are very much part of the communities in which they are working and making a difference in terms of those communities as well. You might want to add to that.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In relation to this there are really two categories of employees we have here. We have our PALOs, which are our police officers. Often these police officers identify as being from the Aboriginal community. We also have our ACLOs, which are the Aboriginal community liaison officers, and these are members of community that we engage.

We are bringing the total number of ACLOs to 13 across the state. We have got in all more than 130 PALOs. But ACLOs are very highly sought after by the Indigenous community. Regularly the feedback is that they want more ACLOs employed, and we have been doing that as we have been going. I think we may have even engaged someone by now for, most recently, Echuca. That was something that we saw a really pressing need for, another ACLO up that way. They certainly are doing a good job in joining together a better understanding for policing Indigenous communities. There are a lot of crime prevention initiatives that they are part of as well, but they help to deepen the understanding of police for community and the history of community. It has paid a particular dividend in the development of the family violence learning package for Indigenous communities where they were heavily involved in informing that learning package for us. We probably would not have got as good a package without that ACLO input that we have currently got. It is a really good education package, so it is paying dividends for us at the moment.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — There seems to be a large number of the PALOs as opposed to the ACLOs. Are you looking to have more of ACLOs; is that your aim?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — It is not the full-time role of the PALOs — some of them spend a lot of time on it, but they also are doing other duties — whereas the ACLOs are specialist, full-time engagement — —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — You are saying ‘crime prevention’, but are they assisting with Aboriginal people who have been arrested for crimes, or is that more part of the justice system? How do they interact with the actual justice system, or is it more liaising with the police and communities and not much with the justice system?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — They do engage with justice at the various regional justice centres particularly. Yes, they do get heavily involved. Justice in those regional offices are pretty heavily involved in the various projects that are done by the ACLOs, absolutely.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Is there a different emphasis on women, adults and young people, for example, because there are obviously different needs for younger people from, say, for adults? Are there different programs or is it just a — I am just trying to get my head around how it might work differently with young people.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Perhaps Greg could — the Department of Justice and Regulation — —

**Mr WILSON** — We have an Aboriginal justice agreement, and then that sets up regional Aboriginal justice advisory committees. The ACLOs are very much connected into that. The priorities are developed or identified region by region, so whether it is women or it is ice issues or whatever — it is like a bottom-up approach where they help develop initiatives through that. I think we had 110 initiatives the year before last, and 58 were developed locally by those committees. ACLOs play an important part in that process.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I will go on to the 24-hour police assistance line. You mentioned, I think, that is for taking non-emergency calls; is that correct?

**Ms NEVILLE** — That is right.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I think I am going to get cut off by the Chair, so if there are any further details about that line and how it would work, if you could take that on notice.

**Ms WARD** — Minister, I want to bring you back to your presentation where you are talking about the community safety statement and you talk about a comprehensive strategy being developed by government and Victoria Police to fight crime and make Victoria safer. How have you come to this policy framework? What have been the underlying principles that you have used in getting to this point?

**Ms NEVILLE** — As I touched on very briefly in my presentation, it partly was a bit of a top-down approach — or a top-up approach, or both ways really — —

**Ms PATTEN** — Top up?

**Ms NEVILLE** — It was a top up, top down, sorry — both ways. It was clear to me when I became police minister that there were some significant challenges around youth offending, some issues around the continuing increase in the crime rate, some particular groups within that and some particular crimes that we were witnessing some changes in. There were things like youth round tables that I was part of with Victoria Police in order to start thinking about some of that, working with local policing, working with TPA, working with Victoria Police. It also was evident that there was a significant resource issue in terms of police numbers and that there were some new challenges that we were yet to be in the best position to fight, really.

Victoria Police, for example, if you look at family violence, have played a significant role in finally violence over a very long time, but in order to be able to manage the demand we also had a lot of Victoria Police officers having to come off the front line in a way, even though family violence is on the front line, to actually fill some of those specialist family violence roles. So how did we make sure that we had the right capacity for that to deal with and respond to family violence in local communities whilst making sure police were best placed to be able to continue to deal with those other crimes?

The other issues were in talking to victims and community members about what the impact of crime was, so what did we need to be doing in terms of both reducing harm and the impact but also how we better supported victims? That was part of the thinking and the frame — —

**Ms WARD** — Around 40 per cent of crime is connected to family violence; is that right?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Yes; that is what the royal commission looked at. I think if you go out to some communities, you will find the police will talk about it more in the vicinity of 60 per cent. There are some communities — —

**Ms WARD** — Depending on where you are.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Family violence is absolutely a really critical part of the police role.

**Ms WARD** — As opposed to a minor issue or a part thereof, it is actually quite a significant issue in managing crime.

**Ms NEVILLE** — I think family violence is a significant issue across our community.

**Ms WARD** — Full stop.

**Ms NEVILLE** — You see that in our crime statistics. You have watched it over time. The crime stat agency have done some specialist work around family violence in terms of understanding its impact on our system. That clearly shows that particularly at peak times — when you have got royal commissions, when you have got new interventions — you have massive increases in reporting, which is a good thing, but that puts a substantial workload on police. It is 40 to 60 per cent depending on where you are. Places like our multidisciplinary centres, where police are working now hand in hand with other family violence support agencies, risk assessment agencies et cetera, are making a really big difference to the quality of life of women and children who are subject to family violence, but it is still a massive workload for police, and rightfully — it is their work to do.

In factoring that in, in understanding the other pressures that we had around the community, around crime, the community safety statement was an attempt to go, ‘We can do one thing — we can put in more police — but that is not going to drive down crime and harm, necessarily, on its own’. We needed to make sure that the police were in the best position to tackle what are changing issues. Counterterrorism is one; family violence is another. Investments in technology, for example, are about making sure we have got a modern police force that is able to get the best intelligence — a new intelligence system; have the skills they need through specialist training and facilities; and have specialist family violence workers whilst having the police on the ground, the numbers on the ground, that you need to prevent and detect and disrupt crime.

So it is an attempt to try and pull together, not to see that there is one solution to this but to see in the police space and in the legal space it is not the only solution. There are other issues around education and community supports and the importance of jobs and TAFE et cetera, but with the powers of the police and the legal system what could we do to actually have the resources and detection but to also have the downward pressure on crime. So if you take cash for scrap metal, for example, that is a piece of legislation that, regardless of their numbers, will help police because you are able to stop that market, close down that market for illegal — —

**Ms WARD** — We are all a bit sick of copper being taken off our train lines and elsewhere.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Well, that is right. And in the UK it has had a huge success in that.

**Ms WARD** — That is good to know. So new legislation has been presented to the Parliament this year. What other policies and legislation have you got in the pipeline?

**Ms NEVILLE** — We have still a number of amendments around drug policy, particularly in relation to drug driving areas. We have done quite a bit of work in bringing that into line with alcohol testing, but there is further work to do in terms of some of the forensic analysis around drug testing. We know, for example, drug driving is now a factor in more deaths than alcohol is on our roads, so it is a significant contributor. There is still a fair bit of work to do there.

