



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION
COMMITTEE

Consideration of Budget Estimates

MONDAY, 22 MAY 2000

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SENATE**FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE****Monday, 22 May 2000**

Members: Senator Mason (*Chair*), Senator Murray (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Calvert, Conroy, Lightfoot and Ray

Senators in attendance: Senators Calvert, Collins, Conroy, Crossin, Faulkner, Lightfoot, Mackay, Mason, McLucas, Murray and Ray

Committee met at 9.06 a.m.

PARLIAMENT PORTFOLIO

CHAIR—I declare open this public meeting of the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee. On 9 May 2000 the Senate referred to this committee for examination the particulars of proposed expenditure for the service of the year ending 30 June 2001, document C. The parliamentary departments have a proposed expenditure of \$154,492,000. The committee is required to report to the Senate on or before 22 June 2000 and has set Wednesday, 28 June 2000 as the date for the submission of written answers to questions taken on notice.

The hearing today will commence with the parliamentary departments and will be followed by the Prime Minister's portfolio. I will call on general questions not pertaining to outcomes first, then outcomes and outputs in the order listed on the running sheet. I remind you all that this committee is continuing to monitor the format of the Portfolio Budget Statements and would welcome any comment on that documentation.

DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE**In Attendance**

Senator Reid, President of the Senate

Mr Harry Evans, Clerk of the Senate

Ms Anne Lynch, Deputy Clerk of the Senate

Mr Cleaver Elliott, Clerk Assistant (Committees)

Dr Rosemary Laing, Clerk Assistant (Procedure)

Mr Peter O'Keeffe, Clerk Assistant (Corporate Management)

Mr John Vander Wyk, Clerk Assistant (Table)

Mr Robert Alison, Usher of the Black Rod

Mr Graeme Nankervis, Director, Financial Management

Ms Gabrielle Avery, Director, Human Resource Management

CHAIR—I welcome the President of the Senate, Senator Reid, and officers from the Department of the Senate. Senator Reid, do you wish to make an opening statement?

The PRESIDENT—No.

CHAIR—Are there any general questions?

Senator FAULKNER—I wanted to ask Senator Reid whether there have been any developments of late on the issue of the old perennial of amalgamation of the parliamentary departments.

The PRESIDENT—Not that I have heard of.

Senator FAULKNER—Is that one in the too-hard basket now?

The PRESIDENT—Not in my opinion. The matter is settled. We have the departments that we have and the place is, I think, running fairly efficiently. It is not a matter of ‘in the too-hard basket’ as far as I am concerned. It is not an issue.

Senator FAULKNER—In yesteryear this has been driven by government as opposed to being driven from the parliamentary departments, so I just wondered whether there was any suggestion from government that this might be an issue worth revisiting.

The PRESIDENT—Nobody has raised it with me.

Senator FAULKNER—No doubt we will hear any rumblings if there are any in the future. There is an efficiency dividend this year, as I understand; is that correct?

Mr Evans—Yes. It is one per cent.

Senator FAULKNER—Could you indicate to us, Mr Evans, how that might compare to other departments?

Mr Evans—I think it is the same figure across the Commonwealth for all Commonwealth departments.

Senator FAULKNER—How is the Department of the Senate proposing to meet the efficiency dividend of one per cent?

Mr Evans—By constantly reviewing its operations and seeking efficiencies in various parts of its operations.

Senator FAULKNER—I was really wondering what efficiencies, if any, you might have identified at this stage.

Mr Evans—We constantly identify better ways of doing things—better ways of delivering the same services.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How many efficiency dividends have you had to find now, consecutively?

Mr Evans—Over 10 years, my colleagues tell me.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Has anyone done the mathematics, if that continues for another 20 or 30 years, whether there will be a Senate department?

Mr Evans—That is a very interesting question. It is based on the assumption that you can constantly find more and more efficiencies, which I think is a questionable assumption. Basically things get done—unless you reduce what is done, which of course has happened in the past, and reduce the services you are providing—more efficiently over the years by the application of technology, which basically comes, although not entirely, from outside. The notion that you can go on forever finding one per cent per year efficiency is a questionable assumption.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Evans, how has accrual accounting progressed in the Senate, and what weaknesses and strengths do you see emerging from that?

Mr Evans—It is now in place. We are slowly getting used to it. We will probably just be used to it when it will be replaced by something else. It is in place and, as far as we are concerned, we have made the transition.

Senator MURRAY—Does it provide you with benefits? Can you see any strengths to the process?

Mr Evans—Initially, I would have said it made the figures more opaque than they were before. It is supposed to give you a more complete picture of the actual financial position of the department, but whether it does or whether it is a matter of getting used to it I am not entirely sure. I would like this committee to make a judgment about that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is there any officer in the department who better understands Senate finances now under accrual accounting than they did before?

Mr Evans—I do not believe so.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I was just doing a survey around the room. I thought there might be someone here who did.

The PRESIDENT—You thought a lot of hands might go up.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Sorry, Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY—I thought that was a good interjection. It seems very quiet on the benefits or strengths side. Is there any loud voice on the weaknesses or difficulties side?

Mr Evans—No, I do not believe so. I think we have successfully put it in place. This is a small department and our finances are relatively simple. We put it in place. We are becoming accustomed to it. I do not think there are any serious difficulties with it.

Senator MURRAY—Are you producing a balance sheet as a result of all this?

Mr Evans—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—You did not before, did you?

Mr Evans—Not a full balance sheet in that sense, no.

Senator MURRAY—That is not available in the papers, is it?

Mr Evans—Yes, page 42.

Senator MURRAY—You have zero debt.

Mr Evans—These are the financial statements which are done at the end of each financial year and produced in the annual report.

Senator MURRAY—Has the introduction of a balance sheet for the first time improved anyone's understanding of the status of the Senate?

Mr Evans—I do not know whether it has improved mine. I doubt it very much. I would like this committee to make a judgment about whether it has improved the committees.

Senator MURRAY—No doubt we will.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The fact that I do not have the Senate PBS in front of me gives you my view on it.

Senator MURRAY—I do not know if my second question falls into general questions, but I think it does. I note from page 5 under 'General' a remark that there is a provision of \$9.250 million from special appropriations for senators' and office holders' salaries and allowances as compared with \$8.987 million last year, which was increased for this year as a result of Remuneration Tribunal determinations. Mr Evans, I think that approximates to a three per cent increase.

Mr Evans—That would seem to be the case, yes.

Senator MURRAY—Do you regard that as an extravagant increase in view of the nature of inflation or any other circumstances?

Mr Evans—No, Mr Chairman.

Senator MURRAY—So the media attention which has always focused on these things, do you think they should be calmed by the fact that it is only three per cent?

Mr Evans—I do not think that parliament as a whole is a terribly expensive operation to run. Nor is it increasing at a galloping rate, as some people would have you believe.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Will the Department of the Senate be GST compliant by 1 July?

Mr Evans—I believe so, Mr Chairman, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Have you had to seek guidance from that special unit in the Department of Finance that assists government departments?

Mr Evans—I am sure we have had to seek guidance from somewhere, but whether we have gone to that unit I am not sure. No, not directly I am told.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Did you get their multi-page explanation of the GST effects?

Mr Evans—Yes, we did receive a large document from that quarter, I believe.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you know how many pages it was? They did not seem to know.

Mr Evans—Very voluminous. I passed it straight on to the finance section.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What extra costs have been added by the GST to the Senate's operations and have you got some examples?

Mr Evans—Extra costs? The Senate department will pay GST on any services it is selling. It will get input credits on any of its inputs on which GST is paid. Obviously, we do not sell very much, so the problem is not great on the selling side.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What do you sell and by what extent will it go up?

Mr Evans—The seminars that we run for public servants for which we charge a nominal fee are the major item that we sell. There are a few other minor things, obsolete equipment which we sell off. That is about it.

Senator CONROY—What do you charge currently for the seminars?

Mr Evans—We charge \$125.

Dr Laing—Our main seminar program is a day long program called 'The Senate and the Legislative Process', which is aimed at public servants to educate them about how to cope with dealings with parliament. That is currently at about \$200 per person.

Mr Evans—What are the half day ones?

Dr Laing—A half day is around \$160, I believe, but I will check that.

Senator FAULKNER—That includes a unit on estimates committees, does it not?

Dr Laing—It certainly does, with very illuminating video footage.

Senator FAULKNER—So how much are they going to go up by?

Dr Laing—They will go up by, we figure, about seven per cent overall. Taking into account the direct costs that we have in providing them, input credits that we expect to receive, we figure it is about a seven per cent increase overall.

Senator CONROY—What are your embedded cost savings?

Dr Laing—Basically our main one is catering. We buy things like morning teas and lunches and afternoon teas from the Hyatt. But the bulk of the value of the seminar is the input of the people who deliver it, the senators and the officers of the Department of the Senate. So it is basically a very nominal fee for what is an excellent value day.

Mr Evans—These charges are not market determined by any means. They are not the market value of the service by any means; they are a nominal charge.

Senator CONROY—So the Hyatt are passing on less than 10 per cent?

Dr Laing—At this stage we believe that is the case.

Senator CONROY—When you say ‘at this stage’ you mean?

Dr Laing—We do have a quote for the rest of the year.

Senator FAULKNER—You are, of course, sole providers in this area, aren’t you, Mr Evans?

Mr Evans—Not necessarily. The House of Representatives have their own program and there are other people around that attempt to conduct programs like this; not covering the same area—

Dr Laing—We would certainly be happy for our product to be open to competition.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But that would imply that you would then have to supply speakers for all the competitors and all the rest of it and it would become a total mess in the end, wouldn’t it? That is why you do it yourselves.

Dr Laing—That is right.

Mr Evans—Yes, that is right. At one stage—well, several stages—we were supplying speakers gratis.

Senator CONROY—So the only real saving we have been able to calculate at this stage is the Hyatt?

Dr Laing—That is right.

Senator CONROY—You’re not passing on any electricity cost savings?

Dr Laing—No.

Senator CONROY—You do not think there are any or are they too hard to calculate?

Dr Laing—That is not a cost that is passed on to us.

Mr Evans—They are negligible and not calculable—that is, I think, the conclusion that we came to.

Dr Laing—Overheads such as electricity are provided to the Department of the Senate free of charge by other departments in the parliament.

Senator CONROY—They are providing you with a service, though. They are passing a service on to you. Presumably they GST it.

Dr Laing—It is a service provided free of charge.

Senator FAULKNER—I assume that some of these seminar programs are conducted in Parliament House and that some are outside Parliament House. Would that be right?

Dr Laing—I think 99.9 per cent of the programs we provide are conducted in Parliament House.

Senator FAULKNER—So when you use a committee room for that purpose, for example, how is that provided?

Dr Laing—There is no cost.

Mr Evans—The lights are on whether we are there or not. I think that is the situation.

Senator CONROY—I am just trying to understand how this works. Who gives you the use of the room?

Dr Laing—We make a booking in the way that anyone makes a booking for a committee room, and that is through the Usher of the Black Rod's office.

Senator CONROY—So, if Allan Fels wrote to you and said he expected you to pass on all the transport savings, electricity savings and those embedded cost savings which keep the price movements, on average across the country, down to 1.9 per cent, you would just write back and say, 'Look, they're negligible and incalculable'?

The PRESIDENT—The other thing is that the seminar is not charged at market rates; it is a nominal charge in any event.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The ACCC would not have coverage of parliament, would it?

Senator CONROY—If it is engaged in commerce.

Mr Evans—I am not sure whether that is the case. I am not sure they would have coverage of anything. But certainly there has been an indication of an expectation that the price will not rise by 10 per cent.

Senator CONROY—They have written to you?

Mr Evans—No, the minister for finance has indicated that the charge should not rise by 10 per cent.

Senator CONROY—Could the committee have a copy of that?

Mr Evans—We can provide that.

Senator CONROY—It is in writing?

Mr Evans—Yes.

Senator CONROY—Even though you do not pass it on at full market rate, even though it is at less than market rate, your GST compliance costs cannot rise by more than 10 per cent. That is Allan Fels's view of the world?

Mr Evans—Well, they are not expected to.

Senator CONROY—He has said they shall not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Madam President, through you, but probably to the Clerk with your permission: given that there is now a change in status of parliamentary secretaries, one I welcome, there has been some suggestion, especially from another place, that having parliamentary secretaries sworn in as ministers may impinge on prohibitions in the standing orders. Has the Clerk looked at this? Mr Evans?

Mr Evans—Yes. Basically, parliamentary secretaries are empowered by the standing orders to do anything that ministers can, with two exceptions: appearing before estimates committees and answering questions at question time. So the standing orders cover that. I do not think having them sworn in as, and called, ministers for salary purposes makes any difference to that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I just wanted to, and you have basically answered it, concentrate on the fact that prohibitions in standing orders would override any technical change of status there, and that is your view?

Mr Evans—The situation is that, when parliamentary secretaries turned up, the standing orders were amended to give them, basically, the powers of ministers under the standing orders, with those exceptions.

CHAIR—Are there any other general questions?

Senator MURRAY—Mr Chairman, I think I might pick up the financial statements as a general question; it is easier than trying to do it under the sections. I assume the officer to answer these questions is Mr Nankervis, is that right?

The PRESIDENT—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Turning to pages 44 and 45, Mr Nankervis, can you explain to the committee what ‘free resources’ are?

Mr Nankervis—The free services are in fact the services provided—

Senator MURRAY—I am sorry, it is the ‘free resources’, listed under the operating revenues.

Mr Nankervis—Yes. As an operating revenue, these are funds provided to assist the operations of the department provided by other parliamentary departments. The break-up of that figure of the \$4.270 million is listed on page 55 and includes services provided to us in the way of chamber publications from the Department of the House of Representatives, at an estimated value of \$23,000; library research and information services from the Department of the Parliamentary Library, estimated at \$144,000; from the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff, *Hansard* publications, telecommunication services, computer network and support services and sound and vision, estimated at \$2.4 million; from Joint House Department, engineering, maintenance and housekeeping services, estimated at \$1.5 million; and ANAO, who continue to provide external audit services, is reflected as an operating revenue and as an operating expense.

Senator MURRAY—So that is just a contra entry?

Mr Nankervis—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Moving to the balance sheet, I see that your infrastructure, plant and equipment figure declines from \$19 million plus to \$10 million plus over the four years. I assume that is a result of depreciation.

Mr Nankervis—That is correct.

Senator MURRAY—Your inventory level is at \$38,000 all the way through, which seems quite remarkable.

Mr Nankervis—We do not expect to change our inventory. It is a small, relatively insignificant figure, and we did not have the time to go through to that in detail.

Senator MURRAY—It is a very low figure, and I am surprised at that. What are the main items in inventory?

Mr Nankervis—The Black Rod's shop, for senators' hats and caps and things like that.

Senator MURRAY—You do not include in there any consumables, like stationery and that sort of thing?

Mr Nankervis—No, not yet.

Senator MURRAY—Where do they appear?

Mr Nankervis—They do not appear as those sorts of assets. We are moving to a supply arrangement whereby we are reducing our holdings in order to be supplied by external providers on a demand basis.

Senator MURRAY—So it is a just-in-time sort of philosophy?

Mr Nankervis—That sort of thing, yes. Hopefully, it will always be in time.

Senator MURRAY—Intangibles are listed as running down from \$600,000 to \$54,000. What do you define as intangibles?

Mr Nankervis—That would include computer software and systems.

Senator MURRAY—Why would that be an intangible?

Mr Nankervis—Recently we purchased a salary system and the value of it is currently in that order, but we expect to actually depreciate it over the next five years, to a point where it may need to be replaced. When it is replaced, the intangible figure will go up again.

Senator MURRAY—So it is principally software?

Mr Nankervis—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Madam President, on the last sitting day, you ruled on a matter of privilege in regard to a complaint by Senator Gibson. I raised it privately with you at the time, but we did not have a chance to pursue it. The question of the timeliness of your ruling on that has got me somewhat concerned because I believe the complaint was received about 20 April. Would you like to outline what the circumstances were?

The PRESIDENT—I was away when it happened. It was mentioned to me while I was away, to be dealt with when I came back. It should have come up on the Tuesday when I came back but it did not. It was then raised on the Thursday and I thought it ought to be dealt with that day and put before the Senate rather than wait about another three weeks before it could have been dealt with. But it should have been done two days earlier than it was.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am really asking why it was not done two days earlier.

The PRESIDENT—It just did not come up in my office. There was no reason for it other than it was not thought of. It had not been noted in a way that ensured that it did come to my attention on the Tuesday.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am not peddling a conspiracy theory. Have you taken steps to make sure this does not happen again?

The PRESIDENT—Absolutely.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The difficulty is that notice was not given of the matter. Once it was drawn to your attention, you had to act on it and then the standing orders took over. It left a lot of us in an unsatisfactory position.

The PRESIDENT—There is no dispute about that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So that is going to be looked at in the future?

The PRESIDENT—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—I saw an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Friday, 14 April headed ‘Spy scare: Senator surprises former envoy in her office’. I do not know if this is best dealt with now or with Joint House.

The PRESIDENT—With Joint House.

Senator FAULKNER—I am happy to deal with it then.

[9.33 a.m.]

Outcome 1—Effective provision of services to support the functioning of the Senate as a house of the Commonwealth parliament

Output 2—Committee support

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have a question in regard to the President’s letter of 20 April, which mentions that the President and the Speaker have received several requests to approve the use of funds allocated to committees to pay for the international travel of secretariat staff to accompany committee members on unofficial travel overseas on committee related business. It mentions ‘several requests’. How many requests have come in?

The PRESIDENT—I think three, recently.

Senator ROBERT RAY—From what committees?

Mr Elliott—The only two requests that I am aware of are from the National Crime Authority committee and the native title committee.

The PRESIDENT—And joint foreign affairs.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The trade subcommittee; is that right?

The PRESIDENT—The Senate does not deal with that, but I think the answer is that it was the trade subcommittee.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Were any of the requests approved?

The PRESIDENT—The trade subcommittee one was.

Mr Elliott—I would have to check the records. I did not bring that documentation with me, but I understand that approval has been given for the native title committee to go to New Zealand later in the year.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is for the committee to go, including the committee secretary.

Mr Elliott—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am not talking about officially approved and funded committee trips. Which ones fall into that category?

Mr Elliott—The native title one has been approved as a delegation.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We can remove it from the equation for the moment. The sorts of visits I am talking about are those where the parliament, probably quite properly, normally does not fund overseas visits by committees, and where they go at their own expense, be it by way of the study entitlement or something else, whether assistance can be then given. I take it

from the tenor of your letter, Madam President, that the two Presiding Officers have said no for all future ones.

The PRESIDENT—I think so, yes. That is not to say that there may not be a case that ought to be looked at, but generally speaking we feel it should not be a situation where a group travelling, for good reason no doubt, can assume there would be a secretary with them.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There is not much wriggle room in your letter, is there?

The PRESIDENT—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You seemed in that answer to give a bit, but there does not seem to be much in the letter.

The PRESIDENT—The letter expresses my view as to what it should be.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You do not think it should just be on a case-by-case basis?

The PRESIDENT—I think you run into difficulties then of setting precedents and distinguishing one from the other.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Doesn't that come with the territory? Isn't that why you are there, to actually be able to make judgments on these things and be trusted to do so?

The PRESIDENT—We would, but we do not want people to feel that it is something that would happen easily when it generally would not be.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am not arguing for that, but I do not see why it is not left to the decision maker rather than making it an arbitrary ruling like this.

The PRESIDENT—I do not feel myself that it is something that would not be looked at again, but people are not entitled to assume that there will be a committee secretary travelling with people using their study leave to travel, for a group that is not a parliamentary group.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am a bit concerned about it because you talk in that letter about a time of continuing financial restraint. Do you think 54 junketeers going to London at over \$1 million shows financial restraint in a government?

The PRESIDENT—It is not a matter that comes out of the Senate budget.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I understand that, but I am just looking at priorities when a trade subcommittee goes to South America at their own expense—

The PRESIDENT—They did have a secretary go with them.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I know. What I am arguing for is that in the odd case—I admit that I come down on your side more than that of the requesters—there is a case for it. They are hitting six countries in 12 days—in fact, I think they hit nine because they are dividing it up—promoting Australia's trade prospects. In such a case they could be getting some assistance, if the money is there in the committee budget. I cannot see what is wrong with that, why you would arbitrarily rule it out in all cases.

The PRESIDENT—I do not feel it is necessarily arbitrarily ruled out in all cases.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It certainly is by your letter.

The PRESIDENT—The letter is fairly definite, and that is to convey a view, but we look at things as they come up.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So if people have a strong case they can still feel free to put an application in. You are just saying that it will be tough.

The PRESIDENT—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What would be the average cost of sending a secretariat member overseas? It wouldn't be the \$20,000 or \$22,000 it is costing on the London junket, would it?

The PRESIDENT—It depends where they are going. I do not know.

Mr Elliott—An average, including insurance and those sorts of costs, you could put at about \$7,500.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So they are not going first class and staying at the Hyde Park Hotel et cetera under the guise of a trade and investment venture. Thank you.

Senator MURRAY—Yes, I have a question for the President. We have been through a situation where some committees reviewing legislation have needed considerable technical assistance, such as economic modelling. Such very difficult issues are still around, principally arising out of the Ralph tax reform proposals. In your opinion, does the budget properly account for contingencies which cannot be foreseen when specialist consulting may be needed for committees, such as modelling or particular technical expertise?

The PRESIDENT—I have no reason to think it is not adequate, based on the experience of the last year or so. There is an enormous amount of money being spent on that sort of thing, and we have managed.

Senator MURRAY—Although we have been through a very unusual period.

The PRESIDENT—I hope it is unusual.

Senator MURRAY—Yes. Probably Australia does even more.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The Black Death lasted only 100 years, Senator, so what you have inflicted on us will probably go by then.

The PRESIDENT—I do not think this sort of thing should be regarded by Senate committees as a growth industry. Certainly a lot was spent and a lot was sought, and some of it seemed to me fairly expensive. That may be just my lack of experience in the area, but it certainly seemed costly.

Senator MURRAY—Yes, it is costly. I suspect, particularly with option 2 proposals and other tax reform proposals, there will probably still be a demand for technical assistance. Knowing, as the Senate does, that that is in the background, would we have appropriate cover if the request were made?

The PRESIDENT—I believe so.

Mr Evans—We do have an arrangement whereby the committee funding is kept at a certain level, regardless of the demand generated by the Senate. That is designed to accommodate extra demands imposed by the Senate. That money was used basically for the GST inquiry to fund the sort of expert assistance the committee considered it needed. But there is a ceiling on it.

[9.42 a.m.]

Output 3—Senators' services

Senator ROBERT RAY—Madam President and Mr Clerk, pick us up if we have raised these in the wrong area, because, as I think the clerk indicated, some of these things are a bit

opaque. How many notebook computers have been stolen from senators' offices at Parliament House?

Mr Alison—Two.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is the value of each of those computers—at purchase? I know that they devalue by about 20 per cent a quarter.

Mr Alison—One of the computers included the docking station, so all together the cost of that was about \$9,000, and I think \$6,000 for the other laptop.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Mention was made that this has occurred in the House of Representatives. Have you got numbers from there so we can make a comparison?

Mr Alison—Yes. I think there were three.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So we have seen probably a minimum of \$30,000 worth of equipment disappear. You have no doubt called in the police to look at this.

Mr Alison—The security controller is an officer of the Federal Police. He has been investigating that, and his inquiries are ongoing.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not want to go into any of the operational matters, but I really have to ask this question. Feel free not to answer it. Were these notebook computers allegedly stolen from locked rooms?

Mr Alison—In the two cases in the Senate, one of the rooms was locked and the other was not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Have replacement computers been provided?

Mr Alison—I only know about the situation in the Senate. Only one of those belongs to the Department of the Senate and it has been replaced.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Like all government departments, you are not covered by insurance, are you? You insure your own losses.

Mr Evans—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You might let us know, at the supplementary round, what progress has been made on this. We do not want to interfere with the investigation, but it does raise in the long-term one or two security questions as to access of offices, et cetera.

Mr Alison—We have been looking at that. One of the concerns is that those five computers were all taken from what we call the private areas of Parliament House, so presumably the person or persons who took them was a pass holder of some sort. We are also looking at ways of securing the computers in a manner better than they are at the moment.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This has not been that big a problem. When we moved into this Parliament House, thieving became a way of life for a couple of years—it was a terrible problem—but then it seemed to disappear. Is my impression right, that we do not have a lot of problems in this area?

Mr Alison—That is correct. Like anything, these things come and go. We find there are a series of thefts and the offender is eventually caught.

Senator MURRAY—I have been told that nine of those computers have been stolen. That means four more than you have indicated.

Mr Alison—I know of five. If there are more I will certainly advise the committee later today.

Senator MURRAY—The proposition I put to you is that they may have been stolen from offices other than members' or senators' offices.

Mr Alison—The advice I have from the security controller is that there are five. There was one incident of computer components in July last year, and a member's laptop computer was taken from a motel room in Darwin. That is all I have, Mr Chairman.

Senator MURRAY—You would be quite certain that every one that was stolen would be reported to the security controller.

Mr Alison—They certainly should be in Parliament House.

Senator MURRAY—But if they were not, they might have reported them individually to the AFP and not realised they should have reported them to the security controller.

Mr Alison—I think the AFP very quickly would tell the security controller about that.

Senator FAULKNER—You are quite confident that there is the capacity to conduct an appropriate inquiry, as a result of the theft of these computers, within the existing staffing establishment at Parliament House? I appreciate the point about the security controller being an AFP officer, but would it be the security controller's decision if other investigating officers were to be brought in from outside the building? Would that be a matter that would be determined by the security controller himself?

Mr Alison—It would be a matter to be determined by the Australian Federal Police. The matter has been reported to the Australian Federal Police and they can choose to investigate or not. In some cases, the information is so old. The dates upon which the computer may have been taken could be, in some cases here, three weeks. In the vernacular, the trail is very cold. It is difficult to convince the police to investigate such a matter.

Senator FAULKNER—Is the point you are making that, for example, if a computer is stolen from a senator's office or a member's office which has been locked during a non-sitting period, which might be two or three weeks, it is hard to nail this down?

Mr Alison—That is correct.

Senator FAULKNER—So it is a matter entirely for Australian Federal Police operations as to how they progress their inquiries with this matter?

Mr Alison—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The use of these computers would be somewhat limited, would they not, by not having passwords and everything? Or is that just the limit to get into the parliamentary network?

Mr Alison—I may not be the person to ask, but I think what Senator Ray is saying is essentially true. I am told that the computer is virtually useless.

Senator ROBERT RAY—They are with or without the password. No, they are actually very useful.

Mr Alison—I might add that what man can invent, man can knock down.

Senator FAULKNER—That is very philosophical.

Mr Alison—I should not go on too much because it is the result of the inquiry. It just seems strange to me that four or five computers would disappear in a short time. That says to me that there may be a market for them.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But if they were used to access the parliamentary network, that would be picked up, would it not, per individual machine?

Mr Alison—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So we can probably rule out an inside job because it would be an absolute waste of space.

Mr Evans—Before we go on, Senator Faulkner mentioned AFP investigations. There is a longstanding convention whereby the AFP or any law enforcement agency does not conduct investigations in the precinct, for example by coming in and questioning people, without first seeking the approval of the presiding officers. On the insurance point that Senator Ray mentioned, I am told that this sort of thing is covered by our Comcover policy, but we do not make claims for small items.

Senator FAULKNER—But this is the point, Mr Evans. What we understand is that the security controller is also an AFP officer. Is that correct?

Mr Evans—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—I am interested in how the convention that you talk about, which I understand in relation to the role here of the presiding officers, works in this instance, where you have a duality of roles with an officer based here at Parliament House with particular responsibilities in relation to the parliament.

Mr Evans—The security controller, being seconded to the parliament as it were, can conduct investigations.

Mr Alison—He is a parliamentary officer.

Mr Evans—He is a parliamentary officer, as my colleague says, and can conduct investigations of his own without that approval. But if any other law enforcement people are coming into the building to conduct investigations, there is that longstanding convention that they get approval.

Senator FAULKNER—Madam President, you have not given approval to the security controller, as an AFP officer, conducting such an investigation?

The PRESIDENT—I think we have asked him for any information about it or for him to report on matters relating to security in terms of whether there ought to be other things implemented to make the place more secure.

Senator FAULKNER—That is helpful, but I am actually asking—

The PRESIDENT—There has been no request for AFP officers to come into the building on this issue that I can think of.

Senator FAULKNER—No, that is not the question. I understand, but there is no approval from you in relation to the security controller being given in relation to any investigation he may be undertaking in this matter.

Mr Evans—I think what we were getting at before—

Senator FAULKNER—You are saying it is not necessary.

Mr Evans—He does not need approvals for being here and being a parliamentary officer.

Senator FAULKNER—I appreciate that is what you are saying, Mr Evans. I am just interested to understand the fine line. I understand the point you make to the committee about saying, ‘However, on this occasion it is not required.’ Why isn’t it required?

Mr Evans—Because it is an internal matter which the security controller can investigate on his own motion, as it were, with his standing approval, as it were. If he were to say, ‘I need the assistance of other AFP officers and they will have to come here and question people and take fingerprints on windowsills’ or something, the approval of the presiding officers would be sought.

Senator FAULKNER—So this theft has been reported to the AFP but the investigation being undertaken is not an AFP investigation, it is an internal investigation.

Mr Evans—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Is that a better summation of the situation?

Mr Evans—Yes. But bearing in mind that the security controller, while a parliamentary officer, is a seconded AFP officer.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think our problem is in Mr Alison’s letter of 4 April it says the Australian Federal Police have been asked to investigate the thefts. There seems to be some sort of inconsistency there.

Mr Evans—I do not think that draws the fine distinction that we have been exploring.

Senator FAULKNER—No. But it is a pretty fine distinction, though.

Mr Evans—It is, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What has happened to the MOU with the Australian Federal Police? Has that been concluded?

Mr Evans—I presume it is still in place. Yes, it is still in place.

Senator FAULKNER—It is almost like the AFP investigation you have when you are not having one.

Senator MURRAY—Before you leave this area, if somebody used any of those five identified stolen machines, who would know that they used them to tap into the parliamentary system? Who would advise you? Have people been advised to look out for it? Is there some kind of watch going on to make sure that those codes are not being used?

The PRESIDENT—I think that is a matter to explore with the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff rather than the Senate.

Senator MURRAY—The question is specifically put to Mr Alison. One of the ways by which you identify whether something is being used and if the security codes are being cracked is if there is that additional use. I would assume that part of the investigation would be advice to the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff to report back and to watch for and to pick up if those codes were used in any way, if there was some use which was not readily identifiable. Has that precaution been taken? Have they been spoken to?

Mr Alison—I have not done it.

Senator MURRAY—Would you undertake to follow up? I think it would be a sensible thing to do.

Mr Alison—Certainly.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Wouldn't it be even more sensible—to follow up Senator Murray's question—if it is in the positive, that is, the stealing of these machines is worthless; they can be tracked if they are used. To get that message out around the building might take the temptation away.

Mr Alison—I hear what Senator Ray is saying, and I will take appropriate action.

CHAIR—Any other questions on output 3, senators' services?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Can I ask this question as it follows an incident: what sort of cover is there for members of parliament, either from the Senate or the House of Representatives, that are injured on official overseas delegations? What sort of compensation coverage is there? Or am I right in saying this is the one remaining area that has never been covered by government?

Mr Evans—There is some provision for it. Does anybody know what the provision is?

Mr O'Keefe—For senators travelling overseas on official delegations we take out travel insurance.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Which covers their medical costs. Does it cover their compensation?

Mr O'Keefe—It covers the usual forms of travel insurance, which would include medical and lost property. Travelling through Qantas, we take the insurance policy through Qantas.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Have there been any extra expenses following the unfortunate accident to Mr Schulz, the current member for Hume?

Mr O'Keefe—That is a matter which is within the responsibility of the Department of the House of Representatives, not the Senate. I am sorry, Mr Schulz was travelling on a program which is funded through the Department of Finance and Administration.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was not an official parliamentary delegation?

Mr Evans—It was the IPU delegation, but attached to the IPU delegation there was a bilateral visit to Tanzania and it was on that bilateral leg of the delegation that it occurred. That was covered by Finance.

Senator FAULKNER—So Mr Fahey's department was covering it?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Was covering Mr Schulz?

Mr Evans—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We will come back to Mr Schulz's fall tomorrow.

Senator FAULKNER—Was that his first or second fall?

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, his first fall. How many car parks are provided in the senators car park?

Mr Evans—Does Mr Alison know that?

Mr Alison—I do not off hand. I believe there are 38.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you know the number of senators eligible for self-drives?

Mr Alison—The office holders: probably six.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is funny, I had it in the high 20s.

Mr Alison—I can provide that—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Nine ministers, six or seven parliamentary secretaries—

Mr Alison—I was not counting the ministers.

Senator FAULKNER—The point is that ministers would have a choice of parking either in the executive wing car park I assume or in the senators car park.

Mr Alison—Yes; and, anecdotally, I do not believe that any minister has parked in the senators car park.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No. Only parliamentary secretaries on occasions; that is fair enough. The 38 should be quite adequate, should it not?

Mr Alison—Those car parks are also available for whatever vehicle is being driven by a senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is about four or five, in my insubstantial survey.

Mr Alison—It is a lot more than that. Some senators have advised me that they drive any of three or four vehicles.

Senator FAULKNER—Not at the same time I hope.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You have sent out a missive, Mr Alison, about car parking down there. I would have said 38 was enough. If everyone obeyed the rules, there is ample parking for them. Certain Senate officers are allowed to park there, too, I think.

Mr Alison—There are a number of Commonwealth vehicle spaces in the senators car park. For instance, the Clerk of the Senate, the Secretary of the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff and the Secretary of the Joint House Department park there.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is to be encouraged. Sometimes you can transact some business on the way to the lifts—totally legitimate business, I might add. Do you ever do any spot checks down there?

Mr Alison—Yes. That was the reason for my letter. I might add that I would agree with Senator Ray that 38 car parks should be more than adequate if everybody obeyed the rules.

Senator MURRAY—I remarked earlier on the \$263,000 increase to parliamentary salaries and allowances. One of the changes of the Remuneration Tribunal which has attracted attention has been the change to allow designated persons to be substituted for persons who might help look after children—grannies or nannies. There is no additional increase in cost as a result of that change from the Remuneration Tribunal, is there?

Mr Evans—I would not have thought so. But it is not in our bailiwick. That is all part of the entitlements administered by the Department of Finance and Administration.

Senator MURRAY—But the question really is: there is no change in cost, is there?

Mr Evans—I would not have thought so, but you would have to ask the Department of Finance and Administration.

Senator MURRAY—There is a bigger question arising out of that. That is the question of child care, which has been an issue for some time as we all know. Is there any intention yet to improve child care facilities for senators and senators' staff who have children?

The PRESIDENT—There is an arrangement made in each of the chamber areas for a room for children to be minded in. There is no plan at present to have a child-care centre in

the building. It was a matter that came up a number of times during the construction of the building and was discussed and rejected. At one stage when it was considered, a proposal that might have happened then was to take allocated numbers from the ACT allocation to put them here, which of course was unacceptable. The government at the time rejected putting child care in here because of the number of places available in very close proximity to this building. There is no current proposal to include child-care facilities in the building.

Senator MURRAY—There are apparently some 3,000 people in the building at peak. Has anyone ever found out what the ratio of children to adults is?

The PRESIDENT—Over the last 10 to 15 years, a number of surveys have been done from time to time about what would be required or what might be nice. Part of the problem is the number of people at any one time and what you would do with the centre, and the extended hours of course. There are perhaps 3,000 people in the building for 24 or 25 weeks of the year. But there certainly are a number of places available around and quite near to the building.

Senator MURRAY—Is it still an issue being raised with you by parents who have children or is it not an issue at all?

The PRESIDENT—From time to time, somebody raises it. There was a question in the House of Representatives I think this year.

Senator MURRAY—So it is still on your watching brief, as it were?

The PRESIDENT—It is a matter that is of interest. The Black Rod has just reminded me that the Joint House Committee has a look at it from time to time.

[10.09 a.m.]

Output 4—Public education and awareness

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is one of my perennial questions. Can we have an update on the status of the dictionary of biography of senators. I saw some mention of it.

The PRESIDENT—It is at the printers.

Mr Evans—The first volume is with the publisher, which is Melbourne University Press. We hope that the presses are rolling even now.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When is the launch date?

Mr Evans—We are thinking of September or October. We have not fixed a date yet.

Senator FAULKNER—Whom do you have in mind to launch it?

Mr Evans—We have not given a great deal of thought to that.

The PRESIDENT—To my knowledge it has not been discussed yet.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Maybe you might undertake the task, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT—I am certainly looking forward to seeing the volume. Nobody reported in it will be able to launch it.

Senator FAULKNER—It would be a rather significant event if they could come back from the dead. Many people would argue that there are enough living senators.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think between Senator Faulkner and me, we found 10 deceased members who are not notified in the *Parliamentary Handbook* on the Labor side. So I hope someone can go through the coalition side at some stage. It is not the fault of those

who compile it in any way, either. It slipped through the cracks. That means there have been 10 or 11 times when parliament has not been notified at all.

