

## **CHAPTER 7: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

### **Transcript of Evidence**

#### **7.9 Attorney-General portfolio**

*The transcript for the hearing on this portfolio will be included in a future report of the Committee.*



## **Transcript of Evidence**

### **7.10 Consumer Affairs portfolio**

*The transcript for the hearing on this portfolio will be included in a future report of the Committee.*



## **Transcript of Evidence**

### **7.11 Corrections portfolio**



# VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into budget estimates 2007–08

Melbourne — 11 May 2007

#### Members

Mr G. Barber	Mr G. Rich-Phillips
Mr R. Dalla-Riva	Mr R. Scott
Ms J. Graley	Mr B. Stensholt
Ms J. Munt	Dr W. Sykes
Mr M. Pakula	Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt

Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

#### Staff

Business Support Officer: Ms J. Nathan

#### Witnesses

Mr B. Cameron, Minister for Corrections;

Ms P. Armytage, secretary;

Dr R. Kelleher, executive director, police, emergency services and corrections; and

Mr K. Anderson, commissioner, Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice.

**The CHAIR** — I now welcome Mr Kelvin Anderson, Commissioner, Corrections Victoria. I call the minister to give a brief presentation — and I mean brief — on the more complex financial and performance information in relation to the 2007-08 budget estimates for the portfolio of corrections.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much. Kelvin Anderson, the corrections commissioner, has joined us for this segment. I understand you want to keep this down to 5 minutes, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIR** — That is right.

**Mr CAMERON** — So I will proceed to go through it. We have allowed for that by having less slides as well.

**Overheads shown.**

**Mr CAMERON** — Let us just touch briefly on the corrections system. We have here the number of offenders who are in the system at the moment. In addition, there are 1381 on parole and there are 7500 community corrections offenders, which includes parolees. There are 13 prisons in Victoria — that is 11 public and also 2 private prisons — which have to answer to Corrections Victoria. In relation to community corrections, there are 50 locations and there is one transition centre, the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre, which has opened only very recently. The staff, including prisons, community corrections and head office, is 2385.

If you look at the monthly average of prisoners, you will see that it is steady, but that during the course of last year, the latter half of the year, there was a large increase. That essentially came about with restricting the use of suspended sentences for serious offences, sexual assault reforms, major crime and police corruption, domestic violence policing, drug trends, longer sentences being given, a tougher breach of policy in relation to community corrections — so if someone breaches a community-based order, less tolerance towards that — and also a reduction of prisoners in police cells.

I go to my next slide. We see the number of major offenders in prison. I am conscious of the time, but what you will see is an increase in relation to the number of major offenders in prison. Also, some of those are people on remand; they have not been found guilty, but also some people are on remand as a consequence of being alleged terrorists.

In relation to new initiatives, there is \$25 million over five years to expand prison capacity for 300 additional beds. There are programs to help rehabilitate. There is \$6.6 million to continue home detention, and there is \$4.5 million over three years for graffiti prevention and removal. Community corrections plays a key part in relation to that.

Here we have the imprisonment rates, and, as you would know over many years, Victoria has tended to imprison the worst offenders. What you see there are the imprisonment rates with Victoria and all of the other states across Australia as a proportion of 100 000 people in the population.

If we go to the next slide you will see the recidivism rates, and obviously what this is is people who come back into the system within two years. What we have seen in recent years is a downward trend. This is below the national average. That is obviously something we are pleased to see. But that work in terms of bringing down the recidivism rate is obviously important — important in relation to people returning to prison, but also obviously important from a community perspective in relation to crimes that are being committed. If we go to the persons returning to prison within two years of release, — this is a reflection across the nation — you will see that we are second best to Queensland. What we have seen over the past five years is that downward trend.

If we go on to the next slide, and this is the final slide, we do have modern prison infrastructure in Victoria. If you have a look at the changes that have occurred over the years, you have the Bendigo prison closed a year or so ago. That was the last of the old Victorian-era-type prisons that we had in Victoria. Really what that has meant, as a result of the work over the last 25 years essentially, is the modernisation of the prisons, and in relation to a couple of the older prisons — Langi Kal Kal, Dhurringile and Ararat — from the 50s and 60s, they have also been modernised. So what we end up with is very good infrastructure.

Obviously offender management framework and balancing security with reducing reoffending is a key role of community corrections, as well as a sustained downward trend in recidivism. Community Corrections Victoria is the leader in correctional practices, and we have many delegations looking at what we do. As I said, there is



additional funding for additional beds, and Corrections Victoria does ongoing master planning in relation to future development. Thank you.

**Mr SCOTT** — Minister, in your presentation you touched upon the new Judy Lazarus transition centre. I would like to ask you how community safety, service delivery output and the integrity of the prison system is improved by this program?

**Mr CAMERON** — The Judy Lazarus Transition Centre is a new transition centre down in West Melbourne.

**The CHAIR** — By the way, who is Judy Lazarus?

**Mr CAMERON** — Judy Lazarus was a former CEO of VACRO. She has now retired. She actually lives up in Beechworth, but it was named in her honour given the work that she has done over many, many years in relation to transitioning people from prison into the community. Obviously to the extent that you can transition, that is also important in trying to break reoffending behaviour. If you go back to the old days when people were thrown out of prison with a paper bag, or a plastic bag, full of their stuff, you can obviously understand why people would fall back into a pattern immediately. She has been a great devotee of transition over the years.

This is a 25-bed unit and it aims to take low-risk offenders, putting them there so that they are able to go out on release, but during the night there are strict curfews in place. That was done in collaboration with the community, as well as Crime Victims Support Association. Noel McNamara and a whole group of people were involved in it. The quest is to try and help further bring about a successful transition so that we do not see people reoffending back into the community. For those that are there, community safety, of course, is paramount, and what will happen if there is any breach of any of the rules is that they will end up back in mainstream prisons. So clearly there is an incentive to make sure that their transition works and works very well.

**Mr BARBER** — I have got some questions about the corrections inspectorate, being an internal unit of the Department of Justice. We are a little unclear on what its deliverables are or have been, unlike in WA where it is a separate inspectorate — particularly it does not publish its findings, reviews or reports in any way that I can find out where they are. What I have got is a detailed question on notice about its budget, staffing and activities, which I will pass over. Could you let me know the sorts of reports and audits it has been doing on prisons, and also investigations regarding individuals in the past and what you think they will be doing this year?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. Penny, do you want to answer? Obviously we cannot go into some of those privacy issues.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Obviously the corrections inspectorate adopts a forward work plan for any particular given year. In addition they do planned reviews that they have mapped out, but they also will do reviews of incidents that occur within the prison system and also in community corrections. They can be asked to undertake a review by the minister or myself as secretary, and we do do that on a regular basis in terms of their work program. They have conducted 21 inquiries in 2006–07 and did 18 reviews. As I said, they have also commenced doing reviews of people subject to community-based orders as well. For the first time they are now starting to do that.

They have examined things like prisoner transport services. There were some issues in terms of prisoners being transported. We became aware of that and they did a review of the conditions, et cetera, that occurred. They looked at prison performance, and they do a regular report about how all the public and private prisons are performing according to the service delivery outcomes that are set, in the case of the public prisons, and that are articulated for private prisons in their contractual obligations. They have reviewed visit bans and how they are imposed in terms of prisons, looked at how our technology is working, reviewed fire incidents and serious assaults and also examined some deaths in custody that have also been the subject of review by the coroner. They provide the report on each of the reviews that they have done, and we provide details in terms of the broad range of activities of the inspectorate in the Department of Justice annual report.

**Mr BARBER** — If that is in order, Chair, then can you pass that question on notice over?

**The CHAIR** — Yes. I mean I will put it in my letter to the minister. I just should note that some of the stuff probably should be handled as the usual sort of questions on notice that you ask in the Parliament.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — The inspectorate, are they prison employees?

**Mr CAMERON** — No, they are department employees.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — And they are seconded from police and other agencies and from wherever?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — They are recruited from a wide range of circumstances, so they might be people with previous experience, say, in the ombudsman's-type functions in other jurisdictions, but they are public servants employed under the rules, and we have deliberately structured it separately in terms of their reporting arrangements, because they are reviewing the activities of the corrections program under the auspices — —

**The CHAIR** — So they are a bit like an internal audit; they just do not report to the line manager. They report directly presumably to the secretary; is that correct?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Yes, they do.

**Ms GRALEY** — I notice as of last week there were 253 female prisoners in our corrections system, and I refer you to the women's diversion strategy. I would like to ask you, minister: what has been the progress in implementing Better Pathways — An Integrated Response to Women Offending and Re-offending program, which I note in the budget papers continues to receive funding until 2008-09?

**Mr CAMERON** — Obviously the reducing reoffending strategy — the Better Pathway strategy — is something that the government has been committed to as well as Corrections Victoria. Obviously getting people into the community, if it is done successfully, helps bring about a reduction in recidivism and for the community helps bring about a reduction in reoffending. So the Better Pathways policy, the integrated response to women's offending and reoffending, was launched in November 2005, and that includes 28 discrete projects that are delivered over four years from the 05-06 financial year through to the 08-09 financial year.

The government invested \$25.5 million to strengthen prevention and early intervention diversion, rehabilitation and transitional support as part of that initiative. There was 18.3 million for support programs and \$7.2 million for infrastructure. That also includes capital works, which commenced in early 2006 and which are scheduled for completion in June 2008. Some of those works include work at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, the women's prison, and those works are now under way and due to be completed by the middle of next year. I might ask the corrections commissioner to elaborate more on some of the successes or where he sees successes that have worked as a consequence of the program.

**Mr ANDERSON** — The need for the Better Pathways program came about because of the rapid increase in the number of women prisoners — something like an 85 per cent increase in the number of women prisoners over a five-year period. Clearly our job is to do something about reducing that reoffending rate. We have seen a tapering off in the number of women prisoners just at the moment, so it has capped out and has not continued to grow. The real intent of this program is to look at early intervention, diversion, rehabilitation and transitional support programs. There is no doubt that the capital works that are being done now at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre were required, so we are working on something like six different building sites within the prison as we speak, but probably the two most important parts, or perhaps three important parts, of that building program are the extension to the health centre and, in particular, a program facility dedicated to the delivery of rehabilitation and support programs.

One issue that does face women prisoners is there is a very high level of mental health need, so there is being constructed a 20-bed intensive support program which we will call Marmak. That will be delivered in the middle of this year, and in the interim we are delivering the support services in other parts of the facility. We are not just waiting for the building, and indeed we will get that 20-bed relief because this has been a significant issue for us, and that is how we cater for the number of mentally ill women prisoners. The particular beauty of this program is that there is also attached to it a women's integrated support program which brings together a consortia of community agencies which provide both pre and post-release support, particularly with regard to accommodation and employment. It is those transitional arrangements which we believe will play an important part in reducing reoffending. In summary, it is about diversion and reducing reoffending.

**Ms GRALEY** — Just a follow-up question, Chair. What sort of mental illnesses are they?

**Mr ANDERSON** — Women prisoners by the time they get to our system, not surprisingly, have been involved in significant episodes of abuse. There are examples of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and indeed their own abuse of alcohol and drugs. We see the full range of mental health issues that present at the prison. There is depression, schizophrenia — those kinds of things. Women who are actively psychotic will be transferred to the Thomas Embling Hospital, but clearly no forensic health facility would take the full range of mental health issues, so prisons are left with some of that to deal with, and that is what Marmmak will cater for.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, major budget output, prisoner supervision and support, page 167. I also refer the minister to a report in the *Herald Sun* yesterday which highlights the rampant overuse of prescription drugs in Victoria's prisons, costing the taxpayers about \$2.5 million a year. I also note that there is an estimated 1200 prescriptions for the highly addictive benzodiazepam, the drug closely related to ice. Do you agree there is a rampant overuse of prescription drugs in the prison system and, if you do, what will you do to curb their use?

**Mr CAMERON** — These are prescription drugs and medications and they have been prescribed by medical practitioners, and what has to happen is because they are prisoners the state meets the cost, where normally in the community when a doctor prescribes a drug the commonwealth picks up a substantial portion of that with the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. But I might ask the corrections commissioner if he wants to make some further comments about the matter.