The DNA rules, which will hopefully be brought into Parliament very soon, I think will be a really significant improvement, particularly around high-volume crime. We have got some of the firearm legislation that is still to be introduced into Parliament. This is to tackle issues around drive-by shootings, shooting at buildings — and shooting at people obviously — which has been one significant issue, and firearm prohibition orders. This is a

new power that we will be providing to police to prohibit certain people — people who might be, for example, persons of interest under terrorism arrangements, might be people who have family violence intervention orders, for example — from having a gun licence and giving police the powers to ensure that is the case. Again, this has seen a significant reduction in shootings in New South Wales, in western Sydney, where they have significant numbers of shootings. So again, it is giving them some additional powers but also legislation we know that can drive down the crime rate and harm.

**Ms WARD** — How long ago did New South Wales bring that legislation in?

**Ms NEVILLE** — I think they have had it in for about three years now.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, a number of years.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Yes, about three years.

**Ms WARD** — And you have seen significant trends there because of it?

**Ms NEVILLE** — That is right.

**Ms WARD** — Interesting. Minister, there is a community safety trustee. What role are they going to play?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Because this is the first time Victoria has gone down this path of having almost an agreement between government and police — and the community in a sense, a bit of a compact with the community — about what we are going to do, what police are going to do and what our ambition and our priorities are for driving down harm, we want to make sure that the community have confidence in this process and that we are delivering what we said we would.

This is a role, so we have asked — and he has accepted, the former secretary of the police association — Ron Iddles to take on this role. It is a role to hold a government to account for our commitments in the community safety statement. It is not an operational role. It is to make sure that we are delivering the allocation model, that we are delivering the 2729 police in the timing that we have said, that we are engaging with the community in the development of the next community safety statement, and he will play a role in doing that.

**Ms WARD** — So how will you be held to account?

**Ms NEVILLE** — This will be a public report which will be done twice a year, and we will have our first one coming up in June, so he has commenced that work now. As I said, it is not an operational role. It is really about saying, 'Here's a significant investment of government, here's a significant commitment government is making to the community about how we will do things differently and what outcomes we want', and somebody who can report back to the community, somebody who is held in high regard in the community about our progress as a government on delivering on that.

**Ms WARD** — So would today's incident be something that he would be also reporting on or including in his report?

**Ms NEVILLE** — No. It is not operational at all. It is about, you know, that we have committed to roll out mobile technology to police. Are we doing it, is it on time, is it working, is it doing what it said? It is that sort of thing.

**Ms WARD** — So it is really focused on, 'This is what we set out to do, this is how we are doing it' and, as you said, holding you to account — —

**Ms NEVILLE** — It is a little bit like we know with the family violence royal commission reports we have Tim Cartwright, who is doing that oversight, again reporting to the community on whether we are implementing each and every one of the recommendations we said we would. Well, that is the same sort of thing here.

**Ms WARD** — Terrific. Who will he be answerable to, Minister?

**Ms NEVILLE** — To myself, but he will provide a public report.

**Mr MORRIS** — If I can come back to Mr Ashton and the issue of the day, just picking up on the last point I was making in our last opportunity to ask questions regarding communications, we know that there have been numerous eyewitness assessments that the offender was secured. One of the news.com.au reports says, leaving out the descriptive adjectives, that the man who had tried to storm the cockpit lay in the aisle clinging to a device he claimed to be a bomb while being restrained by passengers during the delay. So at what point did the police become aware that the man was restrained?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — We knew the man was restrained early on in the process. It was not a matter of trying to make sure whether he was properly secured; that was not really the major question. The question was around understanding what other threats were posed by the individual, notwithstanding the fact that he was restrained and other people as well — other potential people that could have presented a threat.

**Mr MORRIS** — And were you aware of his location in the plane?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In general terms, that is right, we were, yes.

**Mr MORRIS** — Thank you. Just coming back to the chronology, can we get that?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In relation to the question you asked I had some material texted to me while the other questions were being asked, so I can answer your question. As you know, the plane took off just after 11.00 p.m, and first were the specialist resources — not our general duties police, our specialist resources — which is the critical incident response team and the special operations group. They arrived at 00:23, so 23 minutes after midnight, and SOG arrived at 25 minutes after midnight. The entry of the plane took place at 1.21, so that is about 54 minutes after that.

**Mr MORRIS** — So, sorry, the SOG at — —

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — At 25 minutes past midnight.

**Mr MORRIS** — Yes, and what was the 23 minutes?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — That was the head of the CIRT team.

**Mr MORRIS** — Right, okay. So the first person on the ground from that group was effectively 36 minutes after the plane landed.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Around half an hour after the plane landed, yes.

**Mr MORRIS** — After the plane landed, and then CIRT, 36 minutes, and then 38 minutes after the plane landed for the second group, the special operations group.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, and then about 53–4 minutes — something — after that the plane was entered.

**Mr MORRIS** — After that, yes.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Mr Ashton, the *Age* is reporting this afternoon that:

It is understood the delay —

in officers attending —

was partly caused by the failure of an on-call officer to respond to an emergency message.

...

Officers responding to the crisis were further held up, after being unable to locate firearms and body armour, the source said.

Is that correct?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — No. Well, that turnout was pretty prompt. Last night there were no issues raised around access to equipment, access to body armour. Members who were on call-out saw the head of the SOG this morning, and no issues were raised about that.

**Mr T. SMITH** — It does seem like an awfully long time, knowing that the plane was turned — —

**Ms WARD** — Because you are an expert.

**Mr T. SMITH** — This is really important. Can you please not — —

**Ms WARD** — It is absolutely really important, Mr Smith. That is my point.

**Mr T. SMITH** — The Labor members of this committee are trying to gag me. Let the record show that.

**Ms WARD** — No, Mr Smith, I am not trying to gag you.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Let the record show that the Labor members of this committee are trying to gag me.

**Ms WARD** — I am just hopeful — endlessly hopeful — that you will actually ask relevant questions.

**The CHAIR** — Order! Ms Ward!

**Mr T. SMITH** — The Victorian people want answers, and we are asking these questions of the chief commissioner.

**Ms SHING** — Just bear in mind these may be the subject of legal proceedings as well.

**Mr T. SMITH** — I would like to know. The plane was turned around, as I understand it, some 10–15 minutes after it took off. Is that correct?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — This incident took place as the plane had just taken off and the incident occurred while it came back, so it came back in a reasonably quick time.

**Mr T. SMITH** — I am just trying to get an understanding about it. Your people arrived at 20 past 12. There is about an hour there where the plane had been turned around midair and had landed with potentially a terrorist on board. Who was running the scene on the ground during that time?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Initially the federal police are on the ground, and then we are notified. The D24 notification took place at 11.53. That is when our Victoria Police were formally advised of the incident.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So there is still about half an hour there which I am trying to understand, particularly in light of the lessons that we learned from the Lindt cafe siege about what the hold-up was, to be frank.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — There was not a hold-up. I contest the word ‘hold-up’. They have gotten there at midnight within a period of time that is pretty reasonable from that call-out, I would have thought. There is no delay there, and there is no hold-up there.

**Mr MORRIS** — Sorry, just to clarify the D24 call, what time did you say that went through?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — On my chronology that I had sent up to me — the one I had last night — the D24 was notified at 11.53.

**Mr MORRIS** — So 6 minutes after the plane landed?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Shortly after the plane landed; I have not got that plane landing time here.