Senator FAULKNER—It saves on condolence motions!

Senator ROBERT RAY—Can I ask whose decision it was to put out the Senate Daily Summary and also the Brief Guidelines to Senate Procedure?

Mr Evans—It was a recommendation made to me by Dr Laing, which I have readily adopted.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I cannot say that I have read them all yet, but it is a very promising start in terms of clarity of what is happening around the chamber. Do you intend to consolidate the second publication at some stage into a booklet where you explain all the procedures one by one?

Mr Evans—Yes, I would think that when we have a good set of them, we could consolidate them.

Senator FAULKNER—I must admit I have read two of them. I do not know how many there are.

Mr Evans—Dr Laing might add something to that.

Dr Laing—There are 14 titles proposed. At the moment, two of them are actually on the Internet and another two are just about to go up. I have been struggling for some time with the problem of staff turnover in senators' offices and the need to be able to provide simple briefings for staff. I have tried running a series of seminars, which I have been doing twice a year for the past three or four years. Although we get lots of enrolments and we send out reminders on the day, when the day comes the number of people who can turn up is quite small. There is a great deal of information on the Senate web site about procedural matters. A lot of it is difficult to find. So, with the Brief Guidelines to Senate Procedure, I have been trying to give snapshots in fairly plain language that would be easy to find. At this stage, although we may publish them in a booklet, they are mainly designed as a web resource because one of the things they do is lead people through hyperlinks to things like the standing orders and to the more detailed descriptions in Odgers *Australian Senate Practice*. As an electronic resource is where we see their main value lying but, of course, we are publishing hard copies as well.

Senator FAULKNER—I do not know this, but I suspect that they will be very useful for people who would not go to Odgers or the standing orders. In a sense, it is more a plain English guide for procedures that are quite arcane and complex to many. Around this building we may have a good working knowledge of them, though sometimes that is questionable. I must admit I endorse what Senator Ray said. I think it is an excellent start. It is a good initiative.

Dr Laing—Thank you.

Senator FAULKNER—Is this where the centenary program falls in terms of the Centenary of Federation sitting?

Mr Evans—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—I just wondered to what extent, Madam President, you are planning to consult with senators about the order of business, particularly for 10 May 2001. I am interested in the engagement and involvement with senators and obviously members

also—but let us concentrate on the senators—in the 9 May celebrations of the anniversary of the opening of parliament.

The PRESIDENT—There is an outline of the program for 9 May, mainly from Victoria, which Bernie Harris, who is our representative on that committee, is looking at. Certainly it is not settled yet. For 10 May, it is a matter that will be settled by the Senate, but that can only be done with consultation, which is what I would expect to happen.

Senator FAULKNER—What I am interested in is understanding the consultative processes that you have planned.

The PRESIDENT—My intention initially was to talk to you and Senator Hill and see, in a sense, what you thought might be appropriate and how we go about it from there. It would involve the Clerk, of course. But, personally, I intend to talk to you and Senator Hill informally about what we might put in place to plan it.

Senator FAULKNER—This is for 10 May?

The PRESIDENT—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Let me again acknowledge the good work that Mr Harris has been doing in this area in keeping those who are interested abreast of what is occurring. I do appreciate that; it has been helpful. To what extent is the Department of the Senate engaged in the 9 May celebrations?

Mr Evans—We have also been fully consulted by Mr Harris, who is our person on the organising committee, as it were, and the liaison person between the Victorians and us. As I say, we are fully involved in that.

Senator FAULKNER—But is Mr Harris doing this, in effect, for the whole Parliament or just for the Senate?

Mr Evans—For the Presiding Officers from both houses.

The PRESIDENT—The Speaker and I have taken the view throughout that informal briefings be given to the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister, I think you to some extent and Senator Hill. As it gets nearer to the stage when decisions need to be made, that will be increased. But, certainly, there has not been a lot talked about. I do not know whether the Clerk has considered 10 May, but I certainly have not discussed it with him as yet in any detail, or with anyone else.

Senator FAULKNER—There are a range of issues, that I will not go into now, which I do think will require decisions to be made about the actual commemorative sitting itself.

The PRESIDENT—I agree.

Senator FAULKNER—But I am interested, as I say, in the consultative process and how that might work in engaging members and senators. You cannot help me with that at this stage?

The PRESIDENT—Not any further; I have not talked to you or Senator Hill about it. That is where I would start. You will not be forgotten.

Senator FAULKNER—I appreciate that it is unlikely to be forgotten. When do you think it is likely to kick off? We are now less than a year away.

The PRESIDENT—Some time during the next session we can have a chat.

Senator FAULKNER—I do not know if you have a feel for what sorts of lead times are required here.

The PRESIDENT—I think 9 May has had the greater focus at this stage, and 10 May is something that I think will be put into place more easily and more quickly. The motion has to come before the Senate some time later this year, but that is only after there have been discussions and consultations about what does happen.

Senator FAULKNER—We now have a formal invitation from the parliament of Victoria; what are your and the Speaker's plans for the parliament responding to that invitation?

The PRESIDENT—When we have had discussions it will be a matter that will be listed, probably on the same day in each chamber, for a response to the invitation and, hopefully, to accept—I am sure to accept. But that has to be determined by each of the chambers.

CHAIR—Mr Evans, do you want to add something?

Mr Evans—No. I was saying earlier that the concentration so far has been on 9 May, on the sittings in the Exhibition Building, and involving a lot of other things around that. Basically, the Victorian parliament has agreed to give its chambers to the two houses on 10 May to basically do whatever they want in there, within reason. That will be a matter for the Senate to decide as to what it will do when it meets in the Legislative Council chamber on 10 May.

Senator FAULKNER—I appreciate that, but in relation to the Legislative Council chamber on the 10th and the Senate sitting on that day, obviously there is a real interest for the Senate itself as opposed to a range of others that are engaged in the celebratory functions at the—

The PRESIDENT—That date—10 May—in that chamber is a matter for the Senate, not others, in my opinion.

Senator FAULKNER—It will need to be done in consultation with others because—

The PRESIDENT—Yes, but primarily it is a matter for the Senate here to determine.

Senator FAULKNER—Mr Harris and others have certainly kept me abreast of the replanning, which is very positive from what I have heard to date. But would it not be a courtesy to respond to the Victorian parliament reasonably quickly? Some might say courtesy is not necessarily my long suit.

The PRESIDENT—I think the written invitation has arrived.

Mr Evans—I have not seen it.

The PRESIDENT—We are certainly getting a written invitation from them. We are expecting a written invitation from them and then that will be tabled and responded to by the Senate.

Senator FAULKNER—But you have reported—

The PRESIDENT—I reported what occurred.

Senator FAULKNER—How was that advised to you?

The PRESIDENT—We were informed by our colleagues in Victoria that it was happening and being broadcast. The Speaker and I went to the theatrette here and watched it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was piped throughout the building.

Senator FAULKNER—I watched it in my office.

The PRESIDENT—It was good on the big screen. Then I reported that to the Senate. But the written invitation is certainly coming.

Senator FAULKNER—So your report to the Senate was based only on the fact that the joint sitting occurred in Victoria?

The PRESIDENT—Yes. The Speaker and I thought it was appropriate to mention it that day.

Senator FAULKNER—So, Mr Evans, you would expect either the Presiding Officers or the clerks of the houses there to be formally corresponding with their counterparts?

Mr Evans—Yes, I think the formal invitation will come under the signature of the Victorian presiding officers to the federal Presiding Officers. That will be the formal invitation to which the two houses will then formally respond.

CHAIR—Are there any more questions on output group 4, 'Public education and awareness'?

Senator ROBERT RAY—While we are on the Centenary of Federation, Madam President, you are going off to London to celebrate that. Have you been given a briefing on the trade and investment aspects of the trip?

The PRESIDENT—Not yet.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you expect to be?

The PRESIDENT—I would expect to be briefed on the trip, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, I said on the trade and investment aspects: the sort of post-hoc rationale that came after criticism—not of you.

The PRESIDENT—I have no idea what briefing material will be included.

Senator ROBERT RAY—While we are on matters overseas, have you received your official invitation to the UN Presiding Officers Millennium Conference?

The PRESIDENT—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Oh, good.

The PRESIDENT—And to a conference which is taking place the day before that of women presiding officers.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And you will be able to attend?

The PRESIDENT—I hope to.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I encourage you to.

The PRESIDENT—Thank you.

CHAIR—There being no further questions on output 4, that completes the examination of the Department of the Senate. I thank the officers very much for their assistance. I now call on the Department of the Parliamentary Library.

[10.25 a.m.]

DEPARTMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY

In Attendance

Senator Reid, President of the Senate

General

Mr John W. Templeton, Secretary

Mr Rob McL Johnston, Assistant Secretary

Outputs 1 and 2

Dr June Verrier, Head, Information and Research Services

Ms Nola Adcock, Deputy Head, Information and Research Services

Miss Ros Membrey, Head, Resource Development Services

CHAIR—Good morning. I will now call on general questions from senators.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have only one, and it relates to the monitoring of electronic media done out of the library. I might as well put on the public record, Mr Templeton, our satisfaction with the degree of service we get in this regard. Usually within five minutes of making the call, the program comes down channel 15, which is an immense help to senators because we cannot always see programs as diverse as the *7.30 Report* and *Lateline*. Being able to pick them up the next day at request is a great service. Can we have a rough approximation of how many requests for replaying material are received over a year?

Mr Templeton—I do not have that figure off the top of my head or from the briefing papers, but we can provide it for you very quickly.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Good. I am also interested in whether Senator Kemp's performance on the *7.30 Report* last year received the most requests. Could you check that as well?

Mr Templeton—I am not sure we would keep figures as to the most requested items, but if we do I will provide them.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you.

Senator MURRAY—That would be closely followed by Daryl Melham's 41 mentions of 'Laurie', I should think.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Probably. I do not think we have ever had a request for you, Senator Murray.

Senator FAULKNER—I thank Mr Johnston for emailing me a response to a question I asked at a recent library committee about the actual cost of the 70 hours of checking of the problematical *Parliamentary Handbook*. I think that figure was \$2,000, Mr Johnston, which was the salary related cost involved.

Mr Johnston—Yes, Senator; \$2,000 was all salary related expenditure, including the normal on-costs of a direct but not an indirect nature.

Senator FAULKNER—I appreciate your responding with that. The only thing that surprised me a little was the fact that, given that there were 70 hours of work time from 17

library staff, including senior management—most of those I think were at a pretty senior level—the cost was as limited as it was. I would have thought that the costs would be something like \$80 to \$100 an hour, which would be considerably more than the \$2,000. I am not questioning the calculations, but it is a little surprising. When I asked the question I expected it to be more than double the figure that I was provided with. You are satisfied that that \$2,000 figure passes muster?

Mr Johnston—Yes. The figures were originally calculated by the department's management accountant at the time. The budget transfer occurred to the client service programs. After your request at the library committee, the figures were checked again and they were calculated including particular superannuation funds, of which, obviously, CSS, PSS and AGESt are all at different rates. We also provide managers with an hourly rate figure and have for many years, including the normal accrued expenses such as long service leave and so on. They are comprehensive.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you know what that hourly rate is?

Mr Johnston—The figures I have with me are not the current certified agreement. But we are more than happy to provide those.

Mr Templeton—We can provide you with an hourly rate per classification based on our current salary rates.

Senator FAULKNER—That would be helpful, Mr Templeton. Could you break the \$2,000 figure down further, disaggregate that a little, so I could understand how we go from—my recollection is that it was 17 officers: 10 senior officers, three parliamentary officers and four other parliamentary officers—17 officers for 70 hours and the figure coming out at \$2,000. Just the calculations or disaggregation—

Mr Templeton—We can provide the committee with the broken down calculations.

Senator FAULKNER—I am not doubting this but the figure was lower than I expected. Actually, to be frank with you I expected it to be two or three times the size of the figure that was provided. However, the lower the better, I suppose. So that is good. I think the general *Parliamentary Handbook* issue now has been put to rest, has it not? That one is in the past?

Mr Templeton—I hope so. Yes, we have no other carryover or associated items hanging around as a result of it.

Senator FAULKNER—So a few lessons learnt for next time. Could I ask about another issue that I have been interested in now for some time, the Parlinfo database. This goes to cataloguing of the newspaper database. I hope I am being technically accurate. No doubt you will quickly pull me up if I make an error. Miss Membrey knows this issue well. First of all, it ought to be said that there does appear to be a significant improvement. Does your own internal tracking of this indicate that that is the case?

Miss Membrey—It certainly does. We have put in position additional staff to get rid of the backlog that we created earlier this year and maintained a system whereby we do not recreate that backlog. Our figures are showing that the backlog is diminishing and not growing.

Senator FAULKNER—It would seem to me that the backlog would be about a week. Would that be right?

Miss Membrey—It varies. But yes, no longer than a week.

Senator FAULKNER—I think you put extra staff resources into this for this financial year. Have you got a feel for what might happen after July?

Miss Membrey—Yes, I am working on a plan now which I will submit to the Secretary early in June for maintaining our current level of service for the next financial year, which will involve some modification to our current work practices.

Senator FAULKNER—So the obvious risk, it seems to me as an outsider, is that, having worked hard to very significantly reduce the backlog, obviously you will want to ensure that the backlog does not build up again after the resources that have been applied to this task are removed and perhaps allocated elsewhere.

Miss Membrey—We have monitoring systems in place to ensure that we can keep tabs on the backlog.

Senator FAULKNER—Are you able to tell us what the amount of extra resources is that have been applied to address this problem?

Mr Templeton—From what my papers are showing me, the additional costs for the backlog are about \$12½ thousand. Certainly, as Miss Membrey said, she is putting together some proposals to ensure that, firstly, the backlog is eliminated by the end of next month so that we go into the new financial year starting right up to date and that the resources that would be necessary to ensure that we keep up to date will be put into that area. But, as Miss Membrey said, she is working through a number of issues relating to work practices and staffing levels, and she will be giving me a paper in the next few weeks on that.

Senator FAULKNER—Have you been able to establish to what extent piloting of this service might have made a difference? I have raised that in another forum briefly, but is that something that you have had a look at in the meantime?

Mr Templeton—The answer that we gave before I think is pretty much the same. The resources that will be required will be put into it. It is a very high priority service for people in this building, and the significant advantage that the new service provides, which the old service did not obviously, is access from the electorate offices. Because we were a paper based service, you had to come up to the library; you had to obviously be in the building to do that. The new electronic service is accessible from electorate offices, from people's offices in the building and even by people who are using the remote and mobile computing facility, so it is a significant step forward from our perspective. There was an element of the unknown in it, exactly how resource intensive it would be, and we have had to cut our cloth, so to speak, to make sure we get up to speed on that.

Senator FAULKNER—I suppose the issue is that if the service were piloted before it went on line whether that would have assisted with making some assessments about the level of resources that would be required from the beginning.

Mr Templeton—That is possibly so, but we do have a situation that, if we had piloted it, we would have been still up for the dual running costs of continuing to use a paper based service, plus the pilot of the electronic service. We did in fact go for one month of dual running, in January this year, which was a de facto pilot. At that stage we knew that the technology was proven, we knew it was robust, we knew it would work and it was then a question of managing the peaks and troughs which are always going to happen in a clipping service, because if some great crisis emerges obviously the amount of material being clipped goes through the roof.

Senator FAULKNER—Has the fact that because of the backlog more resources than perhaps were first planned have had to be put into this had any impact elsewhere in the library? Have other library services suffered as a result of the successful efforts to reduce the backlog with this particular service?

Mr Templeton—Not that I am aware of, and I would be very surprised if they had. We do not budget for a full year right down to the last dollar; there will always be some contingency funds kept within the library for issues which arise which we had not foreseen, and those contingency funds had to be reallocated and given to Miss Membrey's program. But certainly we do want to know what the continuing establishment cost of that service will be for next year's and the ensuing year's budgets.

Senator FAULKNER—What about indexing of journal articles?

Miss Membrey—There was a time lag at the time we created the backlog of newspaper clippings of journal articles but that has been overcome now.

Senator FAULKNER—Okay, so that is not a problem?

Miss Membrey—That is not a problem any longer.

Senator FAULKNER—So you would be satisfied that there are really no problems in the journal articles indexing area at all? I wondered if resources might have come from there and been applied to the newspaper database. That was all.

Miss Membrey—No, there were not.

Senator FAULKNER—All right, thanks for that. That is helpful. Yes, Chair?

CHAIR—Sorry, Senator Faulkner, go ahead.

Senator FAULKNER—Are you right?

CHAIR—I was just going to ask if there were any more general questions, but I think there are.

Senator FAULKNER—There are more questions to the Parliamentary Library but whether they are specifically general questions I do not know.

CHAIR—I am trying to stick to my running sheet.

Senator FAULKNER—We will knock them over here, if that is okay.

CHAIR—Please do.

Senator FAULKNER—I am sure Mr Templeton can cope with that.

CHAIR—Please proceed.

Senator FAULKNER—The external databases, such as the ASC database for company searches, are obviously a very important library facility. I know it is a resource that we in the opposition use quite significantly, and I believe others use it as well. In the 1998-99 annual report it says that resources set aside to fund the use of these databases are being reduced from, I think, \$345,000 in 1997-98 to \$230,000 in 1998-99. Very briefly, do you know the reason for that—basically, the rationale for that reduction? I am referring to page 42 of the annual report. It might assist me if you could explain what external databases are. Is the ASC database, for example, an external database? I assumed it was.

Ms Adcock—Yes, Senator. They are externally available commercial services for which we pay fees. The Australian Securities Commission database, as you said, is a very high

profile one that we use quite extensively. It is not so much a reduction that we made. Our use of external databases does reflect the issues that come up and how we need to use those. We have a budget for that area, but we do supplement that, depending on the issues that arise, from the major part of the collection development budget. Like the issues that come before the parliament, the use of those services does have peaks and troughs. The previous year was a particularly heavy one in terms of client requests and, therefore, the use of the external services reflected that too.

Senator FAULKNER—Which financial year are we talking about?

Ms Adcock—That was when you were talking about the \$345,000.

Senator FAULKNER—So 1997-98.

Ms Adcock—Yes. I remember that that was a particularly heavy use year. In the 1998-99 one, it was not that we were consciously reducing the amount that we spent on that. We did not need to spend more than that \$230,000. As I said, we nominally put an amount aside for that, which I monitor. In the 1998-99 year, the additional funds went back into the collection development vote proper for purchase of other materials. It is a bit of a floating amount of money, in a way. We do see that our staff are using it cost-effectively. It is only our staff who can actually search those services directly. But the amount of money that we spend on it does reflect the level of client use and the need to use those particular services to answer the questions that we get.

Senator FAULKNER—In that same table—table 7 on page 42—there is a reduction in the amount for monographs from \$95,000 to \$66,000 and an explanation that ‘experience has shown that it is the currency of information that is of most importance to clients’. On the same rationale, it would seem not to argue for a significant decrease in the external databases. They are obviously the most current form of information that is available to senators and members.

Ms Adcock—What I am saying is that for 1998-99 it was not that we reduced the amount of money that was available. It was just that we did not need to spend more than that \$230,000 in order to answer the client requests that we received.

Senator FAULKNER—Have you got a feel in relation to the external databases of current use in the nearly completed financial year?

Ms Adcock—It will be up somewhat on the 1998-99 one. From the budget that I have seen and our usage so far it is probably going to be around \$260,000-\$270,000. Included in those services, apart from the one that you have mentioned, are a number of very prominent media services as well that we have been using. We do make extensive use of a range of them.

Senator FAULKNER—Because of this reduction is there any informal or formal rationing system for the use of the databases at all?

Ms Adcock—Not particularly. When we receive a request where we know we will need to use a commercial service we do have a look at what the likely cost is going to be. In some instances we judge that it may be extremely high. For example, a list of 30 or 40 companies to search on the Securities Commission database may cost us in the order of \$1,000. In some instances where we have judged that it will be quite excessive we do go back and check with the office concerned to ask if all of these are in fact needed or if priority can be given to some of them to have a look and see whether the question that the office is trying to answer may in fact be answered by prioritising and getting the main ones. That is not always the case. But

there are some services where we do have to have quite a close look at the high expense that can be generated by just one request.

Senator FAULKNER—That does indicate to some extent at least some sort of informal system of resource monitoring. I said rationing, but resource monitoring might be a better way of describing it.

Ms Adcock—In some instances—if we go back to the Securities Commission database—we do have other sources of information apart from just searching that service. Our staff are instructed to provide the service that is asked for and to look at how they can provide it in a timely way but most cost effectively as well. In some instances, checking some other sources that we have access to—it may be web based or it could be paper based—can complement.

Senator FAULKNER—But for the purposes of this discussion could I be satisfied that the reasonable needs of library clients are being met in this area? That is my concern.

Ms Adcock—Yes.

Mr Templeton—The notional amount included each year for this activity is \$250,000. The year before that you are looking at we went over, as Ms Adcock has said. Because of lower usage last year it dropped under \$230,000. We have to put a notional amount in there because it is so variable. The requests that we make of our staff to use all our resources wisely and carefully are put in those terms. We all have a responsibility to use resources carefully but if there is no alternative means of doing it, those resources are used. But it is one of our higher cost databases.

Senator FAULKNER—The point that the library makes in its annual report—that experience has shown that it is the currency of information that is most important to clients, which is used as perhaps a perfectly reasonable justification in terms of a reduction in expenditure on monographs—seems to me to be a reasonable point. I make the point about the currency in relation to external databases.

Ms Adcock—In relation to some services, clients do ask us to provide responses and are not aware that there may be any costs being generated by that request. There are some instances where the response of clients, after making them aware that there is a cost for something that they are generally inquiring about, is often, ‘I did not realise that it would be that sort of expense. I would certainly want a certain number of these but these others were just a bit on the wish list.’ It does enable us to manage that service well if we are able to inform clients at times that there is quite a high cost involved.

In relation to your question about monographs, we still have a wonderful service that we get from the National Library which is a large number of inter-library loans that we get from them with book material. So quite often our smaller expense on books is in fact supplemented very well by what we can get from the National Library at very short notice.

Senator FAULKNER—Thank you for that. Could I ask about the SPIRIT tracking system. I think we have established what the acronym is. You know what I am talking about.

Mr Templeton—Yes, I know exactly what you mean, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—As I understand it, it is basically the internal workload computer system. I have raised some concerns about security and confidentiality of this before; in other words, the capacity of Library staff to get details of requests being made by members and senators. I think this has also been discussed at the Library Committee. As I understand it, when we last dealt with this matter a report of some description was going to be prepared.

Where is that up to? If it has been sent, it has not hit my desk yet, but it may not have come through yet.

Mr Templeton—Yes, a paper is being prepared for the next meeting of the Library Committee and will be circulated with the Library Committee agenda papers and other papers.

Senator FAULKNER—Will that include the capacity for Library staff members, either administrative or corporate support people, to access the SPIRIT system, whether they can or cannot do so? My concern here, Mr Templeton, as I mentioned to you and Dr Verrier before, is whether there is adequate security around members' and senators' requests in terms of what requests have been made, who might have responded to them in what manner, and what sort of resources might have been applied to those tasks. What you are saying to me is that we will have a report on that at the next Library Committee meeting.

Mr Templeton—Yes, Senator, and that report will have details of the hierarchy of the access to the information, what sort of data is there and what information is stored on SPIRIT. I think it is important to make the point that SPIRIT is essentially a system that we use to track the response to requests, where requests are. It does not have on that database any of the information that may be part of the response to a request. So it is only a statistical gathering of information. It does not, for example, provide the text or information that is provided as part of any response.

Senator FAULKNER—Thanks for that. I think you have a consultancy to get the electronic guide to services on the Library intranet site. Is that right?

Mr Templeton—Yes, we do.

Senator FAULKNER—Which would be a useful thing to achieve. Can you give me a status report on where that is up to, please?

Mr Templeton—I think Ms Adcock could not only give you a status report but could probably give you chapter and verse, if you felt so inclined.

Senator FAULKNER—Chapter and verse is not required, but a brief status report would be helpful.

Ms Adcock—We took delivery of that last week. The consultant is working with us at the moment to complete all the documentation for our staff, and some of our staff have been loading all the current information on the database as well. We anticipate that we will be showing it to a wider group of our own staff either later this week or early next week, and making it more widely available for testing within the Library before it goes live.

Senator FAULKNER—Who undertook this consultancy for the library?

Ms Adcock—Brave Design.

Senator FAULKNER—Could you tell me the dollar value of that consultancy?

Ms Adcock—\$19,200.

Senator FAULKNER—Is the consultancy ongoing?

Ms Adcock—No. The contract specified to deliver an electronic version of our current printed guide to services. We will then look to see how we may enhance it. But that consultancy finishes with the delivery of this particular part.

Senator FAULKNER—So you now have it, so this consultancy is finished?

Ms Adcock—Yes. We will be winding up the documentation on the consultancy over the next week or two.

Senator FAULKNER—Is the electronic guide on the Intranet site?

Ms Adcock—It is only available on our internal one at the moment, for testing. It will be made available to senators and members once we have all the current data there and all the documentation is complete. One of the advantages will be that it will be kept up to date so any changes to staff and the subjects they cover and so on will be kept up to date. We are training some of our support staff to be able to do that in an ongoing way, rather than us just being reliant on the printed on that comes out twice a year.

Senator FAULKNER—So the status is that it is available to—

Ms Adcock—To a limited group of library staff at the moment who are doing the data input.

Senator FAULKNER—How limited a group of staff is that?

Ms Adcock—It is about 10 or so at the moment, who are checking that everything is working okay on our system. It was only loaded on our system last week.

Senator FAULKNER—Have you got an early feel for how it is going?

Ms Adcock—It seems to be working very well.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you ever read from the web a thing called ‘Crikey Politics’?

Mr Templeton—No.

Senator FAULKNER—A lot of people round the building do because I get about 20 copies of it in hard copy stuck in the internal mail. I wonder where it comes from, to be honest. I would send a cheerio out to those people to say, ‘Keep the cards and letters coming in’. I thought it might have been drawn to your attention because it was on the web site from 28 March. It talks about university by proxy and says:

Rumours are circulating that an electorate staffer to a senior Senate minister asked the parliamentary library to prepare an assignment for his law studies. Developing ...

It does not mean anything to you?

Mr Templeton—No, it certainly does not.

Senator FAULKNER—I will show you the original copy from the web site and you can have a look at it. I am not suggesting that these things are accurate, but hillarybray@hotmail.com does appear from time to time to be quite well informed about certain matters. That involved the parliamentary library so I thought it appropriate that I asked you.

Mr Templeton—I will have a look at that and perhaps come back at the next library committee meeting.

[10.59 a.m.]

DEPARTMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING STAFF

In Attendance

Senator Reid, President of the Senate

Mr John Templeton, Secretary

Ms Val Barrett, Group Manager, Client Services

Mr Peter Ward, Group Manager, Technical Services
Mr Bruce Sharp, Group Manager, Strategic Development
Mr John Walsh, Group Manager, Corporate Support
Mr Bernie Harris, Executive Coordinator, Centenary of Parliament

CHAIR—Mr Templeton, officers of the department, good morning. I call upon general questions for the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff.

Senator FAULKNER—I have noticed, Mr Templeton, a few surprising errors creeping in with some of the *Daily Hansards*. I wanted to ask you whether this was just one of those things or is it a bit of a pattern. For example—you are no doubt aware of this—the Tuesday, 9 May House of Representatives *Hansard* was marked ‘Monday, 9 May’ and the Tuesday, 9 May Senate *Hansard* is correct on the cover but on top of each page inside we have ‘5 September, 2000’. I am not suggesting that this is the most significant event in the history of the Commonwealth parliament, but they do seem to me to be the sorts of errors that may not have crept in before. I would be interested in your comment on that.

Mr Templeton—There is an element of both in it. As you said, some of these things just happen. There has been a particular problem in the first few months of this year. As from 1 January we introduced a new computer production system for *Hansard* which has been going through the bedding-in phase. The sorts of issues that you picked up have been basically production errors. The one on Monday, 9 May I think came about because no-one had essentially checked. Most sitting fortnights start on a Monday, so the system is configured to start on a Monday. The Budget sittings fortnight starts on a Tuesday. It should have been checked and it should not have happened.

We have had, as I said, a number of production problems which have been worked out now in the main. Certainly I would make the point that the daily is a proof; it is picked up. The main thing is that those errors are picked up on the electronic versions. As soon as they are detected in the print versions we correct the electronic versions, which are by far and away the most heavily used. But I think it is partly the result of some teething problems settling in the new system.

Senator FAULKNER—Fair enough. I appreciate that they are proof *Hansards*. When were the last official *Hansards* distributed?

Mr Templeton—It would be quite some time ago. The actual official *Hansards*—

Senator FAULKNER—This is the weekly bound—

Mr Templeton—The weekly bound ones have not been printed for some time, but the weeklies are up on the Internet and Intranet. That has been one of the problems as a result of the production system and they will be starting to come down in the next week or so.

Senator FAULKNER—But this is all part of the same problem, is it?

Mr Templeton—Yes; it is part of the teething problems of the new production system. The printed versions will be available shortly.

Senator FAULKNER—I should have checked before I came up here, but I am not sure that I have received any weeklies this calendar year at all.

Mr Templeton—I do not think you have because we have had a problem marrying the new system up. But the text is up on the Internet and Intranet, which are the most heavily used ones. That has been our priority—to get the electronic versions up and corrected.

Senator FAULKNER—Has this function been outsourced at all?

Mr Templeton—No, it is entirely our problem.

Senator FAULKNER—So this is in-house.

Mr Templeton—It is an in-house problem, except to say that the printing of both dailies and proof *Hansards* has always been performed by someone other than *Hansard*. It used to be the Australian government printer. It is now CanPrint. But the problem is not with CanPrint; the problem has been settling in our system.

Senator FAULKNER—Has there been a delay in the loading of *Hansard* onto ParlInfo?

Mr Templeton—There was in the early stages of the new system, but as far as I am aware it is up to date now. Ms Barrett may be able to confirm that.

Ms Barrett—We think we have overcome the problems with converting the text, and now we will be able to progressively load all of the daily versions.

Mr Templeton—The PDF—the Portable Document Format—has been up automatically. The difficulty has been with the SGML, Standard Generalised Markup Language, version. That is the one that allows very heavy and sophisticated levels of searching. That is the one that we were having trouble with on the new system. The conversion routines from the text into the SGML format; the markup was not converting properly.

Senator FAULKNER—Has Drake Personnel been engaged to look at these or other publishing errors of recent times?

Mr Templeton—We have one person from Drake Personnel helping us with the backlog of converting the text to the SGML format for loading.

Senator FAULKNER—Why was Drake required to do that?

Mr Templeton—Once we got into a situation where we had a backlog—the publishing section of *Hansard* were concentrating on trying to keep it up to date—we needed someone to help us with the backlog. We got someone in on a temporary basis to help us with that backlog.

Senator FAULKNER—What is the cost of that?

Mr Templeton—I am not sure, but I can find out and provide the advice to the committee.

Senator FAULKNER—What is the outcome backlog-wise now? Where are we up to?

Ms Barrett—We are hoping to complete the backlog of committee transcripts in the fully searchable ParlInfo format by 14 June. That is the target we are aiming for. We are hoping to have January and February completed by 19 May, March by 31 May and the April and May version by 14 June. We then hope they will be progressively loaded from thereon.

Senator FAULKNER—Can you assure us, Mr Templeton, that we are not dealing here with systemic problems, that we are dealing more with teething problems—which is I think what you are saying to us?

Mr Templeton—Yes. I can assure you that they are teething problems we are working our way through. The previous system, which we replaced, had a number of problems with it in terms of its relationship to other systems around the building. It had to be replaced. It was within its confines a very reliable system but it had got there after nine years of development. We have brought in a new system both to match what was there before and to take us, we hope, to higher levels of efficiency. But we have had to start from the position that a system

which had taken nine years to develop had to be replicated, and we have run into some teething problems.

Senator FAULKNER—I suppose someone like me who has been here for nine years understands the level of service, which has been outstanding, and when these sorts of errors occur it is probably more noticeable because of the exemplary performance that has occurred for such a long period of time.

Mr Templeton—It is much more noticeable because of that, yes.

Senator FAULKNER—To what extent is the computer system involved in this too? That is the one other thing that has been worrying me. Suddenly when the February sittings come along you are not getting pinks or greens, you are getting the wrong ones or you are getting them extraordinarily late for any reasonable use. There were a lot of complaints to Hansard about this. I do not know if you log or monitor complaints, but I think that is fair, is it not?

Mr Templeton—We certainly did monitor. Yes, we did have a number of complaints in the February sittings. The new Hansard Production System is essentially an application which sits on the main computer network, and it has to relate to a number of other applications around the building, principally ParlInfo, so that material can be loaded automatically to ParlInfo but also to the document production systems which the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives run. The problems in February with pinks and greens were, again, further teething problems with the new Hansard Production System. It was not a network problem; it was the relationship, if you like, between the application and the network over which the application has to deliver those outputs.

Senator FAULKNER—But we still have a pretty serious problem with the pinks and greens, I think, in relation to my own office. Obviously the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate gets particular service in relation to pinks and greens, as you know. For question time pinks the delay has been reduced, but we would not be getting question time pinks until 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening on the night of sittings. That is around average. That, frankly, makes them next to useless. It is an important resource. I can only say this in relation to the opposition in the Senate—I cannot talk for others—but it certainly has quite a significant impact on the way we do business. I am sure Senator Reid, in her previous incarnation, could appreciate that point.

Mr Templeton—What is called the bulk send, which goes to your office and to the Leader of the Government and the Leader of the Democrats, is obviously a separate exercise from when senators get their own pinks and greens.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, sure.

Mr Templeton—I was not aware that it was running that late. I knew we had had problems earlier in the year with the bulk sends and they were being—

Senator FAULKNER—It is not as bad as it was earlier in the year, but it is still very patchy and still, frankly, next to useless. That is the point. It is unsatisfactory because unless you get those pinks quickly—and I know that Hansard understands the need for those things to come through quickly—they have very limited utility.

Mr Templeton—Certainly my understanding is that if there is a problem with the system getting them to you they should simply be printed off, photocopied and walked around to your office to make sure that you do get them on time.

Senator FAULKNER—I am not making a plea for a special case. They can come through the computer and through the system, but they come through very late.

Mr Templeton—If they are coming through late, we can provide the service to which we believe all office holders are entitled within the time frame that we would like to provide it by using a temporary, alternative means.

Senator FAULKNER—The point I am making here is that this is a dramatic reduction in service level. It is a very tangible, quantifiable and dramatic reduction, which is really disappointing and, as I said, quite unusual. I appreciate that, as you say, there are a lot of teething problems.

Mr Templeton—This is a teething problem and no-one is more disappointed about it than us.

Senator FAULKNER—What are Aspect Computing doing?

Mr Templeton—Aspect Computing were contracted to design and implement the Hansard Production System.

Senator FAULKNER—Is their contract now completed? Is this an ongoing consultancy?

Mr Templeton—It is not an ongoing consultancy. They have been contracted to design, deliver and complete the Hansard Production System. It is not yet completed. They are still there, working through the rectification of bugs and problems.

Senator FAULKNER—What we are talking about now in relation to the Hansard Production System are the issues and problems associated with what we were talking about before—that is, mistakes in the actual printed *Hansard*.

Mr Templeton—Yes, it is the new application.

Senator FAULKNER—I was not sure if it was the link.

Mr Templeton—The new application covers all elements of *Hansard* production from when the text of someone's contribution in the chamber is collected to it being entered into the system, edited, put onto pinks, brought together for production of the daily and then translated across into SGML and PDF for use on ParInfo, the Internet and the Intranet. We are having teething problems with the one application, if you like.

Senator FAULKNER—Was there an open tender for the Hansard Production System?

Mr Templeton—My recollection is that we went out to a number of firms which we believed would be able to do that task. They made offers to us. It was a limited tender.

Senator FAULKNER—How was the identification of firms undertaken?

Mr Ward—We invited a number of organisations to bid for the work, based on a functional specification. It was then restricted to a couple of short-listed tenderers, and they were asked to put together a prototype and to demonstrate that prototype. From the overall evaluation, we chose Aspect Computing.

Senator FAULKNER—What is the value of this contract with Aspect Computing?

Mr Ward—I have not got the figure with me.

Mr Templeton—The total cost is around \$2 million.

Senator FAULKNER—Thank you. Could you get us a precise figure? We would appreciate that. There are performance criteria in this contract, are there?

Mr Templeton—Yes. That is why the final payment has not yet been made for the delivery of the system.

Senator FAULKNER—I hope we have not been trying to reinvent the wheel with this system, because it all seemed to be working exceptionally well until this new Hansard Production System came into operation. If it is just bugs in the implementation stage, that is good. But there is tremendous expertise and great corporate memory, it strikes me, in Hansard, and I would not want to see that expertise lost as we try to reinvent the wheel and come up with something that does not work anywhere near as effectively—and so far it has not.