**Mr ANDERSON** — I think there are a couple of points to make about that and I guess that it also relates to the comments I made earlier about women prisoners. Generally the research into prisoners' health shows — and it is consistent both nationally and internationally — that prisoners' health status is very low. There are high rates of physical and mental health issues and disorders that are detected, and on top of that you get the social and economic disadvantage. Together with those is the issue of substance abuse. This allegation about medication being used in prisons, and medication being used as a management tool in prisons, we reject. Prisoners are treated in a medical sense as patients, and doctors will prescribe only on the basis of the presenting condition that they see. Indeed that means that the whole range of medication pharmaceuticals are required to be provided in prison, as they are with any other group within the community. Is there overuse of these kinds of drugs? The way we ensure that that does not occur is the Department of Human Services has a prisoner health care unit which looks at and monitors the arrangements for health.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, this morning I was at my local traders' monthly meeting, and the issue of graffiti came up. I notice in one of your overheads is a new initiative regarding it called a graffiti initiative — \$4.5 million over three years for a graffiti prevention and removal. I assume this means we are going to get some of the people doing community orders or whatever being involved in this, and I am sure my local traders would welcome this, provided they are properly supervised. Can you tell us a bit more about this please?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. What we want to do is continue to ramp this up. What we see with a lot of people that are in the community corrections system is that they are required to do community work, and one of the things that is targeted and will be more so in the future is relating to clean-up — clean-up of graffiti, clean-up of the community. It is only fair that those people that are required to do community work have to go out and do it. So what Corrections Victoria has done is that they have had 8000 offenders to date do 775 000 hours of unpaid community work, and one of those things that they do is graffiti clean-up. To date 72 000 square metres of unsightly vandalism by these graffitiists, who are after all criminals, have been removed under the program. In addition they have removed rubbish and a whole range of other things around community clean-up. But I might ask the corrections commissioner if he wants to elaborate further on how he intends to direct community corrections to go about this business in relation to the program.

**Mr ANDERSON** — Graffiti clean-up — most people would have seen the handiwork of our community work gangs, but might not be aware that it was done by offenders on community-based orders. Partnerships have been established with a range of departments and municipalities. That includes the Department of Infrastructure, VicRoads, Yarra Trams, Connex, the Royal Children's Hospital, Scouts Vic, municipalities such as Geelong, Ballarat, Darebin, Yarra, Greater Dandenong, Moreland, Maribyrnong, Boroondara, Maroondah, Knox, Hume, Frankston, Greater Bendigo and the City of Melbourne. Each week we have teams out and targeting those hot spots for graffiti.

We are very mindful that the removal of graffiti does not impact on the use of water and the like, and so we have moved from water-based products — that is, to spray the graffiti off — to now moving increasingly to painting it out so that we are not putting a drain on the state's water resources.

**The CHAIR** — I know there were a number of initiatives announced in the last year or two, including tag databases and even a suggestion that we strengthen the criminal code against graffiti. I do not call them 'artists' — I agree with you that they are criminals.

**Ms MUNT** — Vandals.

**The CHAIR** — They are certainly vandals. It is criminal damage.

**Ms GRALEY** — It is vandalism.

**Mr CAMERON** — We have had an exposure draft, and we will be responding to that in the middle of the year or so.

**The CHAIR** — That will be good. I know that will probably be of interest, certainly in my community, in that regard.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to ask you about the relative cost of housing prisoners in the public and private prisons. You may have seen a table that your predecessor provided to the committee last year, which appeared in the budget estimates report and showed the cost of the daily recurrent cost of housing prisoners by each of the public prisons and then the average daily recurrent cost per prisoner for all the public prisons and all the private prisons, and you may like to provide similar information on notice to the committee. But my question is: can you provide us now with details of what the current estimate is for the annual daily cost of the prison providing for the prisoners by the public and the private prisons respectively and over the estimates period — the four years?

**Mr CAMERON** — Overall, looking at it globally, from the 2004–05 year to the 2005–06 year the increase in cost for a bed day was 1.6 per cent.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — That is for both public and private?

**Mr CAMERON** — That is the global cost. What you want to know in particular is how that breaks down into the public and private — that 1.6 — which ones are above and below I gather?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Yes.

**Mr CAMERON** — We are not able to do that. We will have to get you those more detailed figures. But that is the overall figure.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Probably on notice, do you also have estimates for the four-year estimates period of the same figure, for the public and private? Is that something you can provide us?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, we can put something together.

**The CHAIR** — Have a look at that. It may not be all that easy to predict of course.

**Mr CAMERON** — It may be a bit rough, but I think we will be able to do something or other.

**Ms MUNT** — Minister, I was interested in the presentation on the imprisonment rates for Australian states and territories and the difference in the comparisons here. ACT is 86.4 and Victoria is 99.7. I would have thought that the nearest state in comparison might be New South Wales — they are at 185.6. So I thought that was very interesting. The Northern Territory seems to have particular problems of its own. What are the factors that are factoring into, you know, pretty good results for Victoria compared to the other states? Would you be able to elaborate on that?

**Mr CAMERON** — Victoria traditionally has tended to jail the worst offenders, so that figure of 99.7 — and that is as a proportion of 100 000 people — has actually gone up a couple of percentages in the last few years. It has gone up slightly. But what you see at work there is really a long-term pattern, notwithstanding that small

increase. Obviously across the whole sentencing system, those who come out we have to manage. That includes not only those who are in prison, but also those who are on other orders. Those orders, for example, are intensive correction orders, community-based orders and there are also suspended sentences. But you will remember last year there was a change in relation to suspended sentences for serious offenders, which was already made, and the Sentencing Advisory Council flagged future changes down the track as well. Part of that is reflected in that jump that we saw in the latter part of last year in terms of prison numbers. But I might ask the corrections commissioner if he would like to make some other comments.

**Ms MUNT** — But regardless of those factors, Minister, it is still a pretty good figure.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Ms MUNT** — So I was wondering what the influences are on that.

**Mr CAMERON** — Key drivers.

**Mr ANDERSON** — In Victoria I think there has always been a tremendous level of confidence in community-based corrections, and so there is a range of options for the courts to choose from, and Victoria has always used imprisonment as a last resort. So the Minister's comments about those people that come into jail being the harder end of the market are absolutely true, and they are reflected not only here in the imprisonment rates, but later if you compare those imprisonment rates to recidivism rates you will see in some jurisdictions that we would think imprisonment a bit too easily, the recidivism rate is also low because they have simply been warehousing lower-level offenders that perhaps could have been dealt with in another way. So it is always a good result for Victoria and we maintain to that level. Indeed it has gone up slightly over time. It has bounced around between sort of 91 per 100 000, 95 and now down to 93.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Minister, there was a period when I was shadowing your predecessor, two predecessors ago, Mr Haermeyer, and in particular one of the issues that was of particular note for us, and indeed the community, was a thing called the prison design capacity. I know that was an issue and I have had that discussion with the commissioner in relation to that. That essentially means that if a prison has been built with, say, 100-bed capacity and then you put 120 prisoners in there, the desired capacity effectively is 120 per cent because you are 20 above.

Now I understand that there were — and having seen them — relocatables placed around the state and in particular the national measures always have a prison design capacity, unless I am advised otherwise, that measure has since been dumped by your predecessor two ministers ago, and I note on budget paper 3, page 167, the government changed from what they called the prison design capacity, which they used to get whacked on quite regularly, to now a daily prison utilisation rate. And surprise, surprise, that obviously is below or on target to what is expected by the government. Minister, are you able to provide to the committee the prison design capacity as measured nationally? Are you able to provide a list of the relocatables of the portable prisons that are currently still in place? I know some have been decommissioned or placed elsewhere — from memory, Ararat, or one of them that I went to had been decommissioned.

**Mr ANDERSON** — Decommissioned. We have decommissioned a couple.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Yes, you have decommissioned a couple. I was just wondering if you can give some indication of what the desired capacity is against the real prison numbers which we have to give some fair representation to, or do you have a view either way on my statements?

**Mr CAMERON** — This committee actually suggested that the design capacity be done away with.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Luckily I was not on that committee at that stage.

**Mr CAMERON** — So the department went off and did that and put in place the utilisation rate as a total of the prison capacity. So let us start there. What does that mean — the prison utilisation rate of a total prison capacity? So that is in any particular one year how many beds we are funding, and this is actually the percentage of prisoners who were taking that up.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — It is like when I went to the prison at Won Wron, for example, when that was decommissioned. I think that is now getting re-commissioned as a Koori-rebuild. The prison design capacity I think

was 127 from memory, yet when I went there you could not believe how many bunk beds and sort of how many beds were crammed into the prison.

Now the utilisation rate would be that it was not crowded, but those who are there would say yes, it was well above its design capacity. I guess it is a bit of a whinge of mine in the sense that you have dumped the measure — the committee previously has dumped the measure, I am advised. The other statement I made: is there a national measure; is that still the national measure? Maybe the commissioner might be able to indicate if it is. Maybe we as a committee should reconsider bringing back — —

**Mr CAMERON** — We will take it back and we will look at the design. I think part of the complication is prisons are designed to have so many beds, but they generally do not have that many beds in them. So if you go to a lot of cells, they are designed to have a multiple number of offenders, but actually less offenders get in there.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — And that is fine. For me that is fair because you have designed for that number and then there is less prisoners; for me that is a true measure.

**Mr CAMERON** — And that is what gives you your capacity in the future.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Yes.

**Mr CAMERON** — We will go back and have a look at that for you.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — In particular — I just want it on the record — is the national measure prison design capacity?

**Mr ANDERSON** — That was discussed by the administrators as recently as two weeks ago. Victoria has expressed its view that that is not an appropriate measure. Other jurisdictions will choose for their own purposes to use design capacity as a measure, so it will be patchy around the country.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So every state uses it? Are you able to provide, again on notice, if other states and what states do still — —

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I think it is important given that we have removed it to just review it as part of the assessment.

**Mr CAMERON** — Okay, we will come back and find that out.

**The CHAIR** — Get some comparisons.

**Mr PAKULA** — There was an earlier question, I think, from Mr Scott about the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre. I suppose just to expand on that about the issue of what transitional programs are in place to help prisoners reintegrate into society and not reoffend — just a bit more of an expansion on that.

**Mr CAMERON** — Not just in relation to women, but more broadly to the male population?

**Mr PAKULA** — No, more generally.

**Mr CAMERON** — Okay. I will get the corrections commissioner to take you through some of the key initiatives. Obviously managing people on parole is important. The work that the parole board does in making sure that people have some sort of plan in place before they get given parole, and having pressure on them to do that is important, as well as the funding that we give to a number of organisations.

**Mr ANDERSON** — Really this is not rocket science. It is clear that if people are transitioned out of an institution back into the community well and settled well, then there is a reduced likelihood of re-offence. We have had a couple of pilot programs that we have evaluated, and we have shown in those small-scale evaluations that there is a reduction in recidivism for people who have settled well into the community. The key elements appear to be around accommodation and employment, and the other element appears to be about the first nine months being a sort of critical period. There should be no surprise in that, it is fairly logical. In fact in the budget papers you will

see there is comment there about prisoners at least suffering disadvantage in a number of areas on reception, but two areas being housing, homelessness, and lack of employment.

To address those issues in the women's system, if we can start with that, we have integrated our system together, and we have pulled a number of programs together under what we have called the women's integrated support program. It is both a pre and post-release support service. It is a case-managed service and, again, provides for issues such as support for drug and alcohol abuse upon release and also accommodation and, in particular, employment. There is another employment program called women for work, and, again, that is to look for job search opportunities for women prisoners and women on community-based orders.

The lessons we have learnt from that program are now being transferred to our men's system, where we did have a fragmented approach to the service delivery, and, as of July, we will bring all those kinds of services together under what we are calling the men's intensive bridging support program. That is currently in the process of being contracted out. At each prison there is a transitional assistance program, where prisoners prior to release will go through a series of information sessions and checklists about what they need to be doing to find their way back safely into the community.

As part of that, the minister mentioned the old ways of doing things, of just releasing them, perhaps on a Friday night, with a plastic bag of belongings and half a dole cheque. We have worked very closely with Centrelink to provide a protocol which allows that first payment to be done in a way whereby people can access their money on release. We have also provided a number of publications like a *Getting Out* booklet, which is also part of our Koori information booklet process. On top of that we also have a series of grants we give under the Pip Wisdom community grants program, where we fund about 13 different initiatives in the community. The one that I would point to for next year which we are particularly keen about is we are also developing an indigenous transitional support program, which we will roll out through 07–08.

**The CHAIR** — I am sure Minister Jennings will be very interested in cooperating very fully with you, Minister, on that particular program.

**Mr SCOTT** — The question I would like to ask is about the application of technology in security arrangements. What new technological developments are being implemented in our prisons to strengthen the level of safety in particular?

**Mr CAMERON** — Security is obviously central to our prisons. One of the things about the modernisation that we have seen in our prisons over the last 25 years is security being much more effective. If you have a look at the medium and maximum-security prisons, it has actually been quite a while since someone was able to breach that. How many years would that be?