**Mr MORRIS** — I understand the plane landed at 11.47.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I have not got that number here.

**Mr MORRIS** — For the time the plane was in the air, police were not aware that there was an issue?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Ask the AFP.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — We were notified at 11.53. That was when we were aware.

**Mr MORRIS** — Right, so the plane — —

**Ms NEVILLE** — Ask the AFP. They are in control at that point.

**Mr MORRIS** — That is what I am trying to establish.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Yes.

**Mr MORRIS** — Yes, so there is a period between the incident occurring —

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Of course, and there always is in these incidents.

**Mr MORRIS** — and the plane turning around —

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes.

**Mr MORRIS** — and Victoria Police becoming aware that there was ever an incident?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, as there always naturally will be in those sorts of environments where there are a lot of things happening quickly.

**Mr MORRIS** — Yes, I must say 6 minutes after the plane has landed — which is some, what, 20 minutes or half an hour after it has been turned around — does seem a very long time.

**Ms NEVILLE** — I am sure we can raise that matter with the Australian Federal Police, who have control of the incident until we are notified.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So were you in direct communication with the brave passengers that apprehended the perpetrator directly, or were you talking to the captain or — —

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — We were going through the captain and through the cockpit communications, not directly with the passengers.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Because people from the plane are saying — and this is from Stan and Pam Young — that:

If there was a bomb on that plane we should have been communicated (to) ... instead, we sat there for another hour and a half.

There was no communication.

They literally left us waiting and wondering.

**The CHAIR** — Where is the source documentation from, Mr Smith? Is this on Twitter or is this on — —

**Mr T. SMITH** — These are media reports; it was a passenger quote. Why were these people not communicated to directly? Everyone is on the tarmac with a mobile phone, including obviously the captain having got communications with you and others. Why were you not communicating with them? Given that the perpetrator was apprehended, why did you not reassure the passengers that all was well?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Well, again, what we were dealing with at that stage was one known offender, and we did not know whether we had unknown offenders on the aircraft, and we were trying to eliminate that risk as much as we could. Communicating more broadly with the passengers can happen, and I have not been advised exactly what the communications were between the cockpit and the passengers at this stage, but that is a consideration that has to be taken into account about what communication is made, because we do not know exactly who we are communicating with in terms of the whole of the passengers, all of the passengers.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So there was a possibility of other offenders or explosive devices being on board. If that was the case, wouldn't this lead to the police wanting to board the plane at the earliest possibility to potentially apprehend anyone else on there that could be essentially committing terrorist acts?

**Ms SHING** — This is why you are not in crisis communication, Mr Smith.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Again the Labor Party are trying to stop me from asking questions.

**Ms WARD** — No, that is not true, Mr Smith; we just do not understand why you are going down this line. It is not helpful to anyone.

**The CHAIR** — Order! The chief commissioner to respond.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Again, these are the decisions that have to be made on the ground about trying to identify what the risks are on the aircraft and breaching the aircraft potentially or having passengers breach the aircraft and the potential that that could lead to a catastrophic situation. It is about trying to eliminate that risk as much as is possible and with the information that is available. Often it is not about entirely eliminating that risk; it is about trying to minimise the time that people are on the plane, obviously, for the reasons that you have pointed out, but at the same time understanding the risks of perhaps a bigger event or a more serious event occurring by rushing there and not eliminating those risks to the passengers' safety.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So were the learnings from the Lindt siege in the front of people's minds with regard to moving quickly?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Of course. You have got lives on the line, so members do move quickly. The members arriving at the scene did so quickly. That response was planned quickly. There was about 53 or 54 minutes, whatever it was, between those specialist units arriving and that plane being boarded. This hearing has been going for an hour, so even within that space of time all those assessments were made, all that intelligence was checked, the operation execution was planned and then was boarded by the police. I know it seems like a large space of time for a passenger on the plane — absolutely — but that is a quick space of time in terms of that sort of response.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Was the alleged perpetrator known to Victoria Police, and did he have any previous interactions with Victoria Police?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, he is known to us. We have had previous interactions with him. The defendant is going before court this afternoon, so I am a bit restricted in what I can say about his history with us for those legal reasons. I might be getting into trouble, if I get into too much of that, with the OPP director, but he has had a history with us. And as I said this morning, I thought in the interests of the community understanding this issue last night well, I did disclose that there was a psychiatric history and I talked a bit about that to try to give the community some confidence.

**Ms PATTEN** — Good afternoon, Minister, Commissioner and secretaries. I would like to turn to the budget — budget paper 3, page 273 — in regard to drug screening tests and the budgeted or expected 100 000 drug screening tests. How much will that cost?

**Ms NEVILLE** — It is 1.9. Sorry, it is 2.7 in 15–16; in 16–17 it is 2.7; and it will stay around that, because that delivers us 100 000 — 2.7 million.

**Ms PATTEN** — That is 2.7 million over two years.

**Ms NEVILLE** — For the next financial year, for 17–18. A lot of that cost relates to the forensic assessments of each of the drug tests, which we do not do obviously with alcohol testing, so it is a much quicker test.

**Ms PATTEN** — I understand that. And we are expecting 93 per cent of those to come up clear; that is the target in the budget this time. I know there has been a decision not to test for benzodiazepines, for example, and given your comment that drugs are now involved in more road deaths than alcohol, could you tell me what drugs are you seeing most regularly or what is the most common drug found in the drug tests?

**Ms NEVILLE** — It is a mix of ice — methamphetamines — and cannabis that are the two leading lines. Often it is multiple. Both of those may be present, sometimes with alcohol, not always, so in fact surprisingly with the deaths there are more deaths just with drugs in the system and not with both. So there is a growing willingness of people to take a risk of driving while using those drugs.

**Ms PATTEN** — Yes, and I think you are saying in the budget that 93 per cent of those result in a successful prosecution for drug driving. Thank you very much for that.

**Ms NEVILLE** — So I think that probably indicates, if you recall when this was first introduced, there was always some scepticism about how reliable the testing would be — the roadside testing — but I think what it is showing is that the roadside testing is a good measure because we have to test all those drug tests and that there is higher level of reliability.

**Ms PATTEN** — I do actually relate back to that because in a response to me about this your office said that you rely on the Drummer study to ascertain around drug driving. Is that correct? Oh, it must be; I got it in a letter from you, so it must be correct.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Of course it would be correct, yes.

**Ms PATTEN** — I think I heard you say you are looking at drug driving, because the Drummer report has been discounted completely because it was only 56 people that were researched in that test, and it has been completely discounted as a reliable test for testing impairment, or relying on that study for your impairment testing is unreliable.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Sorry, I am trying to understand. You are saying: does it raise questions about whether there is impairment caused by the use of those drugs when driving?

**Ms PATTEN** — Correct. The Drummer report is what I understand the department have relied on for their policies.

**Ms NEVILLE** — I think the international studies are clear that there is impairment caused by drug driving.

**Ms PATTEN** — Yes. I am not questioning that.

**Ms NEVILLE** — There is no question about impairment, and it doubles the chances of fatality as well.

**Ms PATTEN** — That is right. I am questioning impairment, I guess, because we are not testing for benzodiazepines — you are testing for benzos now?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — No.