Mr Templeton—I will answer that in a couple of ways. When the first Hansard production system was developed back in 1990, the principal objective was to reduce Hansard's printing costs, which at that stage were running at some \$1 million or \$2 million a year—more than that in fact. It started out as a means of getting the text into a system, where we had a text stream basically going down to the old government printer, and it was focused on publishing in hard copy. Subsequently, it was married up to what was then the Parliamentary Database Service, PDBS, so that the text could be entered into PDBS.

Increasingly, the principal objective of the system is focused towards the electronic storage, retrieval and searching capacities that we have in the building in ParInfo. So the new system focuses on that; it is certainly not reinventing the wheel. It was necessary for a number of reasons. For example, the word processing package which Hansard used has not been used in the rest of the building for five years. That was WordPerfect, and it was built into the old system. It was incredibly complex and difficult to take the word processing package out by itself and put a new word processing package in. It meant it was not possible, without significant conversion costs, for stuff to be moved around the building, because everyone else in the building is now on Word.

We are trying to get a system—if you like, a content management framework—within the building which allows people to access material quickly and easily. We have had some teething problems with the new system. As I said, we have had to replicate, in one hit, a system that had evolved over nine years from a fairly simple system which had been worked on continuously over those nine years. It had cost, when you take into account all of the development time and effort over that time, quite a considerable amount of money. I am quite confident that, once we have got all the bugs shaken out of it, this system will last not only as long but possibly longer than the old one it replaced, but at the end of that time it will not look anything like it, because it is modular. We should be able, as we require, to alter things for different purposes and take bits and pieces out without having to replicate the entire system.

Senator FAULKNER—Do we know what the original cost of the Hansard production system was?

Mr Templeton—My recollection is that the original Hansard production system cost in 1990—and I will have to get the exact figure—around \$1.5 or \$1.8 million.

Senator FAULKNER—What about the ongoing cost of implementation?

Mr Templeton—Of support and development?

Senator FAULKNER—Yes.

Mr Templeton—That would have to be an estimate because it was essentially carried in-house. We can give you an estimate of that.

Senator FAULKNER—But you could give me a precise figure on that, couldn't you?

Mr Templeton—Not the continuing development and support, because a lot of the support costs would have been carried in PISO. At various times throughout the life of the old system there have been up to two, three or four people in Hansard almost full time either supporting the system or developing greater functionality for it. It was very much something that evolved over a long time. We would hope with the new system that we will not require those levels of ongoing support. The development costs should be much less and much more easily identified and will be related more to specific functional requests rather than the need to continually evolve, finetune and improve.

Senator FAULKNER—All the files are available on this, are they?

Mr Templeton—Yes, I would expect so. Whether throughout that time people have totally apportioned all the time they spent on the development of the old Hansard production system, I would personally be extremely surprised.

Senator FAULKNER—So I can be assured that no DPRS files have gone missing?

Mr Templeton—Yes, you can be absolutely assured that no DPRS files have gone missing.

Senator FAULKNER—So I can be assured that file 99/299 and 99/140 have not gone missing?

Mr Templeton—If I knew what they were, I could probably say yes or no, but I do not know what those files are.

Senator FAULKNER—You have assured me that none have gone missing?

Mr Templeton—No-one has said to me that any files relating to the Hansard Production System or the development or support of the Hansard Production System are missing—and I would be amazed if they were.

Senator FAULKNER—If that is not the case, you might let us know. Have you been able to quantify the number of complaints from members and senators on this?

Mr Templeton—I am sure we have.

Ms Barrett—There has been certainly been an increasing number of calls to the Client Liaison help desk about a number of things. I could not give you the exact number of complaints related to late delivery of *Hansard* transcripts, but I can come back with that information.

Senator FAULKNER—It is fair to say, though, that it is pretty widespread?

Ms Barrett—There were a number of complaints both to the Client Liaison help desk and to Hansard officers—yes, that's right.

Senator FAULKNER—Would you be able to say, Mr Templeton, whether you felt that that has now reached an unprecedented level?

Mr Templeton—If you had asked me a couple of months ago, I would have said yes. My understanding and impression is that, with the exception of some specific problems on the bulk sends, we are working our way through it. In fact, the problems are now significantly less than they were, say, two months ago.

Senator FAULKNER—But there is also a staff morale problem, isn't there, in Hansard at the moment?

Mr Templeton—There may well be a staff morale problem as a result of a number of things that have occurred in the first six months of this year. We have had an exceptionally busy time. Certainly people find it difficult to move from a system that they have known and become very accustomed to using. For good reasons, that system just cannot be supported much longer and has to be changed. People often feel more comfortable with what they know and are familiar with rather than have to take the leap into the new system.

Senator FAULKNER—Is there any significant increase in staff turnover—more staff leaving?

Mr Templeton—No.

Ms Barrett—Not noticeably. We are currently in the middle of a recruitment round to replace staff who would naturally leave and go on to other things. I do not think there has been a noticeable increase in staff departures.

Senator FAULKNER—Could I get the figures for the last three years, maybe broken up into six-monthly periods?

Mr Templeton—Yes.

Ms Barrett—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—What about actual leave requests from continuing staff?

Ms Barrett—I could certainly get figures on that too. For the same period?

Senator FAULKNER—There is no need to go back that far, but maybe for a couple of years, just to see if there is any pattern there. I am interested in whether there is a problem with stress in the workplace at DPRS.

Mr Templeton—If I could give a general answer across the whole department and then come to Hansard specifically, the department operates in an environment where we have very pronounced peaks and troughs of workload. If you have a look at the requirements that are on all our staff to perform consistently to a very high standard, I imagine there will be times when people do feel under greater than normal stress. Certainly, going back to Hansard specifically, it has been a difficult time for people in Hansard. The problem was compounded by the difficulties in finding time for training. The sitting patterns for this year have not helped in that and, of course, we had, unusually, requirements on us to be on deck and working early in January, which is normally a time that we would have either for leave or for greater amounts of training. We have had to work our way through that and my impression is, notwithstanding that people have at times felt frustrated, that by and large people have recognised that the imperative is to implement the new system and to implement it as smoothly as we can.

Senator FAULKNER—Okay. If I could identify the files for you—‘99/299 Hansard Production System project: financial administration’ and ‘99/140 Hansard Production System project: implementation phase’—you might come back to me on those. In relation to committee work, there seems to be a dramatic increase in the use of outsourced transcription work for committees. I do not know if that is the case. I wonder if you could let me know.

Mr Templeton—I would say it was not the case. We have been using our external providers for a couple of years, principally to take, if you like, the peaks off some of our workload. We have a core of permanent staff in the department and we try as far as possible to use our outsource providers to give us support at times of maximum activity. As for the

general percentage of outsourced work, if I remember correctly around 11.1 per cent of our hours annually last year was provided by external providers.

Senator FAULKNER—That percentage has not grown?

Mr Templeton—It will fluctuate from time to time. A lot of times we will not be using external providers; at other times, such as now, we will be to help us pick up our peaks. But for last year we did 220½ hours.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you know where you think the figures will come in for this year?

Mr Templeton—I would expect around the same, but I will ask Ms Barrett whether she thinks there is going to be a significant increase. I would be surprised if there were.

Ms Barrett—No, I do not believe the increase will be significant. As Mr Templeton said, it does fluctuate depending on peak workload. The next two weeks are probably our busiest and the workload for committees and chambers combined is probably double what would be an average week. So we do use external providers in those instances. But I do not believe that since we started using external providers we have seen a marked increase. The committee workload over, say, the last six years, the two last three-year cycles, has increased by about 24 per cent. Using external providers is one way of assisting our permanent in-house staff to meet those additional demands. The number of requests for priority delivery of transcripts is increasing too.

Senator FAULKNER—Aren't there real problems with this? What about editing and so forth when it comes back from the other providers? Is that a significant impost?

Ms Barrett—We do undertake quality assurance to make sure that the transcript is of the same standard and, depending on which provider we use, sometimes we have to do more work on some providers than others. We take this into account when we are allocating work and looking at the total value for money.

Senator FAULKNER—You send them down the wire to these outsource providers, don't you?

Ms Barrett—Yes, for some of them.

Senator FAULKNER—What is the sound quality like?

Ms Barrett—We have just upgraded our sound system to try to improve the quality, and we are using a new system now. The sound quality has been variable. We hope that we have improved it significantly. Our two main providers are reporting increased satisfaction with the sound quality.

Senator FAULKNER—So there have been problems with the sound quality?

Ms Barrett—I would not say there have actually been problems, but there was room for improvement, and we have sought to do that.

Senator FAULKNER—What was the capital investment involved in the new high-tech sound system?

Ms Barrett—I do not know the exact figure, but it was not a large investment. Do you mean the audio delivery system to send the sound across the Internet.

Senator FAULKNER—Which you use and which has been enhanced and improved.

Ms Barrett—The cost is quite low. I will get the exact figure for you.

Senator FAULKNER—Thank you. I could be satisfied, Mr Templeton, that we do not have a situation where some Hansard work is being outsourced that could have been done in-house?

Mr Templeton—I would not think so. We will occasionally have work going out when we do have people in Hansard here not doing transcription work but there will be work which they need to do either for professional development or organisational development. We have to have some time for our own staff to work through some issues that relate to their workplace and to their professional development. So it is not an inflexible rule if you would say that because someone is available here it must automatically be done in here. We do not want people doing nothing but transcribing 100 per cent of their time when there are other issues that relate to the way the organisation has to be developed that then are ignored.

Senator FAULKNER—Can someone tell me why, for example, the *Hansard* record of the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee on Friday, 5 May could not have been handled in-house?

Ms Barrett—From recollection, that particular committee was done externally to put us in a position where we would be able to complete any backlog in transcription that we had. Occasionally, we have to make decisions about what our future work requirements are going to be into the next three or four days. When we are trying to keep the transcripts up to date, we sometimes will make a decision that, because we think there might be an overflow or we might not have completed work, we will send out something. I would actually have to look at the work plan for that time to be able to give you the exact reason that particular committee was sent out. There are usually decisions made about how we manage the overall workload.

Senator FAULKNER—What about outsourced chamber work? Is it only committee work that is being outsourced?

Ms Barrett—No. The Senate and House of Representatives chambers on Wednesdays and Thursdays sit through the lunch hour. They do not actually break for lunch. We have a requirement to make certain that our staff can have a lunch break, so from time to time we send out a period of up to an hour of the Senate or the House of Reps chambers, have that provided and sent back to us. That allows our staff to have a break so that—

Senator FAULKNER—No-one would argue against that. Taking the Senate, for example, the Matters of Public Interest debate on Wednesday can be a very important and at times controversial period of Senate sittings. Thursday lunchtime in the Senate is not so because, of course, as you would appreciate, that is basically non-controversial legislation. So you would want to get a pretty good turnaround on Wednesdays at lunchtime.

Ms Barrett—Yes, we certainly do. And we ask for the same turnaround as we would be providing in-house.

Senator FAULKNER—I made, I thought, a very good speech recently—perhaps no others did—on Wednesday at lunchtime. We did not get the *Hansard* until 6 o'clock. The pinks did not come through until 6 o'clock at night.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Mr Templeton, you might also see how many times the Library was asked to replay that speech and how it ranked against others.

Mr Templeton—Vis-a-vis Dr Kemp, or—

Senator ROBERT RAY—There would be no competition.

Mr Templeton—Senator Kemp, rather.

Senator FAULKNER—It was Senator Kemp.

Ms Barrett—I could not be certain whether that was a problem related to a late delivery of work that was done externally—

Senator FAULKNER—I know why it was, because I kept hassling Hansard. It is because it was outsourced to someone else outside the building.

Ms Barrett—Or it may have been a production system problem. I will take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—You have got to understand that these people do not have senators and members as their clients like you do. They have the DPRS as their client. There is a crucial difference.

Mr Templeton—With respect, Senator, they do understand the urgency and the need, and certainly our major outsourcer is a parliamentary operation anyway, Queensland Hansard—

Senator FAULKNER—I think it should be core business, frankly. The House and Senate chambers I really think should be core business.

Mr Templeton—They are, with the exception of lunchtimes on Wednesdays and Thursdays, if they continue on. It is a balancing act that we have to do, if you like, with our OH&S responsibilities to staff. And certainly the people to whom we outsource, particularly those bits of work, are very acutely aware of the nature of the demands on us, the nature of the clientele and the urgency and sensitivity of the work they are doing. A number of them are ex-Hansard people.

Senator FAULKNER—I have come to the conclusion that you cannot get a quick response from Hansard when the material has been outsourced. That is the conclusion I have come to. I can only base that on personal experience, which has been very disappointing and totally unsatisfactory.

Mr Templeton—Could I add that the problems we have had with the production system have not assisted and may well have been contributing to that. The other point I would make is that we have been using external providers for quite some time for committees, and I think we have been using external providers for those two one-hour slots before the first half of this financial year. So material has been being done externally, produced and put back into the system and we have not had any concerns or complaints. It may simply be that difficulties with the new production system have added to our overall problems. But I take on board what you are saying.

Senator FAULKNER—Have Hansard staff had flagged with them the possibility that there might even be some future international contract outsourcing?

Mr Templeton—It is theoretically possible, and we may well be discussing with, say, the New Zealand parliament or someone whether they are interested in doing some of the work for us. It would be a question of cost and benefit which we would make the judgment on.

Senator FAULKNER—But hasn't this been already flagged with Hansard staff?

Mr Templeton—It has probably been discussed as a possibility, particularly with the new sound links, but we have to make a judgment, if you like, on whether or not the quality assurance hours required on material that is brought back would be greater, if we were to use, say, New Zealand Hansard or the House of Commons or someone like that than it would be for an Australian operation.

Senator FAULKNER—Have there been any discussions with the House of Commons, for example?

Mr Templeton—I presume we may well have been talking to them about the technical feasibility of these things and they have been talking to us about being linked up as well.

Senator FAULKNER—You must know, Mr Templeton. You cannot presume you might well have been talking to them.

Mr Templeton—We have, but we have not discussed it in terms of a formal proposition. Hansard in the House of Commons is very interested in what we are doing with sending sound—

Senator FAULKNER—So there have been informal discussions with the House of Commons.

Mr Templeton—There are informal discussions all the time between Hansards.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, but about the House of Commons or Hansard in the New Zealand parliament undertaking what hitherto has been core business of Hansard in this building.

Mr Templeton—I do not think any of the discussions would have been in relation to chambers. It probably would have been only in relation to committees. I cannot see that we would be using—

Senator FAULKNER—So there has been discussion in relation to committees?

Mr Templeton—There has been discussion particularly with the House of Commons, as I said, because they are interested in what we are doing and at one stage were very interested—I am not sure they are anymore. But it was always, in my recollection, in the context when we were still principally looking at committees, because we are staffed by and large to carry the load of the chambers, except when we start having significant numbers of committees meeting simultaneously with the chambers.

Senator FAULKNER—Who has been undertaking these discussions with the House of Commons on your behalf?

Mr Templeton—I presume Ms Barrett speaks to the people from the House of Commons, and Mr Harris has in the past.

Ms Barrett—We recently went out to tender for external providers because the three-year standing offer was to draw to a close. The House of Commons did not submit a tender. They did write to say they would be interested but they were not in a position to assist us at the moment; they would be interested further down the track.

Senator FAULKNER—Have you a view on this, Madam President?

The PRESIDENT—I think the main thing is to make sure that the chambers are adequately covered and that the delays that are experienced at the present time are wound back to what we have been accustomed to. How it is done is of secondary importance to making sure that it is achieved.

Senator FAULKNER—So you are aware of these developments?

The PRESIDENT—No. I know there has been some outsourcing, but not the detail that is being explored this morning.

Senator FAULKNER—I will be following this through at the supplementary hearings. We have a lot on the agenda today and we could spend many hours on this. No doubt we will in the future.

CHAIR—As there are no further questions, I thank officers from the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff.

[11.42 a.m.]

JOINT HOUSE DEPARTMENT
In Attendance

Senator Reid, President of the Senate
Mike Bolton, Secretary
Fraser Bradley, Executive Leader, Support
Bob Wedgwood, Executive Leader, Operations
Peter Crowe, Director, Facilities
David Thomas, Chief Architect
Adrian Guilfoyle, Acting Executive Leader, Technical
Dennis Haynes, Acting Director, Financial Resources

CHAIR—I call on general questions of the Joint House Department.

Senator FAULKNER—I read an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 April about a spy scare—‘Senator surprises former envoy in her office’. I was worried about that because it did appear as if there had been a leak to the media about this. I wondered whether you had instituted any inquiries about how that matter appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Mr Bolton—I do not have any particular details about how it got there, although we assumed that it came out of the office—I am sorry; we did not assume where it came from, but it did mention the fact that a senator was involved, who was Senator Patterson, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Senator FAULKNER—It mentioned Senator Patterson. So you assumed that she leaked it.

Mr Bolton—I did not say that she did leak it—

Senator FAULKNER—I must admit that was the assumption I came to.

Mr Bolton—We made some inquiries of her office because we did not know anything about this until such time as it did appear in the press. Apparently, a couple of people in her office indicated that they were surprised at the appearance of the article and that we had not been contacted. That is reading from a note that was given to me by a staffer that did go on to make some inquiries.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Let us be clear about this. You knew nothing about this issue until you read about it in the newspapers.

Mr Bolton—That is right, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There had been no complaint made to you, no query made to you, from Senator Patterson’s office?

Mr Bolton—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There is reference made to the opening up of the Parliament House dining room to the public over the Easter break. Was that a success?

Mr Bolton—I know what a success is, but I would ask—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Roll up, a good time had by all.

Mr Bolton—I could ask Mr Wedgwood what the result was.

Mr Wedgwood—I do not have the exact details from the Hyatt. The reason for that is that the officer in charge here has recently become a father. He seems to have gained an interest in the child rather than in the ongoing need to keep us informed. I was assured that it was a success both from a social aspect and from a financial aspect.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Well done, Madam President, for approving it. Are you going to do it again?

The PRESIDENT—If it was requested, we may well do so.

Mr Bolton—Before any decision was made to do this, the matter was raised with senators and members of the Joint House Committee for their views. I believe that we were given permission for four or five a year on particular occasions like Mothers Day, Easter, et cetera.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Very good. I read in the Sunday *Herald Sun* of 14 May an article by Gerard McManus. Some surprise is evinced in that article about there being containers for syringes around the building. What is the background to that? Is it true?

Mr Bolton—We have had containers called Sharps containers—that is their generic title—throughout the building since the late 1980s, 1990 or so. They were placed there at the request of people like the cleaners who were finding some items in waste disposal, particularly in the public areas of the building. So they were placed throughout the building. They are also available to other people within the building on request. We have at least a couple of members who are insulin dependent, and they want to protect people and therefore dispose of their items. We also have a number of permanent staff in the building who are insulin dependent. It in no way relates to trying to encourage intravenous drug use within Parliament House. It is there purely as a safety measure for cleaners and other staff.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not think the tone of the article was that there is a rampant drug problem around the building.

Mr Bolton—Following that article I did check with the nurses. They advised that only very rarely do they have to dispose of those items. It is left for the cleaners to check the particular containers. They report them and then they are taken away by the nurses.

CHAIR—Where about are those Sharps disposal units? Are they in toilets?

Mr Bolton—Mainly in toilets.

Senator FAULKNER—I assume there have been no changes since your last revelations about the furnishings in the Prime Minister's office. Are there any changes there? I would not expect so.

Mr Bolton—We have informed the committee previously that we were going to do some subsequent work on the curtains in the main sitting room or main reception room in that suite. We hope to do some work in there over the next recess period.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is budgeted for that?

Mr Bolton—The total cost will be in the order of \$30,000.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Are they going to be green like the chesterfields?

Mr Bolton—They will match in with the existing curtains in the suite. There is a lot of building work that has to go ahead. It relates back, as I think I mentioned to this committee previously, to the fact that a number of years ago some work was done to remove a built-in piece of furniture which was situated in the window frame. Then there was some furniture put in that space which was free standing. The question is that, longer term, that furniture is not required anymore. Prime Ministers do change things, which is their right. We have been concerned about the temporary nature of that work and its appearance. We have got a 200-year-old building here and it will be long term, so we have generated a works order and discussed with the Prime Minister's staff whether they will allow us to come back in and fix up these curtains. At the moment the curtains look as though they are at half-mast and do not match the other curtains in the suite which go to the floor. They are an expensive curtain, I am afraid.

Senator FAULKNER—It does sound like it, at \$30,000.

Mr Bolton—The job is made up of around \$7,000 in consultancy fees because there were airconditioning issues and some lighting issues to be addressed in the office as well, to allow us to hang these curtains appropriately. The supply and fabrication of the silk and scrim curtains was \$7,300 and then the actual building works needed to do it all was in the order of \$15,000.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What do you pay the consultant per hour? Is \$7,000 to recommend curtains based on an hourly rate?

Mr Thomas—The arrangement for consultancies on architectural work in the department is based on a panel architect arrangement, where a series of firms of architects have tendered their rates to the department. There is a certain element of commercial-in-confidence in that, but I would say the rates vary according to the experience and expertise of the personnel they use. A rate for a director of a firm would be different from a project architect or an interior designer.

Senator FAULKNER—But we have just been told by Mr Bolton that these curtains are very similar to the curtains that are currently hanging there.

Mr Bolton—The costs have really been incurred in a lot of work which has gone into looking at how we might solve the problem. Initially I said, 'Why can't we just hang the curtains on the existing track?' The problem was that that window sill has been fitted out with a special marble sill which only allows curtains to come down to the top of the sill. We then looked at whether we could move the sill in some way—reduce its size and scope—and still use the existing tracks that were in the ceiling. All the advice to us was that we could not do that. There were a couple of issues. One was that the sill was quite a nice feature in the space and fitted in with the finishings in the room. Secondly, there is an air plenum underneath that sill and in the wall behind there and we would have to have done modifications to the wall to fit the curtains in. The advice was that it would impact on the temperatures in the room, especially when there were a number of people in there meeting a Prime Minister or whoever. Therefore, we unfortunately had to go back to a more expensive option, which was to alter the bulkhead in the ceiling. This ceiling is a stepped-down ceiling from the window into the room which is quite elaborate, so we had to do some work on that. That is why it took a number of hours to look at the different options and why the price came to what it did.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What furniture was taken out?

Mr Bolton—It was what is called a banquet seat, which was built in flush up against the wall and screwed into the wall. It was a rather large circular lounge.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What has happened to that?

Mr Bolton—Unfortunately, in the process of being removed it is not of much use anymore.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I thought so. You do not store it in case you want to hire a consultant to put it back, for \$7,000?

Mr Bolton—No. My view is that, if a future prime minister came along and wanted that, we would worry about that at the time. We would say, ‘We don’t have one available,’ and would see whether we had funds. The argument I would be putting would be that if we needed something of that type then it would be a freestanding unit, which could then come in and out depending on the requirements of a prime minister.

Senator FAULKNER—Of course, the curtains are Australian made and designed?

Mr Thomas—The curtains are made locally. The fabric for the curtains is a Thai silk which is the same as existed in the suite. There is not a huge market in Australian silk, unfortunately.

Senator FAULKNER—So are there any other changes in the Prime Minister’s suite that we would be interested in?

The PRESIDENT—It should be noted that that change, of course, occurred during the occupancy of a previous Prime Minister; it was not the current Prime Minister who had the seat taken out.

Mr Bolton—In relation to your question, Senator, no, not that I am aware of at the moment.

Senator FAULKNER—No extra; no structural changes to meeting rooms or reception areas?

Mr Bolton—I think we gave to this committee a number of committee hearings ago a full report of substantial things that had been discussed. For instance, the security people in there said they were concerned about the amount of viewing they have of people before they actually get into the suite and that they wanted some modifications done. There have been some changes there with furniture and with some better camera angles, but we have not done the structural modifications. We have taken that report on notice, and we will obviously work through it over a number of years. We are also trying to look at other avenues to solve problems rather than continuing to go in there and do too much building work.

Senator FAULKNER—But there have been no changes to the furniture in the Prime Minister’s suite or of artworks?

Mr Bolton—No, the Prime Minister has not requested any further furniture.

Senator FAULKNER—We have achieved something at an estimates committee, then, if that is the case. What about the Australian-made craft/art suite? Has that been returned from Siberia yet?

Mr Bolton—I assume you mean from storage—

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, storage, I am sorry.

Mr Bolton—When you said ‘art and craft’—people do ask for things to go on exhibition in other parts of the world. In relation to that furniture, it is still held in storage and it is currently being looked at by a conservator to bring it back up to its original condition.

Senator FAULKNER—I was wondering about the refurbishment. Is that under way?

Mr Bolton—Mr Thomas could tell you about that.

Mr Thomas—I expect that the refurbishment will commence this week. We anticipate that it will be limited to the leather piping. If you recall the design of the suite it had—

Senator FAULKNER—It was a long time ago, but I vaguely remember it, Mr Thomas—

Mr Thomas—a leather piped edging on it, which is the area that has the most discolouration.

Mr Bolton—I must say, Senator, that the furniture would have drawn anybody’s attention to it in the sense that it not been properly maintained over many years, because it was treated as furniture in the ministers’ area. That is why Joint House has had agreement from people that we will now specifically look after the furniture in the major suites, including the suite of the Leader of the Opposition, to make sure it is properly maintained over many years and not be left where there is a high changeover of staff who may come in and out of the ministerial wing unit and who may not understand the real requirement to look after this furniture to keep it in top condition.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes. But this is a battle you have fought and lost, to refurbish it and maintain it in the Prime Minister’s suite, Mr Bolton. Anyway, you lost that battle, and that is okay. Mr Thomas, you will let us know at some point how much the refurbishment cost and no doubt the next Prime Minister will move it back. What is the market like in second-hand tub chairs and chesterfields?

Mr Bolton—I am afraid I have not addressed that issue.

Senator FAULKNER—It might come on your plate soon.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is there any more news about the missing writing desk? I may have missed this.

Mr Bolton—Senator, it has not been found.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There could be culprits from either side of politics in this case.

Senator FAULKNER—It probably has five laptops sitting on it.

Senator CALVERT—While we are on laptops, how many laptops have gone missing from senators’ offices.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Get with the program; you have done nothing.

The PRESIDENT—The matter was raised with the Senate.

Senator FAULKNER—And dealt with.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In the proper area.

CHAIR—There being no further questions, I thank Mr Bolton and officers of the Joint House Department. That completes the examination of the Joint House Department and the parliamentary departments. I remind you that the committee has set 28 June 2000 as the date by which answers are required. I thank the President, Senator Reid, and officers for their attendance.

[12.01 p.m.]

PRIME MINISTER'S PORTFOLIO

In Attendance

Senator Ellison, Special Minister of State

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Mr Alan Henderson, Executive Coordinator, Government and Corporate
Economic policy advice and coordination

Dr Arthur Camilleri, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Economic

Mr Brian Cassidy, First Assistant Secretary, Industry and Environment

Mr Grahame Cook, First Assistant Secretary, Forests and Olympics

Mr Richard Webb, Assistant Secretary, Forests Taskforce

Mr Ron Perry, Senior Adviser, Olympics Taskforce

Social policy advice and coordination

Mr David Webster, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Social Policy

Ms Joanne Caldwell, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Office of the Status of Women

Ms Karen Bentley, Assistant Secretary, Office of the Status of Women

Mr Peter Vaughan, First Assistant Secretary, Office of Indigenous Policy

Ms Jennifer Bryant, Assistant Secretary, Social Policy

Support services for government operations

Ms Barbara Belcher, First Assistant Secretary, Government

Mr David Macgill, Acting Assistant Secretary, Government

Mr John Doherty, Assistant Secretary, Government

Mr Paul O'Neill, Assistant Secretary, Awards and National Symbols

Mr Nhan Vo-Van, Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat

Mr Greg Williams, First Assistant Secretary, Government Communications Unit

Dr Susan Ball, Assistant Secretary, Information Services

Mr Richard Oliver, Assistant Secretary, Corporate Support

Mr Joe d'Angelo, Senior Finance Adviser, Corporate Support

Mr Terry Crane, Senior Adviser, Services and Security

Mr Patrick Cole, Assistant Secretary, International

Ms Pat Logan, Ceremonial and Hospitality

OFFICE OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr Martin Bonsey, Official Secretary to the Governor-General

Ms Amanda O'Rourke, Director, Honours Secretariat

Mr Kevin Davidson, Senior Adviser to the Governor-General
 Ms Kay Austin, Organisation Services and Support Manager
 Mr Anian Don, Budget and Finance Officer

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Mr Chris Legg, Deputy Director-General
 Mr Derryl Triffett, Head, Corporate Services
 Ms Margaret Bourke, Senior Executive Officer

OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN

Mr Oliver Winder PSM, Deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman
 Mr Chris Ross, Director, Corporate Services

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

Mr Bill Blick, Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security

PUBLIC SERVICE AND MERIT PROTECTION COMMISSION

Ms Helen Williams, AO, Public Service Commissioner
 Mr Peter Kennedy, Deputy Public Service Commissioner
 Mr Alan Doolan, Merit Protection Commissioner
 Mr Jeff Lamond, Team Leader, Staff, Structures and Performance Team
 Mr Dominic Downie, Team Leader, People and Organisation Development Team
 Ms Jenny Harrison, Team Leader, Values, Conduct and Diversity Team
 Mr Mike Jones, Team Leader, Corporate Strategy and Support Team
 Mr Frank Nicholas, Chief Finance Officer

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

Mr Ian McPhee, Deputy Auditor-General
 Mr Russell Coleman, Executive Director and CFO
 Mr Alan Greenslade, Executive Director PASG

CHAIR—On 9 May 2000 the Senate referred to this committee the particulars of proposed expenditure for the service of the year ending 30 June 2001, documents A and B, for the portfolio of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister's portfolio has a proposed total expenditure of \$1,297,662,000. We will commence our examination of the portfolio with the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, followed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Output 2.2, Women's policy, is scheduled for this evening, to accommodate the senators who wish to be involved in examining that office. Output 2.3, Indigenous policy, is scheduled for Wednesday for a similar reason. The department will be followed by other portfolio agencies as listed in the Portfolio Budget Statements, except for the Australian National Audit Office, which is also scheduled to be examined on Wednesday.

OFFICE OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

CHAIR—I welcome officers of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Bonsey—No, thank you.

CHAIR—Senator Ray has reminded me that we have exempted the Office of National Assessments from these proceedings. I forgot to mention that. We will now proceed to general questions.

Senator FAULKNER—Mr Bonsey, I want to ask a question about the contact between the Office of the Governor-General and the Prime Minister's Office on Corroboree 2000. You

would be aware that there have been a couple of press articles about this. I am sure you have seen them. There was one in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 April, another in the same newspaper of 28 April and also an editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 28 April. Are you aware of those articles?

Mr Bonsey—Yes, I am aware of them.

Senator FAULKNER—As I understand, on 27 April a spokesman for the Governor-General said that it was Sir William Deane's understanding that he would accept the declaration of reconciliation at Corroboree 2000. I gather that that statement was made by the Office of the Governor-General, and I just wanted to establish that that was the understanding of the Office of the Governor-General at that time.

Mr Bonsey—That is correct, Senator. It was the Governor-General's understanding that he was being invited to accept the document. That was in the context of a question from the journalist, which asked was he going to be launching the document.

Senator FAULKNER—Had the Governor-General been invited to do that at that stage?

Mr Bonsey—He was aware of an invitation.

Senator FAULKNER—I do not know if that is a direct answer to my question or not. He was aware of it, but had he been invited? Or were you expecting an invitation, is that what you are suggesting?

Mr Bonsey—My hesitation is that we do not normally disclose the content of invitations or the range of communications to the Governor-General. Clearly, there had been communications with the council which talked about his participation in Corroboree 2000.

Senator FAULKNER—Mr Bonsey, you would appreciate that it appears from reading press reports that there may have been an interface between the Prime Minister's office and the Office of the Governor-General. That is what I am trying to explore. I also read that there was a late night change on 27 April to the understanding that the Office of the Governor-General or the Governor-General had in relation to the Governor-General's role. I wondered if that was correct.

Mr Bonsey—It is correct that, late on the night of the 26th or early on the 27th, I spoke to the journalist and clarified our understanding.

Senator FAULKNER—Could you perhaps apprise the committee of what the background was to the change of plans?

Mr Bonsey—I do not think I can add to what is on the public record, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—You could indicate to the committee, for example, whether the Office of the Governor-General was contacted by the Prime Minister's office on this matter.

Mr Bonsey—The practice is that communications between the Prime Minister and the Governor-General, and between his office and the Governor-General's office—

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, the practice is the content of it, not the process of it.

Mr Bonsey—I think it is the content and the circumstances surrounding it.

Senator FAULKNER—I do not think that is right, Mr Bonsey. This appears to be a matter that is canvassed with journalists, so I would have thought it would be perfectly reasonable to canvass this matter at a parliamentary committee, frankly.

Mr Bonsey—You have asked the question of the Minister representing the Prime Minister and that is the more appropriate avenue to follow.

Senator FAULKNER—Obviously I can do that in estimates relating to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, but I am asking the Office of the Governor-General whether the Office of the Governor-General received a communication. I think that is perfectly proper and it is perfectly reasonable, frankly, to expect a response.

Mr Bonsey—I do not think it is possible to distinguish between any communications there may be between the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, the circumstances surrounding them, and between the offices. Neither the Governor-General nor the Prime Minister would want me to outline either the circumstances surrounding or the content of those discussions, if there were such.

Senator FAULKNER—Can you explain to us why there was a change of plans. Why did you make a correcting statement to the *Sydney Morning Herald*? You made the statement yourself, I think you said.

Mr Bonsey—I made the correcting statement, yes.

Senator FAULKNER—It was not really a correcting statement, it was a new position, was it not?

Mr Bonsey—That accurately describes it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who originally leaked the story to the newspapers? It was not your office.

Mr Bonsey—I am not aware of a leak.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You cannot comment on the midnight call or the late night call—you will not confirm it. We will take it as a fact until someone says otherwise. How does that get in the newspapers? A journalist was not overhearing the phone call. Either the Governor-General's office or the Prime Minister's office has put that in the public domain, surely—a domain you are not willing to put it in here.

Mr Bonsey—It is a deduction that journalists could arrive at from what is on the public record. On the public record is a statement made on behalf of the Governor-General that was reported in the paper about accepting the document.

Senator FAULKNER—Mr Bonsey, that may be accurate as far as it goes. We have established there was an original position that was reported in relation to the role that the Governor-General expected to play or, I am sorry, a function that the Governor-General had been invited to perform at Corroboree 2000. I think that is a fair statement, isn't it?

Mr Bonsey—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—A few hours later that function and role changed. Is that a fair statement?

Mr Bonsey—That is correct.

Senator FAULKNER—My question is why did it change.

Mr Bonsey—I am not in a position to assist you with that, Senator.

Senator CONROY—Did the Governor-General change his mind?

Senator ROBERT RAY—According to the newspapers, contact was made between the PMO and the Governor-General, or his office, all of which you say you will not comment on, and I agree in terms of content but not the process with your attitude, but that then appears in the newspapers. I am just asking whether it appeared from your end in the newspapers. Did anyone in your office indicate there had been contact between the PMO and the Governor-General's office? Was that fed out to the newspapers by you or your office—your operation? That is what I am asking.

Mr Bonsey—The answer to that is no, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you. That is fine. The only other people that knew about that that we know of are in the PMO.

Mr Bonsey—The other fact on the public record which could lead journalists to the conclusion that they arrived at is that, at about that same time, the Prime Minister answered a question from Michelle Grattan in Paris which dealt with that issue.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I see. So he may have commented, therefore, to a journalist that they had had a late night phone call.

Mr Bonsey—No, I am not saying that. I do not know.

Senator FAULKNER—All you are saying is that it was not the Office of the Governor-General or the Governor-General, and you are being categorically clear on that point.

Mr Bonsey—That is correct, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—Has the Governor-General had the invitation that was originally issued to him withdrawn?

Mr Bonsey—No, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—So that stands.

Mr Bonsey—Yes, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—So the invitation still stands but the role has changed.

Mr Bonsey—No. The invitation—

Senator FAULKNER—Won't be accepted by the Governor-General.

Mr Bonsey—Sorry?

Senator FAULKNER—The invitation won't be accepted by the Governor-General?

Mr Bonsey—No, in the sense the invitation has been accepted by the Governor-General, and now the program for next Saturday morning includes a description of the Governor-General's role on that day and that he is participating in the morning session when the document will be received by a large number of people.

Senator CONROY—But that is not what he was invited to do originally.

Mr Bonsey—The invitation in fact I think did incorrectly talk in terms of launching which I do not think was ever intended by those inviting, and certainly not by the Governor-General.

Senator FAULKNER—Is there a role for the Governor-General next Sunday?

Mr Bonsey—The Governor-General has other commitments on the Sunday.

Senator FAULKNER—I meant in relation to Corroboree 2000.

Mr Bonsey—Yes, sure.

Senator FAULKNER—Is preparatory work being done for the Governor-General's speech in opening the Olympic Games?

Mr Bonsey—There are only about 14 or 15 words.