**Mr ANDERSON** — The last escape from a secure facility was in about 2000–01.

**Mr CAMERON** — It has been a while. That is obviously the envy of other states. But part of security relates not only to getting out but also to things getting in and in particular drugs — measures are put in place around that — as well as any weapons or explosives. To that end there has been a substantial increase in the number of dogs, for example. I might get the corrections commissioner to take you over the key initiatives that we are seeing.

**Mr ANDERSON** — We have had an injection of something like \$23 million in the past two years to upgrade prison security. That includes not only technology but extra staff resources. The minister talks about winning the battle against drugs and drug abuse. Clearly with the level of people that abuse drugs — the number widely quoted is something about 70 per cent of prison receptions are claiming that drugs played a part in the commission of the offence — it is not surprising that they will try to introduce contraband into prisons. A test of the success of our drug strategy is that we are currently running at about a 2.75 per cent result on our positive random urine analysis program, which is quite remarkable. I can report that all prisons are meeting their service delivery outcome — their benchmark — in that regard or bettering it.

To give you an idea of the level of this kind of activity, between July and December 2006 we in fact intercepted something like 212 items that people were trying to smuggle into our prisons. That included illicit drugs, weapons and the like. We have doubled the use of vehicle searches — that is, if people come to our facilities, we will, and they should expect that we will, search their vehicles. We have conducted more than 1000 searches with our

specially trained passive-alert dogs looking for things like drugs and explosives. On top of that, at the Melbourne Assessment Prison, at Barwon Prison and the remand prison, people entering these facilities go into a high-tech scanning booth which effectively is a drug-sniffing device. It is a bit of a shock for people the first time they do it, I am afraid, but that is obviously looking for drugs, narcotics and explosives. Having exited there they then go into a metal-detecting booth before they then have to front up to the iris scanner before getting access to the prison. All in all, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of technology in all our facilities.

**The CHAIR** — That is clearly very comprehensive. Thank you, Minister. Just a couple of other items I want you to take on notice. I would like you to provide what resources, both in terms of staffing and costing, the department will be anticipating spending on servicing the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in 2007–08, based on the experience over the last few years. I thank you also for your response to our questionnaire which we sent out. We focused very much on the estimates this time. But in regard to staffing matters, question 3.1, I notice you did not provide the figures for the CFA, the MFB and — I know it is not your area — the VLA and also the judicial officers. I know it may not necessarily appear on the department's accounts, but the costs for these services do actually appear in the budget, even if only partially, so I wonder if it could be provided in terms of the staffing. We would all like to know how many judges we have got and also how many people are in the metropolitan fire and emergency services.

**Mr CAMERON** — We cannot with LSB, but we can with our statutory authorities.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. I am sure the secretary will take on the other ones in other parts of the justice portfolio. That concludes consideration of budget estimates for the portfolios of police, emergency services and corrections. I thank the minister, the commissioner and departmental officers for their attendance today. It has been very comprehensive. Where questions have been taken on notice the committee will follow up with you in writing at a later date. The committee requests that written responses to these matters be provided within 30 days, and they will be considered to form part of a further report of this committee to Parliament. Thank you very much.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you, Chair, and thank you to your committee for your courtesy.

**Committee adjourned.**



## **Transcript of Evidence**

### **7.12 Gaming portfolio**

*The transcript for the hearing on this portfolio will be included in a future report of the Committee.*



## **Transcript of Evidence**

### **7.13 Police and Emergency Services portfolio**



# VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into budget estimates 2007–08

Melbourne — 11 May 2007

#### Members

Mr G. Barber	Mr G. Rich-Phillips
Mr R. Dalla-Riva	Mr R. Scott
Ms J. Graley	Mr B. Stensholt
Ms J. Munt	Dr W. Sykes
Mr M. Pakula	Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt  
Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

#### Staff

Business Support Officer: Ms J. Nathan

#### Witnesses

Mr B. Cameron, Minister for Police and Emergency Services;  
Ms P. Armytage, secretary; and  
Dr R. Kelleher, executive director, police, emergency services and corrections, Department of Justice;  
and  
Chief Commissioner C. Nixon, Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings on the 2007–08 budget estimates for the portfolios of police and emergency services and corrections. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Honourable Bob Cameron, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections; Ms Penny Armytage, secretary, Department of Justice; Dr Roslyn Kelleher, executive director, police, emergency services and corrections, Department of Justice; and Ms Christine Nixon, Chief Commissioner of Police. Departmental officers, members of the public and the media are also welcome.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council Committee Room.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. There is no need for evidence to be sworn. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to be verified and returned within two working days of this hearing. In accordance with past practice the transcripts and PowerPoint presentations will then be placed on the committee's website.

Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions related to the budget estimates. Generally the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off. I now call on the minister to give a 10 minute presentation of the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of police and emergency services. I understand you have circulated the overheads.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. Thank you, Chair and members of the committee. I have with me the people you have already outlined. As has been my practice on my seven previous appearances before this committee, I will answer the questions and then at times I will ask the relevant officer to also answer or further elaborate on those questions. You have a slide show. I understand you have it in your hands and we also have it on the screen. We will go through that with the 10 minutes that you have allocated.

#### **Overheads shown.**

**Mr CAMERON** — First of all, if we turn to the justice budget, to the whole budget for the department, just so that we can have a look at what that looks like. You will see that the bits that relate to this portfolio come to \$1.85 billion. The emergency services budget includes the government contributions to the CFA and also to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and also funding to the Victorian SES. It also includes allocations to the emergency services commissioner, BEST and departmental overheads. It also includes the CSESP, the community safety emergency support program, and also the valuing volunteers program.

When it comes to the police portfolio, that number there, that \$1690 million, includes the budget commitment that goes to Victoria Police as well as the budget commitment to the OPI, to Crime Prevention Victoria and a component to the infringement management system. In the 07–08 budget there is a total of \$272 million in new initiatives over four years, and they include funds which I am sure we will discuss a little bit later on.

The corrections portfolio represents 16 per cent of the budget of DoJ, which comes to \$500 million, and that includes the budget for prisons — both public and private — community corrections, corrections management, the corrections inspectorate and also departmental overheads.

If we go to the next slide, in terms of the police budget, and you will see there the increase that we have seen in recent years with the Bracks government in terms of the commitment of the Bracks government to the police budget.

If we go to the next slide, in terms of police numbers, and here you can see over the past decade what has occurred there at the end of each of those financial years, and you will see the increase in police that has occurred during the course of the Bracks Labor government.

We will go to the next page about the Victorian crime rate, and that is offences per 100 000. When it comes to population, you will see there the increase during the 90s, and what you see is a decrease during the 2000s, I suppose — during the noughties. So since 2000–01 crime has dropped around 22 per cent, and the largest reductions have been in residential burglary, which has fallen by 42 per cent, and motor theft which has fallen by 44 per cent. When it comes to recorded assaults there has been a big jump in the last couple of years related to recorded assaults, and that comes about as a result of the code of practice in dealing with family violence, and no doubt you might want to ask some questions about that later on. There has been a very large increase in the number of charges laid as a result of family violence where police have taken a much stronger line than what has occurred in the past.

If we go to the next slide about more resources for police, you see that we have got the biggest police budget that we have had in history of \$1.64 billion in the upcoming financial year, up 55 per cent, as you saw from the graph, from 1999–2000. There are also funds there to meet our commitments around new police during the course of this term, and also 25 specialist crime fighters. They are people who assist to fight crime, but they might be an accountant or a lawyer — —

**Ms MUNT** — Superman or Spiderman?

**Mr CAMERON** — Or someone like that. There are also funds for more forensic investigators and additional equipment, and also funds for eight new police stations; also to upgrade the Sunbury police station. There is another \$8 million not mentioned up there to refurbish St Kilda Road down at the crime department. We also have funds to provide police with improved weapons and equipment; the crime department that I have already mentioned down there at St Kilda Road, where there is a lease until 2012; \$10 million over three years to increase the police fleet by 100; and also funds for facial recognition technology, to roll that out over the course of the next 18 months.

**The CHAIR** — That's to do with the picture, is it?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, that is to do with the picture; Ken Spry on the left-hand side runs the criminal identification squad — and also some laptops for police.

Just turning briefly to the road toll, and if we have a look there. Over the years I think that has been a success story — pretty much bipartisan throughout; there have been differences at times — where you have seen a very large drop in the number of deaths on the roads, and in the latest report on government services done by the Productivity Commission, Victoria's rate of fatalities per 100 000 was 6.37, and that is actually the lowest of all of the states. Of course, we would all like to see that lower, but that 6.37 compares with the figure of 8.04 for the other Australian states.

We will go to the next slide in relation to the emergency services: ESTA, the telecommunications authority, now handles around 1.5 million calls for help a year; the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, 33 000 fires and rescues; the CFA, a similar number — 33 000 incidents, although of course in the last year we have had a very large incident over summer, as you will all be aware, where they did a fantastic job; and the SES, 10 000 emergencies and calls for help each year, attended to by the 5500 volunteers; and Life Saving Victoria, nearly 1200 water rescues.

We will just have a look at the number of volunteers: it has got the SES at 5500. We have a lot of volunteers across the state: life saving, 19 500; Country Fire Authority, 58 000 volunteers; and the coast guard, 550. Those people do a tremendous job, and Victorians take their hats off to them.

The CSESP program has continued. It has been a very good program. There is also funds for structural firefighters personal protective equipment — that is something we are committed to and we want to see that rolled out. There are funds in the budget for new and upgraded fire stations for both the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and also funds for the Valuing Volunteer Emergency Service Workers program.

I will touch briefly on the SES. It has 88 full-time staff and has been a statutory authority now for 18 months. It has a new CEO, Mary Barry, and it has its own board. As an independent statutory authority it is doing a fantastic job. You would have seen in the budget the large increase to their core budget as well as additional money for equipment and also to build, as well.

We had the bushfires over summer. This is really just a case of where we had fires, and you can see the blackened area out to the east. It is very large — nearly 1.2 million hectares — and one of the four largest bushfires that we have ever seen in Victoria. I will conclude, Chair: what we want to have is a modern, professional police force. We want to continue with the directions in the police force, where we have provided record resources to the chief commissioner, and we are seeing those results on the ground. Clearly, when it comes to emergency services we have good agencies, and we want to make sure that that interoperability continues to grow very strongly. It has been one of the success stories that we have had in Victoria with emergency services, and we are committed to continue it. Thank you.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister, for that presentation. As you go back through them, could you stop at the one on police numbers? Probably for the figures for 2000, there seems to be some transposition of the numbers, because it does not line up with the — —

**Mr CAMERON** — I see — with the graph here?

**The CHAIR** — Yes, correct.

**Mr CAMERON** — Okay. What have we got?

**The CHAIR** — You have got for 99, 9347; and the graph shows them as over 9400.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. It should be about the same. Well spotted!

**The CHAIR** — That is all right. I thank the deputy chair for that.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Any other errors we should be aware of?

**Mr CAMERON** — I suppose what we should say is that in the last year we thought there was only one extremely bad year, but it was actually two — as a result of the Kennett government! I thank Mr Wells for pointing that out.

**The CHAIR** — I would like to begin, as I have begun with many other ministers: what is the impact on productivity in terms of departmental spend, or your portfolio spend, including agencies for which you are responsible in the budget, and including in regard to new initiatives?

**Mr CAMERON** — I will just make some general comment. It is a broad question, Mr Stensholt, but clearly what we want to see is good value for the spend, which is something that we are committed to. But some of the productivity measures that you will see include additional forensic capability, so we have seen during the term of the government we have seen an additional 46 forensic people, and the government is committed to further increasing that by 25. That is obviously important, because those additional staff will deal with the predicted growth in demand for DNA samples, which is expected to grow to 45 000 by 2010.

What we have done is put investments into forensics, obviously, and what is expected as a result of that, additional equipment that will be acquired that can work quicker, is that the police expect that the processing capability will be at 50 000 samples per annum by that time. We have seen the I-face and the laptops — the initiatives I talked about there — with the facial recognition, so instead of using a whole lot of mug books, the facial recognition will be able to do that a lot quicker. In terms of additional police cars, that is going to be able assist police do their work as well as the capital works program. Again, if we have good facilities, then we see better productivity, but I might ask the chief commissioner in particular if she wants to elaborate on any productivity measures in the coming year.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — I guess we are always trying to work through ways, but the extra vehicles, as the minister made the point, obviously make a difference for us in terms of being able to respond and more effectively meet the community's needs.

Police station build is one — people work in good environments. We have seen the difference that makes. It is a far more productive process along the way. I guess with the forensics, just going back to that, there has been a substantial investment in forensic services. We think that is a better way of identification of offenders or potential offenders, so we think those sorts of continuing investments make a difference in the way we deliver services.