**Ms PATTEN** — A lot of the opiates are more difficult to test for because of their short half-life.

**Ms NEVILLE** — That may be a question of: do you need to be thinking about whether you include other drugs as part of your drug testing as opposed to do you do drug testing? I think the evidence absolutely says that you double your chances of fatality with the drugs that we are testing if you have got them in your system.

**Ms PATTEN** — If you are impaired by them.

**Ms NEVILLE** — And I suppose every bit of evidence suggests to me, and the advice I have, is that you are impaired by them. That is reflected in the road toll and number of injuries and fatalities as a result of drugs in your system.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Chief commissioner, just to close off the previous discussion with opposition members, obviously this whole incident will be the subject of debrief, investigation and review with the relevant authorities — the airport authorities, AFP, VicPol and obviously witnesses and those involved. That is the appropriate thing to happen, I imagine, under normal circumstances. I just want to make a comment with no expectation of a comment back from you, but I just want to say on my behalf — I cannot speak on anyone else's — I am sorry you have had to put up with that unedifying display just before on a matter that happened no less than 12 hours earlier. Given there are protocols in place for these things to be fully extrapolated and investigated, I do not think it was appropriate to do it in this forum. What is the time frame, chief commissioner, for an investigation? What is the time frame for an investigation and review process?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In relation to a review, we have an internal review process that involves all the agencies. There are actually a couple of layers to it. On these types of incidents involving aviation, it is a commonwealth-state review that we are central to, with us and all the commonwealth agencies. Last night,

because this was a counterterrorism response for Victoria, state emergency management protocols were used as well, so the emergency management commissioner will lead a review as well. So that is two reviews running. That is in the ordinary course of events, because out of these issues we always have learnings of one sort or another that we have to pick up. It is inevitable with all of these types of incidents so that is why we have those reviews.

**Ms SHING** — Chief commissioner, I might just ask in relation to that: will there be a process to engage with all the people who were on board the plane in the course of this event and what does that ordinarily look like as part of follow-up for what, as you have indicated, was clearly on anyone's reading of the situation quite a traumatic and distressing event?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — At the scene we appoint a witness coordinator. The victims in relation to this matter are also potential witnesses and witnesses, so we appoint a witness coordinator. The witness coordinator has got the local on-the-ground responsibility for giving that liaison, in this case with passengers, from the law enforcement side of things. There is a lot of evidence to be collected. A lot of, for example, mobile phone recordings would have been made and pictures taken, as well as oral evidence that needs to be adduced in statement form, so that takes place. We then have an ongoing contact arrangement with those people from herein so that they are informed about the investigations process and where they stand in that process as potential witnesses.

**Ms SHING** — Given the interface between Victoria Police as well as the Australian Federal Police and potentially legal authorities from other jurisdictions, I assume that that will in fact take place over some time. That is a pretty unwieldy operation if you are talking about people from potentially all over the world who were on board that flight. Is this part of the ordinary resourcing to be provided by way of assistance to people in events of this nature?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — It is resourcing that we provide; that is part of that. The department of justice also have more broadly witness support-victim support mechanisms that can apply and could apply in this case as well. We have these kinds of cases sometimes where we have witnesses going to different parts of the world. We have established arrangements either directly through direct contact or via the Australian Federal Police international liaison network to maintain those contacts.

**Ms SHING** — Will Victoria Police lead this process as far as coordination is concerned or is that an Australian Federal Police matter, or do you have equal footing?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — It is led by the Australian Federal Police.

**Ms SHING** — Is much of this process led by the Australian Federal Police, given the location and the jurisdiction that was involved as far as aviation is concerned?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Well, technically the Australian Federal Police have primacy. It is on commonwealth land. But inevitably the practical application under the counterterrorism arrangements is it is all in — everyone plays a role. For example, last night I was on the phone to the Australian Federal Police commissioner and border force commissioner coordinating this stuff through the night. Everyone just comes to the table and gets involved. But to answer your question, the Australian Federal Police technically have the lead for it.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — We might actually get back to what we are here for, which is the budget. Thank you for your patience with those opposite.

Minister, I want to ask you about the specialist family violence resource that you talked about in your presentation, which is also in BP3, page 98. I think it is 400-odd personnel. It makes sense, given that because of this government we all know the figure that 40-odd per cent of police work is family violence and we know the range of investments in preventing family violence. In my mind, a layperson's mind, I do not actually know what a specialist family violence prevention police officer means. Is it a uniform person? Are they specially trained? Are they new recruits? Are they existing ones that transfer over to a specialised unit? Can you explain a bit more about that and how that would actually address and combat family violence?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Basically our general duties frontline police are also responding every day to family violence incidents. When you talk about the 40 per cent to 60 per cent of time, that is often that response, so it is the call-outs that are coming through triple zero and you are deploying your frontline staff out for immediate response. The specialist teams particularly are critical in the risk assessment. For example, what we know: if you can stop a perpetrator after one incident, you have got a good chance; if you have got some good intervention, you may be able to stop that pattern of violence. But recidivist family violence perpetrators tend to escalate and are of greater harm to women, particularly women and children. So particularly you have got your specialist family violence staff who are doing risk assessments, so if you go out to the Laverton station, there are specialist family violence staff out there.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Minister, are they uniformed?

**Ms NEVILLE** — They are trialling a new risk assessment model, and they will be working with a team, including some psychologists. You will have a mix of both uniform and investigative police involved. Say, if you go to a multidisciplinary centre, same sort of thing. Again there are people who are at that next level, who are starting to intervene and understand the risk and have more of the expertise around risk and family violence and knowing what services and interventions are going to give you the best outcomes. So your specialist team — you might have them out at, I think, Dandenong; we have just recently opened a multidisciplinary centre there — has police, it has your agencies, DHS, child protection et cetera all working there together.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — So they are embedded together, are they?

**Ms NEVILLE** — They are now working across the region, that whole police service area, responding to all the call-outs — overnight call-outs — and assessing them the next morning. So you might have your general duties police go initially overnight, but then that team takes those cases on. They work hand in hand, they are important together, but it adds a level of training and expertise in intervention and an ongoing relationship with those families who are involved in what your general duties police do.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — And I think there is one in Glen Eira or Moorabbin, maybe.

**Ms NEVILLE** — So we are expanding the Wyndham one. We are about to build a new one there. Geelong's is being rebuilt.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — So can I get a sense of where this idea comes from? Obviously it makes theoretical sense, how it works on the ground. I imagine it works well, but did it come from a jurisdiction that had been successful in having a multidisciplinary team like that for family violence?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Well, some of it is on royal commission recommendation but, yes, I will get the chief commissioner — —

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Apologies. Sorry, of course.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In relation to that, there is the bringing together of two initiatives there. There are the multidisciplinary centres for sexual assault. We have had those in place now for some years. That was built on overseas experience, primarily out of the UK, where that model was working well, and it has actually worked really well here. Having the cars particularly in with the police in those centres, as well as the other specialist medical services and forensic medicine, works really well.