Senator FAULKNER—I am aware of that. They are an important 14 or 15 words.

Mr Bonsey—I think the Olympic authorities will inform him what the relevant words are and he will say them.

Senator FAULKNER—So that is an easy task for a speechwriter at Government House?

Mr Bonsey—No. He has an excellent memory.

Senator FAULKNER—I do not doubt that for one minute.

Senator CONROY—The Governor-General initially accepted the verbal invitation. You indicated there was some informal contact that was initially described in the press reports as a launch which you then clarified later? Did the invitation still arrive in terms of launch?

Mr Bonsey—The invitation had been received prior to that and was in terms of launch.

Senator CONROY—So the initial press report that the Governor-General had agreed to launch was incorrect?

Mr Bonsey—I do not think there was a press report saying the Governor-General had agreed to launch. There was a press report saying the Governor-General had agreed to accept. The contact that we had in the afternoon or evening of the 26th was intended to clarify that the Governor-General's understanding was that he would be receiving, accepting, rather than launching.

Senator CONROY—Why did the people sending the invitation believe that he had agreed to launch it?

Mr Bonsey—I do not think there has ever been an expectation anywhere of the Governor-General launching. The document is clearly the council's document.

Senator CONROY—But the invitation was expressed in terms of launch?

Mr Bonsey—It was, and there was clarification beforehand that envisaged there was—

Senator CONROY—But there was informal contact prior to the invitation being sent?

Mr Bonsey—No, post the invitation being sent between the council and myself.

Senator FAULKNER—To what extent was the Governor-General's office involved in preparing Her Majesty's itinerary on her recent visit to Australia? What involvement did the Office of the Governor-General have?

Mr Bonsey—It is best described as an ancillary or tangential sort of involvement. One of the factors is timing and, in a sense, the broad structure of it in terms of whether Her Majesty and His Royal Highness would be staying at Government House or, as has been the more traditional pattern to visits previously, visiting each of the states in turn. We obviously had an interest in that the focus was on Government House and any engagements there, and externally to the extent that any functions involved the Governor-General and Lady Deane, so we were keenly interested in something like the formal welcome in Sydney at the Opera House. The fact that the departure was from Perth obviously had an implication for the Governor-General's program.

Senator FAULKNER—What you are really saying is that the Office of the Governor-General had next to no involvement?

Mr Bonsey—Not in the external parts of the visit. Admiralty House was used in Sydney on the Tuesday afternoon.

Senator FAULKNER—I am surprised to hear this because normally the Office of the Governor-General gets quite involved in royal tours?

Mr Bonsey—Only in those aspects that affect it.

Senator FAULKNER—Nothing surprising in the limited role in the Office of the Governor-General on this occasion?

Mr Bonsey—I did not regard it as a limited role. It was a role focused on what we needed to do.

Senator FAULKNER—You may not have regarded it as a limited role, but was there nothing surprising in the role?

Mr Bonsey—No, not at all.

Senator FAULKNER—It was standard operating procedure?

Mr Bonsey—It is a long time since there was a royal visit, and I do not have any previous experience of those. But it struck me as exactly the sort of close liaison in relation to the Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that one would expect, and similar in a sense to other head of state visits.

Senator FAULKNER—Who involves themselves in the official discussions with Buckingham Palace?

Mr Bonsey—There is a whole layer of communications. At one level, there is communication between the Governor-General and Her Majesty.

Senator FAULKNER—But the Office of the Governor-General is not aware of most of it?

Mr Bonsey—The communications on the detailed program would largely be going between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the palace, but a lot of communications about arrangements in Government House—the various functions that the Governor-General would have a direct involvement with—would lead to direct communication between us and the palace.

Senator FAULKNER—How is the sports medal going?

Ms O'Rourke—The sports medal was approved in late December. We have gone to tender and at the moment the medal is being manufactured. We expect the first production run to be available within the next week.

Senator FAULKNER—How many sports medals are going to be minted?

Ms O'Rourke—We have received advice that there will be a need for between 20,000 and 25,000 medals.

Senator FAULKNER—Have we got an indication yet as to who is going to receive those medals? The categories are clear, are they not?

Ms O'Rourke—The regulations for the sports medal indicate that the medal will be available to a wide range of people involved in sport—from athletes through to trainers,

sports scientists, coaches down to club level for people who are fundraisers and supporters of various sporting organisations.

Senator FAULKNER—But who makes the decision of who gets one? Who decides which particular official in the junior football club might get a sports medal—which is the lucky person who gets one and who is the unlucky person who misses out?

Ms O'Rourke—Nominations for the sports medal are passed to Government House from the Awards and National Symbols Branch within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. I understand that the nominations are derived as a result of consultation with government and peak sporting bodies who would identify people within various sporting activities who have contributed in different ways.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is the consultative process. But who actually makes the decision?

Ms O'Rourke—In terms of who makes the decision, Government House is not involved in that role. That is something that is the responsibility of the Awards and National Symbols Branch.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you have the various categories broken down any more than the information that you have given us?

Ms O'Rourke—No, I do not. As I said, that is a matter that is dealt with by the Awards and National Symbols Branch which will pass the names on.

Senator FAULKNER—How many are nominated by government and how many are nominated by sporting organisations?

Ms O'Rourke—That I am not aware of.

Senator FAULKNER—Do we know who 'government' is in this instance?

Ms O'Rourke—I understand the Commonwealth and state governments have been involved in the consultation process, and Government House as well.

Senator FAULKNER—So any further detail we will need to find from the Awards and National Symbols Branch of PM&C?

Ms O'Rourke—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—What can you tell us about the centenary medal.

Ms O'Rourke—Very little. The centenary medal has received in-principle approval. As yet, it is not at a stage where it would come to Government House for manufacture. I understand that the Awards and National Symbols Branch have called for designs of the medal.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you know how many of those are going to be awarded?

Ms O'Rourke—I understand about 18,000 will be awarded.

Senator FAULKNER—Many Commonwealth ministers will have a bundle of these medals to give out to whomever they believe is a worthy recipient; is that right?

Ms O'Rourke—I understand the quotas are being looked at for each minister in terms of who would receive that medal, yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you have information in relation to the quotas?

Ms O'Rourke—I have some information, which is preliminary information, through consultation with the Awards and National Symbols Branch, which I can provide.

Senator FAULKNER—Can you go through the list, please?

Ms O'Rourke—There is a list of prescribed office holders who will receive the medal.

Senator FAULKNER—And they are?

Ms O'Rourke—They are the Governor-General; the governors of each state; former governors; premiers; former premiers; chief ministers; former chief ministers; chief justices of the supreme courts; former chief justices of the supreme courts; presidents of legislative councils; former presidents of legislative councils; speakers of legislative assemblies and houses of assemblies and former speakers; leaders of the opposition and former leaders of the opposition.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you know the numbers involved there, approximately?

Ms O'Rourke—That I do not know because I am not aware of how many former office holders there are.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It is an awful lot of medals to give leaders of the opposition of the Liberal Party in New South Wales from 1976 to 1984, isn't it? There were about seven. Whose concept is this centenary medal? I do not know much about it. How much is it to do with your outfit and how much is it not? That is what I am struggling with.

Ms O'Rourke—The involvement that we have commences once the medal has been finally approved and there is design in place. The consultation as to who will receive the medal is not something that we are responsible for. Our responsibility starts with the administration of it, which is the manufacture and then the processing of nominations that come to Government House through to the Governor-General for approval.

Senator FAULKNER—We have got the office holders that you have kindly informed us about. Now can we go to some of the others who are in a position of being able to distribute this largesse?

Ms O'Rourke—From the list I have received?

Senator FAULKNER—Yes.

Ms O'Rourke—The Governor-General.

Senator FAULKNER—How many does the Governor-General get?

Ms O'Rourke—25.

Senator FAULKNER—It is within the gift of the Governor-General to present 25 centenary medals.

Ms O'Rourke—Yes. The Prime Minister gets 350. The Deputy Prime Minister gets 275.

Senator FAULKNER—I feel a pecking order coming on here. Keep going if you can.

Ms O'Rourke—Portfolio ministers—

Senator FAULKNER—This is all portfolio ministers?

Ms O'Rourke—I have information in front of me that says 15 ministers with 200 each—3,000. There is an allocation for Australian Defence Force personnel of 200.

Senator FAULKNER—That would be the CDF's responsibility?

Ms O'Rourke—No, the Minister for Defence.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So he gets an additional 200 for the Defence Force.

Ms O'Rourke—Specifically for Defence Force personnel. There is another allocation for the Minister for Veterans' Affairs for veterans and ex-service community members.

Senator ROBERT RAY—He is not a portfolio minister. How many does he get?

Ms O'Rourke—200. The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs gets 200.

Senator FAULKNER—I hope he does not make a presentation of them.

Ms O'Rourke—The National Council for the Centenary of Federation gets 100. The Leader of the Opposition gets 200. The President of the Senate gets 25.

Senator FAULKNER—Can we guess that the Speaker gets 25 too?

Ms O'Rourke—Yes, that is correct. There are 100 allocated, which is a total of 4,700.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So that is 4,700; 100 are not allocated.

Senator FAULKNER—How do we get to 18,000 then?

Ms O'Rourke—There are a further 10,500 to be divided between the states. As I understand, though, these are preliminary discussions about how the medals might be allocated.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is the production cost of the medal?

Ms O'Rourke—To make a medal, including the initial production costs of dyes, tooling, packaging, posting, it is about \$22 a medal.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So at the moment you think 15,200.

Ms O'Rourke—I understand there is to be a total of 18,000 but Government House do not have any involvement in how that allocation will be spread across the community.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We have 4,700 within the federal orbit; 10,500 with the states. That comes to 15,200. At the moment I have a shortfall of 2,800 medals.

Ms O'Rourke—I think that would be an issue that would have to be addressed with the Awards and National Symbols Branch.

Senator FAULKNER—But some of the first category of office holders would pick that up, which you ran through—the automatics. Some of those would be included there, would they not?

Ms O'Rourke—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I was not saying that any had disappeared or anything. You have now explained you do not know, which is what I was trying to work out.

Ms O'Rourke—Just to clarify the cost of the medal, the total cost is \$443,000, and that is a cost per medal of \$24 to \$25.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who suggested the striking of the centenary medal?

Ms O'Rourke—I am not aware of whose suggestion the medal was introduced upon. The introduction of medals is not an involvement that would include Government House.

Senator FAULKNER—But what stage have we got to in the design elements of this process?

Ms O'Rourke—We have not begun or commenced any involvement at all because, as I understand it, designs are still being called for. So there are not actually designs available as yet to consider.

Senator FAULKNER—The Awards and Symbols Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet obviously have the coordinating responsibility for that?

Ms O'Rourke—That is right, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—We will be asking them of course for details. Just so we have a comparison, what stage is the sports medal up to? You have gone to tender on that, have you?

Ms O'Rourke—The sports medal is at the stage of completion of the production process, and we are awaiting the first shipment of medals.

Senator FAULKNER—So it is part minted, effectively.

Ms O'Rourke—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you know if it is possible for one minister to cede their allocation to another minister?

Ms O'Rourke—That I do not know, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am just a bit worried that Mr Moore might need more than 200 medals for the electorate of Ryan.

Senator FAULKNER—We can progress the other issues in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In regard to the replacement VIP aircraft, of which the Governor-General, quite properly, is a user, was your office consulted by government for the Governor-General's views on future use and what his requirements were?

Mr Bonsey—There was consultation quite a while ago when consideration was being given to whatever the new configuration should be, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you, for instance, without revealing the content, put in coordination comments to Cabinet submissions on this?

Mr Bonsey—No, it has just been consultation with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Could you tell us about the works program out at Yarralumla, with regard to making these buildings wheelchair friendly? 'Compliant', I am told, but I think 'friendly' is a nice word.

Mr Bonsey—'Friendly' is a better word. It really came to our attention particularly last year. Government House is classified in many ways as a personal residence rather than a public building, so it has not to date had wheelchair access other than getting various kinds of ramps which will go up and over steps. The need to focus on that came to attention particularly with the reception that we had towards the end of last year, I think it was, in connection with those in a disabled dinghy sailing competition which takes place here in Canberra. The Governor-General had a reception for them and we suddenly found ourselves having a difficult time getting about 25 or 30 wheelchairs into the place. You can have ramps, but they do not have the same wheelbase and things like that. So we are at the stage of having

had some preliminary designs from architects. The Official Establishments Trust will be looking at that in about June and I would hope that is something which we can do in the next financial year.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have one final question. The Governor-General was recently in Greece in respect of the Olympics. There were one or two press reports—and I am not giving them any credence at all—that said he was given fairly second-rate treatment during this visit, especially compared to AOC members. I am not actually asking you to comment on that. Has there been any effort made by the Governor-General to have those stories corrected, denied or put into context?

Mr Bonsey—It is one of those questions about whether those sorts of stories are best left to drop or to do something. There was actually a media statement that I issued the day after his official visit in Greece which included a footnote, noting that there had been some reports to the effect of being—it is that wonderful journalistic phrase—‘snubbed’ and basically just saying that that was not the case.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I can understand your not wanting to give oxygen to the stories. Anyway, they got a bit flooded out by other matters a day or two later.

Mr Bonsey—That is correct.

Senator FAULKNER—Can I come back to you, Ms O’Rourke, to get some clarity on the numbers for the sports medal. What is the final number to be minted? I think I heard two figures.

Ms O’Rourke—I have been advised that there will be a need for between 20,000 and 25,000.

Senator FAULKNER—I was wondering why we do not actually have a more precise figure than that. That is something that would obviously have to be communicated to you because that is your responsibility.

Ms O’Rourke—We have had an initial production run of 20,000 medals made. Depending on the take-up rate, if there is a need for further medals we will have another production run done later in the year.

Senator FAULKNER—With the 18,000 centenary medals and perhaps the 25,000 sports medals, what similar exercises have there been historically in terms of major medal mintings like this?

Ms O’Rourke—In the past there have been major productions of medals for some of the Defence Force medals that have been introduced and for specifically the AASM 45-75.

Senator FAULKNER—Sure. If I can leave Defence aside, wasn’t there a jubilee medal?

Ms O’Rourke—That was the Silver Jubilee Medal in 1975, but that was part of the imperial honours system.

Senator FAULKNER—So this is the first time that major mintings like this have occurred under the new Australian honours system. Is that right?

Ms O’Rourke—These are commemorative medals; so, yes, they are the first large scale commemorative medals.

Senator FAULKNER—The first two?

Ms O'Rourke—No, they are the second and third. There was a previous commemorative medal, which was the 80th anniversary Armistice Medal.

Senator FAULKNER—How many of those were minted?

Ms O'Rourke—It was a small commemorative medal. From memory, I believe 100 were minted.

Senator FAULKNER—I do recall the 80th anniversary Armistice Medal. This is totally unprecedented. Around 18,000 centenary medals, perhaps 25,000 sports medals—43,000 in total. How is the Governor-General's office coping with these resources?

Ms O'Rourke—We are used to processing large volume medals for approval. We are coping within our current resources. We have put in place some IT enhancements to help with processing the actual volume of written material that comes through.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How exactly are you notified? You have got the process of designing the medal and having them produced?

Ms O'Rourke—Our process starts after the design. When the design is approved—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am just trying to summarise it. You are involved in production. Then there is a process of allocation, which I take it you eventually process when you notify them?

Ms O'Rourke—Yes, that is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—One of the things you would make sure is that people have not doubled up and got two?

Ms O'Rourke—Certainly.

Senator ROBERT RAY—If you are a radiologist living in the seat of Ryan, for instance, you might get two from different ministers.

Ms O'Rourke—When the names are communicated to us they come on disk. We would anticipate the Awards and National Symbols Branch have checked that. But, as a double-check, before it is loaded on to our computer system we would run a check against other awardees to ensure that there was not a duplication.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not think it is out of the question, but is there any presumption that someone who wins a sporting medal will not be awarded a centenary one?

Ms O'Rourke—It could very well be that they would receive both medals.

Senator FAULKNER—Particularly if they are in a marginal seat.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You do not have to answer that. That was a rhetorical question.

Senator FAULKNER—It was not a question at all. It was a statement.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When exactly will the centenary medals be ready for approval and handing out?

Ms O'Rourke—I understand that the first medals are expected to be awarded in January 2001. That would mean for the medals to be available the approval would need to take place fairly soon within the new financial year.

Senator MURRAY—I am not quite sure where your balance sheet appears in the program, so I will ask it now, if I may, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—How is the land and buildings valuation done? What basis of valuation methodology is used?

Mr Don—We requested the Australian Valuation Office to conduct that valuation.

Ms Austin—The last valuation was done at the end of the financial year June 1997.

Mr Don—That is right.

Ms Austin—We are up for a revaluation at the moment. The Australian Valuation Office has been hired again to conduct that revaluation. The land and buildings are depreciated over—

Mr Don—60 years, just the buildings.

Senator MURRAY—I assume they do not work on historical cost, or do they?

Mr Don—No, they do not.

Ms Austin—They do not work on historical cost. It will be the current market value of the properties as at 30 June. This one is as at 30 June 1997. The revaluation will be as at 30 June 2000.

Senator MURRAY—That is what intrigued me. They do have market value for—

Mr Don—To clarify that, the next valuation will actually take into account the deprival methodology for valuation.

Senator MURRAY—How do you have market value for land and buildings which are part of the National Estate? I doubt if there is a market for such things. What assumptions are they using to arrive at these valuations?

Ms Austin—I would like to take that question on notice and get back to you in writing.

Senator MURRAY—My need is to establish whether they are undervalued. Obviously, market value is only relevant when you can buy and sell something. This is land and buildings which will never be bought and sold. The replacement value of buildings would be relatively easy to estimate, I would have thought—architects and quantity surveyors can give you proper valuations of that—but as to the land itself I would be intrigued as to the principles they use and whether those principles apply across all publicly held land or are peculiar to land and buildings being valued here. If you could have a look at my remarks in the *Hansard* and make sure that I get as a full a response as possible, I would appreciate it.

Ms Austin—Yes.

Mr Bonsey—Do you have a particular interest in Admiralty House in Sydney or Government House here?

Senator MURRAY—No, I have an interest in comparability because there are other areas of Australian held land, if you like, or nationally held estate. I would like to see what principles are being applied to the various areas, and this is a good one to start with, because I just cannot imagine anyone flogging off much of this land or the buildings.

Mr Bonsey—We will get you as good an answer as we can.

Senator MURRAY—Thank you.

CHAIR—There being no further questions, that completes the examination of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. Mr Bonsey and officers, thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 12.47 p.m. to 2.04 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

CHAIR—Good afternoon. Before the luncheon adjournment, the committee commenced its examination of the Prime Minister's Portfolio by examining the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. I now welcome Senator Ellison, Special Minister of State representing the Prime Minister, and also officers of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Senator Ellison, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Senator Ellison—No, thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—In that case, we will go straight to general questions.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There are some follow-up questions which came out of the hearing with the Governor-General's office. In what section will we be dealing with honours and awards?

Mr Henderson—Output group 4, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I want to test the corporate memory of the people at the table at the moment. We have either seven ministers or seven ministers assisting—plus the Prime Minister in the seven—in PM&C. Is that a record number of ministers associated with PM&C?

Mr Henderson—I do not know whether it is a record. It may be. I can check that. Clearly the Sydney 2000 Games is a one-off which would not have a precedent, so perhaps it is a record.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Minister, has any thought been given to the philosophy of having a lot of ministers and ministers assisting in PM&C?

Senator Ellison—None that I am aware of. But it is a decision that the Prime Minister makes as to what he feels is necessary for the government of the day.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, I understand that. It is just that, ultimately, being the senior portfolio minister, he has really undertaken responsibility for a parliamentary secretary and six others. He is ultimately responsible for them in his ability to be able to supervise them. This is not a partisan issue; it is just that I find it an issue of concern about government that a Prime Minister can be held ultimately accountable for every one of those, because basically they are junior ministers.

Senator Ellison—Firstly, the parliamentary secretary is the cabinet secretary. So that, perhaps, is a standard appointment. As for the others, Senator Newman, for instance, is Minister assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, so it is not for the whole of a portfolio. Some of them are quite discrete areas; they are not wide ranging necessarily, although women's affairs could certainly be looked at in that way. So it is not as if you are saying that there are seven portfolios as such.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No.

Senator Ellison—They are issues that the Prime Minister attaches importance to and that he believes there should be ministerial responsibility for in assisting him with them. Senator Newman is a case in point with women's affairs. But it is really a decision for the government

of the day, and it is one which I think the Prime Minister would make, no matter which government is in power.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I remember the Bicentennial extra issues of 1988, when the Prime Minister of the time was held responsible for things that he was not really supervising. That is all. Could I ask the minister—but Mr Henderson is more likely to be able to assist—when the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet was first briefed by DEWRSB regarding the outcomes of JN2—that is, Job Network 2.

Mr Henderson—I would have to ask Mr Webster or Ms Bryant to answer that question.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was mentioned in other evidence. This is not a big issue for you; I am trying to get the sequence of briefings as they occurred at the time for another committee. I am not going to ambush you.

Mr Henderson—No, but you are asking about the timing, and I certainly do not have the timing.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So, can someone assist us?

Mr Webster—We are at the moment trying to get a more detailed list of time-frame issues around Employment National, and I think we should have it in a short amount of time. What I have in front of me at the moment suggests that we got a briefing probably for the first time about November 1999. But if you can hold on for a little while, I can give you some more detail about timing.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you for that. I am pretty certain it was November 1999. I guess I am really asking: was it the 8th, 10th, 12th or 15th in that period?

Mr Webster—Again, it is best if we wait. I can probably give you that information shortly, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—All right, if you could give a copy to Mr Henderson when you are ready.

Mr Henderson—Mr Webster's difficulty is that Mr Hamburger, who is directly responsible, is on leave overseas at the moment. That is why we do not have it off pat.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I accept that. For completeness in terms of other evidence we have across two other committees, I wanted to slot this one in to understand its timing as it goes to other ones. Minister, has the government given an official reaction to the Salvation Army's Major Brian Watters's suggestion of all public servants drafting or implementing illicit drug programs under compulsory blood tests?

Mr Webster—There have been a couple of statements—at least one—by the Prime Minister to the effect that that was unlikely to be something that the government would be interested in proceeding with. Again, I could quite readily get you an actual quote on that. If you are asking whether something was more substantively considered by government on that matter, then I am not aware of any such consideration.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So the only segments of government where this occurs are the military and maybe the police?

Mr Webster—I think it does apply to the Australian Federal Police. So that is probably right, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In effect, you are saying that the government—through some statements that you cannot quite put your hand on at the moment, but I accept you are accurate—has rejected the idea.

Mr Webster—That is my understanding.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Are the instruments of appointment for ministers and parliamentary secretaries publicly available documents?

Mr Henderson—Ms Belcher should be able to help us on that point, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This floats between general questions and 1.4.

Ms Belcher—I do not know whether they have ever been made public. I can certainly check and let you know.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not know either. I just notice that at one stage the Parliamentary Library was doing a background paper and put in a request for them, and it was rejected. I did not know previously whether these were public documents or regarded as private cabinet documents. You could let us know in due course, thank you. I want to raise the question of the Prime Minister's launch of Mr Graeme Morris's lobbying firm. Minister, is it a normal process for a Prime Minister to launch a lobbying firm in Canberra?

Mr Henderson—I am not sure whether it is normal, but as I understand it, the Prime Minister and former Senator Sibraa did make speeches at that launch. It is certainly not a common occurrence and I am not sure whether or not it has a precedent.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How do you make clear that the Prime Minister in launching his former staffer's firm is not giving a government imprimatur to the legitimacy of that firm, or indicating that that is the one you should use if you want close contact with government?

Senator Ellison—I think the point that Mr Henderson made is a valid one. There was bipartisan presence there. The Prime Minister leads a government which believes in promoting business in the community. The Prime Minister has encouraged and lent his support to a number of initiatives across the whole board of Australian industry and expertise. This situation was an instance where there was a presence from both sides of the fence, if you like. There was certainly no official or unofficial imprimatur of this firm as being a government preferred company or firm. There is nothing untoward in that nor in the Prime Minister's attending.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You mentioned the Prime Minister's promoting industry—that is commendable—but this is an industry basically devoted, as I understand it, either to work on behalf of government lobbying or directly lobbying government. It is quite different from your local manufacturer of solar energy devices or something else. I am not saying that the Prime Minister has put his seal of approval on it, but it is the perception for all those people who do business in Canberra that, if the Prime Minister is launching the firm, it must be very influential within government.

Senator Ellison—I think the firm concerned had connections with both sides of politics, Senator Ray. It is commonplace that lobbyists have former politicians and people who have been formerly associated with either side of politics involved.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not think anyone is saying that there is anything intrinsically wrong with lobbyists; it is just that the launching of the firm by the Prime Minister may give the impression that that is the preferred lobbyist to do business with government, especially as Mr Morris is a former long-time staffer of the Prime Minister.

Senator Ellison—That was certainly not intended and I do not think that inference could be capable of being drawn when one considers the connections that that firm would have with other sides of politics.

Senator ROBERT RAY—At that launch the Prime Minister received a gift from Mr Morris for launching the firm. That was a first edition copy of Henry Lawson's poetry. Has that gift been valued?

Ms Belcher—We would need to check that with the Office of Ceremonial and Hospitality.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Are they here at the moment? Can they assist us?

Mr Henderson—Yes, they are here. The representative from CERHOS has indicated that she is not able to give an answer off the top of her head.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We might come back to the rules on this. I know some of the valuations for first editions of Henry Lawson vary between \$40 and \$1,000.

Mr Henderson—Could you help me by restating the question? This was a gift, was it?

Senator ROBERT RAY—It says that Mr Morris gave Mr Howard a first edition copy of Henry Lawson's poetry. The article goes on to gratuitously say, 'One, he said, emphasised Lawson's love of nature.' I do not think that is relevant.

Mr Henderson—Was this in the *Bulletin*?

Senator ROBERT RAY—The source for it was an article by Mr Lincoln Wright in the *Canberra Times* headed 'PM's old mate back in lobbying game'. I do not have a date for that article, but I do not think you would have much difficulty finding it. I was just wondering whether that gift had been valued. If it is over a certain limit it has to be handed in, does it not?

Mr Henderson—We will follow up on that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And if it is a really cheap copy, then Mr Morris is a bit of a scunge. Hopefully, it will fall between the two.

Senator Ellison—It is the content that counts.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In a very general sense I would like to go back to the events of the last few days in Fiji. Has the current position in Fiji been generating a lot of work within PM&C?

Mr Henderson—Mr Cole, from the international division, can answer that question. Certainly he has spent quite a bit of his time over the weekend preparing briefs for the Prime Minister and other senior ministers.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I was asking, Mr Cole, whether this is absorbing a bit of time.

Mr Cole—The simple answer is yes, it is.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Without going into any of the security aspects, would you like to just outline how these issues are dealt with vis-a-vis Foreign Affairs and maybe Defence and PM&C?

Mr Cole—The usual way in which they are dealt with is that, at a certain stage, if a decision is made that Australian consular and/or political interests are engaged in a serious enough way, a crisis centre operation is established in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Those who are most nearly involved in the various—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Sorry, I was distracted there but I am listening.

Mr Cole—As I was saying, when a situation of consular and/or political gravity for Australia is established, a crisis centre is generally established within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which provides a focus for the sharing of information between government departments and making sure that Australian consular reactions and political reactions are appropriate to the engagement of Australian interests.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you divide it into a couple of categories: protecting Australian interests in terms of any contingency plans for Australian citizens in Fiji at the one level and the political response at the second level, which is developed by the three departments, or is it just the two—Foreign Affairs and PM&C?

Mr Cole—In certain circumstances the Department of Defence would also have a very considerable influence. If, for example, one were in a theoretical situation—it is a theoretical situation, I must make clear—of service assisted evacuation of Australians, obviously the Department of Defence would be involved.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There has been some criticism in the newspapers about being taken by surprise by this particular issue, but these events happen from time to time, don't they? They are not predictable at all.

Mr Cole—You would need to be talking to other agencies and other departments to get a good feel for that, but I am reminded of a colleague's words some years ago in Bangkok that the essence of a good coup is that no-one knows about it before it happens.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, that is not far from the truth.

Mr Cole—We have here a situation which is some steps removed from being a coup and which we continue to regard as a hostage taking situation rather than a coup, so the number of people potentially in the know, if you like, could well be a fairly small circle.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thanks for that summary.

Senator CONROY—There is an overseas trip later in the year for the Prime Minister and delegations. I was wondering if you could outline how many of the Prime Minister's personal staff were going on the trip.

Mr Henderson—At the last hearings we provided the committee with an estimate not confined to the Prime Minister's own party as such but for a total of 54 and a costing of \$990,000. We are not able to provide any more detail than we provided at the last hearings. In other words, the absolute fine detail, names, et cetera are just not settled at this stage.

Senator CONROY—Is that even from the Prime Minister's own staff?

Mr Henderson—That is right.

Senator CONROY—I understand there could be as many as nine, is that right?

Mr Henderson—Mr Macgill might be able to refresh my memory, but I think there was a group comprising departmental staff, a medical practitioner, Prime Minister's office and CERHOS staff, which came to 24, I think. Whether the final figure is actually 24 is not settled at this stage. It is a few weeks away before they are actually boarding the plane.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There has been a block booking of plane tickets, I take it, even if not in name.

Mr Macgill—I am not sure what arrangements have been made for booking aircraft. I would imagine that the various areas of the department and the Prime Minister's office are making the bookings.

Senator ROBERT RAY—They are all going commercial on this occasion, as I understand it.

Mr Macgill—As far as I know, yes.

Senator CONROY—I am still having trouble confirming it but it seems, on the lists that we have been supplied, that it is nine of the Prime Minister's personal staff. Mr Sinodinos?

Mr Macgill—I believe he will be going, yes.

Senator CONROY—Mr Ritchie?

Mr Macgill—I do not know the names of the senior advisers on the Prime Minister's staff who will be going.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Minister, could you take that question on notice for us and get back to us rather than our going through every name?

Senator Ellison—Yes.

Senator CONROY—I am sure you are aware that has been a fair bit of media comment about the size of the delegation. I have also seen some comment about the number of the Prime Minister's staff going on the trip. Nine does seem to be a large number. How long is the trip: fourteen days?

Mr Macgill—One week, I think.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What are the dates, just to refresh our memory?

Mr Henderson—The 4th to the 8th. Senator, it may help you if we were to table a very recent press release—

Senator CONROY—I understand there was one yesterday.

Mr Henderson—Yes. It details the extensive itinerary for the Prime Minister during that visit. We can make that available right now.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In the question you took on notice, Minister, we asked you for the nine names. We should amend that to how many and who they are, because we are not sure that nine was in the previous evidence.

Senator Ellison—Right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We could have been overenthusiastic there in saying there were nine.

What about the most recent trip by the Prime Minister: how many personal staff did the Prime Minister take on the Gallipoli-France battlefield trip? I will have to abbreviate it there because I am not sure where else he went.

Mr Cole—The Prime Minister's most recent trip was the trip to Korea that has just concluded.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am talking about the Gallipoli trip. We will come to the Korean one next, now you remind me of it.

Mr Cole—I will need to check the precise numbers for that. I can get that before we finish.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Can you tell us how many personal staff went and how many departmental staff went?

Mr Cole—As I say, I would need to check. I have documents in the room that would enable me to do that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—While you are checking that, would you like to tell us how many personal staff and departmental staff went to Korea?

Mr Cole—I am afraid that the documentation is in the room but not with me now.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We will come back to that in due course. I have not actually read the press release yet, Mr Henderson, but what was released was a detailed itinerary, I take it, of the Prime Minister's visit to London.

Mr Henderson—That is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is an itinerary for the Prime Minister, rather than necessarily the party that is accompanying him. Is that right?

Mr Henderson—That is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So presumably the former Prime Ministers, Presiding Officers, et cetera will not necessarily participate in this program.

Mr Henderson—No, they certainly will not be meeting with Prime Minister Blair or the Chancellor of the Exchequer or Foreign Secretary Cook or Defence Secretary Hoon. This is the Prime Minister's program.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was described at some stage as a 'trade and investment visit' as well. Has anyone been added to the program from Australian business or investment or banking background to assist here and promote Australian trade overseas?

Mr Macgill—The Prime Minister has not invited any more individuals or representatives or organisations.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So the figure of 54 is still extant, in other words?

Mr Macgill—Yes, Senator.

Senator CONROY—Any changes? Has anyone dropped out and someone else been added?

Mr Macgill—Not as far as I know, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When the Prime Minister departs London on 8 July, he is coming back here, is he? He is coming back to Australia?

Mr Cole—Senator, that is not finally resolved at this stage. There is the possibility of another visit on return.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is this the exhibition opening that has been discussed? Is that in Hanover?

Mr Cole—All I can say is that there is a possibility that there will be another visit to another country on the way back. The details of that have not been finalised yet.

Senator ROBERT RAY—All right. We will not go to that aspect of it. But wasn't there originally in the program a visit to open an Australian trade exhibition in Hanover?

Mr Cole—There was certainly at one stage a thought that the Prime Minister might be proceeding to Hanover for an expo event in Germany—in Hanover. I understand that at this point in time, however, the Prime Minister will not be travelling to Germany for that event.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is this Hanover event around? What is the purpose of the Hanover event?

Mr Cole—It is an expo. As you know, there is a series of world expos that are held from time to time around the world. There is an opportunity at such an expo for Australian goods and services and for Australia to be showcased.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So this is a trade and investment matter.

Mr Cole—This is another trade and investment matter, that is correct, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And that is not being proceeded with?

Mr Henderson—As I understand it, Senator—and I will check the details—it is probably Australia day at an international trade fair. A large number of nations would be represented at this exhibition and on particular days or weeks—I have forgotten how long this runs for—there would be focus on a particular country.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Like at the Brisbane Expo.

Mr Henderson—Exactly.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So what day is Australia day then?

Mr Henderson—I am not sure, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was right at the end of this trip though, wasn't it?

Mr Cole—I understand it might be the 11th.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So we have the trip to London to celebrate the centenary, which later becomes a trade and investment visit, or in part.

Mr Henderson—Well, Senator, it is not later. It is the fact that a lot of the events for the celebration of the centenary of the passage of the Australian Constitution Act are substantial cultural events that need a lot of preliminary planning. We do not usually have to work on six month lead times for putting together what is in fact an extensive series of bilateral meetings for the Prime Minister. It was not as an afterthought. It is just the fact that these other celebrations, those sorts of details, they were bedding those down way back in 1999.

You do not need nine months to set up groups of financial sector people for the Prime Minister to address. I do not accept the suggestion that this was an afterthought. It is the lead time involved in the various elements of this visit that explain why we could tell you in February, or maybe it was last year, elements of the Federation celebrations, where it is has been more recently that we have been giving you the details of the Prime Minister's bilateral visit. In fact I would have thought a very detailed outline for the elements of the Prime Minister's bilateral visit, with this press release here, is probably much earlier than is customary.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It is a bit earlier than customary: it is issued the day before the estimates committee is meeting. When was the Prime Minister first invited? I understand it was for the minister for industry and one other minister to attend Hanover, seeing that we are talking about lead times now.

Mr Cole—My recollection is that the possibility of attending this function was raised with the Prime Minister late last year.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When was the final decision made not to attend the trade and investment expo in Hanover?

Mr Cole—The decision would have been made not to attend Australia day at Expo 2000 earlier in the year, possibly February. I would need to check.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That decision is made before consideration of an alternative country, which I am not going to pursue because those discussions are still under way. But the actual decision to reject going to Hanover was made before it was contemplated going to another country?

Mr Cole—I do not think that would be accurate. The decision making on overseas travel is always taking into consideration a number of possibilities at any given time. It is not a simple matter of either/or at any particular time but very much more dynamic.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That really does not answer the question. My question is: the rejection of Hanover preceded consideration of going to another specific country, not the possibility of going to another country?

Mr Cole—I did not specifically say no. The possibility of going to other countries is not simply restricted to either Hanover or the other one at the moment. It was very much in mind at that earlier time.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But not the specific country to which you are now considering going is what I am asking?

Mr Cole—My recollection is that it was.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is the Prime Minister's visit. Has there been developed or is it your duty to develop a program for the Presiding Officers? Or is that one they develop themselves? I know they will attend some common functions.

Mr Macgill—Mr McGauran has written to the other delegation members letting them know what is on the program. It would be up to them in consultation with Mr McGauran to work out what events they would attend. Certainly Prime Minister and Cabinet is not taking an active role in developing a program for any of the other participants.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So that would be Mr McGauran's responsibility to do so?

Mr Macgill—Yes, to liaise with the other members of the delegation.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is good.

Senator CONROY—The seminar being organised by the Australian Centre for Global Finance—the Prime Minister is speaking at the business dinner: where is that being held and what are the details around that?

Mr Cole—The details of it are that it is being held under the auspices of the Australian Centre for Global Finance in association with the *Financial Times*. I understand that the location is at the Financial Times, No. 1 Southwark Bridge London. The publicity is going out currently and that includes the listing of the key note speakers for that seminar which I am pleased to say includes the premiers of New South Wales and Victoria.