**The CHAIR** — Every time I go to the police station and have a cup of tea with them, and they are always very welcoming, I must say, but there is always the issue of paperwork and the amount of time they spend on it. I assume you have in your plans measures to streamline this and improve it?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We do, and I think we are continuously trying to work through that. It is not in this budget, but the previous budget — I guess it is, but it was announced previously — are issues around LEAP, and the replacement of that system will allow us to be far more effective in the way we do paperwork. We also have a major project within the organisation to look at, I guess, the face of a computer system and simplifying the data. We are looking at ways and means. We are trialling some systems at the moment to have the input of the data done more efficiently. I think what we are seeing, of course, is a need for greater data collection, but it is how you balance that with the members who want to be out to the ground. We have also invented a traffic information system which we have had some problems with, but we are again making that more streamlined so we keep cutting down the paperwork as best we can to make sure people are allowed to be out doing the job we want them to do.

**Mr WELLS** — Firstly, chief commissioner, congratulations on the outstanding work of the Purana task force. That has been absolutely outstanding.

Minister, I refer you to the total outputs cost of the major budget output policing services on page 155 of budget paper 3. I note over the course of the next budget expenditure on policing services that it is expected to rise \$83.3 million, but I also refer you to the secret deal that you did with the police union where the Premier and your predecessor committed the government to ‘conclude the next EBA negotiations by July 2007’. How much will this secret deal with the police union cost Victorians, what does the cost of the secret deal reflect, or is it reflected over the forward estimates period, and given that it is mid-May and it is supposed to be concluded by July, do you know what pay increase the police force will receive?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, you need to refer to the forward estimates and anything about presumed events during an election period — —

**Mr WELLS** — The deal with the police association is directly going to be reflected in the forward estimates, so surely it is a relevant question.

**Mr CAMERON** — I reject the basis of the question.

**The CHAIR** — I do not think that part is relevant. Answer to what extent you can in terms of the forward estimates.

**Mr CAMERON** — I reject the basis of the question. What we have done is given commitments and commitments to negotiate in good faith, and I understand you gave the same commitments, didn't you?

**Mr WELLS** — No.

**Mr CAMERON** — You gave the same commitments during the secret meetings that you had in a mansion — was it in Toorak or Kew? I am not sure.

**Mr WELLS** — We didn't sign any dodgy, shabby deal.

**Mr CAMERON** — Wherever it was, you gave a commitment — —

**Mr WELLS** — We did not sign any deals.

**Mr CAMERON** — And we said we would — —

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, if you could just maybe answer the question. How much is this deal going to cost the budget?

**Mr CAMERON** — We said that we would negotiate in good faith, and those negotiations are occurring.

**Mr WELLS** — But you would not sign a deal unless you had a fair idea of much it was going to cost the forward estimates.

**The CHAIR** — I think the minister is answering the question.

**Mr CAMERON** — If you say there is a deal, it will say what it is, but there is no deal. We gave commitments, and you cannot point to anything.

**Mr WELLS** — Okay, in this document it has ‘to conclude the EBA negotiations by July 2007’, which is only two months away, so surely they must be a long way down the track, or how is that process working?

**Mr CAMERON** — Those negotiations are ongoing and those negotiations between the chief commissioner and the police union are progressing. They are progressing well to date, but they are still not finalised.

**Mr WELLS** — So you have no idea at this point of how much the costs to the forward estimates will be?

**Mr CAMERON** — At this stage it is not finalised, and until it is finalised we cannot put any exact figure on it.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister.

**Ms MUNT** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3 page 151. It refers to changes to the output structure for 2007–08 and gives some examples there. I was wondering, could you give a little bit more detail, please, about those changes, what they mean and why those changes have been made?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Ms Munt. In relation to output changes as you are aware, they have occurred at a departmental level and also with the police so I might ask Ms Armytage to make some comments, followed by the chief commissioner.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Thank you very much. The department undertook a major review of our output structure because Treasury had indicated to us that they felt as a portfolio we had too many outputs for the level of our budget and the outputs structure at that time focused on our organisational arrangements rather than the services being provided under the portfolio. They requested that we undertake a major review, which we did. They also said at that time we had the second-highest number of outputs and output groups of all departments, and that our portfolio budget was the fourth highest in terms of the cost to government. They therefore said we had more outputs per million dollars of investments than other portfolios.

We undertook an extensive process of review to try and make sure that we streamlined those arrangements, and we are confident that the new performance measures that have been put in place and the accountability and transparency that goes with them will make sure that they are an effective representation of the work that we undertake on behalf of the community. We will make sure that there are records of actual results from previous performance measures so that we do not lose the perspective over time in terms of the changes that we have made.

**The CHAIR** — So in your response to the budget estimates questionnaire on page 21, you have got the details there including, but which are not included in the budget paper, the output groups?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — I refer members to that particular page.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, my question relates to the police checks for volunteers. I note there was a progress report in terms of the number of people tested, and I think it was mentioned in the thousands — the number of people detected with criminal records such as sexual assault was zero; there was an explanation given for that. But my issue relates more to the implementation of the checking procedure and the concerns that have been raised with me by members of the CWA, the RSL and the Red Cross. They are concerned about implementation, and there may be simply confusion on the part of people out there or there may be problems with the system per se. It is sufficiently of importance that I see in the Volunteering Victoria website on the 11 May this year, they make a comment:

The cost of police checks is also of concern for organisations working with vulnerable client groups. For organisations involving large numbers of volunteers in their activities or those with a high turnover of volunteer staff, the total cost of police checks to the organisation can be prohibitive. The lack of transferability of police checks between organisations is also an area of frustration for volunteers who work for more than one organisation.

They then made the recommendation to:

introduce a system of free police checks and investigate the feasibility of a system of transferable ...?

That is the conclusion they have got to. I am not sure that that matches up with how you believe the system operates, but the message is there is a problem out there in the community with the implementation, relating it to the budget. Is there an intention to review the implementation; has any funding been set aside to review it, to address these sorts of concerns?

**Mr CAMERON** — That was the working-with-children checks, was it?

**Dr SYKES** — Yes.

**Mr CAMERON** — Ms Armytage might be able to assist with that, as it relates to the Attorney-General's portfolio.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — It is a matter for the Attorney-General — he has principal responsibility — but a large number of volunteers are covered by that scheme. As a result the government made a decision to waive the fees that would normally apply to other employees or volunteers.

We have in the first year of rollout of that initiative focused on particular occupational groups — those people who are working in child protection, juvenile justice, as foster carers and others. We have had a large number of inquiries from other volunteers to make sure that they cooperate with the scheme, and we are continuing to process those applications. But because we have given particular attention to the needs of volunteers and to streamline that, once they get a card, provided they have either registered as a volunteer or an employee, and sometimes they are both — they might be an employee in one organisation — they can get a card that then allows them to work in those variety of roles once it has actually been issued to them.

**Dr SYKES** — What I am flagging to you is, as you have expressed it, not as many of the groups understand it. I suggest there is a need to take on board their concerns. If it is simply a communication issue, then that needs to be addressed. If there are fundamental issues —

**Mr CAMERON** — The chief commissioner might be able to help Dr Sykes.

**The CHAIR** — That would be good. Certainly members of Parliament would appreciate that, so we can tell the many groups that come through our doors in this regard.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Your second aspect of that question was around whether or not we are looking to issues around cost reduction or more streamlining of the process as well, and Penny has spoken to one part of that. But there is in fact a national project related to CrimTrac, which is the national system we would use to check other states and to check the national fingerprints system or the national criminal records system. There is a review on that at the moment, and various states have concerns about costs. Various states are looking to make it more efficient. Certainly Victoria has participated in that project, and that should be finished by early next year, and that may well also assist. It is a different issue, but it is about productivity, and it is about being efficient in the way we are doing these checks.

**The CHAIR** — Dr Sykes might like to take that up further with the Attorney-General as well.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, I am actually referring to one of the slides in the presentation.

**Mr CAMERON** — Which slide?

**Mr PAKULA** — The one about the crime rate. You have noted in that presentation a substantial reduction in crime over a period of years. I am interested in what you expect the future trends to be in crime and what you think are the major contributing factors to the downward trend that we have been seeing.

**Mr CAMERON** — Very clearly as a result of, I think, smart policing and the government providing record resources to the police, we have seen that combination result in the success of the reduction in crime. You would have to remember that this reduction has happened notwithstanding the changes that have occurred around family violence, where there are actually more incidents; more crimes are being recorded. That together is very important. Clearly smart policing and what the chief commissioner has been able to do — her organisation and the

determination of her organisation — is extremely important, and I might ask her to give her views on where the future lies and pick up on her future directions.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — I am happy to do that. It seems to me that there is a set of categories of crime that we have been working on quite successfully over time, and the minister has spoken about a number of those categories. I suppose in terms of the future, we think there are two categories we see are rising: one is property damage, and that is really around graffiti and those sorts of issues, and there are strategies in place for that. The other is around assaults, and we did predict some time ago — in fact at this committee some time ago I predicted the assault rate would go and that was on the basis of family violence and the underreporting of family violence. We think those kinds of categories are important to think about.

Other categories that we think will continue to go down are burglary. We also think that robbery offences will continue; it has had a bit of a blip, but it is continuing down. Homicide is in fact 20 per cent down this year — a small number of offences — so it has got some variability in it, but we think that that is another area.

Sexual assault, we are predicting for the future, might well go up, and we think that is really about a whole set of reforms within the criminal justice system that might encourage people in the community to report sexual assault who have not previously done so. They are the kinds of offences, but in the volume of offences we continue to predict downward trends.

**Mr BARBER** — Minister, I would like to ask about programs and activities under this year's budget designed to reduce the incidence of fatal shootings. Following on from Project Beacon in '94, we had Mr Brouwer's report in 2003. He said that Victoria Police had lost some of its strategic focus on safety in avoiding the use of force and he thought that some of the recent shootings had been prompted by a gradual reduction in officer training, particularly on how to deal with people with a mental illness, and he also recommended that police officers involved in fatal shootings undergo drug and alcohol testing after the incident. So could you provide for us, and feel free to do so on notice as well, the particular programs and activities you will be doing this year, perhaps into future budget years, and the money that is associated with those programs?

**Mr CAMERON** — I will make some general observations. You talked about the OPI review of shootings between January 2003 and April 2005 and there was a report at the end of 2005 which you have referred to where the OPI made 55 recommendations. Victoria Police has already implemented half of those and the remainder are being progressively reviewed as part of their long-term strategies.

In terms of fatalities, just to get it in perspective, since 1990 there have been 33 fatal shootings in Victoria. Ordinarily there has been 0, 1, or 2 or 3 shootings over the years, except during the mid-90s there was a very high year. You will remember that at the time. Victoria Police have done a comprehensive review of their practices in relation to mental disorder and clearly that is a very large issue when it comes to this, and in conjunction with stakeholders they have developed a mental health strategy to enable police to respond more effectively and appropriately to such people. That implementation will help Victoria Police to meet the OPI recommendations. I might ask the chief commissioner if she would like to elaborate further about that for the coming year.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We did obviously take on board the advice given by the OPI and we have looked at a range of areas. Obviously police training, as the minister made the point, we increased that, and to have members be aware of those issues. In terms of mental health we have in fact done an entire review of our current training and also our current strategies and practices of dealing with people with mental health issues because that in many cases has underpinned the shooting.

We are also looking at issues around tasers, which is part of it. We have introduced tasers — a 26 it is called. We have used that on a number of occasions and we found that to be productive, but at this stage its use is confined in certain circumstances and also to certain groups of people within Victoria Police. But we are still looking at that as to whether or not it could be expanded.

Any death is clearly a serious issue for us, and again to reiterate the minister's point, in 2006 no members of the community were shot; the year before it was three, and the year before, three — any of those are a concern to us. But ways for us to deal with the community, we have millions of contacts with the community each year and the vast majority, so you are talking a very small percentage of incidents where we have used our firearms, but we are very cautious about doing that, and looking at ways and means that we can reduce the kind of situations where police officers might find themselves where they in fact have to use their firearms.

**Mr BARBER** — Thirty-three since the 1990s was your figure. How much in the rest of Australia put together over that period?

**The CHAIR** — We can find that out — put them on notice, I am sure.

**Mr CAMERON** — We will see if we have got that. I do not know whether we will be able to help you, Mr Barber.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We do have that.