We have an increasing plan to bring the specialist family violence units much closer to the MDCs. That is what the minister was referring to about Dandenong as our primary centre for sexual assault, particularly because it handles juvenile sexual assault. That is actually working very well even early on, having specialist family violence to establish a relationship between sexual offending allegations and response to family violence, so it is actually proving so far to be a pretty good initiative to bring them together. That is going to require a bit more work getting that together, because the centres were not initially devised for family violence to come in, so we are doing the work around that to bring them together where we can.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Chief Commissioner, just in the 35 seconds that we have got left: the body cameras that were in the media recently, what role do they play in this?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Well, we hope that body-worn cameras will play a big role in the family violence response. In fact the first rollout of body-worn cameras will be in family violence.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Collecting evidence?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Well, they provide actual evidence of the victims, particularly for supporting victims, to show actually the state of what the victim is dealing with at the time, and evidence can be provided in video form to see the state of mind of the victim at the time. So we actually — —

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — And the officer is in the family home or whatever.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, exactly. It can actually provide very cogent evidence for the court to consider.

**Ms NEVILLE** — And there will be legislation that enables that to be implemented and used as part of courts — —

**The CHAIR** — Order! Mr Smith until 2.45 p.m.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Again to Mr Ashton, if we could return to the incident overnight, are you satisfied that in Victoria there are clear lines of responsibility and decision-making that are understood by all relevant law enforcement agencies that enable seamless and decisive decision-making in such a crisis?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, I am. It is done at a range of levels. They are initially planned at the national level through the national counterterrorism coordination committee. Victoria Police is represented at deputy commissioner level on that committee. That sets up the overall framework. That not only involves police but involves all the agencies — in our case it is the Department of Premier and Cabinet, but all the state versions of that, whatever they might look like. They are also involved in that. That sets the overall framework.

Then at the operational level, they are tested through exercise testing, and where we see improvements from the various exercises they are included in the arrangements as well. So they are long established and long practised in those sorts of scenarios.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Obviously there will be, as you have suggested, an internal review or an independent review?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Well, there are a number of aspects to it. There is obviously the police; we do our own review. But in these instances, the national counterterrorism arrangements — under those arrangements we do a national review involving all the agencies because there is a commonwealth and state overlay, so we do that. That involves the commonwealth AGs, Premier and Cabinet as well as police, so that review takes place after all these incidents.

Also I indicated earlier that under our state arrangements and the emergency management commissioner, whilst I have primacy for a terrorism event and emergency response under our arrangements, under the tiered arrangements, through those arrangements the emergency management commissioner also has a look at this at the state level, looking at the state arrangements.

**Mr T. SMITH** — And will the findings of your review be made public?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — They are certainly not secret findings. Sometimes there are operational matters around types of equipment and things that are not made public. That call is usually not left to Victoria Police to make, but the general aspects of it certainly are made public. They are available. They are not secret documents at all.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Okay. Thanks very much.

**Ms STALEY** — My questions are to Commissioner Ashton, and I refer to BP3, page 274, which is the total output costs for policing and crime prevention. Commissioner, in relation to home invasions are you making public all of the information about the number of these home invasions that are occurring?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes. These offences, as all offences, are reported on. This is no different. We are reporting on aggravated burglaries or, as they are now called, home invasions. We are reporting on those as they are being recorded.

**Ms STALEY** — Last night there was another home invasion, and this time it was in Templestowe. I am particularly interested in the fact that this home invasion was one of a series that appears to be going on in Manningham. Manningham appears to be a hotspot for home invasions. What are you doing particularly in Manningham around reducing the 76 per cent increase since the election of the Andrews government in home invasions?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Home invasions we take extremely seriously. In fact most of my time in an operational context is taken up with our operational response — myself, the deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners — in planning our response to home invasions, to carjackings, to stolen motor vehicles. It is those sorts of crimes that over recent times have been much highlighted by media and cause a lot of concern in the communities, so we spend an enormous amount of time on it.

That offending has changed a lot. It was initially very much young people in what we were calling gangs going out, looking for the cars, wanting to steal cars. It is much harder to steal cars now without the keys. In fact it is almost impossible with a modern car, so they break into a home to take the keys. Most of those cases where they break into the home — I think it is about 80 per cent or thereabouts — the people are asleep, so they do not actually know anyone has been in the house until they come out the next morning and the car is gone, the keys are gone, sometimes some other items are gone. They have not actually had to confront the offender. But that started to change a bit where they were not just going out as, say, a gang of people. They were networking with each other, so they were via social media hooking up in a way that we had not seen previously.

**Ms STALEY** — Just on that, I understand that the group of people who perpetrated this home invasion in Templestowe last night could be described as an African gang, and I am particularly interested in whether the Apex gang is still active in Victoria and I suppose particularly in Manningham, or have we got a new wave of organised groupings, perhaps as you say through social media, and it is a different cohort?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — In a policing context we call it network offending. There might be a flasher name that could be attributed to it, but it is not actually a gang as such any longer. You talked about Apex before. We still get members of a group which call themselves Apex that offend, but they are not doing it as in this is the Apex gang going offending. They are sort of all joining in with others on different nights depending on what is happening, so we get this different sort of offending going on.

Just getting back to answering the initial question, what that has meant for us is we have had to have a cross-regional approach to dealing with the offending. So we have established interregional crime squads to deal with these particular individuals, and that has actually been having a good impact right across the state where we have been able to bring down the number of home invasions, and we have been able to more quickly arrest them when they have been offending. Whereas last time — back 18 months ago or so — there would be a whole series and then we would get them; now we are getting them initially as they try to commence that series.

**Ms STALEY** — Commissioner, you say it is having a good effect, but the data I have from the Crime Statistics Agency is saying, for example, in Brimbank last calendar year there were 29 home invasions a week, in Whittlesea there were 28 a week. Clearly that is a very large number of homes being subject to aggravated burglary, home invasion, and that does not point to great success in that area.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Like I said, we have been bringing those numbers back through that response that we actually planned and executed. That number that you talked about for that one area, that is about a monthly total across the state now, so we have been bringing that number back. In those areas that we have really had to focus on — like last year when the crime rate was up by 13-point-something last September — we have been working to bring it back from that and have been bringing it back from that every quarter. The next crime stats are in a couple of weeks actually, and we are confident we will see another reduction through that work. For example, with theft of motor cars we have been reducing that now for some time. In fact with our numbers now — a lot has been made of New South Wales comparisons — New South Wales are increasing; we are decreasing in this regard.

**Ms STALEY** — Now that you have mentioned theft of motor vehicles, I refer to BP3, page 274, total output costs, ‘Policing and crime prevention’. Again to you — and it is in relation to carjackings on Geelong Road — I refer to the answer the minister gave in the house on 6 December 2016, where she said during question time she had advice, and I quote, ‘directly from the chief commissioner’s office during question time ...’. Did you send that text, Commissioner?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Text?

**Ms STALEY** — The minister indicated she received information during question time. She cannot have taken a phone call.

**Ms SHING** — Seriously!

**Ms STALEY** — She did not leave the chamber.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — On a point of order, Chair, just a reminder to witnesses, they do not have to answer questions about interactions between a direct report and a minister. That is ridiculous.

**Members interjecting.**

**Ms STALEY** — Just put a bit of a question that you do not like and the same thing.

**The CHAIR** — Order! Ms Staley, I will rule on the point of order. There is no point of order.

**Ms STALEY** — The question stands. Did you send that text, Commissioner?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Could you tell me what the text said?