Senator CONROY—So this was not something that was already being organised and we were going to be there at the same time? It was something that was organised with the Prime Minister being the keynote speaker?

Mr Cole—Certainly it was organised with a view to utilising the fact that the Prime Minister was in London as a significant drawcard and also that other folk, such as Premier Carr and others, would be in London too.

Senator CONROY—When did the Prime Minister's office or your department let the global financial centre know that the Prime Minister would be available?

Mr Cole—I am afraid I would not know precisely the date for that. I would have to say that the possibility of such a seminar has been in mind very much since midway through last year when, as you would probably be aware, the Prime Minister spoke at a similar financial services seminar in New York. Generally, when we do have the Prime Minister travelling overseas, we would not be doing our job as public servants if we did not take maximum advantage of the possibility to use him to promote Australia's economic strengths, the attractiveness of investing here and the attractions of Australia as a global financial services centre. You would recall that this is an ongoing theme in the government's promotion of Australia's economic prospects and potential, and this seminar fits very squarely into that strategy.

Senator CONROY—Did you say you would take that on notice and let me know?

Mr Cole—Sorry?

Senator CONROY—Concerning when the Prime Minister's office or your department notified Mr Hoskins at the centre to organise this: it is just that you said that the flyers had just been sent out, so I got the impression that it was only locked in very recently. I am just looking to find out when the Prime Minister was able to confirm that he would be able to attend it.

Mr Cole—I can simply address that point straight away. The organisation of this seminar has been the subject of ministerial correspondence prior to Christmas—that is, the detail of it—so we are not talking about a Johnny-come-lately type of organisation of this seminar. But we can come back and certainly give you those dates.

Senator CONROY—You said flyers have started to go out already?

Mr Cole—Yes, that is correct.

Senator CONROY—Have we had any success in tracking down delegations to Korea and Turkey yet?

Mr Cole—As you notice, I have not left my seat.

Senator CONROY—I was wondering if someone had passed you a note while I was not looking. I would like to get the size of the Turkish one, if I can describe it as that. I know it went on to a number of places but it is just the Turkish delegation.

Mr Cole—Sure.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Just while we are doing those calculations, we did ask which prime ministerial staff would be going to London. Do you have an idea yet as to which departmental officers will be going?

Mr Henderson—I would expect the secretary, the head of the International Division and somebody from CERHOS—ceremonial and hospitality.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So there would just be three.

Mr Henderson—And Auspic—a photographer. They are now part of PM&C.

Mr Macgill—And there is a visits coordinator from CERHOS as well.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So there are four in all.

Mr Macgill—No, five. There is a director of CERHOS and a visits coordinator from CERHOS.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So there are five going.

Mr Macgill—Yes.

Senator CONROY—Are there any more overseas trips planned for the Prime Minister this year?

Mr Cole—There are a number of possibilities for the Prime Minister's travel later in the year. The Prime Minister is considering his travel schedule. Possible multilateral commitments might include the APEC leaders meeting in Brunei from 15 to 16 November and the South Pacific Forum meeting in Kiribati from 28 to 30 October.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When did the Prime Minister last go to the South Pacific Forum?

Mr Cole—I believe that would have been two years ago.

Senator CONROY—So those are the only two possible ones at the moment.

Mr Cole—Those are the ones that are being considered actively at present. There may be other Asian destinations.

Senator CONROY—There is Indonesia. We have got an invitation. Is that for President Wahid to come here or we going to Indonesia?

Mr Cole—As I understood it from the Prime Minister's announcements in Korea, President Wahid is looking actively at coming here in July.

Senator CONROY—That would cover most of the major economies in the area that the PM has been able to visit. Probably the only other one, short of Malaysia, is India. Is there any prospect of India?

Mr Cole—There would be the prospect of Asian destinations still in the second half of the year.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Some time in July?

Mr Cole—Or indeed—it is theoretically possible—linked to the APEC leaders meeting.

Senator CONROY—I am sorry I kept interrupting you while you were trying to come up with the Turkish delegation. How many were on that delegation, in a general sense, and then more specifically?

Mr Cole—It appears, from a very quick head count—and please do not hold me to these numbers—that it was 21, plus the Prime Minister and Mrs Howard.

Senator CONROY—How long did this trip go for?

Mr Cole—Approximately two weeks.

Senator CONROY—Were you able to quantify the personal staff?

Mr Cole—There were nine—

Senator CONROY—That must be where I got the number from.

Mr Cole—from the Prime Minister's office, six from PM&C, one medical officer, one senior officer from DFAT and four security.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Which six from PM&C went on this occasion? I assume there were two from CERHOS.

Mr Cole—From PM&C we had the Secretary, the First Assistant Secretary International Division, Mr Roger Bagley, the head of CERHOS and we had two visit coordinators from CERHOS, given the complexity of the trip and the very considerable challenges of moving around in two of the countries concerned. Amongst the PM&C people, I have listed the official photographer.

Senator CONROY—Nine personal staff seems to be a lot. Recently, I travelled with Minister Hockey. He had one departmental staff member and one personal staff member. I appreciate that Mr Hockey is not the Prime Minister. What would nine have been doing? What were their responsibilities?

Mr Cole—As I said, there were a number of quite complex logistical issues involved in this trip, not least in moving quite a large party, including a large party of media, from Istanbul and Ankara down to Gallipoli and back up again. There were also a number of complexities with other points on the itinerary. From every account I have had, they were fully engaged.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The PM&C staff certainly, and the embassy staff. I think Senator Conroy was asking about the nine personal staff. Were they involved in the logistics as well?

Mr Cole—As you can imagine, there were a number involved in media liaison issues with a very large media party accompanying. Other than that, it was actually a fairly modest operation.

Senator CONROY—Who was designated the media liaison role?

Mr Cole—Do you mean who was the leader of the media?

Senator CONROY—The departmental liaison, media liaison, personal staff—would you explain to me how it works. I have not been on one of these visits unfortunately, so I am completely in the dark.

Mr Cole—Media liaison is handled by the Prime Minister's office and in this case by Mr Tony O'Leary.

Senator CONROY—Were there any departmental media liaison people?

Mr Cole—There was nobody specifically designated as media liaison but there would no doubt have been active liaison between senior departmental officers and the media.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it would have been the Prime Minister's personal staff who briefed the media after the Paris meeting?

Mr Cole—That would certainly be the case, but I recall having seen reference in the newspapers to some other briefings as well which may have been background.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do we know if it was Mr O’Leary who said that former Senator Evans went off to the opera after the meeting when he never did? Do you have any information on that?

Mr Cole—I am not in a position to comment, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—A particularly sleazy effort. I think we know who did it.

Senator CONROY—You have mentioned Mr O’Leary. Did the Prime Minister have other personal media staff along. Mr Herron, perhaps?

Mr Cole—I think you mean Ms Herron.

Senator CONROY—Sorry, my apologies. I guessed that it was a relation. So there were two.

Mr Cole—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What were the media arrangements going to Korea? Was that something that the Prime Minister’s office had a say in, sending pool cameras, or was that really a media driven rationalisation?

Mr Cole—Senator, I am afraid those media arrangements are directly handled by the Prime Minister’s office and I am not in a position to comment on that. I simply do not know the facts.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Minister, do you know?

Senator Ellison—No, I do not. I can take that on notice.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So we are specific about it and it is not misunderstood: I was not sure whether the pooling arrangements in Korea were driven by Australian media requirements in terms of economies or whether it was a requirement from the Prime Minister’s Office. I think it was the former, but I would just put an inquiry in along those lines. I think it was basically to save money for media outlets, but I do not know. There was some reference to it in, I think, the weekend press.

Senator Ellison—We will take it up.

Senator CONROY—How many of the Prime Minister’s personal staff went on the Korea trip?

Mr Cole—I am sorry; could you give me a couple of minutes?

Senator CONROY—Yes.

Mr Cole—Perhaps I could do the mathematics while other questioning continues.

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, I might just say that we are in general questions, and some of these are getting a bit detailed. I think it is output 3 that this relates to.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But it is not going to be any quicker in output 3.

Senator Ellison—But it makes it easier on officers, et cetera.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We will get the answer to this one and move on to another area.

Senator CONROY—I have a question about the appointment of Rosemary Calder to the Office of the Status of Women. I am trying not to distract Mr Cole.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is more on the corporate services aspect of the appointment rather than OSW business. That is why it is raised here.

Mr Henderson—And the question is?

Senator CONROY—I note from media reports that she has not started yet.

Mr Henderson—That is right.

Senator CONROY—May 29?

Mr Henderson—That is correct.

Senator CONROY—Is it correct that Ms Calder lives in Melbourne?

Mr Henderson—That is correct.

Senator CONROY—What will be her long-term residence?

Mr Henderson—She is going to commute to Canberra. She will have a flat here, but her principal residence will be in Melbourne and her family are remaining in Melbourne.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How many times is she expected to commute per year? Will she be coming up every Monday morning and going back every Friday night like us politicians?

Mr Henderson—Yes, that is right—but whether it is every Friday night or what have you. Give or take special events outside this town, yes, it will be weekly.

Senator CONROY—Is the flat here provided as part of the package?

Mr Henderson—I would have to check on those details.

Senator CONROY—Would she be establishing an office in Melbourne? Will there be facilities and an office for her in Melbourne?

Mr Henderson—I would have to check on that as well. She could use Cassellton Place and, in due course, when we return there, 4 Treasury Place, I guess, if she needed office space. Basically, she is commuting to the departmental offices.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who picks up the \$33,000 airfare bill?

Mr Henderson—I do not have precise details with me as to the AWA that she will be signing with the secretary.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not want to go into the personal salary level and entitlements of someone—

Senator CONROY—Extra add-on costs.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The last time we had a major commute was in DOFA. A certain individual who, the moment Dr Boxall became secretary, terminated the arrangement because of the cost and other related matters. I am not actually asking for the head of the Office of the Status of Women's entitlements. If she is commuting, and I assume she will be travelling business class, that is \$33,000 a year before you add in transport costs to and from the airport.

Senator CONROY—And possibly a flat.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think that is a separate issue.

Mr Henderson—I accept the point you are making: there are costs associated with commuting. We will get you as much detail as is consistent with not—as you have already alluded to—going into the details of her AWA. I know you would not expect us to provide you with those details.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No. But I think it is a policy issue. In the life of the last government, DOFA alone forked out \$706,000 on relocation costs, just for ministerial staff

and others. Surely this is a factor before you appoint someone. I could be being unfair here, but by my estimate if they are going to commute and it is going to cost over \$30,000 and if you add in any sort of reasonable travel costs—I assume she is not living in Tullamarine or Airport West—you are getting close to \$40,000 to appoint someone who wants to commute. Why shouldn't they live in Canberra, like Mr Max Moore-Wilton and everyone else has had to?

Senator Ellison—It is trying to get the best person for the job. Australia is a big country and it is always difficult getting people to necessarily reside in Canberra.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We cannot get the Prime Minister to, can we?

Senator Ellison—Canberra is not the be-all and end-all, so to speak. But Mr Henderson said that he will take those matters on notice and get back to you.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Apart from the Prime Minister and Ms Calder, is there anyone else working in these agencies of PM&C that is commuting to and from Canberra every week? How many employees do you have in PM&C and its agencies, approximately?

Mr Henderson—For the department itself, it is of the order of 380. I do not have the figure off the top of my head for the portfolio.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It would be considerably higher. It would be close to a thousand when you take the Public Service Commissioner—

Mr Henderson—And ONA and so on. It would be 750, maybe.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You cannot be expected to talk on behalf of agencies generally. But of the 380 in PM&C, who commutes to work from interstate?

Mr Henderson—The secretary would be one.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think we went through the secretary's entitlements in some detail.

Mr Henderson—We certainly have.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And I do not ever recall that we are paying his air fare to go to and from Sydney every week. I think he gets about six trips a year, which seemed to me not unreasonable.

Mr Henderson—I have not said we are paying \$30,000 a year for Ms Calder. We have not signed on the dotted line. She has accepted the appointment. It has been announced. All I can say is I will provide the details when I have got them to hand.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The question I am now asking is: is there anyone else on the PM&C payroll commuting on a weekly basis to Canberra to fulfil their functions? Mr Max Moore-Wilton does not do that. He may go back to Sydney four or six times a year outside his normal duties. That was put within his entitlements and Mr Shergold gave him a clearance on that, so that is all bedded down. He is not going back on a weekly basis. I am asking: is there anyone else working in PM&C commuting to Canberra on a weekly basis?

Mr Henderson—I am not aware of anyone else.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Were you aware of the Barrell case in DOFA?

Mr Henderson—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I commend it to you to have a look at, at some stage. When do you think you will be in a position to know whether Ms Calder's transport costs to commute are being picked up?

Senator Ellison—Whilst that is being obtained, we have got some figures on the Korean trip.

Mr Cole—The Korean numbers, as far as I can check them from the documents I have here, indicate that the total number of the party was 16 plus the Prime Minister and Mrs Howard, so a grand total of 18 there, consisting of seven from the Prime Minister's office, four from Prime Minister and Cabinet, one medical officer, three security and one RAAF.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So on a two-day trip the PM has taken seven personal staff with him. Is that right?

Mr Cole—I think it is four days—

Senator ROBERT RAY—It probably stuck in my memory that he was there for two days.

Senator Ellison—Two days travelling.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But for a two-day visit he has had seven staff. How many from the press section of the PM's staff went there? Do we know that?

Mr Cole—There were a press secretary and a media support person on that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So two of the seven were in the press area.

Senator CONROY—Were there a lot of logistical exercises with a large group of media?

Senator ROBERT RAY—But there were hardly any media on this one, were there?

Mr Cole—I do not know how many went in the end, but I have a listing here that seems to include around 15 to 20.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is more than I thought. On the trip, when was the Prime Minister informed that his counterpart had resigned?

Mr Cole—I am not exactly sure of the timing but I think the Prime Minister would have been informed at about the time that the rest of the world was, which was immediately at the same time as the trip commenced.

Senator CONROY—Was he in the air or had he landed?

Mr Cole—I would have to check on that.

Senator CONROY—That must have put a bit of a dampener on it.

You were consulting about how quickly we could find out—

Mr Henderson—I would expect that would be sorted out this week. She starts next Monday.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who negotiates the conditions of employment: is it you, the Public Service Commissioner or a combination? Is it an iterative process?

Mr Henderson—The chairman of the selection panel in this case, who is my colleague Jane Halton.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Your sort of equivalent over on the social policy side.

Mr Henderson—Yes. The selection panel included Ms Halton as the chair, me and another person from an outside agency, which is a pretty customary situation. Ms Halton has been directly involved.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is a position which was advertised widely?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who drew up the shortlist: the outside agency?

Mr Henderson—When I said the outside agency on the selection, it was another public servant on the selection panel. Morgan and Banks were used in the recruitment process to develop the shortlist and to manage the interview process in the logistical sense.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So they put a list of whatever to your other deputy equivalent, and who was the third person?

Mr Henderson—I am embarrassed to say I have forgotten her name, but she is a senior officer in the Health Insurance Commission.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I see. So you got an odd woman odd man out from another department to bring a different perspective.

Mr Henderson—It is a customary arrangement, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is fine. When the position was advertised, was any mention made that residence in Canberra was preferable in the long term?

Mr Henderson—There is a customary phrase we use in our ads, that the position is located in Canberra.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It did not say you could have 50 return airfares?

Mr Henderson—We are going to give you the details as to just what the travel arrangements are in due course.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When you take that on notice, apart from the return air fares, can you put in whether there will be other transport costs, cabs, hire car or otherwise? Can you also put in what the conditions will be in terms of accommodation allowance in Canberra? As I understood you, the home base is still going to be Melbourne, and that triggers other entitlements here, does it not?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator CONROY—So they would be entitled to travel allowance in Canberra, or some other form of allowance?

Senator ROBERT RAY—No.

Mr Henderson—Senator, you are trying to tease out of me details which I have promised to provide as soon as possible.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think what Senator Conroy was saying was that there are fairly strict rules vis-à-vis allowances that would—not necessarily in this case—always fit in these circumstances. I think that is what he was asking, rather than to go into specific detail.

Mr Henderson—We will be complying with those rules.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you think you will be able to give us an indication later today, or will that not be possible, because we do have the office coming up at 9 o'clock tonight.

Mr Henderson—I will see what I can do by this evening. We have got another session scheduled, I know not for OSW, on Wednesday morning for this department.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is true. We need not actually go off on other issues, or we may never get away.

Senator CONROY—If one of your staff in another state—any staffer who is based in Melbourne, Sydney or Perth—comes to Canberra for the night, what are their entitlements? What would be their allowance if they were in Canberra?

Mr Henderson—Mr Oliver will give you information on those allowances, but I should say you can probably count the staff in that situation in our department on two hands there—the personal assistants to former Governors-General and there are some Reconciliation Council staff located in Cairns. So it is very rare, but Mr Oliver can put you in the picture as to what their allowances would be.

Mr Oliver—It would be the standard allowances, Senator Conroy, for travel allowance, so it would be accommodation and incidental expenditure and meals. They would be at the standard non-SES allowance rates and, depending on which capital city they are going to, they vary slightly in terms of their accommodation allowance.

Senator CONROY—Ms Calder's position would be an SES position?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator CONROY—What would an SES officer from another department receive if they lived in Sydney or Melbourne or anywhere else and came to Canberra? I appreciate Canberra is different in terms of the amounts of allowances.

Mr Henderson—If I went interstate, I could use my credit card up to a limit for an overnight stay of \$217—accommodation, meals and incidentals.

Senator CONROY—It would be less in Canberra, though. Sydney is normally a greater amount than Canberra.

Mr Henderson—Yes, but Canberra is not part of the equation we are discussing, is it? We are going to provide you with the details in relation to Ms Calder. Her situation is—

Senator CONROY—I am just asking you about the general Public Service situation where somebody from the SES level from another department, based in another city—I am not even trying to draw on your own department given you have said no-one in your department is in this position—came to Canberra. I am just presuming it would be less than if you went to Sydney, say, where it is \$217. Sydney is more expensive so it is slightly higher rate. So if you lived in Sydney and came here—and I am not trying to make it you; if an SES officer came to Canberra—it would maybe be only \$200. We get a lesser rate in Canberra than we get in Sydney. I am not complaining.

Mr Henderson—Why I am looking a bit puzzled is we are jumbling up a continuous commuting situation and the entitlements that may apply in that case with occasional travel.

Senator ROBERT RAY—With respect, Senator Conroy in his first philology is trying to get a complete picture, so he has asked what the odd rate is and then of course wants to know what the permanent rate is for points of comparison and evaluation. Do not look for a linkage that is not there.

Mr Henderson—The odd rate is specified in my AWA and it keys off standard rates of allowance provided by DEWRSB in respect of SES. We can provide those for you if you wish.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you.

Senator CONROY—I want to have a chat about the performance pay for secretaries. You might have seen the article in, I think it was, the *Advertiser* and an article in the *Courier-Mail*. News Limited must have syndicated it.

Mr Henderson—Ms Belcher can help us with that. Mr Chairman, could I just check whether we are in general questions? The significance to us is that while we remain in general questions there are officers from the Office of the Status of Women and the Office of Indigenous Policy—which we have quite explicitly scheduled for either after 9.30 tonight to Wednesday morning—who could go if we have finished with general questions.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We never intended for either to be here, and I am surprised they are.

Mr Henderson—We have batted that topic around. That is fine. Those officers can go.

Senator ROBERT RAY—These days the difficulty is that, without a distinctly identified corporate services area, if you have a question on remuneration in the Office of the Status of Women, it basically has to come under general questions. So we do not need OIP or OSW—and it is 9 o'clock tonight; not 9.30. I hope.

Senator Ellison—But it will not be before that?

Senator ROBERT RAY—We can hope. We can aspire. We can dream.

CHAIR—I doubt it.

Senator Ellison—Just experience tells me otherwise.

Senator CONROY—Where is the process for the performance pay for secretaries up to?

Ms Belcher—The Public Service Commissioner and the Secretary to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have been holding discussions with the individual ministers. That has not yet been completed. When it has been, those two will report to the Prime Minister.

Senator CONROY—Is there any proposed time line? Is there any deadline that we are working to?

Ms Belcher—There is not a precise deadline, but my understanding is that the process is well under way and they would be wanting to conclude it soon. But I do not have a date for you.

Senator CONROY—I will just run through the assessment process, just to make sure I have not missed any steps. The secretary writes a self-assessment?

Ms Belcher—That is right.

Senator CONROY—And the secretary discusses the self-assessment with the minister?

Ms Belcher—That is right.

Senator CONROY—The assessment then goes to the Secretary to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Public Service Commissioner?

Ms Belcher—Yes.

Senator CONROY—The Secretary to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Public Service Commissioner prepare the report and that report is discussed with the relevant secretary and minister?

Ms Belcher—No, that is not quite the order. The secretary and the commissioner speak to the minister with the self-assessment. It is not until after that stage that they prepare a report.

Senator CONROY—So they prepare a report. Do they discuss it with the relevant secretary and minister again?

Ms Belcher—If there has been a change—if there is something to report—yes, they would discuss it again.

Senator CONROY—And that report goes to the Prime Minister?

Ms Belcher—Yes.

Senator CONROY—And then the PM makes the decision on zero, 10 per cent or 15 per cent?

Ms Belcher—Yes.

Senator CONROY—Ordinary, superior or outstanding is, I think, the terminology that is used.

Ms Belcher—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is the process after that if someone has been listed as—what did you say the term was?

Senator CONROY—Ordinary, I think, was the first one.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is that secretary counselled and encouraged? Do they go through an inspirational process somewhere, or do they just start to pack up their bags, Minister?

Mr Henderson—Sorry, Senator—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I will direct that to the minister, who may want to call on assistance here. To rephrase it, Mr Henderson, in this process you can be regarded as ordinary—what is it?

Senator CONROY—Superior.

Senator ROBERT RAY—superior or outstanding. I am sure there would be no-one who was just ordinary, but if they were is there a sort of a process in place to try to make them outstanding or extraordinary?

Ms Belcher—I am not aware of that being part of this formal process that I have described. I would have thought that any secretary who wished to discuss the result would have full opportunity to do so, and wanting to know what should happen next would no doubt be helped to work that out. It is not something that has been discussed as the part of the process I have described—or, I should say, not to my knowledge.

Senator ROBERT RAY—With regard to the assessment that goes to the Prime Minister, does a departmental secretary have any means of access to that?

Ms Belcher—The departmental secretary would know of any significant aspects of the discussion that took place between the minister and the Secretary to PM&C and the Public Service Commissioner.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How would they know?

Ms Belcher—The secretary and the Public Service Commissioner would go back to them if there were significant issues that were raised in the discussion with the minister. It is not intended that there be information passed on that is not known in general terms to the secretary.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Has there been a burst of bureaucratic freedom, Minister? Will some of the criteria used become public or is that still being hidden behind a series of defences? We have been through this before, but I just thought there might have been some Prague Spring in which you might have been able to give us some minor peek through the window at the process.

Ms Belcher—It will vary somewhat from portfolio to portfolio, but there will be some general standards or criteria that one would expect would most likely be—

Senator CONROY—Are they available?

Ms Belcher—I can tell you that one would relate to the efficient and ethical use of resources.

Senator ROBERT RAY—If the Auditor-General found that a departmental secretary was presiding over had an abysmal record keeping history, is that the sort of thing that is going to be taken into account in the evaluation of whether they are ordinary, superior or extraordinary?

Ms Belcher—As I said, I think it can be assumed that the efficient use of resources would be a consideration. If it is a matter of public record that there has been a major problem, then no doubt both the minister and the secretary, or the commissioner, would be aware of that.

Senator CONROY—But if the minister is comfortable with that level of record keeping—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Or what if the secretary has backed the minister up in the minister's blunders? Where do you get the objectivity in here rather than subjectivity? How do we get an indication that the secretary is not being rewarded for political—not in the sense of partisan political but a general political—loyalty to the minister rather than the performance of the department that that person is organising?

Mr Henderson—On the subjectivity-objectivity considerations, when Senate estimates started I actually worked in the research service of the Parliamentary Library. If senators had come to me and said, 'Can you give me some information about a particular department and how it is performing so that I can raise some questions at Senate estimates?' in 1971 or 1972 I would have been struggling to find hard material to go on. It was not mandatory to produce annual reports in 1971. Unlike today, the Australian National Audit Office does not devote almost 50 per cent, I think, of its resources to effectiveness reviews. There were no budget forward estimates. The Ombudsman did not exist. Privacy commissioners did not exist. There is a whole raft of accountability developments at the Commonwealth level in Australia over the last 30 years that have actually taken a lot of the subjectivity out of performance measurement. Clearly there are judgments in the end in regard to performance, but there is also a lot of hard evidence in regard to performance, including by secretaries.

In regard to the question about what would you say about auditors' comments, if I was responsible for a certain area where the auditor discovered that there were systemic problems, I would say that certainly should bear on how I am assessed. I am not talking about any particular instance. If there is a one-off fraud situation, it is a little bit different as to how you

might assess somebody for isolated instances. So the general thought that assessment of secretaries is all subjective and there is no hard objective data to go on does not take full account of the whole raft of accountability developments that have occurred over recent decades, of which this process of Senate estimates is a key development.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I cannot contest any of that. I think accountability has gone up. I could run some countervailing arguments about how a whole range of things are kept hidden by other devices such as commercial-in-confidence, et cetera. But let us concede your case here. It still comes back to the persons making the judgment. You put ministers in that equation who have formed some sort of relationship with their departmental head. No minister is really going to want to mark their departmental head down to ‘Ordinary’ and then have to work with them for the next three years.

I am not talking about \$4 million or \$8 million being knocked off out of DOFA and saying that that secretary should not get performance pay because, as you say, it could well be an isolated case. It is the judges. It is like internal assessment in school; it is who judges it. It is not that there are not criteria out there but whether those criteria can be properly applied, given the sort of political and bureaucratic relationship that has evolved in our form of government—highly unlikely, especially if you will not spell out the criteria. You put all the bureaucratic effort in as a government, not as a bureaucracy, to covering that part up. That is why we do not have before us what the open objective criteria are in this. So we will never know whether it is subjective or objective, will we?

Mr Henderson—What models do you have in mind?

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not believe in performance pay for the Public Service—full stop. I acknowledge that a Labor government did it in the SES. I did not see it properly and fairly applied there and it will not be properly and fairly applied here. But at least you should have the criteria right out there for everyone to assess. It is very difficult. It is a tough issue, I agree. I am not trying to have senior public servants not being remunerated properly, Mr Henderson. It is a disgrace at the federal level, compared with their state counterparts, where they seem to be able to get away with paying mediocrity whatever they like and at a federal level talented people are not properly remunerated. That is our problem. I think that is why performance pay is here, as a backdoor way of getting their salary up. It is a pity that it has to occur. Anyway, we could argue and discuss this all day, but we probably will not resolve it.

Senator CONROY—Has the government made any budgetary allocation for if everybody is successful or if no-one is successful?

Mr Henderson—Individual agencies pick up the performance pay tab for their secretaries.

Senator CONROY—So is it budgeted for in advance? Presumably you do not know in advance that it is going to be given or not, so how do you include that in a budgeting sense?

Mr Henderson—We have an ongoing appropriation of the order of \$45 million and we have aggregate salaries of the order of \$27 million. We do not make explicit allowance for the ratings of our secretary, just like we do not make explicit allowance if somebody is going to retire in a particular year.

Senator CONROY—If every single departmental secretary received it—the full 15 per cent if they were all outstanding—it could cost up to \$765,000 a year. That is a substantial amount if everybody is outstanding in one year.

Mr Henderson—It is. I am sure if Dr Hawke scored performance pay it would be caught up in the rounding of the Defence portfolio budget—that is the point I am making. But, yes, you are right: if they all get top ratings, there is a cost. But it is not unrelated to the point that Senator Ray was making about remuneration for senior executives. He may not like the elements of the package but it is addressing a competitiveness issue.

Senator CONROY—Like Senator Ray, I am just conscious of how it was applied in Victoria within schools. I think something like 95 per cent of teachers managed to get the top grade all the time within their performance appraisal. I am just conscious of how it will apply here, but I absolutely agree with Senator Ray. I wish to move on to the Prime Minister's palmtop, which is referred to as the Mobile Minister package.

Mr Henderson—Dr Ball may be able to help you. Are you looking at a particular newspaper article—

Senator CONROY—Yes, the *Advertiser*.

Mr Henderson—and are you under the impression that Mobile Minister is some fundamental change in the way the Prime Minister runs the Commonwealth government?

Senator CONROY—I thought it may have even been dragged into performance pay if the Prime Minister just calls up—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think they are prepared for you on this one, Senator Conroy.

Senator CONROY—Mr Henderson flicked straight to a page, so I think you are right.

Mr Henderson—It was one of the more outrageous articles for the season. What is the specific question?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Has a correction been forwarded?

Mr Henderson—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Has a complaint to the Press Council been made?

Mr Henderson—No. We are keeping our head above water on questions on notice, and Senate estimates leaves the press awaiting their rejoinders, I am afraid.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But you have got most of those answers in, haven't you? Is that right?

Mr Henderson—We have got a lot in.

Senator Ellison—They are doing well.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Should we take them up on their invitation? Anyway, you are doing better than DOFA. We have not seen one answer to a question on notice there.

Senator Ellison—They had more questions.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is true. I am sorry to interrupt you, Senator Conroy.

Senator CONROY—That is okay. I was just wondering, Mr Henderson, if you would like to give us the prepared response to save time.

Mr Henderson—You have just identified an article. What is the particular question?

Senator CONROY—Would tell us a little bit about the Mobile Minister package? That is the first time I have heard of it, so I am just interested in finding out how it works. Is there one for each minister?

Mr Henderson—Some ministers have them. Dr Ball will provide you with some explanations as to how Mobile Minister works.

Dr Ball—The Mobile Minister package is purchased from an external company.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Which company?

Dr Ball—A company called Random Pty Ltd. It is not an in-house developed solution. The Prime Minister has implemented Mobile Minister purely to monitor his diary and calendar.

Senator CONROY—To monitor his own diary?

Dr Ball—Yes, and calendar.

Senator CONROY—Are any other ministers issued with them at this stage?

Dr Ball—A number of ministers have purchased this package, but through their own departments; it has nothing to do with our department.

Senator CONROY—Are they linked?

Dr Ball—No, they are not.

Senator CONROY—So the Prime Minister cannot eavesdrop on his colleagues?

Dr Ball—The Prime Minister has access only to his information.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You are saying that this would basically record a minister's diary?

Dr Ball—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is this system backed up in case it should accidentally disappear?

Dr Ball—Yes. The system is located here in Canberra, and we replicate that in Sydney as well. It is backed up each night. Also, the Prime Minister's diary and calendar are downloaded to his palmtop so that he has them at all times with him.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Will this be kept as a permanent record—not necessarily accessible by the general public?

Dr Ball—We do backups and then we keep them for five to 10 years depending on the information recorded.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think keeping past diaries is one of the most underestimated aspects of public life. I hope you do administer it, because in 10 years time someone could ask you where you were on X date. If you had the diary information, it would assist.

Senator Ellison—As Mae West said once, 'Always keep a diary, because one day it will keep you.'

Senator ROBERT RAY—Exactly. I am just worried about whether this will disappear. Will any of this ever disappear and not be a permanent record?

Senator CONROY—Referring to the article, I am hoping you will clarify something. I think Mr Henderson described it as an outrageous article—was that your exact phrase? So the Prime Minister can check with a click of a button on the diaries and calendars for other ministers?

Dr Ball—No, he cannot do that. They are not linked.

Senator CONROY—He cannot check on the expenses of errant ministers heading off rort scandals?

Dr Ball—They are not linked, and the Prime Minister is not using it for expenses; he is using it purely for his diary and calendar.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So why is it better than a written diary? Can you explain that to me?

Dr Ball—A written diary is probably just accessible to people in the vicinity of that written diary. With an electronic diary, people within the Prime Minister's office here in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne can also see his diary and schedule.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it is not just the Prime Minister that accesses it; his whole staff can access it?

Dr Ball—Yes, that is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And it is entirely secure?

Dr Ball—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You say yes, but how do you know that? Have you had some counterintelligence on this? Have you taken it to a government agency like DSD or somewhere else to make sure it is properly protected?

Dr Ball—We have developed a threat-risk assessment for remote access to the Mobile Minister application, and DSD have seen that assessment.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is very good. That is really what I was asking—to see whether it had been done.

Senator CONROY—There is a link presumably back to the Prime Minister's office or back to the department when he is carrying around his palmtop. What is it linked to?

Dr Ball—For example, when the Prime Minister went to Turkey, his staff could dial back to our secure gateway and access the information through that.

Senator CONROY—Into his own office or into the department? Or is it a gateway to both?

Dr Ball—It is the gateway to both. We replicate to the secure gateway, so he is not accessing the actual server within the department or within his office.

Senator CONROY—Are the departments linked? We are saying that the Prime Minister cannot click on his button and check on what the ministers are doing. Presumably each department has its own link to its own minister?

Dr Ball—Yes.

Senator CONROY—Are the two departments linked—as opposed to the Prime Minister being linked to the other minister or the minister's department?

Dr Ball—No. Our Mobile Ministers are not connected between departments at all.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think mention was made that the PM does not keep track of his ministers' entitlements. Minister, why does the Prime Minister's office have to clear program 3.1 in DOFA answers before they are given to this committee?

Senator Ellison—I am not sure that the premise of your question is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It is 3.1 of DOFA.

Senator Ellison—I do not have the list in front of me.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We had a letter to our committee—Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee’s answers to questions on notice: Finance and Administration portfolio. It says:

Answers pertaining to outcome 3, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Group, including Comcar, are currently being cleared by the Office of Prime Minister and will be lodged as soon as possible.

I am wondering why the Prime Minister’s office is clearing the answers on notice for another department. I know you have got two hats on now. I am asking you about your hat as representing the Prime Minister.

Senator Ellison—I think you have to look at the question concerned. It does not necessarily mean that all MAPS questions are cleared by the Prime Minister’s office. You might tell us what that question was, because there are some—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I said ‘answers pertaining to’—not ‘answer’.

Senator Ellison—What were the questions relating to the answers?

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have not got those attached.

Senator Ellison—That might have been Comcar and the Olympics. Of course the Prime Minister’s office has a role there in relation to the Olympics. Comcar has been working with the Prime Minister’s office in relation to the Olympics. That would be a classic case where you have two departments dealing with the same subject. Of course, where you have that, you do clear answers with both departments because, obviously, one has got an input.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I would have thought the order was that you would clear it with PM&C and then you would clear it yourself.

Senator Ellison—But, again, it depends who has the prime responsibility for the issue at hand. The Olympics, again, are primarily in the Prime Minister’s domain.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It makes it look like I do not trust you.

Senator Ellison—Not at all. It is well known that Comcar has a role, albeit a very subsidiary one, in relation to the Olympics and the Olympics are the prime responsibility of the Prime Minister’s office.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The last time the PMO staff stuck their sticky fingers into these sorts of issues two of them lost their job, hence the Prime Minister’s opening of a lobbying firm a few weeks ago.

Senator Ellison—I think that what we are dealing with here is a pretty cut and dried issue of Comcar and the Olympics, as I recall that question.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You are on notice for that tomorrow in another incarnation. You might like to make sure you get that checked—whether it was just Comcar and the Olympics. You might be right. I will ask you tomorrow under general questions of DOFA. How is that—no ambush?

Senator Ellison—We are always obliged for notice.

Senator CONROY—I ask two more questions on the mobile that you have got on, Minister.

Senator Ellison—No, I do not.

Senator CONROY—You do not like being checked up on.

Senator Ellison—They know where I am. I am always in estimates.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Or Carnarvon or Broome. Do you want me to go through the full list?

Senator Ellison—I have not got around WA much. I spend most of my time with estimates lately.

Senator CONROY—You are too afraid to now.

Senator Ellison—I think if you go over the last four or five months you will find that a bit of a record.

Senator CONROY—I think there is a \$50,000 price tag put on it in the newspaper article. I wonder whether you can give us an accurate figure, as opposed to this.

Dr Ball—I may have to come back to you on that, Senator. Certainly we did not pay \$50,000 all-up for it. Again, it depends on how much of the software you use and what server you put it on.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But a paper diary is about \$20, isn't it, as a reference point? I am just a Luddite. I reckon it is technology gone mad.

Senator CONROY—It does say that they can update the Prime Minister as he stands there talking.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Not just the Prime Minister.

Dr Ball—It is more than just a paper diary. It does actually do scheduling as well. It can schedule events for the Prime Minister. He can accept those. It is all electronic.

Senator CONROY—I want to confirm that there is no central collation of the downloaded material, the paper material. You do not require ministers to supply information in writing, even if they are not linked electronically. There is no requirement to supply the information from the Mobile Minister across to—

Dr Ball—No, there isn't.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are almost finished, gentlemen. Is it possible for you to get back to us on the briefing on Job Network 2? Do we have that information available to us, just to wind that one up? Did you follow the question?