**The CHAIR** — Criminology people might have it.

**Mr CAMERON** — The police have it. We will be able to do it.

**Mr SCOTT** — My question relates to family violence initiatives which the chief commissioner touched on briefly in an earlier answer. Minister, in the context of the policing services outputs in the service delivery aspects of budget paper 3, can you provide the committee with details as to the trends, status and plans for police initiatives in relation to family violence?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you, Mr Scott. The code of practice for the investigation of family violence was introduced in the latter part of 2004. The code was really aimed at enhancing police responses to family violence. It focuses on the evidence gathered, investigation and laying charges where appropriate. In other words, in the past police would attend an incident, and people later might say, 'Well, don't worry about it' when they cool down. Police are now taking a much more proactive approach. Family violence is violence, and that is a crime, and as a consequence of that, the police have taken a different approach as a result of the code, which is something that government and police worked on.

Since that time there has obviously been a lot more charges laid. I take you to the 05–06 police annual report. Although the number of incidents attended has remained relatively static in the past few years, to give you an example — in 2003–04 there were 2627 charges laid as a result of police attendance; that increased in 05–06 to 7087. There has been a very large increase in the amount of assaults that the police have dealt with because they have treated these assaults as violence, and they wanted to send a very clear message to the community — as we have all wanted to send — that family violence is unacceptable, just as other forms of violence are unacceptable to the community.

In addition, since the start of July 2006 police now have a legislative power to direct or detain a perpetrator of family violence while police make a complaint for an interim intervention order, and as at the end of March this year police have used that on 879 occasions. So, again, that has been an effective tool. The next stage is presently being developed, so those considerations are being given to it. It remains an ongoing initiative. It is something that we all have to be prepared as a community to fight, and the government and Victoria Police are out there with the community in taking that battle up.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to ask you about the audit of resource allocation. Last November the Premier and your predecessor admitted in the document Mr Wells referred to earlier to undertaking an analysis of resource allocation of police officers:

The ALP (when in government) will have an analysis performed by Victoria Police to examine the current resourcing allocation of police officers. This analysis will be completed by 1 March 2007. TPA will be shown the analysis and the findings will be subject to ongoing consultation.

Has that analysis been completed, has it been shown to the Police Association, and is it made available publicly?

**Mr CAMERON** — What that commitment related to was a piece of ongoing work, which was already in place, where the chief commissioner was doing work around the police allocation model, the PAM, which also involved the police union. The chief commissioner put out the latest draft for further consultation back in February, as she always intended to.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — So this was not a separate commitment for a separate assessment?

**Mr CAMERON** — No, what we committed to was what the chief commissioner already had in train. The chief commissioner has been going about her business, as she previously told the government she would go about her business.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — So there is no other resource allocation analysis being undertaken?

**Mr CAMERON** — No, the chief commissioner is doing what she always intended to do — that is, she has put out a finalised PAM and, in addition to that, as part of that, she has to find out where the police are, and that was done back in February.

**Ms GRALEY** — I want to raise an issue of concern, particularly to Victorian women, about sexual assault initiatives. I am asking the minister if he can detail to the committee the relationship between the policing services of seeking a reduction in crime against the person and the trends and initiatives in the area of sexual assault?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Ms Graley. There was an updated code of practice in relation to the investigation of sexual assault going back to 2005.

The purpose of that code was to ensure that there was a coordinated response from all services, so that involved police, sexual assault counsellors and forensic medical officers. Since that time we have also seen two multidisciplinary sexual assault centres established, at Mildura and at Frankston. That is part of an initiative providing victims with better support and for the reporting of sexual assaults — to bring those together in those areas, which will be very successful. Two new sexual offence and child abuse investigation teams will provide specialised police investigation services.

In addition, in August 2006 Victoria Police, in partnership with Melbourne and Ballarat universities, commenced a five-year study to identify ways to improve police policies and practices in relation to sexual assault. What we have seen since 98–99 to the end of the financial year 05–06 is a relatively small, 9 per cent, decrease in the number of rapes and a larger decrease in other sexual offences, but this is an area where, as the chief commissioner has identified, we actually want people to come forward. These offences occur in the community. We want to make sure that they are being reported, they are being flushed out, so that people can be dealt with and also to set an example to others.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — This is an area that we certainly are predicting for a growth in the future. The centres that the minister spoke about, which bring together the CASA centres and police, we have launched one and there is another shortly to be opened in Mildura, to give an idea of what that would look like. But I think as importantly our other tranche, which is in the Attorney-General's department and the secretary has been responsible for working with, is about improved prosecution. It is also about coordinating the whole-of-government approach, particularly across the criminal justice system. So this area is benefiting from research, from understanding why people did not report and from understanding why police officers in some cases did not necessarily proceed when people have reported.

The research study that the minister pointed to is an ARC grant of \$1 million, with Ballarat university, to understand this piece of work. Actually it is an action research, so as we change out practices and systems they will be evaluated so we can continuously improve in this area. The research is quite strong about the underreporting, and it is the kind of offence, as you well know, that causes enormous damage to people for many, many years. So I think that is one part of it. What we are also seeing is a growth in people who are reporting old offences as well. So there is a set of people who perhaps are feeling more confident. That is why we are protecting the growth in the future in this area, in reporting and in action we will take.

**Ms GRALEY** — Who is undertaking the research at Ballarat uni?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Dr Caroline Taylor.

**Ms GRALEY** — I was hoping it was going to be her.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Yes, Dr Caroline Taylor. She, as you know, has both been a victim and has written about the subject and has survived the criminal justice system, and the fact is she is very keen and is working in partnership with us to improve our response. We clearly understand. We worked in this area as best we

could and have done some very good work but there needs to be clarity within the court system and also with prosecutions, and that is what is occurring.

**Ms GRALEY** — I am very glad to hear that.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Dalla-Riva, I am sure you have a special interest in criminal investigation, besides other things.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Thank you, Chair.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Once.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Yes, thanks for that. Minister, I refer you to page 410 in BP 3.

**Mr CAMERON** — Hang on.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — This is in relation to appendix C, the discontinued performance measures. I make the first note that there are 34 performance measures that have been dumped. One in particular that relates to the question I have further on is the increase in reporting of family violence incidents. I note that the target was 3 per cent for 06–07 — —

**Mr CAMERON** — Whereabouts? How far down the page?

**The CHAIR** — It is almost virtually in the middle.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Further down, the percentage. In 05–06 there had been a reduction at 3.6 and then you expect an increase of 3 per cent in reports. Also, below that, increase in reporting of sexual assault — you are expecting a 5 per cent increase in that. That aside, they are no longer going to be measures leading forward.

I refer you now to page 154 of the same budget paper. Bearing in mind the commissioner's comments about some of the explanations for that, in relation to quantity on that page, 'reduction in crimes against the person', the performance measure for 06–07 was 2 per cent reduction. The expected outcome is actually minus two; in other words, there was an increase of percentage. In 05–06 there was an increase in percentage of 4 per cent if you take the negative.

**Mr CAMERON** — And double negative.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Double negative being the positive. Given that the commissioner made reference to the fact that there would be an increase in reporting of domestic violence offences and also sexual crime offences, but bearing in mind that those are, in my view, of a small number, given that I have just referenced those in the discontinued performance measures, does that mean that in reality whilst you are arguing that you are reducing crime against the person, it actually has not been delivered as great as it has — given that we have seen increases in these crimes against the person in real terms?

**Mr CAMERON** — If you go the annual report of Victoria Police in 05–06 on pages 12 and 13, crimes against the person in 01–02 was 36 630; in 2002–03 crimes against the person 35 642; in the 03–04 year, 34 919; and then it jumps up over the last two years, as I mentioned at the outset, and in the 05–06 year you have got 40 421. If you go to the number of incidents where police attend, crimes family violence, on page 13, those numbers have remained relatively static — they jump up and down. In 05–06, 28 300, go back to 03–04, 27 672, so both similar. But what is different and what relates to the statistics is the number of people that are being charged. Go back to 03–04, the number of people charged was 2627; but go to 05–06, the number of people that were charged was 7088. In other words, it is almost a 4500 increase in the amount of charges that have been laid. Obviously that makes a bit of difference in relation to the reporting. Does that help?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I note — just finally, Chair — you are expecting in your target a reduction in crimes against the person again of 2 per cent. Do you think you will be on target for there or are there any sort of variations you anticipate, Commissioner or Minister, in relation to those figures?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Can I come to your question in a minute? But can I also say — I did not make the comment before and wanted to — part of the discussion I have had, a continuing discussion, with this

committee over the last six years — this is my seventh time I have been with the minister — is about these performance measures. Part of the issue for us in Victoria Police was to have a set of performance measures that actually meant something and that we were able to then use to drive the organisation to perform. I guess I called it measuring what matters. I have had a continuing discussion over time. Part of what we are seeing here is a change in a set of indicators. Those indicators are also relevant to the *Report on Government Services*. That national report has in fact changed as well, so the number of indicators has reduced. It just gives you a sense of perspective; I understand your point. We also report in the annual report, and the minister just used those figures. We also report in the crime statistics report. So in terms of our kind of figures then, that is, I think, a broad sort of way of explaining to the community and justifying why we would operate.

Your issue around sexual assault, I was asked was that about the future. I think we have seen some minor increases, and we have indicated that. I think that once we are able to put into place the changes around sexual assault reporting, then we do — that is my point about the future and expecting an increase in that regard. I think that is part of it. The domestic violence issue, we have watched over time some increased reporting and then some reduction. We still have a long way to go in terms of encouraging the community to continue to report, but what we are seeing is the change in the way the police are dealing with the ones who do report. We think that has implications in terms of reporting for multiple offences. You get, as you would recall, repeat offenders and repeat offences where, you know, you go to the same place seven times and no-one does anything about it.

What we are seeing now are in fact steps to put into place. We are in a change process as we work this through. It is also about educating police officers and evaluating and accounting for what they do. I suppose we are predicting in that sense — we hope — an increase in that reporting. The other increase in assaults, which are offences against the person, we are actually seeing increase in street assaults as well, and we are predicting some increases in that regard.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So it would be fair to say, Minister, in relation to the commissioner's comments that whilst the target is set at 2 per cent, there is a real chance that it may be — based on the evidence just given — that there could quite feasibly be an increase in the crimes against the person.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — In those categories.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Because of the range of issues that you have just brought up in terms of reportability.

**Mr CAMERON** — Reportability.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — If there is such a word — in terms of reporting.

**Mr CAMERON** — If we were American, it would be, so we had better take it back!

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I just made up that word, so I will claim it. I meant in the sense of those particular issues that you have discussed.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — To be open, the issue around street assaults is one where we are certainly seeing a rise, and we are doing quite a lot of work to figure out how we can actually look to reduce that, but we are seeing — particularly in the inner city area — a rise in that category.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Is that because of a lack of police numbers in the city?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — No, I think we are seeing a set of changes in the way people behave. We are certainly seeing, along with very much more openness in our cosmopolitan society in nightclubs and clubs, a whole set of those changes. I think there is a drug issue involved in it as well, and we think there is some more violence because of some of the drug issues, and we are seeing more of that about.

One of the interesting changes is actually around assaults by young women — actually being committed by young women and young women being assaulted. We have seen some increases in those categories. It is one we are watching at the moment because it is quite a different phenomenon for us. We obviously have a range of operations in terms of the city. Gasket at the moment is one which we started three or four weeks ago in the city, to look at that. But you are talking about volumes of people. I know most people do not go to the city at 2.00 in the morning, but most young people do not seem to leave home until about 12.30 at night, so you are now actually seeing quite a



large number of young people congregating in different places. Obviously what we are trying to do — and we have been very much thinking about this — is talking and having a whole community response around the way we deal with those young people, and then there are public transport issues about late nights and those sorts of things.

**The CHAIR** — Thanks very much. Minister, just continuing on looking at some of the outputs and deliverables, on page 154 of budget paper 3 in relation to the proportion of community satisfied with policing services — and of course this relates also to previous outputs under policing services and police integrity — I see there you have got what is actual for the last year's target and expected outcome and also a continued one. How do we rate in terms of other states, and how do you see this going forward in the future as well?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Mr Stensholt. Obviously community satisfaction is very important when it comes to police. People have to be — —

**The CHAIR** — They have to have confidence.

**Mr CAMERON** — It is much preferable that people have confidence in police, and fortunately what we have seen is a situation where people are very, very confident when it comes to Victoria Police. In the latest report on government services by the Productivity Commission, when people were asked were they satisfied or very satisfied, what we saw was 77.8 per cent of people saying they were satisfied or very satisfied, and that is significantly up on the national average of 74.6 per cent. Also, when they were asked about their most recent contact with Victoria Police, Victoria Police scored 85 per cent, and that is the highest in the nation. So we are very pleased to be able to see that. Obviously you have seen good work by the chief commissioner and Victoria Police at the local level, at the neighbourhood level and around police stations, and I think the work that you see with additional police out there, out and about, as a result of the record resources that we have provided to police has certainly contributed to that success, as well as the style of the chief commissioner and the way the police operate. Obviously the great challenge for the chief commissioner of Victoria Police is to try to keep it up there.