**Ms STALEY** — The minister said:

... I want to make it clear that the advice I have received directly from the chief commissioner’s office during question time is that there have not been 15 to 16 carjackings on the Geelong Road.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I do not recall ever sending that as a text to the minister. Sometimes during question time our office is asked questions and we provide information.

**Ms SHING** — That is why it says ‘office’.

**Ms STALEY** — That is right. That is why I asked. The minister said that there had not been 15 to 16 carjackings on the Geelong Road. Commissioner, was Andrew Rule lying about himself being carjacked on the Geelong Road, and was Noel Ashby lying?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I do not have any information about either of them lying. In fact I met with Andrew Rule personally about the matter that he had, and he was clearly distressed by what he went through. He reported that to us, and that was in the hands of the Geelong police; in fact, it still is. It remains unsolved.

On the matter with Mr Ashby, I have not met or discussed that matter with Mr Ashby in relation to his incident. I can only refer to the fact that I met with Geelong police about the Geelong freeway. We are not seeing it as an active area for carjackings. We have had incidents that you have talked about, but it is not known as a hot zone. It is an issue for speed, absolutely, but carjackings have not been an issue for us.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — There has been a lot of discussion about the incident at Melbourne Airport today. I just want to say that that must have been an extremely worrying incident for everyone concerned — the passengers, the crew, the police responders and the other responders. I am happy to hear that it has ended safely, and I take on board that there will be some debriefing and reviews.

My question is about the specialist mental health education that is mentioned in budget paper 3, page 87, which is a bit apposite to that incident. I just want to know how is this different from any existing education training for police? When will it start and be rolled out? Is it additional, new? I have asked questions before, Minister, about this area. Will PSOs be receiving that training as well?

**Ms NEVILLE** — This is in relation to the training of police officers as opposed to — —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — It says:

Specialist mental health education will be rolled out across Victoria Police to improve police capability to manage incidents involving people with a mental illness.

**Ms NEVILLE** — Each year there is a process of review of Victoria Police training. For example, we have just updated family violence, so there is a centre of excellence around family violence. Similarly with mental health issues, there is a review constantly around how to respond and deal with people with mental health issues. These are delivered with Victoria Police but in partnership with specialists who develop the programs and oversee them, just like any other training program that is delivered by a registered training organisation, which the police academy is.

It is a constant review process to make sure that Victoria Police are provided with the best training to respond to issues in the community. I think there are much stronger relationships now through the police and CAT teams as well, so there are more of those PACER teams that are part of police day-to-day operations. You would have seen an additional rollout of that in Melbourne yesterday by the mental health minister, making that a 24-hour, 7-day a week service. In a sense it is about saying how do you minimise police time waiting at emergency departments, but also how do you make sure that you have got the specialists, both the police response and the mental health response together, so that you are bringing the experts together to deal with some of the more serious incidents. So I do not think it is an attempt to replace those specialist staff, but it is about better understanding mental health issues, how they play out, what the risk factors are, how you de-escalate those issues with individuals, and how you work in a partnership across and with the PACER teams.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — But does it include not just specialist police but all police and PSOs as well?

**Ms NEVILLE** — That would be my understanding. All police and PSOs are trained in how to respond to mental health issues. It is part of the basic training, and that is also continually updated.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Commissioner, were you going to say something?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, I just want to add to that in relation to the mental health specialist teams, the component that you are talking about, we have got 18 of those currently active around the state. We had 10 330 referrals last year, so that is a lot of referrals. My last understanding is it was somewhere around 40 per cent of the people that we deal with have a mental health history, so that is a really important area for us. These specialist units, by having a specialist mental health clinician out with the police, has actually made a huge difference on the ground, but it does not obviate the need for more general training across the workforce. It is included in the recruit training for all, general duties, PSOs and PCOs. It is all included in their training as a base level as well. So it is important that we do have good mental health literacy for all officers.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Is it all conducted at the police academy, because you mentioned that the police academy is an RTO? Is it all conducted there or is it different?

**Ms NEVILLE** — The vast majority.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — The vast majority of our training is conducted at Glen Waverley.

**Ms NEVILLE** — And there are some specialists on top of that, but yes.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — So it is the police academy as an RTO that delivering it to police.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes, it is an RTO.

**Ms SHING** — Minister, I would like to take you and also the commissioner to the question of police technology. We have had evidence from a number of witnesses at previous PAEC hearings about the length of time that outdated technology chews up in the way in which policing is able to be delivered and services are able to be provided, particularly in regional areas. It is within that lens, as far as the regional policing effort goes, that I would like to ask you about the investment in police technology. As I understand it, there was \$227 million allocated in the 16–17 budget to take us away from fax machines and away from outdated equipment and into the modern era of digital devices and technology.

To that end, I understand that there has also been additional funding for the new police officers and technology to be rolled out more efficiently. Can we talk through what the reforms will result in for more efficient and effective policing, and in particular with reference to the information sharing that is required as part of L17 in the family violence dimension, and how that will assist particularly in regional areas, because from the Gippsland perspective and from other regional parts of the state that has been something that has been continuously been a source of frustration and delay?

**Ms NEVILLE** — If I start off and then I might ask the chief commissioner to add to it. There is no question that modern technology is at the heart of the police force that we need into the future, and we have probably seen the biggest uplift in investment in that technology in the last three budgets, so an investment in a new intelligence system. What does that mean? That means that all the work that local police are doing around understanding this network defending, really being able to pull out intelligence, understand each of the offenders, how it is working, where it is happening, what are the trends, and being able to respond very quickly.

Our police officers do that now, they do it very manually, and I have seen them do it and they do a great job. But being able to use and tap into an intelligence system that pulls that together is going to be critical for being able to be quick and fast in terms of the changes in offending. The monitoring and assessment centre, in a sense, is an example of that — the 24/7 centre — and that played a really significant role in things like Moomba and major events. That will ultimately be something that applies across the state, not just in metropolitan Melbourne, so being able to monitor and identify risk pretty early through a range of technologies and a range of systems.

Of course perhaps one of the biggest improvements will be the rollout of the smart tablets and smart phones. We have awarded the contract there to Motorola, who will be delivering iPhones and mini iPads out to police officers. We will commence a trial a bit later this year, with PSOs being the first to do that. The important bit that sits behind that — it is not just handing someone an iPhone or an iPad — is what is in the back of that, so what is the information they can pull up and how quickly they can pull that up. For example, knowing has this person got a family violence intervention? Have they got a gun licence? Have they just previously round the corner already had a police interaction? It both assists in being better prepared and improving the safety of our officers but also ensures that they have the information they need to make the judgements and assessments and to make decisions around maybe at that point you make an arrest rather than a warning because there has been some history there.

**Ms SHING** — Is that technology in use in other jurisdictions?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Yes. But I think by the end of all of this, particularly with our intelligence system and the MAC — the monitoring and assessment centre — the combination will see Victoria ahead of the game. Certainly New South Wales has that technology. Again, as I understand it, what we are trying to achieve is what they have got, which is a 3-second input of that: once you ask a question of that technology, getting the response. So it is very quick. The other part of that is it will stop the need for officers having to go back into stations and having to use computers or faxes and send information that way, freeing up their time to be out in the field.