Ms Bryant—No, sorry. I was out of the room.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We did have an earlier question on when PM&C was briefed by DEWRSB about the outcome of Job Network 2.

Ms Bryant—The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was first briefed by DEWRSB on 18 November. Dr Shergold contacted the Executive Coordinator in the department, Jane Halton, on that date.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Relatively late in the piece. That rounds out the briefing picture. Who did the briefing from DEWRSB to PM&C?

Ms Bryant—Dr Shergold briefed Executive Coordinator Jane Halton.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you.

CHAIR—Senator Murray, do you have some general questions?

Senator MURRAY—Yes. Minister, I have just two brief sets, the first through you to Mr Henderson. I suspect you will have to take this on notice, Mr Henderson. The balance sheets throughout record land and buildings, but the notes to the accounts do not indicate the method of valuation. The valuation method could be historical cost, replacement cost or market value. Throughout all the balance sheets recorded in the Prime Minister's portfolio, could I be advised on notice as to the method used for valuation of buildings and whether and why it differs from common practice in large organisations in the private sector?

Mr Henderson—We may need to elaborate on notice, but in relation to the building it is the deprival valuation method. In relation to land valuation, it is current market price. I cannot read the rest of this here. Mr Crane can elaborate.

Mr Crane—I think you asked a similar question this morning of the Office of the Governor-General, and we are in the same position as they are in. The last valuation was conducted at the end of the financial year 1996-97. We have engaged the Australian Valuation Office to carry out the next valuation. As Mr Henderson said, the building is the deprival value—the depreciated current build cost—which is of course very difficult in a heritage site. The land valuation is the current market price, taking into consideration the fact that there is really no other use for the site, given that it is a heritage listed site.

Senator MURRAY—There are three points to my question. Firstly, I am looking for comparability across the whole of government as far as I can establish it. There are clear instances where it is very difficult to establish a valuation because it is not normally a commercial property and it will never go on the market—for example, the Governor-General's residence and the land surrounding. Another issue I am concerned with is that the valuations are not overconservative—in other words, they are appropriate for the times. I am particularly alert to any historical cost valuations, given the long-term nature of many of these assets. Could you explain to us how deprival value differs from replacement cost? If you wish, you can do that on notice if it is a technical question.

Mr Crane—Yes, it would be best for us to take that on notice.

Senator MURRAY—Could you be as expansive as possible in explanation. I particularly want to see in what respects valuations differ from common practice in large organisations in the private sector where it is appropriate. Obviously, with heritage buildings it might not be but with other land or buildings it might well be.

My second set of questions relate to an assessment which goes right across the outcome classifications in the Prime Minister's portfolio document. I note the quality appraisal very frequently says things like the degree of satisfaction, the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's office, the minister assisting, the departmental executive, organising committees, et cetera. In other words, the quality appraisal is, I assume, both a quantitative and a qualitative appraisal, depending on the circumstances, by large numbers of people, but there are occasions where the Prime Minister's own satisfaction is the only one recorded. Given the nature and stress of a Prime Minister's duties, I cannot really see him spending vast amounts of time ticking boxes and doing surveys to establish quality measurements. I would like a response from you as to exactly what the Prime Minister's role in all this is. Is it almost always delegated? Who, if it is delegated, has the prime responsibility for coordinating the quality assessment?

Mr Henderson—I will take that question at various levels. Clearly, the Prime Minister does give the secretary feedback on the performance of the department. You mentioned

ticking boxes. We have discussed that possibility with the Prime Minister's office and they do not want to go down that route of ticking boxes. I am aware that there was a report prepared by this committee which refers to assessments being to the minister's satisfaction. The report said: 'Invariably, this performance indicator attracted fairly scathing comment from senators.' In the case of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, our primary function is to support the Prime Minister and his office. We are not going to be ticking boxes or answering questionnaires. We would all be familiar with filling in questionnaires when we have been to a seminar or we have stayed in a hotel. Those are one-off interactions with, in those cases, the service provider or, if they are not one-off, they are not daily. But the *modus operandi* for our department is that everybody in the SES and a very significant proportion of middle management in the department are in regular ongoing contact with the Prime Minister's office; so you are regularly getting feedback.

Another situation where we can judge whether we are hitting the mark is with our briefing. There are three departmental staff in the cabinet meeting room. Quite often the No. 3 notetaker in that meeting will have been the person who prepared the brief that the Prime Minister would be using in that meeting. They can see for themselves, first of all, the use that the Prime Minister makes of that brief. They can also make an assessment of the discussion in cabinet as to whether their brief turned out to be to the point or whether it missed the plot. So there is a raft of avenues for the department to get feedback on our performance in regard to the quality. There are, as you will see in our Portfolio Budget Statement, a number of situations where we are going to measure the timeliness of our responses, but we are not going to be ticking boxes and we will be, as we always have, consulting the PMO regularly on whether the briefs that we are preparing are regarded as useful, whether they are high quality or otherwise.

Senator MURRAY—My concern is that the whole output-outcome approach is supposed to be designed for greater specificity, for greater effectiveness, to be more results oriented, to be more real-time applicable—all those sorts of statements. These appraisals attach to appropriations. Money is given for the performance of a certain function and you are appraising the quality of the outcome. The difficulty we face is the very difficulty that Senator Ray outlined earlier, that it can result in subjectivity in the sense that the perspective is internal rather than external. Let me give you an example. That is an item headed 'State occasions and guests of government'. The quality appraisal says the degree of the Prime Minister's satisfaction—nobody else's—with visits to Australia by heads of state and government and the degree of his satisfaction with arrangements of his overseas advice and advice on relevant matters. It might be, from the Prime Minister's perspective, that he would have thought it is a wow, but the public, commentators, voters at large or the parliament might have a different opinion. What I am really searching for is whether you are satisfied that in all the circumstances these quality appraisals will end up having any meaning, will be meaningful in the sense of their relationship to appropriations and value for money, if you like, and effectiveness.

Mr Henderson—We have all been for quite some years now trying to focus more on outputs and outcomes. I think the reforms that have been implemented in the last few years make us try even harder in that area. I am not sure whether you were at our last hearing, Senator, but our last annual report had a discussion of performance appraisal for policy advising.

Senator MURRAY—I read that.

Mr Henderson—To some extent you can say these matters are subjective but, if you prepared a brief for the Prime Minister in relation to a discussion in cabinet and you discover that there is a major issue that is discussed in cabinet that just was not picked up in your brief, the message is clear. You go away chastened by that experience. In some situations it might have been impossible to predict it, but in other situations you can make quite an objective assessment of the quality of your briefing: are you identifying the key points?

Senator MURRAY—Behind my questioning is this thought: this is the first time this particular methodology has been laid out. I might have missed it, but I did not see within this that you would undertake an overall appraisal by you or your officers at the end of the year to establish whether this methodology is working or whether it has the effective outcomes that people have been searching for. When you read it, on the face of it sometimes the reader will say, ‘I don’t think that is going to give you what you want.’ Is there an effectiveness appraisal planned by you and your office at the end of this process?

Mr Henderson—The situation as to the appraisals varies across the department, but there are lots of divisions within the department that have regular discussions with members of the Prime Minister’s office. It is quite customary to discuss issues that have arisen in recent weeks or months and what is coming down the pipeline. A lot of the staff in our department are supporting cabinet, parliamentary business committee, reconciliation councils and ministerial committee on government communications. The sorts of feedback situations that you can have in those can be more formal. In the instance you were talking about before, about the satisfaction of the Prime Minister with the support from the ceremonial and hospitality unit, I would have thought key clients there are foreign VIPs—guests of government—that are assisted and supported by CERHOS. They frequently give feedback to the unit and I would have to say they are usually fulsome in their praise. I have seen correspondence from visiting dignitaries. But you could institute more formal survey questionnaires in that area, I guess.

Senator MURRAY—I think you would acknowledge that you set yourself up for senators to ask you later on in estimates in, say, the year 2001 a series of questions on all these boxes and say, ‘All right, you have said the “degree of satisfaction”. What was your degree of satisfaction? Can you quantify it and can you justify it, and so on in the process that goes on?’ Would you be able to do that? Are you planning to be able to do that? Was there going to be some kind of summary against each of these?

Mr Henderson—We certainly would not be planning to quantify assessments of quality. We certainly will be quantifying the timeliness of our responses to FOI requests, questions on notice and some other elements of correspondence, for example. I understand your question, Senator. We have been casting around looking for best practice indicators in relation to quality in policy advising. The most useful document that I have seen is the one from the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria, but I do not think they are quantifying assessments of quality.

Senator MURRAY—You won’t even have a descriptive appraisal such as ‘outstanding’, ‘superior’ or ‘ordinary’?

Mr Henderson—No.

Senator MURRAY—From the perspective of the parliament which says, ‘All right, we agree to appropriate you the money to do these things,’ and you tell us that you are going to appraise it for us on this basis, the parliament will have absolutely no means of assessing your quality appraisal, in any form—qualitative, quantitative, descriptive, evaluative—none at all.

Mr Henderson—What is the model you have in mind, Senator?

Senator MURRAY—That is always the question. I would say to you that it would be a varied response. Sometimes it is appropriate to have a quantitative measure. ‘Was the food sufficient at the banquet?’ Everybody can tick yes. You get 91 yeses and nine noes and you have a quantitative response. ‘Was the food of a high standard?’ That also can be quantified or it can be qualified. The point is that the government has chosen an output-outcomes methodology with performance appraisal or an effectiveness appraisal measure, which it spells out, and how it is going to do it, which is the degree of satisfaction. As you know, degrees are a quantitative measure in themselves as a descriptive thing. My question to you is: what worth is this? These things are given to the parliament and to the people for the purpose of transparency. What benefit is this to all of us if there is no means of reporting, on whatever basis you choose, for the particular measure? If a senator comes to you in future days and says, ‘Output 3.2, ceremonial and hospitality, says the degree of the satisfaction of the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister’s office, the secretary, and departmental executive with management of the government ceremonial and hospitality services,’ would you then rhetorically say, ‘What is your model?’ Surely you would give a response in terms of how you appraise that. My question to you is: given that you say this is how you are going to measure, will you be in a position at the end of all this to give a response to each of these measures if asked in terms of the degree of satisfaction, however you choose to express it, quantitatively, qualitatively or otherwise?

Mr Henderson—With respect to satisfaction in regard to the quality of briefing, I think it will be a general response. But, if you are asking me whether the increased focus on outputs and outcomes—that framework that has come with accrual accounting and budgeting—has focused our department more on performance management and on making an additional effort to measure performance where it can be measured in terms of the timeliness of our responses to parliamentary questions, the timeliness of us handling prime ministerial correspondence, the timeliness of courier runs from the department to this House and all manner of things like that, yes, it is making us more conscious of performance. But, as to some pass, credit or high distinction for quality, no, I do not expect to be showing that to you in our next annual report. Everybody claims that their task is special, but for Centrelink, the timeliness with which they process applications for people entitled to benefits, or the implications for Job Network as to whether people are in jobs as a result of training programs, it is easier to measure outputs and outcomes in those areas.

In respect of the quality of our policy advice, I do not think that is readily amenable to quantitative measures, but that does not alter the fact that we are making extra effort to seek feedback from the Prime Minister’s office. Clearly, the secretary would be seeking feedback from the Prime Minister himself. As I have mentioned before, people can get very clear messages from the usefulness of their brief to the Prime Minister whether he is going into cabinet, whether he is going into question time, whether he is going off to a Premiers Conference, whether he is going on an overseas visit or whether he is meeting some VIP. We have no takers there. There is a series of situations in which you can get feedback.

Senator MURRAY—So in summary you are telling me that there are serious limitations in this process of appraisal if the services provided are internal as opposed to external because your client, if you want to put it that way, the Prime Minister and cabinet for instance, is not going to appraise it in the same way as would, say, Centrelink customers who would say whether they had received an appropriate response in the appropriate time and it got them a job.

Mr Henderson—I do not think there are serious limitations. I am saying that the outputs and outcomes framework that came with accrual accounting is increasing the focus of our department on performance. I am just saying that calibrating performance with regard to the quality of our briefs is not something that we will be reporting on in the same way as we will the average time we take to answer an FOI request or a parliamentary question on notice. The scope to have quantifiable performance indicators with regard to policy briefs is, I feel, just not as great as it is in some other areas. I am trying to recall the phrase you used. You suggested that it was seriously deficient. I think it is improving our performance, but we are not going to be able to measure it in the same way as people are able to in some other areas.

Senator MURRAY—I do not know if it is deficient or not at this stage. It is new and I would want to know from you at the end of a year whether this was a worthwhile format for expressing a review of outputs and outcomes in the areas in which you have responsibility. If it is not, if it is merely words and if it is merely to comply with a one-size-fits-all policy for the whole of government, then that is worthless. The purpose of this has to be that value for money is achieved by everybody concerned, eventually.

Mr Henderson—I think it is worth while. Just to quote another observation in the report of this committee in relation to performance information, it was actually a Senate official that said we needed to be very careful that performance information and reporting on it did not become an end in itself. You have referred to a whole series of boxes in our annual report. We are not going to start recording and documenting just for the sake of it. We are going to measure performance where that is integrated into our actual performance management within the department. The secretary and the executive would focus on the timeliness of individual divisions in responding to questions on notice or ministerial correspondence. We will not report publicly on the timeliness of individual units within the agency, but we will report for the department as a whole. That is an example of where our public reporting is aligned with our internal management. We are not going to create a whole edifice just for the sake of filling up the Portfolio Budget Statements. It is going to be what is relevant to managing for better performance in the department as a whole.

Senator MURRAY—From pages 20 to 26, there would be 20 to 30 boxes and a lot of them have ‘the degree of the Prime Minister’s satisfaction’ is to be established. I would agree that, as the head of the government, he does need to be satisfied. Will you actually ensure that he is satisfied on each of those?

Mr Henderson—There is a combination. The Prime Minister’s response would be general. It would apply right across the department, I would expect. There will be staff in individual areas that will be seeking feedback in regard to the work of individual divisions. But I do not envisage the Prime Minister giving ‘pass’ or otherwise marks for every unit within the agency.

Senator MURRAY—But I assume, if we said to you next year, ‘On those 20 to 30 blocks, was there any area on which dissatisfaction was expressed by any of the people referred to as the appraisers?’ you would be able to tell the committee where there had been failure in policy provision or a failure in terms of the event you were trying to manage. You would be able to apply it in the negative, wouldn’t you?

Mr Henderson—Yes. We have acknowledged, for example, in last year’s annual report that for the software we were developing for our ministerial correspondence—parliamentary correspondence management system, I think it was called—I seriously underestimated the difficulty of implementing that system. It has taken us a lot longer to implement it than estimated. It is not the sort of thing that was the first thing your read in the departmental

overview. We do not parade the balls I have dropped, but you could glean from that report that that did not go as well as I had hoped.

Senator MURRAY—So the committee would be obliged to assume that, unless in your annual report or through estimates you expressed dissatisfaction in a particular area, satisfaction applied throughout all these measures?

Mr Henderson—One of the measures of whether we are meeting the requirements of the Prime Minister—and in this particular stint I have been in the department for three prime ministers—is how much they are making use of you. You can get a clue as to whether they are finding your support helpful by how much they are making use of you. I can assure you they are keeping us busy and they always have done. But the pattern of that use varies according to the prime minister of the day.

CHAIR—That concludes general questions. Before we commence output group 1, we will have a short break.

Proceedings suspended from 4.18 p.m. to 4.42 p.m.

Outcome—Sound and well coordinated government policies, programs and decision making processes

Output Group—Economic policy advice and coordination

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are going to move on to the Olympics briefly, and I want to firstly thank the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for getting some answers into us, as promised. Mr Cook, are you the approving authority for Ms Goward's interstate travel, or does she do that of her own volition?

Mr Cook—I am the approving authority.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The visit to Melbourne on 28 and 29 February was listed as an interview on 3AK, which has a rating of about 0.1 or something, an interview on 3LO, which should now read ABC Melbourne 774—you are not allowed to call it 3LO, by the way—and interviews with leading newspapers. I am just wondering why those interviews were not done from Canberra. Most of us who need to do those sorts of shows can do so from the studio in this building.

Mr Cook—It was my view at the time that it was important for Ms Goward to have that face-to-face contact. As you would appreciate, back in February she was still building up her network of contacts and it was important for her to get to know personally the people involved.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you know how long the interview was on ABC radio 774 Melbourne—known by everyone else in Victoria as 3LO?

Mr Cook—Not offhand.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What about the visit to Melbourne on 20, 21 and 24 of January? I assume 22 and 23 January was a weekend.

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Did Ms Goward go to the tennis while she was there?

Mr Cook—On 20 and 21 January she did.

Senator ROBERT RAY—She went to the Australian Open?

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator FAULKNER—In an official capacity?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am wondering why it was necessary to have two trips to Sydney—admittedly, there are slight differences—to brief the Fairfax reporters and the News Ltd reporters. I am wondering why that was not done on the same day.

Mr Cook—Can you point me to the dates, please?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Sorry, I did mention it. The dates are 31 January and 2 February.

Mr Cook—My memory is a bit vague on that, but 31 January was a key meeting. I think it was the first major meeting she had had with News Ltd reporters. On 2 February, she went down to assist with a press launch of the recording of the national anthems by the ADF and took the opportunity to talk to the Fairfax reporters as well.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That was an add-on, if you like?

Mr Cook—As you can see by these returns, we try as far as possible to make a reasonably full day of it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There were 22 trips to Sydney in less than eight months. Is that one of the reasons why they are all transferring to Sydney for the last three months?

Mr Cook—That is correct, Senator. We expect the level of interest from journalists in Sydney to increase almost exponentially, and it would be far preferable to have the media unit on the spot.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In answer to Senator Faulkner's question, you put the total cost of the media unit at \$216,620. That is to the end of April 2000. What does the other expenditure refer to, do you know? Give us a ballpark view of that.

Mr Cook—It includes things such as development of the web site, and it includes some printing and mail-outs. I think they would be the larger of the items within that category.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You can confirm that the budgeted total cost of the Games Media Unit is \$530,000 for the current financial year?

Mr Cook—That is correct. That amount was appropriated to the Industry, Sciences and Resources portfolio.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is it expected to be fully expended, or will there be some savings?

Mr Cook—No, it will not be fully expended, in part because when we did the budget figures it was anticipated that we would have to pay for all our accommodation up-front, but we have been able to negotiate better arrangements than that. So some of the accommodation will now be paid next financial year.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it will not be expended this financial year but it will be expended in total?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In other words, that segment out of the \$530,000 is not included in the \$310,000 for the next financial year?

Mr Cook—No. But my expectation is that we will bring the total cost of the unit through the games under that total budget figure.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Of \$860,000.

Mr Cook—I think it is \$810,000, from memory.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Sorry, you could be right. How do you like the figure of \$840,000? I think we are both wrong. If it is \$530,000 and \$310,000—

Mr Cook—Sorry, Senator. Yes, you are correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We will split the difference, as they say. So it has cost us \$840,000. We mentioned it before, but this was not an advertised position?

Mr Cook—It was put out to selective tender.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And the tenderers were recommended to you? Who actually put it out? Did your unit put it out?

Mr Cook—The Department of Industry, Science and Resources let the tender, but we were consulted about the shortlist and I participated in the selection process.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Just remind us how the shortlist was established.

Mr Cook—It was based on some advice from the Government Communications Unit and on other thoughts that Industry, Science and Resources had at the time.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What were these ‘other thoughts’?

Mr Cook—We went through a process of getting some advice from the Government Communications Unit, and then I sat down with Industry, Science and Resources and we worked out a shortlist.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But the department of industry did not suggest anyone; they helped establish a short list rather than added any names in. That is what I am asking.

Mr Cook—No, I do not think they added any names in.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you went to the Government Communications Unit because they had a register of consultants?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Were all the people on the short list registered as consultants with the GCU?

Mr Cook—No, I do not think all of them were.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Was the winner, the selected person, registered?

Mr Cook—Not at that stage, not when I first talked to them; I do not think so.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That happened subsequently?

Mr Cook—I think the sequence of events was that we became aware that Ms Goward was planning to leave the service. Her qualifications and experience seemed well suited and so I asked for her to be added on to the list.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Am I right in saying that everyone else on the list came off the GCU consultants list and Ms Goward was added?

Mr Cook—I think that is correct.

Senator FAULKNER—But you asked for her to be added?

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator FAULKNER—Was that on your own initiative?

Mr Cook—Yes, I became aware that she was becoming available and I thought, based on my past knowledge of Ms Goward's media experience, that she would be a good candidate to consider.

Senator FAULKNER—How did you become aware of her availability?

Mr Cook—I am not 100 per cent sure on my memory of that, but it was mentioned to me at an SES meeting, if I remember correctly.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And the process then is that that sparks a thought in your mind and you then ring the GCU to ask for her to be added to the list?

Mr Cook—No, I did not ask them to add her to the list. I suggested to Industry, Science and Resources that we add her to the list.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So how many were on the list that came from the GCU?

Mr Cook—I think originally eight or nine—something of that order.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That sounds consistent with an operational brief. They give you eight or nine. You add one in who is not on the register. You then go through a process of establishing a short list in consultation with the department of industry?

Mr Cook—Yes, that is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Can you recall who from the department of industry would have been involved in that?

Mr Cook—Yes, at the time a fellow called Bill Rowe, who was heading their sports area. I am a bit embarrassed to say I have forgotten the other fellow who came from there.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do not be embarrassed. We all have difficulty recalling.

Mr Cook—It was 'Creed' somebody or other. His surname I cannot recall, but he came from their corporate governance area, the area that looks after their contracting processes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you have two from the department of industry, to use the short term, and you.

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you then created a short list. Can you recall of how many?

Mr Cook—Five.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it comes from eight or nine down to five.

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Did you inform Mr Rowe and his able colleague that you had added in one of these?

Mr Cook—Yes, of course.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You were not at all concerned that you eventually came up with the one name that you have added in, or is that just part of the process?

Mr Cook—No. We went to some lengths to ensure we ran a fair and appropriate process which was consistent with DISR's own internal requirements.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What were the qualities you were looking for—media experience obviously?

Mr Cook—Yes. Media experience was important, a capacity to articulate a brief was important and familiarity with issues management was important. I cannot recall all the selection criteria off the top of my head but they were put in the tender documentation at the time.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Was the ability to write hagiography not considered one of the requisites here?

Mr Cook—No. I think that is just demeaning the process. It was a fair and proper process.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The hagiography was very demeaning, let me tell you.

Senator FAULKNER—On that, can we be assured that you were not approached by a member of the Prime Minister's office or another executive in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet about Ms Goward's availability?

Mr Cook—I was not approached by anybody in the Prime Minister's office, but I became aware of Ms Goward's probable availability through another person in my department.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And you are not aware whether that person was approached by someone in the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Cook—No, I am not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In terms of the work of the media unit, looking back over the last three or four weeks, probably the biggest issue—I do not want to run judgments here—has been the torch relay in Athens. Has the media unit been involved in managing the news there?

Mr Cook—Not in managing the news. Can I just clarify that you are talking about all the events in Athens of the last several weeks?

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am not referring to the alleged snub of the Governor-General; I am referring to a controversy surrounding who would be the first Australian citizen to carry the torch, obviously enough. I am not going to ask you or intrude my own judgments on the efficacy of that or not. I am asking because it was a controversial issue. It was the most controversial issue I have seen at least this year in terms of the Olympics. Did the Games Media Unit, the one you are in charge of, have a role in managing the issue or not?

Mr Cook—Not in managing the issue. They monitored developments fairly closely and the public reaction and kept me and others briefed, but it was not our issue to manage. It was an issue purely for the International Olympic Committee and I guess to some extent SOCOG.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So there is no role for them, even though it reflects back on Australia?

Mr Cook—There is a broader role, and that goes to the broader role of the unit. We are trying to ensure as positive a treatment in the media of Australia as we can for those issues for which we are responsible and which we can do something about. But that was an issue totally outside our control and there was nothing much we could effectively do about that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But you were happy enough to launch a biography of one of the people concerned in this controversy. How is that relevant?

Mr Cook—That was done on one of Ms Goward's trips to Melbourne, if my memory serves me correctly. We took advantage of the launching because it was apparent there would be quite a large number of Olympics related media reporters there, so Ms Goward went to that to network with those reporters and again to be seen and get some profile with those reporters in her role as Commonwealth spokesperson.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There seems to be a lot of networking and not a lot of output. That is the problem.

Mr Cook—If I could address that issue—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have not asked you a question on that at the moment, but I might.

Mr Cook—Well, I think it reflects on me as a manager and on the unit.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Let us get to the reason why you were not involved in this controversy. I cannot think of anything that has impacted on Australia's Olympic image more adversely than the events in Athens. Can you nominate one? I know there have been other things that I am concerned about—the ticket controversy, et cetera—but in the last six to eight weeks surely nothing has dominated the headlines more than the torch relay events in Athens. Can you nominate something else? I may have missed it.

Mr Cook—I cannot think of anything in the last few weeks, but the line that has consistently come out of the federal government in relation to that is, 'Let's try not to get too hung up on the gaffes and let's concentrate on what the Olympics are all about,' and the thing that got the headlines was the swimming championships.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is highly commendable and it happens to be something we agree on. Nevertheless, it was worldwide; it was covered all around the world. It reflected on SOCOG, even though it was not their responsibility. It reflected on the Australian government and is not their responsibility. I concede all that. What I am asking is why there was not some sort of assistance and input from your media group. Did you just wash your hands of it?

Mr Cook—I cannot for the life of me see what we could have done in relation to that issue given that it was created by an organisation with which we have no contact and it involved a member of another organisation for which we have no direct responsibility. All we can do is put out the positive stories, which are about focusing on what the games are really about: our athletes. Fortunately, along came the swimming championships, which enabled us to build on that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was extremely positive for a week. You are telling me that your job is to focus on the positives.

Mr Cook—No, as much as possible we would like to get our positive stories across, but our job is to handle issues management from primarily a Commonwealth perspective. To the extent that we can, we are working with New South Wales and SOCOG to ensure that that

occurs. That will provide them with some assistance as well. With organisations for which we have no direct responsibility there is very little we can do.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What sort of media liaison do you do with SOCOG? What are formal relations like?

Mr Cook—There is a group within SOCOG colloquially known as Olympics Inc., which is a collection of people involved in media relations and issues management. Ms Goward has established a close relationship with them and with the various other people in SOCOG handling media issues.

Senator FAULKNER—Could the committee be provided with a copy of the press kits for rural, regional and suburban media, please?

Mr Cook—Yes, I would be delighted to table that. Could I table another press kit we have put out quite broadly as well which outlines the scope and complexity of the unit's work. It is a compilation of other departments' work, coordinated by Ms Goward and her unit. That is the one in this cover and this is the rural and regional one.

Senator FAULKNER—You indicated in relation to Ms Goward being originally considered for appointment to this position that you were approached by an officer. Was that an officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet?

Mr Cook—I did not say I was approached; I said I became aware of it through another officer.

Senator FAULKNER—You became aware of it through another officer. Was that an officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Without identifying the officer, was that a more senior officer than you?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You just identified the officer, but anyway. Just to finalise this particular area, last time we had a discussion about accommodation in Sydney and that seemed to be a bit up in the air because it had not been finalised. Has that been finalised yet?

Mr Cook—We have made progress across a whole sweep of accommodation, if you would like an update.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am looking at, firstly, accommodation for the unit itself to be relocated to Sydney.

Mr Cook—I think we have finalised the negotiations for a one-bedroom serviced apartment for the unit and we have under negotiation two other two-bedroom units for members of the unit and two other staff of the task force. In addition to that, we have completed negotiations for the hire of the Australian Graduate School of Management facility at Little Bay—that is, their entire facility. There are 71 rooms there. And there are six rooms at the Russell Hotel.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We will come back to those two later ones. You say you are now in fact having three accommodation places for the staff of the media unit, is that right?

Mr Cook—No, I said we have one one-bedroom apartment and one two-bedroom apartment for the media unit and another two-bedroom apartment for other members of the task force.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Last time we only looked at one and one, didn't we?

Mr Cook—Yes, you did not ask me about the broader accommodation requirement, as I recall.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you are basically trying to accommodate, I presume, about five people.

Mr Cook—In all, I am trying to accommodate about 115 for the period of the games.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, but we are talking about those who are going down for the three-month period now.

Senator FAULKNER—Not 115 from the media unit. I hope it has not grown to that extent.

Mr Cook—No. The three media unit people will go down mid-July and my other two officers will go down mid-August.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I presume the one-bedroom one will be taken by one of the media unit?

Mr Cook—Yes, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Two of the media unit will share the two-bedroom one?

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And then people from your task force going down will share the two-bedroom one?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do we have costs on those?

Mr Cook—I can give you indicative costs. This is just global costs, give or take a little: around \$16,000 for the one-bedroom unit, around \$25,000 for one of the two-bedroom units and around \$21,500 for the other two-bedroom unit.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think we asked before that, as accommodation is provided, none of those individuals could claim for travel allowance, could they?

Mr Cook—No, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—They could claim some sort of meal allowance component, could they?

Mr Cook—Yes, they can claim meal allowance and a small allowance for incidentals.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is fair enough. The mid-July one for \$16,000 will cover about three months. Is that what we are looking at or a bit longer?

Mr Cook—From mid-July through to about 3 November. One of the others is from mid-July to 31 October and the final one is from mid-August to 31 October.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So the middle one and the latter one are an equivalent standard. It is just that one is being rented for a shorter period.

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator Ellison—Before we move on, Senator Ray mentioned that there seemed to be a lot of networking and some lack of output. The officer concerned—although there was not a question and it was a comment—felt he needed to address that comment. I think it is only fair the officer be given that opportunity, because it was made in the context that there was a lack of output.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I did not ask him about how the fix was put in to appoint this person because that is a question to you and not him.

Senator Ellison—But this was a different issue of output. I think the officer should be given a chance to address that.

CHAIR—Yes. I think Mr Cook said that it reflected on him as a manager. Perhaps you would like to address that, Mr Cook.

Mr Cook—Thank you. I thought, in view of the interest of the committee in this matter, I should—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is this a prepared statement?

Mr Cook—I have some notes here, Senator, but I would also like to—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am not happy to have a prepared statement read into the text. The witness at the table can answer the provocative statement that I made but not read a prepared text.

Senator Ellison—They are briefs which are prepared, which a lot of officers rely on.

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is the one they tried to read into the record last time, Minister.

Senator Ellison—The committee has to realise that it can make comments, but if those comments are disparaging or there is some criticism then the officers concerned should be given an opportunity to address those.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I understand that, but I do not think by way of a prepared statement.

Senator Ellison—That just shows how prepared the officer was in guessing that this might come up as an issue. Whether or not it is prepared, the fact is that—

Senator ROBERT RAY—How long is it going to take?

Mr Cook—Only a couple of minutes. I just want to table some additional material.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Then table it.

Mr Cook—Okay. What I would like to table is a two-page summary of some of the key achievements of the media unit since its establishment in October 1998, a list of 33 interviews given by Ms Goward from when she was appointed in October through to 16 May and a list of speeches given by Ms Goward from her appointment until 18 May, including the speech to the National Press Club.

I just want to emphasise two other things. I think you will get from this and from the material I have already provided to you in response to your questions on notice a better understanding of the scope and the scale of the media unit's operations. I also wanted to draw to your attention that Ms Goward's role encompasses a security dimension and she is also providing strategic media advice to the Attorney-General and is assisting his office in that regard.

Senator FAULKNER—Now that you have raised it, let us hear about it—what is the security dimension?

Mr Cook—Ms Goward's responsibilities were broadened in about March this year to include providing some strategic media advice to the Attorney-General.

Senator FAULKNER—At whose instigation?

Mr Cook—It was really a process of consultation between the task force and the Attorney-General's Office in relation to some issues we saw arising from a national anti-terrorist exercise where we felt that the media dimension of it could be better handled, and Ms Goward's experience was very relevant there.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Was this requirement ever in the original brief for the appointment of a person to that position?

Mr Cook—It is encompassed by the generality of the original brief.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Where? Could you cite that?

Mr Cook—I previously tabled a list of Ms Goward's functions. I can provide you with another copy if you wish.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am asking you to cite where in the original brief this security aspect that was enhanced in March this year is.

Mr Cook—It does not talk about security specifically.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Doesn't it?

Mr Cook—It talks about issues management, assistance with matters and so forth generally.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it was not in the original brief?

Mr Cook—It was not excluded by the original brief.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Neither was the fact that the earth is flat. Be fair here—it was not in the original brief, was it? You cannot say that it is not because it is not excluded. What is the list of exclusions in the original brief?

Mr Henderson—All Mr Cook has indicated is that her responsibilities have been expanded. That is a quite understandable development.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am sorry, Mr Henderson, he said that it derived from the original brief and then he said it was not excluded in the original brief. I am now asking: what were the exclusions in the original brief?

Mr Cook—There are no exclusions in the original brief.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Now we have established that we can move on. There were not any exclusions in the original brief, and this particular matter was not in the original brief. I think we can establish that.

Senator FAULKNER—Is Ms Goward being paid more for her consultancy as a result of these increased responsibilities?

Mr Cook—No.

Senator FAULKNER—What is she currently being paid?

Mr Cook—She is being paid \$550 per day.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Five days a week or seven days a week?

Mr Cook—It depends on whether she works. She only gets paid for the days that she works. It is normally five days a week.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who made the decision to expand her role?

Mr Cook—As I said, it came out of discussions between the task force, the Attorney-General's Department and his office, reflecting on some of the experiences we had in a national anti-terrorist exercise.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What precisely is the enhanced role? I do not think it is security matters because this is more the media handling and PR side.

Mr Cook—I am sorry if I misled you. It is about assisting with the strategic management of national security and intelligence matters. It is about media handling.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Which is the reason why I can raise it here. If it went to other matters, of course, I would not raise it here. So this new role sort of emerged—a little after the February estimates committee this emerged as a new role?

Mr Cook—The priorities that Ms Goward and her unit attach to particular issues vary from week to week depending on what we believe to be the priorities of the day. This is obviously a very key priority and it is important that these sorts of issues are handled very well.

Senator ROBERT RAY—If it is such a key priority, why was it not considered in October-November last year?

Mr Cook—When we first set up the media unit, because we have not done this before, we did not really prescribe the boundaries of the task. It really was a question of trying to develop the role of the unit depending on the issues before us.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I cannot understand how you can appoint someone not having prescribed the duties. How can you evaluate someone's quality if you have not properly prescribed the duties?

Mr Cook—We have. As I said, we have tabled the list of duties from Ms Goward's contract, which are quite extensive.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Except this was not one of them. This may have tipped the balance for one of the others on the short list—or the long list that became the short list.

Mr Cook—No, it would not, because Ms Goward's duties are described in generic terms. They do not talk about issues as such.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What was the date on which this amended list of duties came out?

Mr Cook—We have not amended her duties.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What have you done—added to the responsibility, given her a new task? What way do you want to describe it?

Mr Cook—We have asked her to perform this additional function as part of her duties.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It is an additional function?

Mr Cook—Yes. It is because of her particular relationship to the Attorney-General in this area.

Senator FAULKNER—Or because of the pressure about workload?

Mr Cook—No. Ms Goward works closely with other ministers on other issues as well.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What other issues?

Mr Cook—The Drugs in Sport Summit last November, where she took a substantial role in assisting with the media management of that event.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you want to nominate some other issues that she is working with ministers on?

Mr Cook—She has also been looking more recently at indigenous issues.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Are these all related to the Olympics or is it just a sort of *carte blanche* brief to roam?

Mr Cook—They are related to the Olympics. Drugs in sport is one of the hottest topics in the Olympics, and in terms of our international reputation overseas no-one would argue that indigenous issues are not very important in that context.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Have you some other examples where she is working with ministers?

Mr Cook—She has also been doing quite a lot of work on the Defence side of things in terms of our media strategy, explaining to the public the role of the ADF.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So the \$20 million being spent over in Defence on these sorts of matters was not sufficient; they cannot handle it?

Mr Cook—No, that is not the case. I think the best term I can probably use is that the media unit is designed to leverage off the synergies across the entire sweep of Commonwealth activities and, therefore, we get a better result if we approach it from a whole of government perspective.

Senator FAULKNER—What is this thing you have just tabled called? I am sorry, I just do not know its name.

Mr Cook—It is just a whole of government media kit. And here are the other documents which go with that.

Senator FAULKNER—It is a whole of government media kit. Does it include anything on drugs in sport.

Mr Cook—I cannot recall the precise content.

Senator FAULKNER—I think the answer is no, because I have looked through it. Does it include anything on indigenous Australians?

Mr Cook—I am not sure. I should have looked through.

Senator FAULKNER—The answer is no, because I have looked through it.

Mr Henderson—Ms Goward is employed as the head of the Games Media Unit— just like the head of our Social Policy Division will focus their resources, whether it is education and training or employment or social security issues. What are the hot topics of the day? You move according to where the issues of the day are. It is just like the media advisers in the Prime Minister's office. Your topics will vary as to what are the issues in the Olympics area. The issues Mr Cook has been talking about are issues in respect of the Olympic Games. It has been recognised from early on that security would be one of the significant issues.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The issues go right out there—then suddenly a line comes down. When the most controversial issue hits the plane, suddenly there is no activity. The torch relay is an integral part of it.