**The CHAIR** — So I take it with this new output or performance measure it actually now becomes a compilation of several ones you had before, including some of the police integrity ones and complaints et cetera, or what?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — The survey is a national one that we use, again, as a tool to drive the performance of the organisation. We set targets for customer satisfaction, and particularly the measure we used, as the minister pointed out, was the last contact with police in the last 12 months. I was delighted to see that Victoria actually took over from Tasmania in terms of the highest rating of any state in Australia. Just to put it in context, if you took it back during the time of 2004, our community perceptions of Victoria Police were down in the 70 per cent mark, and so what has happened over the last while is, again, a renewed community confidence, I think quite rightly, to the current rate. So it is one of the indicators. Again it is reported in the national studies and comparison to other states, but it is an indicator. There are other indicators, as you made the point about people's safety in their own homes. There is a set of those things which we have been testing nationally since about 2001–02, so that allows us to make some comparisons with our colleagues but more importantly comparisons with ourselves and to set targets in what kind of goals we set for the whole organisation.

**The CHAIR** — So those which we see in appendix C now become part of this single line one regarding general community satisfaction and includes the one regarding the contacts in the last 12 months.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — That is right, they do. But, again, they are independently released by the Productivity Commission and by the report on Australian governments, so they are available as well in more detail if people want them.

**The CHAIR** — Good. We will look forward to your next annual report.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, I just need to clarify something very quickly before I go on to my question. It is following up Gordon's question — —

**Mr CAMERON** — What was it about?

**The CHAIR** — It was about PAM?

**Mr WELLS** — In regard to the secret deal. So the resourcing allocation model that was put forward by the Police Association is exactly the same as the police allocation model that the chief commissioner was referring to? So we are not talking different models, we are talking just one model that the Police Association is happy with?

**The CHAIR** — Can you just repeat that question. I do not think it relates — if you are asking the minister to clarify what the police allocation model is, to which the answer is that the commissioner put the draft out in February, is that what you are talking about?

**Mr WELLS** — That is exactly right. Is that exactly the same model that was referred to in the record of commitments about the resourcing allocation of police officers; we are talking exactly the same model?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. Our commitment relates to the work that the chief commissioner was already doing. The chief commissioner put out the draft in February, and as part of putting out the draft you must set a formula about where you put people and on what basis. Part of that also was an understanding of where police are and how many are in each of the police service areas at the present time.

**Mr WELLS** — That has already been shown to the police union?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, and that is the subject of ongoing work.

**Mr WELLS** — In regard to my question, I refer the minister to the cost of the major budget outputs, policing services, on page 155 of BP 3.

**The CHAIR** — That is 1639.4 million.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, 1639.

**Mr WELLS** — And we have already discussed the crime stats being up since '99: sexual assault up 5 per cent, rape up 18 per cent, homicide up 36 per cent, and, as we have mentioned, assaults up 45 per cent. The police union has advised its members in February — —

**The CHAIR** — I do not actually think the minister said that.

**Mr CAMERON** — No, I did not say that.

**Mr WELLS** — No, I am saying that.

**Mr CAMERON** — We do not agree.

**Mr WELLS** — I am just saying about the quotes — that we have discussed assaults and we have discussed sexual assaults.

**The CHAIR** — Sure, but they have different figures.

**Mr WELLS** — I am only quoting official police stats.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Don't let the facts get in the way.

**Mr WELLS** — The police union advised its members in February:

The overwhelming majority of police stations have received no increase in numbers in the last four years and instead have had a reduction in numbers.

Minister, are you aware of the police union's own data which estimates an overall shortage of 650 police on the front line across the entire state, and would you agree with the police — —

**Mr CAMERON** — You are saying 655, are you not?

**Mr WELLS** — Six fifty plus.

**Mr CAMERON** — I think they use a figure of 655, yes.

**Mr WELLS** — If it is 655, I am happy to put that in.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr WELLS** — Do you agree with the concerns of the police union around law and order if we have a shortage of front-line police?

**Mr CAMERON** — When it comes to the 655, what the number was was an incorrect report which the police were going to use in the AIRC some two or three years ago?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — No, it was about a year or so ago.

**Mr CAMERON** — About a year or so ago, which was wrong, and the police advised that immediately. But that figure has been used. That figure is erroneous. The police advised straightaway it was erroneous. However, as a result of the chief commissioner's work about where police were in the different PSAs, which she put out in February, what it showed was there was an additional, there was around — 1200 on the front line?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Twelve hundred and sixty two.

**Mr CAMERON** — Twelve hundred and sixty on the front line. Those figures are out there about where they were across the state.

**Mr WELLS** — Just to clarify, the police union figure of 650 is totally incorrect?

**Mr CAMERON** — The 655 — —

**Mr WELLS** — The 655.

**Mr CAMERON** — The 655 came about from an incorrect document that the police had that they corrected soon after, and everybody was advised of that. The figure in relation to how many extras there are in the police service areas was done by the chief commissioner. That was part of the PAM, that was part of the resource allocation as to where people are, because obviously where people are is very important when you are talking about resources and changes in resources in the future. What that showed was 1260 extra in the PSAs.

**Ms MUNT** — Minister, I refer you to page 26 of budget paper 3 under 'Safety and crime prevention'. It is following on from the deputy chair's question, but with a different perspective entirely. It says:

... the government has increased police numbers by 1400 and since 2000–01, the crime rate in Victoria has fallen by 22 per cent. In this budget the government will provide \$87 million over four years for 350 new police officers and 25 unsworn crime fighters with specialist skills.

My question is: there has been a very large investment by the government in police numbers and police resourcing over the past six years; will this increased resourcing and extra police numbers continue to have that positive effect on the reduction in the crime rate? Does a plateau get reached or does a point come where other resources might be appropriate? Or will this extra resource continue to have that good effect?

**Mr CAMERON** — As you alluded to about the 1400 police, where we promised that additional 1400 in our first term, and our second term come to that, and now in this term an additional 350, certainly it is our hope that with the good work that has occurred with the government providing record resources to police and the work of the chief commissioner and all of her crew, who do a fantastic job across the state, we can go even further and reduce crime even further.

Certainly I can say that that is the commitment of the chief commissioner and the senior members of her team. I think if you go around police stations around the state people are pretty determined to get out there and try to nip crime in the bud. Clearly we also want to see people not commit crimes in the first place. We want to see people going about their behaviours. Part of that, for example, which we will come to in an hour's time, is that we want to see less recidivism when it comes to prisoners, and we are seeing that. Obviously there is a whole range of irons that are in the fire, but that is our commitment, and the chief might want to expand on that further.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — She does. We have obviously a focus. We had an agreement with a five-year plan with the government, and that plan had certain indicators to be met. That plan becomes finished at the end of

this year. There are a number of indicators in it; we have met all those indicators. So we are in the process now with the community and on behalf of the government developing another five-year plan. That allows you a capacity to target and focus. There are a number of people in Victoria Police who have occasionally said we have probably got as far as we can, but I do not think that is the case. I think the evidence says that we can continue to focus.

Our four key focuses are, obviously, on reducing crime, on reducing deaths and serious injury on the road, as well as customer satisfaction. So, by using this data and driving the organisation and the commitment within the organisation, the additional resources allow us to do things differently. If you take the work of Purana which the deputy chair spoke about, again a very substantial number of offences where people have been charged, and obviously there were a number of murder offences involved in that. We would use the resources and the money to continue to drive down all levels of crime, whether it is organised crime, but I have made some points about sexual assault and family violence issues which in fact will probably go in the other direction, and we think that would be a positive step.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, I wish to talk a little bit about the bushfires and the CFA. If you look at this map —

**Mr CAMERON** — The picture that we did, yes.

**Dr SYKES** — The second-last slide. Just from a visual point of view it looks like a large percentage, if not the majority, of bushfires occurred in the identified area, in fact on public land, and certainly if you just look at the area burned I think it is quite clear that a large proportion of the fires burned on public lands. As we all know there was a massive CFA input and general volunteer input into those fires, particularly the big ones in north-east Victoria and Gippsland, for the benefit of all Victorians. What I am interested in is the funding of the CFA. How much of it comes from the general taxpayer, and how much of it comes from the fire services levy?

I refer you to a letter that has been sent to me by one of my local CFA groups. It is a response to some communications that you and I have been having, but in essence he is challenging the inference by the current government that it provided all the increase in budget funds in 1999 from 113 million through to 226.9 million in 2006. I will give you a copy of the letter so you can follow it.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thanks.

**Dr SYKES** — In fact you have the original?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Dr SYKES** — What he is saying is that in real terms the government may have approved these increases. However, the community contribution through these levies has increased from two-thirds to almost three-quarters of the approved budget. In dollar terms the community contribution went up from 75 million in 1999 to 170 million for the 2006 year, while the government contribution for the same period went up from 38 million to 56. So he is suggesting that the community contribution is increasing substantially. He acknowledges in the second-last paragraph that there is additional government commitment to other activities. In essence, my question is— and you may need to take it on notice: what is the break up of the actual CFA funding? How much comes from the fire services levy, and how much is coming from the general taxpayer?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, in regard to the particular break-up, it is actually not a levy; it is actually a contribution from insurance.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. So obviously — —

**Dr SYKES** — It is called the fire services levy.

**The CHAIR** — It is called that by the insurance company; it is a misnomer.

**Mr CAMERON** — That is what the insurance companies call it, and the way that came about historically was because the insurance companies benefited as a result of fires being put out, and obviously they had less payouts. What happened back when the formula was set many years ago — and it is set in the legislation that the state puts in 22.5 per cent and insurance companies put in 77.5 per cent. So if the state puts in more, the amount from insurance is more or less. So they move in exactly the same proportion. But as you say, in addition there have

been those other funds. When you come to the bushfires over the course of last summer, obviously given they were essentially on public land, as you said, DSE had a lot of expenses which are state-only expenses as well.

**Dr SYKES** — Yes, but I think — —

**Mr CAMERON** — But when it comes to the CFA — —

**Dr SYKES** — I am not questioning the big input by DSE; there was a big input by CFA. So the clarification is that the general funding rule is that the state contributes 22.5 per cent?

**Mr CAMERON** — And that is set in the legislation.

**Dr SYKES** — And so — —

**Mr CAMERON** — So they move in proportion to each other.

**Dr SYKES** — So the 160 million that is flagged in this budget — that is to emergency services?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Dr SYKES** — That is the state contribution?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Dr SYKES** — And for CFA — —

**Mr CAMERON** — It will be the corresponding proportion, as under the legislation, by the insurance. So that 160 figure — —

**Dr SYKES** — Is only state?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. But that was not just for the CFA; that was for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the SES as well.

**Dr SYKES** — Okay. I understand.

**Mr CAMERON** — But the Metropolitan Fire Brigade has a different proportion, and we fund the SES.

**Dr SYKES** — It is intended for the SES to remain under that full funding by the state, or is there some other formula envisaged?

**Mr CAMERON** — There is nothing that I have discussed about that.

**Mr PAKULA** — Again on the policing services output — and I suppose it is another variation on the question about increasing police numbers — what do you estimate the turnover in police numbers might be over the forward estimates, particularly over the 2007–08 year? What has been the trend over time, and how does that compare to other jurisdictions within Australia?

**Mr CAMERON** — Obviously one of the things that reflects the health of an organisation is the turnover in the organisation. If you have got a large turnover, obviously you have a problem, but pleasingly in Victoria our turnover rate is relatively low.

When you look at our attrition rates, they have consistently been below the national average in recent years. If we go to 05–06 — and I have got those figures here — the Victorian attrition rate was 2.79 per cent, and that was the lowest of all the Australian jurisdictions and well below the national average of 4.3 per cent. So when you have got an attrition rate that low, and you have to think about people having to retire, essentially you have got people wanting to stay in the force, and I think that is a credit to the force that it is able to hold people for that long.

In addition to that, when you have got to look at Victoria Police and say, ‘A lot of people clearly want to stay there’, also a lot of people want to join. We have got the longest queues in the nation, of people wanting to join a

police force, and obviously that reflects very well on the organisation. You go to some other states, like South Australia or — —

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Western Australia.

**Mr CAMERON** — Or South Australia. I think they are trying to import English — —

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Three hundred of them.

**Mr CAMERON** — They have to go out and try and import English people, but we are not in that position.

**Ms MUNT** — Scarce of bobbies.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. If you go to South Australia do not be surprised if you get an accent if you get pulled over.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to ask you about Victoria Police's handling of the Neal HIV case and the issues surrounding that. We had the paedophile inspector for Victoria Police needing to raid the Department of Human Services in order to carry out Victoria Police's functions. Can you tell the committee, please, what was the cost to Victoria Police of that action in terms of legal cost resources et cetera, to take that action against DHS, and has the protocol with DHS now been resolved to ensure that those situations do not occur again?