**Ms SHING** — With portability comes efficiency and comes a greater effectiveness as far as response is concerned. What about the integrity of the data as we move to portable devices, because that is something which is obviously going to be an area of key concern given the nature of the data that will be generated and able to be generated to and from these devices in the course of policing?

**Ms NEVILLE** — The chief might be able to answer with more of the detail of the technology, but that is a critical component and it was part of the critical decision-making around the awarding of the contract to Motorola and their ability to deliver that.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Certainly the encryption is a really important issue on the tablet devices. Of course we are delivering on the enterprise level. We have a security overlay over them. In fact in regional areas, which you talked about, it is actually getting much better because they are currently relying on our regional radios, which are not even encrypted at all. So I can get on my device here now and listen, and I can be a member of the public and hear the police radio in our country areas. So having it actually through an encrypted device which is encrypted at the handheld level and also encrypted at the enterprise level is a much better case scenario for us under these new models.

**Ms SHING** — And in the event that any of that hardware were to fall into the wrong hands, I assume that there are the appropriate levels of security for the purposes of access such that that information would not be able to be used or accessed by anybody who was not an authorised officer.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes. It is not only the encryption to get into the phone but we can remotely wipe the device as well.

**Ms SHING** — As a real-time exercise?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes. Just on the issue of the regional delivery, I know that is a really important issue; certainly for us it is. The recent numbers on family violence in some of the rural areas just highlight that. There was a report just yesterday from the Crime Statistics Agency that further highlights that. That is a really pressing issue for us, so having those devices is going to create a lot of efficiencies in the rural policing. In fact across the state we think the total rollout will have a technical effect of about 500 extra police. It will have a big effect on our ability to spend better quality time with victims and dealing with perpetrators, importantly, in rural settings, absolutely.

**Ms SHING** — When we talk about the 500 additional police that will in effect be able to be accessed because of improvements in efficiency, on top of the 3135 police that have been put into the budget to provide a pipeline as opposed to this boom/bust that was represented in the graph, how will the deployment of additional police as part of this overall investment be deployed to regional areas? We have got population growth, we have got decentralised areas that are growing at a rapid rate of knots, and with that comes its own challenges, plus the fact that areas throughout Gippsland, for example, have a particular prevalence in relation to certain sorts of crimes. Again they are areas which require attention now but also will require ongoing police efforts and resources into the future, beyond things like the forensics hub and beyond things like additional police stations, and they are a part of it. But those numbers of people are a crucial part of that. How will that in fact be rolled out in a way that is equitable, that responds to the challenges of communities and that gives us the results that we are after?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — We have done that through what we call a staff allocation model. We have always had models of how we allocate police, but we developed a new model to coincide with our request for additional police that we made of government. I wanted to do that because previously we have not had the police association in the room for that. They get very important information from our staff about some of the pressures that they feel, that sometimes do not even come through management lines. I wanted to make sure they were at the table to be part of the understanding and inputting into the model.

We take a whole range of factors into account. Obviously it is not only callouts; it is your populations et cetera. But we have been able to get a more sophisticated model that actually looks at the quality of time that is spent out. Understanding that one does not equal one, so, say, attending a shoplift, for example, is not the same value in terms of time spent as a family violence incident. Understanding what areas were impacted worse than that of others is taken into account in the model. There is a whole series of subsets of categories that I could take you through, but the overall point is it is a more developed model than we have had previously. It has more inputs than we have had previously. In relation to rural policing, for the first time, it will take into account travel distance and tyranny of distance to get to incidents. That has never happened before. It will happen now under this model.

**Ms NEVILLE** — I will be very quick. When I try to explain it, partly this is getting everyone up to a level. Initially it is sort of, ‘What do you need to keep a station open, do the basics? How do you get there? And how do you keep everyone above that?’, and regions will benefit from that.

**Mr MORRIS** — Chief Commissioner, there is a series of questions I want to ask about particular issues, just in terms of numbers and things. I imagine you will have to take them all on notice.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Okay.

**Mr MORRIS** — I will just run through them. On budget paper 3, page 272, is the reference, which is about the policing and crime prevention output. Would you provide the committee with a list of the top 10 local government areas — or PSAs, if that is more appropriate — where ice drug labs have been located in 2016–17 so far, including the number of instances in each?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Absolutely.

**Mr MORRIS** — On a different matter, the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment Act 2016 added five new offences to the principal act. I am wondering if you can provide the committee with the number of offenders arrested under each of the following offences: traffic illicit drugs to anyone or supply illicit drugs to a child at a school or in a public place within 500 metres of a school; use of violence or threats to force someone to traffic illicit drugs; possess instructions for trafficking or cultivating illicit drugs; publish instructions for trafficking or cultivating illicit drugs; intentionally allow a property to be used for trafficking or cultivation.

On another matter, how many people are currently on preventative detention orders relating to terror or terrorism? Finally, are we able to get a breakdown, in terms of road testing for drugs, on how many occasions drugs have been detected and on how many occasion each substance has been detected?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — What type of substance?

**Mr MORRIS** — Yes.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I will certainly get all of that. In relation to violence associated with the trafficking, some of that can depend on the offence codes, as to the aggravated aspects of them, so there might be some — I will probably get everything I can on that for you. Preventative detention orders: we have not got anyone in Victoria currently under a ‘terrorism order’.

**Mr MORRIS** — That is easy.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — So we have not put anyone in that category. That is not to say that we have not got a lot of POIs — persons of interest — that we look at. That number generally — at the moment it is sitting around about the 300 number. But that escalation to then taking out a preventative detention order is, ‘It’s really evident now; we have to have the person in our custody to prevent the issue’. We have not got anyone on one of those orders at the moment. We do have extensive data on the drug offences. There is certainly no issue getting all of that for you.

**Mr MORRIS** — Excellent; thank you. On another matter, the same output — the policing and crime prevention output — has Victoria Police made any payment or any offer of payment in 2016–17 to the Chinese government for information relating to drug importation into Victoria?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Has Victoria Police offered?

**Mr MORRIS** — Yes.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — No, we have not. I am not aware of us ever doing that. Our relationship with the Chinese police is through the Australian Federal Police, who have a presence in China. I do not know what arrangements the Australian Federal Police Commissioner has on criminal intelligence exchange, but I am certainly not aware of us doing anything in that area. We do have an engagement on student-related crime through the consulate here in Melbourne, and we provide advice back to the community, the student-parent community, in China as to safety elements. We had an issue about a year ago where students were walking around with mobile phones, looking at their phones, and we had people coming and grabbing the phones. So we had a lot of dialogue with them about that to provide assurance around what we doing to police that. That is about the extent that I — in fact I sent an assistant commissioner to China on that student issue last year to have specific meetings with those student-parent groups.

**Mr MORRIS** — There have been no payments for information relating to drug importation into Victoria?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — As I sit here I am not aware of any cases where we have paid — is the question whether we have paid money to the Chinese government?

**Mr MORRIS** — Yes.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I am not aware of any cases where we have done that; nothing that I am aware of.

**Mr MORRIS** — Is it usual to pay money for information on these matters?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Well, it would be very unusual for Victoria Police to pay a government. Again, at the national level I guess it is a matter for the Australian Federal Police or the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission or even the Australian Border Force in that area. They all deal with those sorts of issues. We sometimes make reward payments to human sources who give us information. That is traditionally at a domestic level. They will tell us about a serious drug trafficker, and there can be a reward payment made for that. That is overseen by the crime command. Assistant commissioner Fontana is currently in charge of that.