Mr Henderson—Mr Cook has made it clear that that is not something of direct responsibility to the Commonwealth. It evidently was something of direct responsibility to the Minister for the Olympics in the New South Wales government, because it seems to have become evident in the press that he was advising the person concerned to adopt a different approach. He took it as his responsibility. It is not something that Mr Cook or Ms Goward were directly responsible for. But there are a very substantial number of issues that the Commonwealth is directly involved in with the Olympics.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are getting additional responsibilities. I am just wondering why this was not made an additional responsibility.

Mr Henderson—We are describing a situation where the media adviser moves to where the issues of the day are for the Commonwealth. The first Australian to carry the torch was not part of Mr Cook's responsibility or the Commonwealth's responsibility. It appears as though it was something of direct concern to the New South Wales Minister for the Olympics.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, he had a dip on it. It was not his responsibility either. It is not SOCOG's responsibility. That was quite clear. It was not organised by SOCOG. SOCOG did not have a say in it.

Senator Ellison—Certainly the Commonwealth did not have a say in it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is the point I am making. Others got in and tried to sort it out.

Senator FAULKNER—I suspect the Greek Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee have more direct influence than others. I think you would acknowledge that that is the case.

Senator Ellison—I think Mr Henderson said that you can only take responsibility for those things you can control. You can only do things when you have control over things. In this particular instance, the Commonwealth did not have any control. Drugs in sport is something where the Commonwealth definitely does have some degree of—

Senator FAULKNER—If it is so important, why isn't it in this big glossy document that has been tabled?

Senator Ellison—It may be that the matter was covered at that sport summit in November last year.

Senator FAULKNER—That is not an answer to the question.

Senator Ellison—It is.

Senator FAULKNER—What we have had is a massive self-justification for Ms Goward over the production of this material. Frankly, anybody could collect all this stuff—I have just been looking at it—from AQIS, the Australia Council, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, DFAT, the Australian Tourist Commission, the Australian Federal Police. I am not knocking it. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs—who is this from? I see it is from the Sydney Airports Corporation Ltd. Who is this from? It looks like the Bureau of Meteorology. Anyone could stick these together in a big glossy folder and table it at an estimates committee

as part of a justification of Ms Goward's salary and the appointment process. Who was the senior officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that recommended Ms Goward to you, Mr Cook?

Senator Ellison—I think that, for a start, the evidence of Mr Cook was that no-one recommended Ms Goward to him. Simply, he was advised that Ms Goward was leaving her current position, or her then position. Let us get that straight.

Senator FAULKNER—Who was it?

Senator Ellison—The next thing is that it is unfair to expect an official to name an official in these circumstances. He has given the evidence that it was someone from PM&C and that person simply drew to his attention the fact that Ms Goward was changing employment.

Senator FAULKNER—I am sorry. Everyone else drawn from the list of candidates comes from the usual source provided by the GCU, but not Ms Goward. So I am asking—

Senator Ellison—She was not available to be included on the register because she had gainful employment at the time the register was in existence.

Senator FAULKNER—She got the job.

Senator Ellison—She then terminated her employment and was available. That happens from time to time. It is not unusual that people do become available and that they are not on particular registers or tender lists. There is nothing inappropriate in someone being included who has become available.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Just like DDB Needham.

Senator Ellison—What Mr Cook has said is that he was simply advised of the situation. There was no recommendation.

Senator FAULKNER—And I am asking who by.

Senator Ellison—I think, Mr Chairman, that the practice in estimates committees in these situations has been to recognise that it is unfair to expect an official to name another official.

Senator FAULKNER—We know that it was a more senior officer in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. If this estimates committee was not being turned into a forum to try and justify Ms Goward's role and her function, it might be a different matter.

Senator Ellison—There have been questions asked about it and questions are being answered.

Senator FAULKNER—It appears to be a situation where, if answers are to be provided to questions that are not asked, this is a question that is being asked and asked seriously. So who was it?

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, I think that is an unfair question.

Senator FAULKNER—You are trying to cover up, are you?

Senator Ellison—No. He has told you that he has been told by an official, a senior, we understand, in PM&C. The identity of that person advances the matter no further.

Senator FAULKNER—But you are trying to cover it up.

Senator Ellison—No, there is no cover-up. He has already given his evidence. It is there.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There is no confidentiality here. If someone had actually given him advice rather than mentioned it, then you would start to have a case. We have asked the

question, ‘Was the PM’s office involved?’ and we believe Mr Cook absolutely when he says, no, it was not involved with him. But, if someone else has mentioned it to him, we may want to pursue that further to make sure that the PMO has not tried to influence events through the back door. That is why we are asking for the name of the officer that mentioned it to Mr Cook.

Senator Ellison—The evidence you have from Mr Cook is that there was no influence, there was no advice; it was simply him being informed that Ms Goward was now available—and she was not previously.

Mr Henderson—The other evidence that Mr Cook has given that seems to be being overlooked at the moment is that due process was served in the selection. You are talking about how the list was made up. Mr Cook was on a panel that belonged to another department and he has indicated that due process was served in the merit selection process. That is where the focus should be, and he has indicated that those processes were completed.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Mr Henderson, there could have been 20 other very well qualified people who were not on the GCU list and who did not get a crack at this job because some other senior officer never thought to mention them to Mr Cook. Therefore we want to know who mentioned it to Mr Cook so, if necessary, we can make sure that it was not set up from somewhere else. There is nothing confidential about it.

Senator Ellison—I think the committee has Mr Cook’s evidence, which is quite clear, and what the committee is saying is that you obviously do not believe him.

Senator FAULKNER—There is no problem with Mr Cook’s evidence; it is just that you are covering up. Mr Cook has provided answers to the questions that have been asked. I am just asking another question now.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It is amazing, Minister, how often short lists get drawn up in this government and how you can bet every time when a name is added that is going to be the winner. Every time it has happened in this government, be it electoral commissioners, DDB Needham or anyone else, I can always bet who is going to win.

Senator Ellison—You are wrong on electoral commissioners because there has been no name.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Or deputy electoral commissioners then. I apologise, I withdraw: deputy electoral commissioners.

Senator Ellison—I dispute that in any event.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You were not there for that fix; you were involved in the next one.

Senator Ellison—There was no fix in relation to the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Come off it!

Senator Ellison—That was a proper process, and you will have a chance tomorrow to explore that if you want to, Senator Ray. I think, Mr Chairman, we have really reached a stage where the evidence is before the committee and that in the circumstances there is no advancement in knowing the identify of the officer concerned.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are saying there is. We want to establish it to make sure. We believe Mr Cook was not approached by the Prime Minister’s office—we trust his answer

implicitly, absolutely—but someone else has suggested to him that someone is available. For all I know, the PMO has got on to them and said, ‘Why don’t you suggest to Mr Cook that so-and-so would be good for this position’ or ‘available for a position,’ not specifically this one; they may not have even known that. We would like to know that.

Senator Ellison—But it is quite open for Mr Cook, who might discover by any means that someone is available, to then say to the department, ‘Look, there is someone else who is qualified and available,’ and the means by which he comes across that—he could have read it in the paper or he could have been told by someone in the Prime Minister’s office—

Senator FAULKNER—But he did not; he was told by a senior officer of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. You just don’t get it, do you?

Senator Ellison—No, there is no influence whatsoever.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How do you know?

Senator Ellison—Because he said that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, I am sorry.

Senator Ellison—He has said that. Mr Cook has said that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am sorry, but let us take it back to square one. There could have been, theoretically, 20 very well qualified people, some up in the press gallery, who could have done as good a job as, or a better job than, Ms Goward. But she gets added to a short list or a long list that becomes a short list because someone else has said she is free. Whether that was for that specific job or just for general information, she is free. All the others come off the register. You set up the process, you go to the GCU register, you get the eight consultants for the long list and then one gets added in.

Senator FAULKNER—And they land the job.

Senator ROBERT RAY—They get within the list of five and then they get the job.

Senator Ellison—Senator Ray, it is quite normal that people get added to lists who might not be available when the register is drawn up. There is a situation that has to be recognised, that people have other jobs and so they are not on the register.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are talking about the Prime Minister’s co-biographer here. We are talking about one of the inside establishment people.

Senator Ellison—Ms Goward is regarded very highly in media circles.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I regard her highly for the job she did on the status of women.

Senator Ellison—She has vast experience, particularly for this job.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But I like due process, and I want to know who nominated her or who suggested it, to make sure that the trail does not lead back down the road where it always has for these inside fixes.

Senator Ellison—The point that has been made by Mr Henderson says it all. There was a proper process which was followed. On what you are saying, that process would have to be flawed. Mr Cook has said that there was due process followed in the tendering process, because that long list was reduced to a short list.

Senator ROBERT RAY—If you do not understand, Minister, the concept of selective tendering is based on a database. No-one wants open tendering and advertising for everything

because of the enervating costs. You go to a database and get someone to pull out the long list, from which other people like Mr Cook can make a short list. That is the whole idea of that sort of selective tendering. But it is not dobbing another name in to it, especially the one that wins. Can't you see that?

Senator Ellison—That list can be added to if other people become available. How do you know that list is up to date? It does require updating, and that means other people can be added.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So what you do is find out how they became available and who said they became available. There could have been 15 people come available by that time, but you know of only one because another senior officer of PM&C has informed Mr Cook.

Senator Ellison—Mr Cook has given clear evidence that due process was followed in reducing that long list to a short list.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am sorry, selective tendering is about going off a particular list somewhere. Everyone does it in government. You have used the GCU one. You have added one person in and they have got up. There could have been another five added in. If Mr Cook had a wider circle of acquaintances, he may have found out about another five. What we want to know is whether the person who told him about the availability had been approached by anyone else. You cannot answer that, and we cannot ask questions about it because you will not tell us the name. There is no confidentiality, there is no advice to government here. It is part of the bureaucratic process that is normally answered at estimates.

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, I think we have taken this as far as we can.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you are refusing to answer.

Senator FAULKNER—You are covering up.

Senator Ellison—No, we are not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Of course you are.

Senator Ellison—The evidence of Mr Cook speaks for itself.

Senator FAULKNER—His evidence does. You are covering up.

Senator Ellison—The practice is that we do not require officials to name other officials—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Of course we do.

Senator Ellison—In this instance it does not advance the matter—

Senator ROBERT RAY—How do you know?

Senator Ellison—Senator Ray, you have got Mr Cook's evidence, which says very clearly that there was a list. He was informed—not influenced or cajoled or anything but informed—that Ms Goward, highly qualified and experienced, had become available. She was not on the list because previously she had another job.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Let me ask Mr Cook this question: what steps did you take to find out who else might be available? You found one, mentioned to you by a colleague. I think I know the name of the colleague, but I will not put it down here. Having discovered one, how do you know there were not a few other nuggets out there?

Mr Cook—When we gathered together as a committee to go through the short-listing process, we also discussed whether there were other people that other members of the committee were aware of, and people were happy with the list we had.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am asking you what steps you took to find out if there were other people outside the GCU database.

Mr Cook—Only by asking my colleagues in Industry, Science and Resources.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But they would not have a clue. They are not in that department. You have gone to a unit within your own department and asked for a long list. Have I got it right?

Mr Cook—That is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And then you have added one name in because a colleague has mentioned that that person is available. I am asking you what other steps you took to find out whether any other media genius had become available. Did you take any other steps, other than ask your Industry colleagues?

Mr Cook—No, that was the process. I then asked them whether they had other people they thought should be added to the list, and they were happy with what we had.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No doubt about that.

Senator FAULKNER—Is Ms Goward's name now on the register with the GCU?

Mr Cook—I do not know.

Senator FAULKNER—Does anyone know?

Mr Henderson—Mr Williams would be able to inform you.

Senator FAULKNER—He is there; maybe we could ask him.

Mr Henderson—Mr Cook took the obvious step for a longstanding industry policy and economic adviser. He went to the GCU in the department. That is the obvious place to go to develop a list. You are asking him what other steps he took. He took the one obvious step in terms of the expertise available in our portfolio.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Can you name one other occasion where you have gone to the GCU for the appointment of media people?

Mr Henderson—For media people?

Senator ROBERT RAY—This is a media liaison job. It is not an advertising job. It is not a master agency job.

Mr Henderson—I cannot think of another occasion.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But you just said that they dealt in this area and they had a lot of experience in it.

Mr Henderson—For an officer with Mr Cook's background in our department, within the department the obvious place to go to for advice is the Government Communications Unit.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Wouldn't it have been more obvious to go to a headhunting firm? You do it on other occasions, I am sure. Why wouldn't you have gone to the professionals in this instance? Basically, the GCU does not deal with media officers, does it?

Mr Henderson—One of the reasons you would go to the GCU is value for money—something you would be asking us about. From Mr Cook's point of view, their advice is available free.

Senator ROBERT RAY—How many people with media training are on the—

Mr Henderson—And issues management is an issue—

Senator FAULKNER—But does the GCU have a register dealing with such matters?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Or is it just consultants generally?

Mr Henderson—Mr Williams can help us if you want.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes. Maybe he could help us.

Senator Ellison—We will be reaching that later.

Senator FAULKNER—No. We are dealing with it now.

Senator Ellison—We are not saying that we cannot answer those questions, because we can.

Senator FAULKNER—Will you answer the question then?

Senator Ellison—But the fact is that it goes into detail of the GCU, and we will take them on notice and deal with them when the GCU officials are called.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you are not willing to call them now to assist— you refuse to?

Senator FAULKNER—You are covering up again.

Senator Ellison—No, we are not. I said they are coming and they are going to give evidence.

Senator FAULKNER—Get them up here now. He is just at the back of the room. Don't be ridiculous. The reason we have had this impasse is this absurd—

Senator Ellison—The Government Communications Unit might not be here. Perhaps only Mr Williams is here. It is normal for the officials when they are giving evidence to have present colleagues dealing with the same area.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you know that for a fact?

Senator Ellison—I am presuming that they are not here yet because they are due later.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is that true?

Senator Ellison—I will check.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Go on.

Senator Ellison—Perhaps you could ask some other questions while that check is made.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We heard evidence earlier that Ms Goward went to the Australian Tennis Open. Could I have a list of what other sporting events members of the media unit have attended? I would like to exempt Olympic qualifying trials from that question, because I think it is an obvious thing to go to. I do not want to know whether they went to the swimming trials last week. But could I have a list of other sporting events?

Mr Cook—I cannot provide that off the top of my head.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, of course not. Would you like to take it on notice?

Mr Cook—I could take it on notice. She may have gone to one at Stadium Australia, but I would need to double-check that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When the first questions were asked on the output of the spokesperson—and you were helpful in tabling information—about three radio interviews had been done prior to the issue being raised in estimates committees. Is that right? There was one on 15 January, one on 20 January and one on 3 January. There could even be four, but I am not so sure about the interview with TV China.

Mr Cook—I cannot recall the time of the first estimates committee at which this came up. But I think at that time there were five or—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think it was 7 February. And I am talking about electronic media.

Mr Cook—On that list of interviews, you will see that by that date there were three radio interviews, plus the overseas television interview, and the rest were print interviews.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So since then—probably not because of the estimates committee—there have been 12 electronic ones?

Mr Cook—I have not broken them down into electronics versus print.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have. But, given our adding up earlier on on the accommodation thing, I do not want you to hold me to it. Will we split the difference? There seems to be a bigger lift in productivity post-estimates committee here.

Mr Cook—No, I think it reflects the fact that, before you get into an operation of this type, it takes some time to establish the contacts, do your planning and get things organised. There is a certain amount of lead time involved in this exercise. A lot of Ms Goward's early time was focused very much on the drugs in sport exercise, which absorbed a lot of her time in the early weeks of the unit.

Senator Ellison—Although not all the officials from the GCU are here, Mr Williams has indicated that he feels confident that he can answer questions.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am sure he can.

Senator Ellison—He is available now. Despite it not being at that point in time when GCU is to give evidence, we will ask Mr Williams to come forward.

CHAIR—Thank you, Minister; the committee appreciates it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The question is: is Ms Goward on your register?

Mr Williams—The answer is no.

Senator ROBERT RAY—On how many occasions have you been asked to recommend a short list for a media liaison job?

Mr Williams—This would be the only occasion that I have been approached.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you. We will save any other questions for later.

Senator FAULKNER—Finally on this matter, can you now provide the committee, Mr Cook, with the name of the PM&C officer who mentioned Ms Goward's availability?

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, we will take that question on notice.

CHAIR—That concludes questions for output group 1, and there are no questions on output group 2, social policy advice and coordination—excluding the Office of Indigenous Policy and, of course, the Office of the Status of Women.

Senator Ellison—We said that would happen tonight. Is that right, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—Yes, it is tonight.

[5.44 p.m.]

Output group 3—International policy advice and coordination

Senator ROBERT RAY—I want to keep up my batting average—I always ask about the VIP fleet, as International Division is always consulted. Has a final decision been made on that yet?

Mr Henderson—Can I give you an answer after dinner on that? That is something that Mr Cole would help me on. There is no specific information on where they are at.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Can we move to some CERHOS issues? Can we deal with those now? Is that possible?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Does Mr Cole deal with CHOGM? Can I just be clear about this so I understand where we are going?

Mr Henderson—With regard to CHOGM, I will try to take some of your questions. Mr Craft and his offsider are actually in Brisbane today.

Senator FAULKNER—I am asking whether it is worth waiting until Mr Cole is available.

Mr Henderson—On CHOGM?

Senator FAULKNER—Yes.

Mr Henderson—No, probably not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Could I ask whether CERHOS was responsible for organising the East Timor lunch on Tuesday, 7 March?

Ms Logan—With regard to the luncheon to which you refer, the Department of Defence had the prime carriage of it with CERHOS giving advice as necessary. They used our database to send out their invitations, for instance, and took some advice on a seating plan.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who paid for the lunch?

Ms Logan—I understand the Department of Defence did.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Really?

Ms Logan—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Why didn't CERHOS pay for it, Minister?

Ms Logan—It was because we were only offering advice. The Prime Minister—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Sorry, I said 'Minister' at the end of my question because this is more a political question. I am still sliding the question to the minister as to why the Department of Defence—

Senator Ellison—I am not aware of the detail of that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I will just make it clear that some questions are for ministers only. I think you were concentrating on it.

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, I will have to take that one on notice.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am interested, Minister, in why the Department of Defence would pay for this lunch when CERHOS and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet pay for others. Can Mr Henderson help you here?

Mr Henderson—In relation to this particular case, I cannot advance the situation. Ms Logan has suggested that CERHOS had an advisory role. I cannot elaborate, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think overwhelmingly people thought this was not only a CERHOS organised one in cooperation with Defence but that the government had paid for it, not the Department of Defence. The government normally pay for these lunches for visiting dignitaries or big events, don't they?

Mr Henderson—Yes, they do.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I just cannot work out why the Department of Defence, given their stringent financial position, have been stuck with a bill for feeding 600 people.

Mr Henderson—We will take that on notice.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I will probably ask a colleague to follow up the costs in another estimates committee and give them notice of that. Ms Logan, you talk about the assistance that you gave Defence. Now we know it is primarily their function. Was the question ever raised as to why Major General Peter Cosgrove's spouse was not invited to the function?

Ms Logan—I am afraid I cannot speak about detail. I simply know this was an activity going on in the office. I was primarily engaged on the royal visit, so I cannot speak in detail about it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So who else have you brought to the estimates committee today?

Mr Henderson—Mr Bagley is on leave. He is the director of CERHOS.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who were these other people that were involved in the organisation, given that you were tied up with the royal tour?

Ms Logan—Other ceremonial and hospitality officers.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes. Who are they?

Ms Logan—My colleagues—the officers who normally arrange the ceremonial and hospitality luncheons and dinners.

Mr Henderson—We can take on notice the question as to why General Cosgrove's wife was not invited.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am trying to establish whether it is more appropriate that this be directed towards Defence or PM&C. But as CERHOS has had some advisory role, I thought they may know.

Mr Henderson—It should be obvious to you that none of us at the table is across the detail on this.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is obvious. It does not make me happy.

Mr Henderson—I can understand that. We have taken on notice the two issues you have raised. What more can we do?

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not want to suggest something publicly. Could I ask a more general question. You might be able to help me with this. It is not restricted to this function, but on average there are four or five CERHOS functions at Parliament House to which, generously, most MPs are invited. If an MP declines, is there a wait list, where their spot is given to someone else?

Ms Logan—No, there is not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—On occasions I have declined and so have colleagues. They have always assumed someone would really enjoy going and taking their place. That is not the case?

Ms Logan—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Why is that? Is it because you do not want it to look like it is a second round offer?

Ms Logan—The invitation is for that particular person and the particular office they hold.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You have taken on notice why on this occasion it was paid for by the Department of Defence and you have taken on notice any role CERHOS may have had in the appropriateness of invitations vis-a-vis the failure to invite Major General Cosgrove's spouse.

Ms Logan—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—In relation to the role you did play with the seating, you indicated you advised Defence on that issue at this particular function. Do you know if your advice was accepted? Basically, did CERHOS organise the seating for Defence?

Ms Logan—No. I do not know to what extent the advice was accepted.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Well, I have got to ask the big question: who was responsible for seating Mr Max Moore-Wilton next to Senator Faulkner for the lunch? I have got to ask: who was responsible? Now, own up.

Ms Logan—There again, we will need to investigate that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Are you sure it has not been investigated already?

Senator FAULKNER—Mr Moore-Wilton and I both had a very enjoyable lunch, I can assure you.

Mr Henderson—I am pleased to hear that.

Senator FAULKNER—Well, I did and I think he did.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So there has been no investigation so far. Okay.

Mr Henderson—The outcome seems to have been satisfactory, so do we need to?

Senator FAULKNER—You might have to check with Mr Moore-Wilton but, from my point of view, it was all right.

Senator Ellison—I am sure we would have heard if he had not enjoyed it.

Mr Henderson—So there is no need for us to take that one on notice; is that right?

Senator FAULKNER—No. I suspect that might have been tongue in cheek from Senator Ray.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You say you were busy organising the royal tour. I notice on Friday 19 May in the *Courier-Mail* and in the *Herald Sun* an article by Mr Michael McKinnon. I do not even know whether I am allowed to ask this. Do I take it that Mr McKinnon had an FOI request in for certain documents around this?

Mr Henderson—Yes, he did.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You are able to disclose that, are you? I was not certain of that. I think he has, virtually, in his article.

Mr Henderson—We did provide him with information in respect of the royal tour.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think he says in here that documents obtained by the *Herald Sun* show that the Queen's itinerary for the March tour was not formally checked with Buckingham Palace. I find that hard to believe. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Henderson—It is hard to believe. Senator, I am at a loss as to whether to rate this article as more misleading than Mobile Minister. It probably is. That statement is not accurate. We were asked for the rationale as to why the Queen visited certain places. What was not explained to him, which we might have, I guess, were the processes involved in managing a royal visit and the itinerary.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What were those processes? Would you now like to put it on the record?

Mr Henderson—They were the same as in the past. Often you start with the premise that it would be nice for the Queen to visit every state and territory. It turned out not to be feasible. She did not visit South Australia or Queensland. She did not visit South Australia because on her previous visit she attended South Australia. Queensland was not on the itinerary because she will be going there for CHOGM. Having determined which jurisdictions she would be visiting, the practice is that you invite the premiers or chief ministers to make suggestions as to where she should visit, and that was done. The itinerary that she followed was closely in line with the suggestions from those ministers. For example, Victoria was suggesting that she visit Ballarat. Premier Carr was suggesting—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Ballarat—two per cent. Thank you.

Mr Henderson—That was in response to suggestions from that jurisdiction. Similarly, the visit to Bourke reflected the suggestions of Premier Carr. In that regard the process was just a traditional one.

Senator FAULKNER—I am not clear whether this was prior to the new government in Victoria being elected. It must have been.

Mr Henderson—Some of the correspondence was from the relevant official in Victoria for the reason that they were either in caretaker mode or in the immediate aftermath of the election, you might say—processes were in limbo. I am not quite sure.

Senator FAULKNER—I was not sure myself: I wondered. That is why I raised it. But there is correspondence from Victoria, is there?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—And that is from an official.

Mr Henderson—One of the items of correspondence from Victoria was from an official. I am not sure whether I have read all the correspondence.

Senator FAULKNER—There is correspondence and there is correspondence from New South Wales.

Mr Henderson—Yes. There is an invitation from the Prime Minister to all jurisdictions, as is the practice for all such visits. I have explained why a couple of jurisdictions were not included on the itinerary.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Past and future.

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The article goes on to say:

Senior Canberra based bureaucrats, who would not be named, were puzzled and angry that normal protocol on longstanding practices were apparently ignored.

Was there any change this time to previous visit organisations that would justify that statement?

Mr Henderson—No. Having read the article, I discussed with likely people whether they could explain such a statement. I do not know on what basis the article makes that assertion.

Senator FAULKNER—Are you denying that there were details of the trip organised in telephonic conference calls?

Mr Henderson—What do you mean ‘denying’? There were lots of consultations, as there normally are in developing these. Senator Ray raised the question about a particular senior unnamed officer being disgruntled, or whatever the word he used was.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was bureaucrats—with an ‘s’.

Senator FAULKNER—I am just trying to get to the bottom of what the bureaucrat was allegedly puzzled and angry about. Longstanding practices were apparently ignored. The article talks about government sources indicating that there are a lot of details of the trips organised via conference calls. That might be standard operating procedure for all I know. That is what I was just asking.

Mr Henderson—I do not have precise information about conference calls but the processes in terms of finalising the itinerary were standard practice.

Senator FAULKNER—There could have been conference phone calls then?

Mr Henderson—There could have been, yes.

Senator FAULKNER—But we do not know.

Mr Henderson—I have not pursued that point. The particular point that I have checked is that they did not take account of standard procedure of inviting premiers and chief ministers to make suggestions as to the itinerary within individual jurisdictions. That was all standard. I have asked for an explanation as to what might have prompted the observation that a senior bureaucrat—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Bureaucrats.

Mr Henderson—that senior bureaucrats were dissatisfied with the process. Of that, I can find no explanation, and no support for that claim.

Senator FAULKNER—Do you know whether there are records of phone hook-ups on this matter, on the planning?

Ms Logan—I am unaware of any phone hook-ups. Certainly there were many phone calls between all the agencies which needed to be kept informed.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There is some sort of implication in the articles that it might have been a bit of a marginal seats tour. If premiers from a different party are now involved, they would both have a mutual self-interest to go into marginal seat territory, wouldn't they? Ballarat is marginal federal Liberal and it is also marginal state Labor. So they could both have a conjunction of view that they might get benefit out of it. I am not saying that that is the case, but at least it coincides, does it not? You are saying that federal and state both have an input.

Mr Henderson—That is an observation.

Senator Ellison—I do not think Mr Henderson can comment on that. I think you have made the point.

Senator ROBERT RAY—He has commented on the article fairly vigorously. The Queen did not do any doorknocking while she was in marginal seat territory, I take it?

Senator Ellison—It does seem that she is a drawcard with the voters.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Really.

Senator FAULKNER—Who was the FOI officer for your department on this matter?

Mr Henderson—I am not sure that the person who signed off was the decision maker in this case. I will check on that. Mr Macgill can help you.

Mr Macgill—The decision maker was Roger Bagley, the head of CERHOS. The decision was conveyed by the FOI coordinator.

Senator FAULKNER—Fair enough. I assume, from the article that Senator Ray is referring to, that there is some request about the planning in rural and regional Australia and that documents pertaining to that have been asked to be provided under FOI, in broad terms. This is an assumption on my part. Is that a reasonable question for me to ask?

Mr Macgill—I think the article actually says that the newspaper asked for documents advising of the reasons and rationale for the focus on visiting rural and regional Australia by the head of state during her recent visit.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes.

Mr Macgill—The article also goes on to say that two documents were provided in response to that element of the request. They were both press releases, I think, from the Prime Minister. That was because Mr Bagley could not find any documents advising of the reasons or rationale for the focus of the visit being on rural and regional Australia. Because of the process Mr Henderson has outlined, those documents which he was referring to do not explain why the Victorian and New South Wales governments, for example, wanted the Queen to visit those particular areas. They did not advise the reasons or rationale, so there were no documents in existence which satisfied the journalist's request.

Senator FAULKNER—So what the journalist has reported in this regard is accurate as far as it goes. That is what he is saying, isn't it?

Mr Henderson—The press releases were attached to our answer. To quote from the Prime Minister's release of 23 February this year referring to the royal couple:

Their program has been arranged so that The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh can meet people in remote areas of Australia as well as in the cities, and to enable them to see the many and varied contributions that people from all walks of life make to the nation.

So it was quite transparent that the government was hoping and intending that they would not confine their trip to the capital cities. That was seen as the nearest to the rationale. It was quite explicit that they wanted them to go to the regions. What we have added today is to explain that we were acting on the advice of premiers and chief ministers.

Senator FAULKNER—Can I ask you to take a question on notice in relation to this. I would appreciate an answer to it, instead of spending a great deal more time on it today. Could the department take on notice a question which goes to explain briefly what the PM&C processes were in relation to the planning for the Queen's trip and the process involved in effectively bringing Buckingham Palace into the loop, to use the vernacular. That might be a useful start. Also, in relation to Government House, the interface with Government House as well as the palace on those matters. I briefly touched on this with the Office of the Governor-General this morning. I think that might be a sensible way of progressing it, Mr Henderson. We can have a look at those responses, appreciating that whatever might be a response to an FOI that we do not have access to is always difficult to deal with.

Mr Henderson—We will take that on notice. I just want to confirm that you did say a brief description of those processes, and it is basically the responsibilities of the palace and PM&C, CERHOS in particular. The palace is not in the loop; they are party to the finalisation of these—

Senator FAULKNER—I am sorry, I was using—

Mr Henderson—I wanted to say that they are very much part of the process of finalising these. We can provide a very succinct description confirming that it is basically business as usual.

Senator FAULKNER—If you feel there has been some inaccuracy in some of the public material on this, it might be useful to have an answer to a question on notice.

Mr Henderson—We will take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—But could you also let us know the extent of the engagement and involvement of the Prime Minister's office, how that works in terms of these processes also.

Mr Henderson—Right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—On CHOGM, there is \$16 million listed in budget measures for CHOGM. Is it anticipated that that \$16 million is going to be spent before 1 July 2001?

Mr Henderson—Are you in the portfolio budget statement there?

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have as much chance of running a four-minute mile as being able to understand that.

Senator FAULKNER—It is \$16.4 million in two years.

Mr Henderson—In 2000 and 2001 there is a departmental appropriation of \$13.9 million. In fact a substantial proportion of that will be transferred to other agencies, as I recall. Maybe Mr d'Angelo can help us.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Just to short circuit this so you know where I am coming from, I am asking: are you going to spend \$16 million this upcoming financial year, for which the appropriation is made, and what is likely to be the expenditure the following time, so we can have a concept of what CHOGM is going to cost?

Mr Henderson—The estimate is that we are going to spend \$16.1 million this financial year but I am making the point that some of that appropriation—

Senator ROBERT RAY—is going to security and other matters. I understand that. But is it going to be spent?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Okay. Have we a rough idea of how much the following year?

Mr d'Angelo—In fact, it is a similar amount in both years. It is disclosed in the budget measures page of the PBS. It is about \$16.4 million.

Senator FAULKNER—In both years?

Mr d'Angelo—That is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—For a total cost of 32 million?

Mr d'Angelo—Yes, 32.8—that is correct.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Okay. It was mentioned that someone was in Brisbane today. Is that on CHOGM business?

Mr Henderson—Yes. Mr Craft.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Was he the one that helped us last time?

Mr Henderson—Yes, he was.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is the date still set for 1 October 2001?

Mr Henderson—Can I take that on notice? I think that when we were last pursuing the CHOGM issue the precise date had not been settled.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It just stuck in my mind for some reason. Okay, take it on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—Would it be possible to get on notice an actual disaggregation of the \$32.8 million without any detail of the security apart from a dollar figure?

Mr Henderson—Yes, we can take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—Obviously, I do not think we require detail of the security measures but a dollar figure would be useful.

Mr Henderson—We can take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—Is there a Commonwealth protocol or are there guidelines for services and facilities that are provided by host countries?

Mr Henderson—You will recall that when we discussed this at some length in February, I think, Mr Craft outlined how there was a Commonwealth secretariat group taking stock of the outcome of the most recent one and developing guidelines, or perhaps that is a bit too detailed.

Senator FAULKNER—I said protocol but guidelines and protocols are the same thing.

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Is there something either existing or new?

Mr Henderson—I will have to take that on notice. I do not think there is a manual as such, no.

Senator FAULKNER—If there is something, it would be interesting to hear about it.

Mr Henderson—As for the level of detail I am talking about, you will recall Mr Craft was making points about, as I understand, frustrations at the last meeting over the time spent getting from the conference centre to the retreat.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes.

Mr Henderson—They are the sorts of things that I have in mind.

Senator FAULKNER—If there is such a thing as a Commonwealth protocol—or guidelines, whatever—and it would be possible to provide it, that would be helpful, so if you could take that on notice.

Mr Henderson—All right.

Senator FAULKNER—Is Australia expected to bear the costs of visiting heads of government in CHOGM?

Mr Henderson—I am advised that that it is our responsibility, yes.

Senator FAULKNER—And the Queen?

Mr Henderson—I would expect so. We will have to take that on notice as well to confirm the general arrangements.

Senator FAULKNER—What about the costs of recent CHOGMs? I wonder if the Commonwealth has looked at this at all and would be able to provide any general advice on this.

Mr Henderson—What is the question, Senator?

Senator FAULKNER—Is there any information about the costs of recent CHOGMs to host countries?

Mr Henderson—I will have to take that on notice. I would be surprised if there were.

Senator FAULKNER—I would be surprised if there weren't. I was wondering whether you based some of your own budget estimates on some of the previous experiences.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It would be cheaper, would it not, to have it in Australia? In a couple of these cases they built specific resorts for CHOGM, didn't they?

Mr Henderson—I am batting outside my area of expertise here. Mr Craft has been to numerous CHOGMs. We can get him to review the *Hansard* transcript and give you an answer.

Senator FAULKNER—We would not want you to slash outside the off-stump, so we will move on. In relation to Mr Howard's Australia Week trip, I wondered—

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was the trade and investment mission.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, the trade and investment mission. I wondered what the status was of the plans to go from the UK to officially open Australia day.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We have done that.

Senator FAULKNER—You have done Australia day and Hanover?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—Excellent. I had better read the transcript if that is the case.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We did not do over Hanover, someone else did.

Senator FAULKNER—Who did that?

Senator ROBERT RAY—The Prime Minister has cancelled.

Senator FAULKNER—Could I ask about the involvement of indigenous Australians in the Australia Week trip? Is there any?

Mr Henderson—I will just have to check. I think really that would be better addressed to DCITA and to the secretariat for the national—

Senator FAULKNER—I do not think so. I would have thought this was something—

Mr Henderson—We have been giving details in respect of the party going and the estimated cost. We tabled earlier this morning a press release detailing the Prime Minister's itinerary.

Senator FAULKNER—I read that in the papers this morning.

Mr Henderson—They are where our responsibilities are focused.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Of the 54 that are going, are there any indigenous Australians that we know of?

Mr Henderson—I am not aware of that. I will just have to check with my colleagues.

Senator FAULKNER—Wouldn't the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have some policy in relation to this in terms of its appropriateness, given the nature of the Australia Week trip?

Mr Henderson—Mr McGauran is being advised on these issues by the secretariat and by the chief executive officer, Mr Eggleton; the chairman of the council, Archbishop Hollingworth; and the deputy chair of the council, Mr Rodney Cavalier.

Senator FAULKNER—They are advising Mr McGauran, but surely the Prime Minister would have a view on the appropriateness of this, wouldn't he? Or the department would. We have had a great long list of people who are going, but I have not heard of much, if any, involvement of our indigenous community in this trip at all. You cannot help us there? I am disappointed if you do not know.

Mr Henderson—We are not responsible for those aspects of this trip.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The Prime Minister is ultimately responsible. We heard that he is the ultimate approving officer, isn't he? So it might be a question better directed to Senator Ellison. Minister, you have 54 berths there and you cannot find one for indigenous Australians.

Senator Ellison—I do not have them here in front of me, so I will take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—I am pretty disappointed that no-one actually knows this. We know that there are none in the 54, but do we know whether there are any plans for any people from our indigenous communities, any Aboriginal people, to accompany the Australia Week delegation?

Mr Macgill—There is some indigenous involvement in the cultural program that is part of Australia Week. I think we tabled that. I am not sure whether it is the same document I am reading from. On 2 May, I think we tabled a program.

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, I know about that. I am talking about involvement in the official delegation. I am not talking about the arts festival.

Mr Macgill—I think that the composition of the official delegation—which, as you know, comprises former prime ministers, the Speaker, the President, et cetera—would have made it difficult to have had any indigenous involvement.

Senator FAULKNER—Why?

Mr Macgill—Because there have been no indigenous former prime ministers.