**The CHAIR** — Mr Rich-Phillips, you might wish to rephrase that in terms of the estimates and the budget.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Certainly. Page — —

**The CHAIR** — We normally deal with past events in the accounts in the annual reports, but — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Certainly. Page 155 of budget paper 3 shows the appropriation of \$1.6 billion for police services.

**Mr CAMERON** — In the coming year.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — I am keen to ensure that those resources are used appropriately, and in that context — —

**Mr CAMERON** — When it comes to — —

**The CHAIR** — Can you answer in terms of protocols?

**Mr CAMERON** — In relation to operational matters, that is a matter for police. Do I know how much it is? No, of course I do not know how much it is — it is not a matter that you would expect me to know. But when it comes in relation to protocols between police and DHS — I think that was the gizzards of your question — in particular which protocols are you referring to?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Protocols to ensure that what happened with the Neal case does not reoccur. We understand in the appearance of the Minister for Health, that with the protocol there is some progress. I do not know if you or perhaps the chief commissioner is able to expand upon exactly what is happening from Victoria Police's perspective in resolving that issue?

**Mr CAMERON** — Those discussions have been taking place.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — In terms of executing warrants on other government departments and sometimes other organisations, that is actually a process that is sometimes used for legal reasons, so it is not unusual for us to execute a warrant to gain access to information. For various reasons it is sometimes seen as the most appropriate way to do that, so that is not unusual.

The second part is we do in fact now have protocols developed between the Secretary of the Department of Human Services and me to be able to make sure that there are good, positive working relationships in the way we proceed on a set of issues relating to DHS.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Are those protocols now in place?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — They are. We are distributing those now to have people working in these environments understand the arrangements in place.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — I guess you appreciate from a public perspective it is fairly unedifying to have resources spent by one arm of government — Victoria Police — pursuing warrants against another arm — DHS. Are you able, as chief commissioner, to tell the committee the cost of that in relation to the Neal case?

**The CHAIR** — I think we can take that up in public accounts.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — It was public accounts.

**The CHAIR** — We are dealing with the estimates here today.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Are we having hearings for public accounts?

**The CHAIR** — You are able to ask questions and send around questionnaires.

**Mr SCOTT** — My question refers to budget paper 3, page 269, in regard to increasing police resources, particularly in terms of technology. The budget paper details a number of initiatives which could be described as high tech policing — things like facial recognition technology, laptops for crime scenes, forensic service and equipment for state-of-the-art policing vehicles with digital cameras. Could the minister describe to the committee how these measures are to be applied to the goal of community safety and crime prevention in the budget output measures detailed?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thanks, Mr Scott. Obviously the increasing sophistication of criminal activity and also developments in technology require different approaches, and that is certainly what we in police want to be able to do. To that end in recent years we have invested significantly in new technologies for crime surveillance, improvements to the IT system capabilities, both to integrate and extend existing data holdings. For example, that might be the integration of intelligence systems into one system interface, which enables the utility of the system. There are improvements to road policing technology, including the world first roadside drug-testing equipment, in-car video facilities and new digital camera technologies. We will see improvement to crime analysis tools, such as forensic automation. The 07–08 budget builds on these capabilities by providing further funding for facial recognition technology, laptops for crime scene investigation and forensic equipment. The reason we do that is certainly to enhance policing services. For example, with DNA automation, that tool is expected to speed up the processing and that will be critical to increased demand for and reliance on analysis for specific offences. The facial recognition technology will speed up the review of mug shots by essentially doing away with the mug shot books, which can take an age, if ever, to be able to locate someone. Laptop computers will assist crime scene investigators more efficiently to gather evidence, and the in-car video system will aid the prosecution of road safety offences and assist support improvements to policing practices. These are all important technologies. Nothing stands still, and we have to be prepared to adapt with the times.

**Mr SCOTT** — Could I seek one clarification?

**The CHAIR** — Yes.

**Mr SCOTT** — The facial recognition technology, is that in the things outlined I know in the UK with CCT technology — —

**Mr CAMERON** — There are different technologies around the world. and this will put us at the forefront. There are a few places at the forefront, and certainly during the trial here in Victoria we have had visits from other countries, including the English, but South Africa and Indonesia as well, I think, and maybe Malaysia — they have come and had a look at what we do, and certainly it can be beneficial in a whole range of areas.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Minister, I refer you to BP3, pages 155 and 154, just the general policing services. There was a commitment by your government on 22 August 2005 — in fact by the Premier — in a press release stating:

Premier announces statutory body to manage LEAP.

I think it follows a range of LEAP issues which we are all aware about.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — The Premier said in his release that:

... preliminary estimates by the government's CIO —

chief information officer —

of the cost of the new database were around \$50 million.

My understanding is that they expected to apply the \$50 million over the course of the next three budgets, which would include this budget. Given we have had a recent leaking of the confidentiality database files where it has been alleged that the LEAP had been altered by a person employed by the Victoria Police with alleged links to the Melbourne underworld, can you identify, given that there obviously are still some concerns about the LEAP database, where in this year's budget papers this expenditure is, and how much has been spent so far of the promised \$50 million?

**Mr CAMERON** — Within last year's budget? I will just take some advice.

I might take it on notice, but apparently it was announced in last year's budget, including the time frame or — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So there was \$50 million allocated last year.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Over a period of three years — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Over a period in which you — —

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — But the initial funding and the initial work, we have a project team on board to look to develop the new system and so we expect that the major amount of that money in fact would be spent towards the end of next year.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So that is why there is no indication in the current budget?

**The CHAIR** — It has gone into out-year costs from last year.

**Mr CAMERON** — It was in this year's appropriation but the initiative was announced last year

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — And are you expecting to have the project completed within that three-year framework or less, and how is it looking? Are we down the track with LEAP?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We certainly are expecting it to come into play. We are obviously looking to overcome a number of problems. The issue of auditing has been part of the requirements but so is to make it in a more efficient, more easily used system, but in terms of your other comment about misuse of the system, that particular case you referred to is actually about a criminal records case. That is being investigated at this stage, so I do not wish to go any further on that. But in terms of actually misusing the LEAP database, which is our current operating system, the commissioner for law enforcement does security, which came into place as you said, a statutory function, has in fact recently reported a reduction in the misuse. We are still doing the same auditing. We are still working on the process of changing it, but there has been a reduction. We think that we may have turned the corner about people understanding it.

We have also charged a substantial number of police officers who had in fact misused it and fined them and taken various other steps against them, as well as a whole set of other educational tools and cutting off access to a range



of people and so on. We are trying to make sure that the database is protected. We understand as well as the committee should that we are working very hard to protect that, and the new system will help.

**The CHAIR** — So the message is getting out.

**Mr CAMERON** — In relation to the question that was asked about LEAP, during the break I got the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report from last year. The commitment last year was for \$59 million over four years, which takes us up to the conclusion in the 09–10 financial year. So just to clarify that and save us reporting back later.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much for that.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Sorry, it is expected to be finished in?

**Mr CAMERON** — To be completed in the 09–10 year.

**Ms GRALEY** — Minister, I would like to relate this question to the output measures for contributing to perceptions of community safety, and my question is around hoon driving, which I think from memory, standing in my mobile office at Hampton Park during the election, was an issue that was raised numerous times with me. I am just wondering if you could comment on how police have been dealing with this issue to date and what measures we can look forward to.

**Mr CAMERON** — The Road Safety and Other Acts (Vehicle Impoundment and Other Amendments) Bill 2005 came about to reduce the risk posed to the rest of the community by hoon drivers, essentially. So basically what we wanted to do was crack down on hoon drivers. What we have seen across the state is hoons that have been dealt with on the spot where their car can be impounded for 48 hours for a first offence. The effect of doing these things on the spot hits the message home a lot earlier, especially with young fellows. You know, no matter what you do, when you have got young fellows in cars there is always going to be a certain percentage of them who are going to be revheads to the detriment of the rest of the community.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, that is sexist.

**Mr CAMERON** — But it is also true — so true! Yes, there will be some women, but if I just stick to the essential problem.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — The big hole.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, the big hole problem. What happens is when police have done this it has reduced some of them to tears on the spot because their prize possession has been parted with, and it has actually hit home immediately. When you have a look at the numbers of cars that have been impounded since 1 July last year to the end of April, there have been 1625 impounded and 788 of those have been probationary licence-holders. That might also reflect in relation to the age demographic. In addition there have been — —

**Ms MUNT** — And boys? Males? A gender breakdown?

**The CHAIR** — Is there a gender breakdown minister?

**Mr CAMERON** — A gender breakdown? No, they have been a bit politically correct on that front. I do not have the gender breakdown.

**Ms GRALEY** — Take it on notice for Dr Sykes.

**Mr CAMERON** — Anecdotally, very, very high when it comes to young males. There have been 41 repeat offenders. That is a small number, the police thought that the recidivism rate would have actually been much higher than that, so while we do not want any repeat offenders, they are actually pleased with that and it demonstrates that the message has got through to most hoons, but police will continue to pursue this because hoons are a menace to the community and to social amenity by the noise that they cause, but in addition they are a danger to themselves and to others on the road.

**Mr WELLS** — I refer the minister to the forward estimates in budget paper 4 where it is budgeted that there will be an estimated \$50 million increase in fines over the course of the next budget period.

**Mr CAMERON** — Which page are we on?

**Mr WELLS** — \$50 million in fines.

**Mr CAMERON** — You are on page 145.

**Mr WELLS** — Yes. I note that during the past week in an interview with the Premier on the Neil Mitchell program, the Premier acknowledged that despite the overall drop in the total number of deaths on Victorian roads, deaths on Victorian country roads had actually increased. Minister, how can you justify the current government's speed camera policy is not a targeted revenue raising exercise when the government insists on increasing the already high level of speed camera surveillance on revenue-rich, zero-to-low fatality metropolitan roads, instead of placing speed cameras where they are most needed on high-fatality country roads in the interests of genuine road safety?

**Mr CAMERON** — If we go back and have a look at the budget papers about what was budgeted for in relation to police fines of \$416 million in 06-07, compared to the budget estimate for 07-08 of 419, it is a 3 million increase. However, the actual revised amount in 06-07 is going to be lower and that is because the Western Ring Road and the Hume, for example, came on later on.

Now I hear what you say about the revenue raising, because you have said that for a long time, but of course that is wrong. Let us have a look at speed cameras. They cut crashes and they save lives, and this was actually the subject to an Auditor-General's report, which I think you called for, from memory, for quite a long time. So I will take you to that Auditor-General's report of July 2006 and to what the Auditor-General had to say here. I will perhaps go to the gizzards of it. In the executive summary on page 5 he says, and I quote:

We are satisfied that the speed enforcement initiatives are underpinned by strong evidence and are primarily directed at reducing road trauma, rather than raising revenue.

We found that decisions about the speed enforcement initiatives in the Arrive Alive strategy were based on an extensive body of research.

Let's have a look at it. This is what speed cameras do; they slow people down and they save lives. When I started, during the slide show I showed you the figures of the different initiatives and you have seen what a difference speed cameras have made. If you have a look at the last four years, over the last four years we have had the lowest road toll ever.

If we go to the issue of country roads and I will give you the latest statistics. These are from Victoria Police, having a look at the year to date. In the year to date we have had 110 fatalities, unfortunately, but that compares to 119 last year, so across the state we are 9 down. But when we have a look at the country figure this year — we are at 50, and that compares with 62 last year. In the country this year we have actually seen a marked decrease, and in the metro area, I think, that will make it 2 higher.

**Dr SYKES** — That is just in the last 12 months, but if you go back — the pattern over the last six years, does that stack up?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, it does. If you have a look at the five-year average in the country for this time, the five-year average is actually 66, and this year it is 50.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. I would like to take up the issue of organised crime, which has been mentioned earlier. Certainly this committee, as the deputy chair has mentioned, very much appreciates the efforts there as part of the policing service delivery, the work going on there. Could you give us more information on the progress the various task forces, including Purana, are making and the impact and the ongoing process over the future estimates period?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you. I will just make some preliminary comments and then ask the chief commissioner to make some comments, Mr Chairman. The Purana task force has been successful, and that was established in May 2003. I think at the time there were some people in the community who were questioning the ability of Victoria Police to get on top of that. Certainly I have heard the chief commissioner express that view. But

what the police have been able to do with Purana is reassert public confidence as well as produce results through the Purana task force. I think Mr Williams's sentence in the last week has helped reaffirm in the community the success of the Purana task force. Certainly I rang the Purana task force to congratulate it on concluding another chapter, but of course while that is one chapter, there are other chapters that have been had and still to be had. I might ask the chief commissioner to make some comments.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — Just in terms of the Purana task force — we have not often had a chance in a sense to talk about the work it has done. The Purana task force will continue. It has certainly done a terrific job to start with. You are talking about 157 offenders charged with 485 offences, 14 offenders being charged with a total of 25 counts of murder, 10 offenders being charged with incitement or attempt to murder, the laying of 292 serious drug charges and \$19.2 million worth of assets restrained. So it has been a very successful model.