**Ms NEVILLE** — David, just on that, if I can add, having been briefed as part of an operation when there was a large international haul of ice, the relationship with the Chinese, which is a very important one, is maintained largely by the federal police, and they then brief back into Victoria. So we work closely with federal police, but they maintain a number of those international contacts and international operations on the ground in China and in other countries. So I think they may be questions for the federal police.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I am certainly not sitting in that much money that I want to give it away to the Chinese government, I can assure you.

**Mr MORRIS** — I did wonder. Thank you for that frank answer.

**Ms STALEY** — Minister, further to the answer just provided by the chief commissioner, who usually communicates with you during question time from the chief commissioner's office? Is it Daniel Andrews's former chief of staff and now the chief commissioner's chief of staff, Brett Curran?

**Members interjecting.**

**Ms NEVILLE** — I am actually sure that it came via my staff via the chief commissioner's office, and we have a very close working relationship with the deputy chief of staff, who is responsible for assisting in preparation for any issues that might arise in Parliament.

**Ms STALEY** — Minister, I refer you to BP 3, page 98, which outlines output expenditure initiatives as part of the community safety statement. Can you please advise the committee how much your government is paying Quantum Market Research to undertake community surveys and focus group research into perceptions of community safety in Victoria, when we all know the real purpose is that it is a proxy for political polling ahead of next year's election?

**Ms NEVILLE** — Firstly, I want to really dispute that. If you have a look at the community safety statement and you have a look at the way that the UK government operates, this has been based on a model out of the UK where we have an engagement with our community about what are the things that matter to them around community safety. There are a number of components to this. It is not a 'one size fits all'. It will be a survey which a number of community members will be promoted to come onto, and it is not a survey of, 'Do you think the government is good or bad?'. It is asking, 'What makes you feel safe at railway stations? Is it PSOs? Are these the things that matter to you, and how does this — —

**Ms STALEY** — I understand that, but how much are you paying them for it?

**Ms NEVILLE** — I will get to that in a moment — and, 'How does this help us frame the next community safety statement?', which is a set of priorities which will be established between government and community.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Can we have an answer? We have got a minute and a half left.

**Ms STALEY** — I can take it on notice.

**Ms NEVILLE** — No, I can give you the exact figure on how much we are spending. You have not asked me about the big spend, which is on recruitment, but the total campaign by Quantum Market Research is \$407 000, and it is outlined in the community safety statement.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Thank you very much, Minister. This question is to the commissioner. Previously during the estimates hearings the President of the Legislative Council stated that Victoria Police have contacted the Parliament and asked about the availability of information in respect to the work that was done by the Audit

Committee into the Labor members for Melton and Tarneit. Can you provide the committee with an update on that investigation into Don Nardella and Telmo Languiller?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — The particular matters you are referring to are under assessment at the moment. We have not formally said that we are doing a formal investigation of that yet. That is early and it is still in its assessment phase. I did make an inquiry a couple of weeks ago as to how far away that was, in terms of, you know, was this going to be something that is criminally investigated or referred to a body — one of the bodies here, as sometimes happens, or to another body. And I am told that is not far away, so I am expecting that it is not too far off and a matter of sort of weeks away from having a decision on that.

**Ms PATTEN** — Minister, yesterday the consumer affairs minister confirmed that the brothel licensing authority does not have responsibility for illegal brothels and that they would report those to the police. Do you have any idea how many reports they have made to you? Thank you.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I do have some exact data on that somewhere here.

**Ms PATTEN** — While you are getting that exact data, do you have any exact data on how many you have closed down?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes.

**Ms PATTEN** — Great.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Maybe, hang on. The sex industry coordination unit — I just got this this morning actually, so I apologise; I have not read through all of it yet.

**Ms PATTEN** — How many people are on SICU? So there are three questions now.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — That number has varied a bit, so I am not sure of the exact number now.

**Ms PATTEN** — Could I get that on notice, how many it is at the moment?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Yes. Anyway, the SICU, as you call them, the sex industry coordination unit — the data I grabbed this morning was for 12 months to February 17, so it is 16–17. They visited 39 of the 90 licensed brothels in that period. They visited what we determined ultimately were 149 illegal brothels. Intelligence estimates are there are about 400 of these around the state potentially, but that number is inexact. They visited 149 of them. We charged 11 offenders with 39 offences relating to illegal sex work. Ten search warrants were executed. In relation to the licensed brothels, there were what we call prescriptions; there were four of those. One phenomenon that we have picked up in the last year is the pop-up aspect, and that has been more prevalent in the last 12 months than previous periods.

**Ms PATTEN** — Yes. I think 400 would be an underestimate.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Potentially in this pop-up environment where apparently they can move very quickly.

**Ms PATTEN** — Thank you, Commissioner. That is a real answer. Turning to page 274, I am just looking at the time lines for the proportion of crimes against the person resolved within 30 days and proportion of property crime resolved within 30 days. I have been asking this of a lot of ministers, given the increase in the police force in the next year, I am just wondering why you are not more optimistic about resolving crime. You are hoping to resolve 22 per cent of crimes involving property within 30 days and 42 per cent of crimes against the person within 30 days, which is the same as last year and I think the same as —

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — I do not set the targets.

**Members interjecting.**

**Ms NEVILLE** — The new police, as they start to roll out you will start to see that reflected in the performance measures, no question. There are performance measures that sit in the community safety statement as well which we will report against, and we will continue to improve those as well. It is a year from the time

you start to train a new police officer to get them out there. We do not turn around a lack of investment for four years in police overnight, but you will start to see improvements as you get more police out there.

**Ms PATTEN** — Are there any performance measurements just on how many crimes are resolved? Not within a 30-day period.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Absolutely. We go through those metrics weekly on solved rates.

**Ms NEVILLE** — In the community safety statement, if you have a look at that, we are trying to provide more detail and performance measures for the community about the things that reflect is there a reduction in harm. That is, I think, one of those that is reflected in some of those performance measures.

**Ms PATTEN** — Great. So the actual is 25 per cent of property crimes resolved within 30 days. What is the actual of property crimes resolved?

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — There are all sorts of different property crimes, so I guess if we could give you some — —

**Ms PATTEN** — I guess using the same.

**Chief Comm. ASHTON** — Perhaps if I can get that back to you, because it is important to break that up by type of offending. Property crime covers a whole huge ambit of different types of crimes and solve rates are very relevant to the different type of crime, how heavily it relies on forensic testing or the act of violence associated with it — that would need to have additional resources more quickly as opposed to non-violent crimes. So there are a lot of different variables. I am happy to get you that information.

**Ms PATTEN** — Thanks, Commissioner, that would be great. Thank you.

**The CHAIR** — Order! I would like to thank the witnesses for their attendance: the Minister for Police, the Honourable Lisa Neville, MP; Mr Wilson, Mr Condron, Mr Kent, Mr Ashton, Ms Kingston and Ms Walsh. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. The response, answering the questions in full, should be provided in writing within 10 working days of the committee's request.

**Witnesses withdrew.**