We actually have other task forces that are not quite as high profile, but they have been working on a series of issues relating to drug offences, frauds or those matters as well. What also happened with the Purana task force was — in a sense it was an interim response to a major issue about major crime. What we have done since then is rethink our model about how to deal with the management of major crime, done a lot work, looked overseas, worked with other federal agencies as well, to think about the way we should go forward. And we are certainly benefiting from that.

We are now 12 months into that new model. It has had some questioning about it, but we believe it is a good way to think about how we use our resources, how we fund, how we actually get better results than perhaps we had previously. We think we are better placed for that broad range that will occur. We are seeing increases in drug offences; we are also seeing a different kind of drug offences. We predict in the future an increase in fraud offence and this kind of area. So they are the things we are better placed to be able to deal with than we were previously.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, they are very interesting figures. I hope they are taken notice of in the media and in the public, because the work of the Purana task force and also the other task forces has been excellent.

**Ms MUNT** — There has been a good conviction rate too, hasn't there?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — There has been a very good conviction rate too. You put a huge amount of effort into these matters, and if you took the courts sentencing — certainly the more recent sentence on Carl Williams, I think, was an important, I guess, notice to the community about the way that the courts and the community feel about these kind of offences.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to ask you about funding for the CFA. It is something the Treasurer touched upon in his speech — the work that volunteers do in the community through the emergency services. In particular, I have received a copy of an application from the Patterson River fire brigade to the City of Kingston for a grant under the community grants program. They were seeking roughly \$4000 from the council for the supply of a rescue cutter to be used in rescue activities that the CFA is involved with. If the CFA is being properly resourced by state government, why do they need to go cap in hand to local government and community organisations to get funding for the purchase of essential rescue equipment?

**Mr CAMERON** — What happens is the CFA provides basic equipment to CFAs. We have seen the budget of the CFA nearly doubled, and as you go around CFAs you will see a substantial expansion of equipment that relates around the place. But I understand that at Patterson Lakes they wanted to acquire some type of angle grinder to assist with the community. I think that is why the application was made to the City of Kingston.

The Patterson Lakes council can apply to the CSESP; of course that has been a very successful program of this government. What occurred previously was for equipment that the CFA did not assess as essential, and they are CFA operational matters, they would have to fundraise that themselves. The CSESP has been a very successful program in terms of assisting with what I will call community equipment as distinct from what the CFA regards as operationally essential equipment.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Do you know — you said it is an operational decision — what criteria the CFA has used? I assume they have developed a base kit of equipment for each brigade. I am surprised that something like that is not included among it?

**Mr CAMERON** — I could not tell you off the top of my head how they do that operationally, but we can make some inquiries, if you would like.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Thank you.

**Ms MUNT** — Minister, I am a big fan of *CSI* and I watch it — —

**Mr CAMERON** — There are a lot of others who do, too.

**Ms MUNT** — Yes. My question relates to increased resources for forensic services. It is mentioned in budget paper 3, page 26 — 7.1 million over four years for 25 additional forensic officers and 1.7 million TEI for new forensic equipment. There has been some press over the past 12 months or so on backlogs in the forensic work that needs to be done. What impact do you think this funding and extra forensic personnel will have on that?

**Mr CAMERON** — DNA profiling is obviously one of those things with new technologies, moving to a new age and using new technologies to assist in crime detection. DNA has certainly done that. The profiling that has been around over the last 10 years and used in relation to criminal cases has obviously been dramatic. The effect of it has also been dramatic in terms of solving crime and also making convictions a heck of a lot easier and more secure.

During the course of the Bracks government you have seen an increase of some 46 staff at police forensic. Obviously that affects capability. But what you have seen as a result of the budget, the \$8.8 million of initiatives that you referred to — the 7.1 and the 1.7 million; those two initiatives that you talked to — that is about being able to assist in a range of things at forensics. At forensics they would expect by 2010 to be sampling some 45 000 samples a year. They expect as a result of the measures that they put in place to be able to do 50 000. This is important. DNA assessment is important, and that is why that budget commitment came about. Do you want to add anything?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — I think what we are also doing in terms of that broader forensic — the DNA has been a major advance, but so have just our ways of more efficiently understanding how to use forensic evidence and the ways that we put evidence before the courts. In some cases courts make the comment about the delay. This certainly makes an advance on that, but so does our thinking about where you might get DNA evidence from and how you might triage better. We have money for a new forensic information system to be able to manage cases more effectively. They are all part of the process, and then there is another part which is really not far from being produced, and that is what is called a minimum nationwide person profile, which is access to information that comes out of a lot of that kind of forensic information — fingerprints, photographs et cetera — which allows police officers to use that information on the ground in terms of crime prevention and investigation.

It is a major area for us, and one that takes a lot of finance — and I understand that — but it also means we need to be continuously making sure that we are using the skills effectively. The robotics part of analysis — using robotic technology — we are obviously trialling it. It is not as if it happens anywhere else in the world and it all works perfectly well. We are certainly looking to have that technology in place and be able to more quickly identify DNA. We now have better procedures of sharing DNA information, so it is a much better model, I think, than in terms of previously. I wish it were at the standard of *CSI*.

**Ms MUNT** — Interestingly enough, the blue light that they use on the television program — —

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — The luminescence, yes.

**Ms MUNT** — It actually comes from a manufacturer in my electorate who lent it to them and never got it back.

**The CHAIR** — Chief Commissioner, I think that might be out of your jurisdiction, I'm afraid.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, I would like to come back to the graph on Victorian road deaths. My colleagues would be most disappointed if I did not raise the issue with you. I have no question about any statistic you have quoted so far. What I would just like to do is make sure that we truly understand what is going on. The drop between 2001 and 2006 from 444, 397, and then it has gone down to about 330, 340 — it is my understanding that that drop is almost entirely due to a drop in city-based road deaths, with the country figures being about 187 in 2001 and about 193 in 2006. The country figures have gone up slightly, whereas the city figures have come down.

That is the first proposition — that country figures have remained high whereas city figures have come down. Then you have said — probably correctly — that this year the road toll in the country at this stage is 50 compared with 62 last year and 60 across the board.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, 66.

**Dr SYKES** — Again I accept that, but I think we have all been around long enough to know that one swallow does not make a summer, and it would be wrong for anyone to conclude that that is a very strong indication that the country road toll is in fact coming down. It is an encouraging occurrence, but until that is taken over a full year and until it is repeated as a continuing pattern over the next two to three years it is too early to call. If you can just clarify that.

**Mr CAMERON** — Right.

**Dr SYKES** — I have another question.

**The CHAIR** — Move along.

**Dr SYKES** — I will explain. In this figure you have indicated that a factor that is associated with it and is, by inference, a reason for that toll coming down is increased speed camera hours and a reduction in the default speed, but that means no tolerance, does it not? Interestingly, there are other factors, and you have already alluded to them in Arrive Alive — it is not just cameras; it is education and various things.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, and the 60 to 50 in the residential streets.

**Dr SYKES** — So it is a number of factors. That said, my question is: given that you are moving towards leniency for drivers with clean records — is that correct, in relation to speeding?

**Mr CAMERON** — It was always there, but it is more expansive.

**Dr SYKES** — Okay. Was it always there?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — The provision for people to have a review of their penalty has in fact always been there. The minister has made the point that more recently we have been explaining to the community publicly that they have a capacity to write, and if it is their first offence, then they are able to ask for a review, and perhaps another penalty might be imposed.

**Dr SYKES** — Given that is a response to a lot of clamouring from the community, I think, to make that more public, do you hope that you have got the drivers sufficiently trained that you will keep your level there or can you see that in backing off a little bit it may go up?

**Mr CAMERON** — No, I think we all strive, and I think if we have a look across Victoria at different successive governments and the community, they have continued to strive. If you go back to 1970 and have a look at the road toll today, it was almost three times what it is today. But if you have a look at the number of cars on the road over that time — I don't know — it is probably two or three times the number of cars, so when you actually look at the deaths per car rate it has actually gone down by one in nine. That is very, very large. But I do not think at any point along the way people have said, 'Isn't that good; we have got to a half', or, 'We have got to a quarter'. We have to, and I think we all want to, continue to drive that across the board.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — I think we do, and I do take your point. We understand that issue. This is the first time we have seen the country road toll come down. The country road toll is really interesting. Over Gippsland way we saw a substantial decrease over two or three years and that, we thought, was terrific to see. They now have a few coming back, but we have learnt a fair bit about what might have underpinned why in country areas you can start to see that decrease. Part of it is in a particular location, which you have said, and part of it is work by VicRoads in terms of putting in the safety barriers and figuring out the locations where people were killed. That has been useful. Of course, we had multiple deaths in one location last year — two locations, actually — in country areas. The country is a bit more difficult for us to work on, but if we could figure out four things about people who drive, they are important: still 30 per cent of people killed on the roads have excessive alcohol in their systems; 30 per cent are still speeding on country roads and city roads; fatigue is still another issue; and 30 per cent still do not wear seatbelts. You are talking about a break-up that way.

We do not think, and I am certainly very clear from advice by the government that it does not think either, that this is acceptable, so there is now a next Arrive Alive strategy, or whatever it might be called, to be put into place. We met the goal of the last one, which was a 20 per cent reduction over five years, and in fact the state reduction is 24 per cent. I have certainly been very strong and have said recently I think we can get it down to 200. But that will require all of those four categories to continuously be understood. I am quite strong about the speeding issue. People do understand; if they get a fine, it changes their behaviours; and I think we have been able to see the reduction in particular locations where, if you have a speed camera operating, you watch a reduction and a change in people's behaviours at that location. That is one of our key focuses and targets. We are not claiming country changes. We understand the issue, but we are still trying to figure out why in certain country areas it works and in other areas it does not.

**Dr SYKES** — What percentage of road deaths are attributable to suicides?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We do not actually count a road death as a suicide. What we look at when a death occurs on the road, we then understand whether it is a suicide or not. If we believe it is and there is sufficient justification — that might be a letter; more recently we had one where a person ran into a tree, and we understood that was actually a suicide — that is not counted on the road toll. We take that off; that is not in it.

**The CHAIR** — Bill, we need to move on. You have had about five of them now.

**Dr SYKES** — Can I please go on, because I am going in a moment. I want leniency because I have 3½ hours to get to a deb ball. Is there any indication on how many suicides involved the use of a vehicle in country Victoria in the past 12 months?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We could come back, but it is anecdotal.

**Dr SYKES** — If you could take it on notice.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We certainly think there are some, and we have certainly seen some evidence of that.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Dr Sykes. I might ask Mr Pakula and Mr Dalla-Riva to say what their questions are so they can be taken on notice.

**Mr PAKULA** — I am happy with that. I am really interested in the police station building program. Not being a fan of *CSI*, I would rather ask about that. I just want to know about the projected development of police stations and police facilities. It is touched on at page 26 of budget paper 3. If you could provide on notice some advice about the status of the existing replacement program and the upgrades that are under way at the moment.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you; we will take that on notice.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I just have a question for the commissioner. Commissioner, I am just curious about the quality of food at the police academy now. Do you actually have salads as opposed to chips?

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We absolutely do.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — You absolutely do; thank you.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — We have taken into account our members health.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Then it has improved since I was there.

**Chief Comm. NIXON** — It has.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — That is good to hear. In respect of some figures you might be able to provide on notice, Minister, currently how many sworn police officers are on permanent or indefinite sick leave and on WorkCover; how many are on maternity leave or extended maternity leave; and how many are on leave without pay? Could that be provided at some point?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, we will take those matters on notice.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. Mr Dalla-Riva, I am disappointed you did not ask about the \$8 million upgrade of the crime department on St Kilda Road, which I think you are familiar with.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I have been there, and I think it has deteriorated, so I think the money is a worthwhile investment.

**The CHAIR** — I am glad you support that. I thank Christine Nixon, Chief Commissioner of Police, for her attendance.

**Witnesses withdrew.**





## **Transcript of Evidence**

### **7.14 Racing portfolio**

*The transcript for the hearing on this portfolio will be included in a future report of the Committee.*