Senator FAULKNER—I am well aware of that, but do not think for one minute that the blooming thing is limited to former prime ministers. You have got 54 berths. Perhaps one of the Prime Minister's staff could stay behind and an indigenous Australian could go on the trip.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Drop one sleazy spin doctor and send someone else.

Senator FAULKNER—They are not all former prime ministers. There are a couple of former prime ministers going, as we all know.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We do not expect you to make policy print-outs on some of this—I think that is a bit unfair. I just draw your attention to the fact that every deceased prime minister—apart from Mr Cook—has an electorate named after him. If you also look at those electorate names, you will find that there are about 10 or 15 indigenous electorate names around Australia, which shows the sort of balance. We are taking at least three ex-prime ministers over, Minister. I am wondering why the Prime Minister—who does control all this ultimately; sure, he gets advice—has not rectified this particular matter.

Senator Ellison—As I understand it, there is a committee which is involved in this and has some control.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I did not realise they ran the Prime Minister. I thought it would be the other way around, but maybe you do things differently.

Senator FAULKNER—The committee is not running the Prime Minister's delegation of 54 people.

Senator Ellison—Mr Cavalier—as no doubt you would know, Senator Faulkner—is involved in this.

Senator FAULKNER—I know him well. I know he is involved in it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And Mr Eggleton.

Senator Ellison—And it is a good cross-section of people to be advising the Prime Minister on this.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So he just accepts their advice blindly, does he? 'Oh, that has come from them'—tick.

Senator Ellison—As I have said, I will get to you the details on those people who are going and I take the question on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—Why didn't you accept their advice on the Federation Fund issue, if that is the case? That was ignored.

Senator Ellison—I think that is another estimates committee question, Mr Chairman.

Senator FAULKNER—It just shows the inconsistency and the preposterous nature of the position that you are putting forward. I am asking why there is no indigenous representation on the Prime Minister's 54-strong delegation. Is it still 54-strong?

Senator ROBERT RAY—I have got no additions.

Senator FAULKNER—That is my question: why are there no indigenous Australians in the Australia Week delegation to the UK? Does anybody know?

Senator Ellison—We have said that we are taking that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—Does anybody care?

Mr Macgill—There are at least three elements of the cultural program which are indigenous related.

Senator FAULKNER—I know about the cultural program. I am asking about the official delegation. I am asking about the 54 people that are being squired by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and I think the answer is there is no indigenous involvement.

CHAIR—It has been taken on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—The answer is there is none, because we know who the 54 are. Why do you need to take it on notice? You know who the 54 are.

Senator Ellison—If you did, why did you ask the question?

Senator FAULKNER—You tell me.

Senator Ellison—You are the one asking the question.

Senator FAULKNER—You are taking it on notice. Why are you taking it on notice?

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you can put the facts on the table and then you could be asked to explain them. That is why you are asked the question. You know that.

Senator Ellison—The question has been taken on notice. The identities of the 54 people have been the subject of previous questioning and that was taken on notice. The identities have not been revealed because it is a matter of notice.

Mr Henderson—I can give you a correction in respect of the East Timor luncheon: \$45,000 was paid from the Guest of Government Program.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is good news.

Mr Henderson—You were asking for a disaggregation of our funding in our portfolio budget statement in relation to CHOGM. For the budget year 2000-01 it is \$16.4 million; PM&C \$8.8 million; AFP \$2.2 million; ASIO \$2.6 million; PSCC \$0.4 million; Queensland Police \$2.4 million. In the subsequent year it is a similar total of \$16.4 million; PM&C \$8.4 million; AFP \$1.2 million; ASIO \$2.8 million; PSCC \$1.4 million; Queensland Police \$2.6 million.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Getting back to the lunch, you say \$45,000 has been paid for by government hospitality. Was that the totality of the costs?

Mr Henderson—I will have to check.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We know how much PM&C through its agencies put in—that was \$45,000. You might like to check whether that was the totality of the cost or whether Defence paid for part of it.

Mr Henderson—There is just one other point in relation to the East Timor lunch. You raised the question of Mrs Cosgrove. She was invited to attend that lunch.

Senator ROBERT RAY—There was never a correction made in this regard. I think there were two newspaper articles on this.

Senator FAULKNER—There were at least two. It got quite a media focus, so I am surprised to hear that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am glad to hear that she was invited, firstly, because I think it was appropriate. I am disappointed that the claims in at least two newspaper articles in this regard were never corrected by anyone. That is why I asked the question.

Mr Henderson—Are you expecting the Ombudsman and PSMPC to be called this evening?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Mr Henderson, would you prefer we bring on the Inspector General, the Ombudsman and the Public Service Commissioner first? Would that suit your purposes better?

Mr Henderson—If you would not expect them to take very long. What are the curfew rules now, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR—About 11 p.m., I think is the informal agreement.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We cannot have the Ombudsman tonight or this round.

Senator FAULKNER—If we do that, then on the basis that we might have to ask some questions in the supplementary round—

Senator ROBERT RAY—I will put a question on notice now: is the Ombudsman satisfied with his budget for this year? That will trigger it, if we have to follow it through at a later date.

Senator Ellison—At the supplementary.

CHAIR—I will just confirm that it is Output group 4 after the dinner break and then the Office of Status of Women.

Proceedings suspended from 6.33 p.m. to 7.47 p.m.

[7.47 p.m.]

Output Group 4—Support Services for Government Operations

Mr Henderson—I have answers on topics we were discussing earlier today. We were to confirm whether the CERHOS contribution of \$45,000 towards the East Timor luncheon was the total financial contribution. The answer is yes, Defence did provide personnel, but there were no other direct financial costs. The question from Senator Ray with regard to whether a decision has been made in regard to the VIP fleet: the answer is: no decision has been made at this point.

Finally, there were a series of observations regarding indigenous representation or attendance at the London July celebrations of the Centenary of Federation. We have provided earlier advice of an estimate of 54 people attending that event. Five of those people are members of the National Council for the Centenary of Federation. One of those five is Mr

Richard Walley OAM, who is a Commonwealth nominee on that council and an indigenous person.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you for those answers. I was earlier critical when I heard evidence that Defence had been made to pay for the dinner, but it was based on PM&C evidence at that stage. I am no longer critical of that, but it was based on that answer given.

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you for getting those answers so promptly. I take it there is no sign of an answer on the Office of the Status of Women, the status of commuting backwards and forwards and the estimated costs?

Mr Henderson—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Could I ask with regard to allowances to former Governors-General why there has been a 15 per cent increase in this item proposed for the next financial year?

Mr Henderson—One of the factors is that there was a delay in the initial adjustment. I do not know whether it is the correct phrase, but there are back allowances incorporated in our estimate for this year. In other words, the percentage increase that you see there is significantly higher than the actual increase in the allowances.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, I do not need any further information in that case, if that is the reason. In terms of what is generally known as the theft of an antique table, has this matter been finalised in the ACT Magistrate's Court?

Mr Henderson—No, Senator, it is still sub judice. We are expecting the judge to make a decision this Friday.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you. I do not think this part is covered by sub judice. Has the table been found yet?

Mr Henderson—No, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And that table was intended for use by the former Governor-General, Mr Hayden?

Mr Henderson—No, Senator, that was another item. It was a microwave oven that was destined for the former Governor-General. I am hesitating because I am not sure where the line on sub judice comes in.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am trying to be careful on that. Do we know where the table was destined for? We know where it was not destined for. We know it was not destined for the secretary's office; that has been canvassed strongly in the press. Or was it not destined for anywhere? Did it just disappear?

Mr Henderson—It was not destined to go anywhere really. It was going to stay in our departmental offices.

Senator ROBERT RAY—If you read the articles, I think the conjunction was that both were going to go to Mr Hayden. It was just running together in the press article. Thank you for that. We touched on this earlier in the day. I do not know if it is more appropriate here. What are the limits in terms of ministers receiving gifts? What is the monetary limit?

Ms Belcher—A gift may be retained by the recipient if its value does not exceed \$500 if it is received from an official or government source, or \$200 from a private or industry source.

If the gift is assessed as being above those amounts, then the recipient can retain the gift if he or she pays the difference between the value and that \$500 or \$200.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Since the Howard government was sworn in in March 1996, how many gifts have been handed back into PM&C because they were over the limit and not repurchased by the minister concerned?

Ms Belcher—I am sorry, Senator, it is CERHOS that actually values gifts. I do not have that information; I would need to take it on notice on their behalf.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The question is, just to make it very precise: how many gifts by ministers in the life of the Howard government have been handed back in to PM&C because they were deemed to be over the value? There may have been some gifts handed in below the value for other reasons, so we do not want to know those. Also, how many of the gifts so handed in were repurchased by the minister outright, given the conditions that you have outlined as a policy in this regard? In how many current cases has the government agreed to meet the legal expenses of ministers as a result of their official duties?

Ms Belcher—I do not think there have been any cases since the last tabling. Are you looking for a total number for this government?

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, I do not think that would be very good; the total amount of current cases in which there has been some comfort given in terms of legal expenses to ministers performing their official duties.

Mr Macgill—I do not think there are any which have not been tabled yet. I do not think there are any cases outstanding where an approval for legal assistance has been given which has not been tabled, so I am not sure exactly what the number of current cases are.

Ms Belcher—We have got the list most recently tabled, but we might need to check which ones of those have been completed.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I was interested in the total amount of those still current.

Mr Macgill—The total dollar amount?

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, the total of cases and who it involves. I am not interested in the dollar amount at this stage.

Ms Belcher—We would need to check which of these ones are still current, I am afraid, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I do not know if you can answer this then: in all of those cases was the decision made by cabinet?

Mr Macgill—No, the decision was made by the Attorney-General in consultation with the minister for finance and the Prime Minister, and it might be better if the questions were, in fact, addressed to the Attorney-General's portfolio.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, I obviously have not caught up with the change of policy where they were always once done by cabinet.

Mr Macgill—I do not recall them ever being all decided by cabinet. Certainly now the rule is that cabinet makes a decision if one of the three ministers—that is, the Attorney-General, the Prime Minister or the Minister for Finance and Administration—is the minister seeking assistance. But, in other cases, if another minister is seeking assistance, the decision is made by the Attorney-General after consultations with Prime Minister and the minister for finance.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Okay, so that is the methodology that is used?

Mr Macgill—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, I will go on and ask, not in individual cases, but what the total costs are that have been incurred so far by the Howard government in this way? In other words, I do not want it disaggregated per minister, but what the total legal costs have been through such assistance?

Mr Macgill—I think that is a question that should be addressed to the Attorney-General's portfolio, because the Prime Minister would be consulted before much in the way of legal costs has been incurred. So we would not really have much of an idea, except when the Attorney-General tables material in the parliament, how much has been incurred.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I am sure you will pass the question on because, as you know, the policy with misdirected questions on notice is that the department they are misdirected to passes them on to the other department. So do you want to cut out the middleman and pass it on for me?

Mr Macgill—We could certainly seek the information for you from the Attorney-General's.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you, that will be great. That is all on that topic.

Senator FAULKNER—Could you let us know please, Mr Henderson, when Mr McClintock will be coming on board as head of the cabinet policy unit, what the precise date of his taking up the reins is?

Mr Henderson—Yes, the appointment is effective from 10 July 2000.

Senator FAULKNER—Thank you. It is still a MOP(S) Act job?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Was it advertised?

Mr Henderson—No, it was an appointment by the Prime Minister.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is the salary level?

Mr Henderson—As with Mr L'Estrange, you were advised that is a band 3 level. In terms of Australian Public Service categories he is in band 3.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What is the salary level encompassed in band 3, minimum to maximum, so we can have a rough idea?

Mr Henderson—I would have to say that in the AWA world I am not aware of an APS band as such. But the APS survey would suggest somewhere between \$130,000 and \$160,000. That is what the APS survey would indicate.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And the rest of the conditions of this appointment would comply with the MOP(S) Act, not the Public Service—

Mr Henderson—That is right. The appointment quite explicitly follows the arrangement for Mr L'Estrange but it is a MOP(S) Act appointment, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—With MOP(S) Act conditions?

Mr Henderson—That is my understanding, yes.

Senator FAULKNER—I read in a newspaper, I think, that Mr McClintock was moving from Sydney to Canberra: would he be entitled to removal costs or an allowance for that?

Mr Henderson—Mr McClintock will be employed under the MOP(S) Act. If it was an APS appointment and we appointed anybody from a graduate to a senior person they get removal expenses, but I would have to take that on notice unless Ms Belcher can help us. It is really an issue, I guess, for DOFA.

Senator FAULKNER—It depends, obviously, where his home base would be, to some extent.

Mr Henderson—He will be moving to Canberra.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Has Mr McClintock completed all the necessary assurances as to conflict of interest?

Ms Belcher—Senator, he will be making such statements if he has not already done so.

Senator FAULKNER—Who are they lodged with, in Mr McClintock's case as head of the cabinet policy unit?

Ms Belcher—I believe it would be with the Prime Minister.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it would be there that he would indicate whether he still holds a position or shares in Ashton Mining. He would do that in that declaration?

Ms Belcher—That is my understanding.

Senator ROBERT RAY—These days is the cabinet policy unit listed under the staff of the Prime Minister when we ask you or DOFA for all the staff positions? Is it listed there with the staff of the Prime Minister?

Ms Belcher—I am not sure, Senator, whether it is listed under DOFA or the PM. They are certainly employed by the Prime Minister.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I just thought that one stage in the early days they were listed under prime ministerial staff and when it blew out they were separated off and classified somewhere else in those things, but I am not sure. We do not know?

Ms Belcher—Certainly, in the material that DOFA puts out they are on a separate sheet from the Prime Minister's office but it is made clear that they are employed by the Prime Minister.

Senator FAULKNER—Do we know if the role has changed at all from the one that Mr L'Estrange had, or is it an identical role and function?

Mr Henderson—Mr McClintock will perform a similar range of duties to those undertaken by Mr L'Estrange, and that point was explained in the press release the Prime Minister issued on 15 May.

Senator FAULKNER—Is similar identical?

Mr Henderson—It is getting into semantics.

Senator FAULKNER—It is either the same job or a different job.

Mr Henderson—It is the same job.

Senator FAULKNER—Who is the number one note taker in Cabinet?

Mr Henderson—Mr McClintock will become the number one note taker. He is the secretary.

Senator FAULKNER—Who is currently the number one note taker?

Mr Henderson—Mr L'Estrange's last day on the job was last Friday, and Mr McClintock commences on 10 July 2000.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Will Mr Max Moore-Wilton get higher duties allowance?

Mr Henderson—I would not expect so.

Senator FAULKNER—Who was the number one note taker in Cabinet prior to last Friday?

Mr Henderson—Mr L'Estrange.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I missed the press release on Mr McClintock's appointment. I do not know how far it went into his background. Minister, which Liberal pre-selection did he lose in the 1980s? Was it Wentworth or the Senate—I cannot remember?

Senator Ellison—I am not aware of his background.

Senator FAULKNER—I can help you with that; it was the Senate.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I was not being smart; I could not remember it. It was Senator Bishop who defeated him?

Senator FAULKNER—No, it was actually Senator Tierney, I think you will find. I try to keep a finger on the pulse of the Liberal pre-selections, but you know it is a little hard.

Senator Ellison—I know the feeling.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Chairman, can you assist.

CHAIR—Senator Tierney is my bench mate, and I know him well.

Senator FAULKNER—You would know that he defeated Mr McClintock.

CHAIR—I do not know that.

Senator FAULKNER—My recollection is that it was on Senator Peter Baume's retirement.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That was not in the press release?

Mr Henderson—No, Senator.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Did the press release refer to his distinguished career as a Vice-President of the New South Wales branch of the Liberal Party?

Mr Henderson—No, the press release refers to his experience in government. It says:

Includes two and a half years as the Prime Minister's senior private secretary when the Prime Minister was the Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, Minister for Special Trade Negotiations and the Treasurer.

Senator FAULKNER—And it attaches a CV, does it not?

Mr Henderson—Yes it does.

Senator FAULKNER—And the only mention of any vaguely political role, apart from the one you mentioned—as senior private secretary to the Hon. John Howard—is as Federal

President to the Australian Universities Liberal Federation, which is like a youthful activity. More recent activities appear to have been forgotten.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Be fair, Minister; you would not want to mention on your CV that you were the Vice-President of the New South Wales branch of the Liberal Party, would you?

Senator FAULKNER—Would you be more likely to mention the fact that Senator Tierney defeated you in a pre-selection ballot?

Senator Ellison—I think the Federal President of the Australian Universities Liberal Federation is a worthy position. As an old student politician myself—

Senator FAULKNER—Why is that mentioned and not the more recent higher level political involvement?

Mr Henderson—Senator I think the points you are raising are relevant to why he is employed under the MOP(S) Act.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are trying to find one member of the New South Wales Liberal Party that has not been appointed by this government, to be honest. It is very hard, very hard. Most of them, I know, are over the age of 65 and therefore not liable for appointment, but if you are under 65 and a member of the New South Wales Liberal Party you have to find a position somewhere. But neither his vice-presidency nor his pre-selection are mentioned in the press release—let us get back to the question.

Senator Ellison—It identifies him as having an involvement with the Liberal Party.

Senator FAULKNER—That is true.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The Liberal Party is much more obsessed with curriculum vitae than the Labor Party, and that is why I wondered about the omissions. They have in fact bowled over a couple of candidates for errors on their curriculum vitae in the past. Who else is in the Cabinet policy unit now?

Mr Henderson—One support staff.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is all that is left?

Mr Henderson—That has been the case for some time since Mr Stephens departed.

Senator FAULKNER—Since Mr Moore-Wilton won the battle?

Mr Henderson—No, that has nothing to do with it. I have explained that at length.

Senator FAULKNER—I was not satisfied with that explanation, Mr Henderson; I really was not.

Mr Henderson—Anything to do with it, Senator. We explained that at length.

Senator FAULKNER—I was not satisfied with that explanation Mr Henderson, I really was not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Is there any possibility Mr McClintock might apply to move back over to PM&C? He might have a more amicable discussion on rent, do you think?

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, that is something that Mr Henderson cannot answer as to what might happen in the future.

CHAIR—Mr Henderson has been very patient, I think, in the last few minutes.

Senator FAULKNER—So do we know if Mr McClintock as head of the cabinet policy unit would be able to maintain his position as a director of Ashton Mining. I think Senator Ray asked this, but would a resignation from that position be required? Can someone advise me on the situation?

Ms Belcher—No, that is not something I could advise you on.

Senator FAULKNER—But given that he is employed under the MOP(S) Act, who would know that?

Ms Belcher—I am not sure anyone would know at this stage—not at the table anyway.

Senator FAULKNER—If he is employed under the MOP(S) Act, is a pecuniary interest declaration required?

Ms Belcher—Yes, ministerial staff under the MOP(S) Act are required to make declarations.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Because they are employed under section 3 rather than section 4 of the MOP(S) Act—is that right, because there are two?

Ms Belcher—Yes, that is right.

Senator FAULKNER—So how do we find someone who is the number one note taker in the cabinet who might, let us say hypothetically, have a position as director of a mining company? If a resources issue was being discussed or debated in cabinet and the note taker was present taking notes of such a discussion, can you advise me, Mr Henderson, about what would be required in that circumstance, or is a declaration of the interest adequate?

Mr Henderson—I will have to take advice, Senator.

Ms Belcher—We would need to take advice on that, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER—I am a bit surprised to hear that. I thought that would have been something that, given PM&C's interest in these matters, you would have a clear understanding of?

Ms Belcher—As the announcement was made just last week I do not have any further details at this stage.

Senator FAULKNER—I am speaking more generally; I am not talking about Mr McClintock. I am alluding to that obviously, but I am talking more generally about the situation of the note taker. We understand what is required in relation to ministers at the table themselves. I think that is understood and appreciated on this side of the table and, I have no doubt, on your side of the table too. What I am asking now is whether there is any guidance available to those who are the official note takers at cabinet meetings. It is actually a substantive point. I may go later to Mr McClintock's situation but I am not asking specifically about that; I am asking about general guidance.

Ms Belcher—I am not aware of any guidance that goes to note takers other than the advice that all public servants receive about ensuring that they avoid conflicts of interest and declare potential conflict if it arises. In relation to Mr McClintock I think that at this stage all I can say is that it is a matter for the Prime Minister and Mr McClintock to discuss between now and the appointment.

Senator FAULKNER—But what does 'declare a conflict if it arises' mean?

Ms Belcher—It could mean that if a person were taking part in a decision making process and had a private interest that that would be declared.

Senator FAULKNER—But, with respect, the note taker is not participating in the decision making process. They are not ministers.

Ms Belcher—No, that is right.

Senator FAULKNER—They are recording the decisions of ministers—I think that is a better way of putting it. That is fair, isn't it, Mr Henderson?

Mr Henderson—Yes, that is perfectly fair. The issue you raise, Senator, is recognised and it will be addressed. The point you are making is perfectly relevant. He is recording other people's decisions, and there are procedures for ministers—

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, I am drawing a distinction between participating in and recording them—precisely. I wondered if there was any PM&C guidance in relation to this particular matter, in other words, the role of a note taker, which is a very significant one—I think we would all accept that in terms of cabinet operations in our system of government, frankly. I think you are saying to me there is not any guidance but I would be surprised if in 99 years this issue has not emerged at some point?

Mr Henderson—We cannot take rules off the shelf. That is what we are saying. For example, I know that when I was in industry policy division there were questions about factor F, it used to be called, and I declared at the bottom of the brief that I actually held shares in a company that probably would have benefited from that scheme. So there are procedures to follow, and I am sure they will be followed in this case. You are suggesting it is a little bit different from the usual, and it is, but the fundamental principles will still apply. We can let you know what is worked out in due course.

Senator FAULKNER—Did I read somewhere that Mr McClintock was a director of FAI Insurance? I know I did not read it in Mr Howard's material—I do not think I did; I might have.

Mr Henderson—No, it does not appear in the attachment to the press release.

Senator FAULKNER—So he could not be a director of that if it does not appear?

Mr Henderson—That is a reasonable conclusion.

Senator FAULKNER—All right, so he is not a director of FAI Insurance. However, he is a director of Tower Life. Again, you have this situation about what protections might exist currently or will be put in place to ensure integrity of process and no conflicts. But who is going to work this out with Mr McClintock?

Mr Henderson—In the final analysis, the Prime Minister would.

Senator FAULKNER—That does not make me feel very confident. So it is the Prime Minister who is going to sort this situation out with Mr McClintock?

Mr Henderson—He may well take advice but it would be his responsibility in the finish to tick off on the arrangements. As I said, we recognise the issue. He will take up the position on 10 July. We will have to address this issue in the meantime.

Senator FAULKNER—Where was this press release and attachment curriculum vitae drafted?

Mr Henderson—PM&C staff were not involved in the preparation of this press release.

Senator FAULKNER—Is that a way of saying you do not know?

Mr Henderson—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—I notice from the CV, however accurate it might be—and it appears it might have a few flaws already exposed—

Mr Henderson—Which ones are we talking about?

Senator FAULKNER—I was not going to go back on this but I must say to you that I am not convinced about the evidence I heard about FAI Insurance.

Mr Henderson—We will take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—I heard you say that he was not a director and it was not there. I took it at face value. I am not convinced.

Senator Ellison—He said it was not there.

Mr Henderson—I said it was not identified in this list. We will take it on notice as to whether he is a director of FAI.

Senator FAULKNER—I think Senator Ray ran an Atlantean bus through Mr McClintock's Liberal Party background but, anyway, those are the sorts of issues I was referring to, Minister.

Senator Ellison—If there are any other points, we can take them on notice—if there are any other aspects you want to put to us. You have mentioned two.

Senator FAULKNER—I am just continuing my questioning, if you do not mind.

Senator Ellison—I wanted to see if you wanted them taken on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—I am hopeful that not you perhaps but at least officers at the table might be able to answer some of the questions. There is the issue, of course, of Mr McClintock's recent position on the board of Plutonic Resources. That changed its name earlier this year, I think, to Homestake Mining Co. I read in Mr Howard's press release that Mr McClintock was a director and chairman of a finance committee of Homestake Mining Co. Is that accurate? Is that the current situation?

Ms Belcher—All we know is what is in this press release with the attached CV. We are happy to take on notice any questions about any omissions that you might think have occurred.

Senator FAULKNER—I checked the ASIC records here, and it says that he ceased to be a director of Homestake Mining Co. Australia Limited. I did not know if that was the same company or not. Does anyone know? I am sure it could not be possible that Mr Howard would have made a mistake, so there must be some explanation.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It could be the same home page.

Senator FAULKNER—It is possible.

Mr Henderson—We will check that point as well.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Minister, we might be assisted by Mr O'Neill on the honours and awards as a follow-up.

Senator MURRAY—I would just like to conclude on Mr McClintock, if I may. I might have missed it earlier, but in any appointment to the head of cabinet office, are there criteria laid down and published?

Senator FAULKNER—Yes, you have to be a mate of Mr Howard's.

Senator Ellison—I believe we could leave the officials or me to answer that, as the case may be.

Mr Henderson—The responsibilities of the cabinet policy unit are repeated in here, as I recall. But it is an appointment by the Prime Minister.

Senator MURRAY—So in previous appointments over previous administrations—and I think you said you had served on three administrations—there have never been criteria laid down, just the duties, never personal criteria laid down?

Mr Henderson—Not that I am aware of. You said three jurisdictions?

Senator MURRAY—I thought you said you had been under three administrations.

Mr Henderson—I had, yes. I do not recall a situation like this current situation, and I think it was Bunting who was the cabinet secretary under John Gorton when Sir Lennox Hewitt was the secretary of the department.

Senator MURRAY—There have never been criteria laid down, personal criteria?

Ms Belcher—Mr L'Estrange was the first head of the cabinet policy unit. It did not exist in previous administrations.

Senator MURRAY—In the selection process, did the Prime Minister call for considerations of a short list of candidates?

Mr Henderson—No. The department was advised of this appointment.

Senator MURRAY—Are you saying in shorthand that it is an appointment of patronage?

Mr Henderson—We are not saying that. It is an appointment which is not dissimilar to a number of MOP(S) Act appointments, is it?

Senator MURRAY—I would have thought that if it was an appointment based on merit, even if the Prime Minister would rightly have the final say, that throughout the public sector you would search for the best candidates and you would select out of a short list. If you do not have criteria, if you do not have a short list, if you do not ask for submissions as to what the appointment must be, it is then quite plainly a patronage appointment. There is no other complexion that you could put on it.

Mr Henderson—To start with, he has a very strong CV. He is highly qualified.

Senator MURRAY—I am not questioning the man's ability; I am questioning the appointment process. I will leave it at that, Mr Chairman.

Senator ROBERT RAY—If Tierney beat him, he must be—

Mr Henderson—He was appointed directly by the Prime Minister, and there is nothing more to offer in that regard. But is this any different to the appointment of a chief of staff? He is supporting the Prime Minister as Secretary of Cabinet and is also assisting the Prime Minister in a number of issues in the prime ministership. We have previously indicated—

Senator FAULKNER—The note taking role, yes—

Mr Henderson—for example, that Mr L'Estrange used to support the Prime Minister through contributing to some of his speeches.

Senator MURRAY—The fact that it may not be different, Mr Henderson, does not mean that it is necessarily right. You are assuming that I support the existing process such as it is,

and I am merely indicating to you the shortcomings that I believe are there and I do not resile for one minute from the right that the Prime Minister has to select the ultimate candidate. That is perfectly proper. My question is whether the criteria are spelt out, whether the appointment is made on independent and meritorious grounds and whether the field of candidates includes everyone would could rightly be considered as quality candidates available for the job. You would surely concede that Mr McClintock is not the only person in Australia with the capabilities, even as strong a candidate as he obviously is. That is all I am putting to you as an alternative view.

I have one last question on this matter. Note taking in the cabinet is a very serious and important task both in terms of current events and future records. What experience does Mr McClintock have in such activities and, if he has none, what training will be given to him to ensure that he does not behave like an amateur in such a task?

Mr Henderson—For starters, he is a lawyer so he should be familiar with precision in drafting. The second point would be that I think boards of directors have something in common with cabinets, namely, they both deliberate on substantive issues and both become frustrated if note takers or secretaries to boards of directors, in the jargon, have creative decision writing—in other words, start writing decisions that reflect perhaps what they hoped was the outcome as distinct from what was discussed by the board of directors or cabinet. So, as a member of a board of directors, he is familiar with the sorts of issues that arise in preparing well-crafted minutes.

Senator MURRAY—Are you telling me that Mr McClintock has been a note taker on those companies?

Mr Henderson—No, but he is familiar with the frustrations that can arise for members of boards and for ministers—namely, the note takers need to faithfully record the discussion and the decisions of the members of the board.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Henderson, I have sat on boards and I would not say that that qualifies me as a note taker for a cabinet meeting.

Mr Henderson—No, but it would be relevant experience, would you acknowledge?

Senator MURRAY—Yes it certainly is of assistance. I am not suggesting he will not be competent; I am merely asking whether in coming into a new job he is given special training and guidance as to what is required. He has never been a cabinet secretary before.

Mr Henderson—I know he has had discussions with Mr L'Estrange. He will have the support of Mr Vo-Van here, the assistant secretary in charge of the Cabinet Secretariat. He has got a publicly available cabinet handbook which is very detailed in the processes for cabinet. So he will have a lot of support. As I said, he has got his legal training, his board of directors experience and very capable support from the department.

Senator MURRAY—I will leave it at that, Mr Chairman.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Mr O'Neill, you were here this morning, I noticed, looking intently as we asked some questions of the Governor-General's Office and we foreshadowed we would ask you some. So could we go through these questions fairly quickly. Who initiated the concept of centenary medals?

Mr O'Neill—It was initiated by a government decision in 1996.

Senator ROBERT RAY—When was that decision transmitted to your unit?

Mr O'Neill—At about that time.

Senator ROBERT RAY—In what form was it transmitted? It was not in a final form; it was as a concept, was it?

Mr O'Neill—It was a concept. It was a cabinet decision, and we worked it up from there.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I see. Who determined the number of medals?

Mr O'Neill—There is a precedent for commemorative medals and, whilst it is easy to refer to the British system, it is common around the world, but we applied a formula that has precedent—which is a division between the Commonwealth and the states, 30 per cent to the Commonwealth and the remainder to the states—that there be, and am going the reverse way, an allocation to the states in strict relationship to the population. For the centenary medal it was one of attempting to give what I would call broad coverage. The Prime Minister indicated that it would obviously be available for living persons from the community, including the indigenous community, government, including local government, industry, business, the professions, associations and representative service and voluntary groups. So the number needed to be a fair size to be representative of a fair cross-section of the Australian population. Having regard to the formulas, having regard to the needs of states, getting down to state level—and there has been consultation with the states over some time—the number evolved. I think that is a way of saying that the 18,200 became an appropriate number to meet the objectives of the medal.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Who did the calculations as to the 18,000?

Mr O'Neill—That was done as part of the development of the process.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, but who do it? Who developed the process? Who did it?

Mr O'Neill—What do you mean, the name of a person?

Senator ROBERT RAY—The unit, was it your unit?

Mr O'Neill—Awards and National Symbols. Yes, we developed up the proposal and it was endorsed by government.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So you came up with a figure of 18,200?

Mr O'Neill—Based on our knowledge of centenary medal arrangements, based on our knowledge of other medal arrangements—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Which centenary medal arrangements did you look at?

Mr O'Neill—There have been a number that Australia has used over the years under the British system which was adopted by Australia. There have been hundreds of centenary medallions in Australia, so there has been a fair practice.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Which previous example got to 18,200?

Mr O'Neill—There was no particular example that gave a direct relationship between an absolute number. If you went back to 1977 and the 8,000-odd, or whatever it was, for the jubilee medal and extrapolated that forward you still would not get exactly to 18,000 but you are heading towards it in terms of a population in 2001 of about 19 million to 20 million people.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We have not doubled our population since 1977, have we?

Mr O'Neill—With respect, Senator, I did not say we did but we are heading towards it. We are heading towards the number but it did come down to thinking in terms of state requirements and state representation and getting good access through the communities. That is where the number evolved from without having a direct science to say there was a situation that can be directly translated to the centenary.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You quote the 1977 example of 8,000. What methodology was used to distribute the 8,000?

Mr O'Neill—The 8,000 was the same basis of 70-30.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I think we accept 70-30 as the formula. The individuals that allocate them: what was the process of allocating them to the recipients?

Mr O'Neill—You probably need to go back one step; 8,000 was only the Australian allocation out of the many more for Britain, Scotland and all those other countries and other countries of the empire. So we got eight out of the tens of thousands that were determined for the jubilee medal. The 30 per cent for the Commonwealth, 70 per cent for the states and each state allocation was determined in strict relationship to the population at the time.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That has not answered my question. Joe Bloggs gets one: how does he get one? I am not interested in the ratios between Commonwealth and states. By what process was that person nominated and selected?

Mr O'Neill—In 1977 the person was nominated by government—was identified by government and then nominated by government.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What element of government nominated them?

Mr O'Neill—Commonwealth and state governments. In 1977 the fair preponderance would have been persons who held office in some way, whether it be parliamentary or government office.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But it was a government decision as to who was so rewarded with a medal?

Mr O'Neill—Yes, in 1977.

Senator ROBERT RAY—It was not left to individual ministers, Speakers or Presidents, was it? It was a right, was it?

Mr O'Neill—There was an element of that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What on?

Mr O'Neill—When I went through the list of the persons who received the award I noticed, for example, that a lot of people who were in Victoria, for example, were members of hospital boards.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That determines who may receive it.

Mr O'Neill—I am saying that the nomination would have come from those areas in the sense of doing a trawl through those areas.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, I understand that.

Mr O'Neill—The minister for health may well have been the one who was doing the trawl.

Senator ROBERT RAY—But did the minister for health have as of right a nomination right and a determinative right?

Mr O'Neill—At that time, the government would have; the Premier would have, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Exactly. That is just precisely what I am trying to get at. So there is a different methodology between 1977 and the year 2001?

Mr O'Neill—On this occasion it is being nominated in the case of the Commonwealth by ministers; in the case of the states they are still to determine the arrangement.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So as a precedent, 1977 was useful for numbers, although it is not quite in proportion, but not useful for selection method.

Mr O'Neill—I think it gives a guide as to what the current selection method might be.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You are not saying that the minister for health last time was given the right to choose 200 recipients are you, in 1977?

Mr O'Neill—That is in the case of the Commonwealth, if we are talking about 200 recipients. In the case of the states where the great bulk of the nominations will be coming from, the arrangements are still to be determined.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I will repeat the question: in 1977 the minister for health or the minister for education was not the key person who had been given a quota of 200 medals to nominate, were they?

Mr O'Neill—No, they were not given quotas in the same way that is now being proposed.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That is right. That is what I am trying to establish. We are looking for precedents by which actions are taken. We have established that on numbers you might be able to go back to 1977, but not on allocation. That is right.

Mr O'Neill—But you need to consider the different purpose in the sense that the 1977 award was to celebrate the jubilee of the Queen of Australia. So the process would necessarily be different from a medal which is to commemorate the achievements or the contribution to the society of citizens in celebrating the Centenary of Federation.

Senator FAULKNER—What, Mr O'Neill, are the criteria that are to be applied to those who are to be nominated as recipients?

Mr O'Neill—I would suggest that that would be a matter for the judgment of the individuals who are bringing forth the nomination.

Senator FAULKNER—So there is no criteria?

Mr O'Neill—In commemorative medals it is not usual for formal restrictive criteria or—

Senator FAULKNER—Let me start at a really basic one: do you have to be alive?

Mr O'Neill—I said that before. It is for living persons.

Senator FAULKNER—So you have to be alive. Do you have to be an Australian citizen?

Mr O'Neill—It is possible to extend it beyond Australian citizens.

Senator FAULKNER—You do not have to be an Australian citizen but you do have to be alive.

Mr O'Neill—Yes, that is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you have to be an adult?

Mr O'Neill—No. There is no requirement on age, gender or race.

Senator FAULKNER—Can you hold dual citizenship?

Mr O'Neill—If you are a dual citizen you will be treated as an Australian.

Senator FAULKNER—Is it the plan at the moment to indicate or to communicate with those who are going to nominate recipients—like all the government portfolio ministers, for example—that there are criteria, that you have to be alive.

Mr O'Neill—Yes. I hesitated because I was wondering what else you were going to say.

Senator FAULKNER—Well, there are no other criteria.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We have been trying to find another criterion.

Senator FAULKNER—Are you going to tell them, 'You nominate anyone you like. You can nominate someone who is serving a life sentence for quadruple murder. As long as they are alive, it is okay.'

Mr O'Neill—Certainly in the case of the states, it would be up to the states to determine the process that they would use for bringing forward nominations.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We are not talking about the states. Just so that you understand it, let us restrict it to 15 portfolio ministers, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Speaker, the President and the Leader of the Opposition. Let us just restrict it to that for the while—so you can always have that in the back of your mind. The only criterion for awarding centenary medals is that they have to award it to someone that is alive?

Mr O'Neill—Someone who is alive, and I think it would be expected that a portfolio minister would think in terms of the functional area of the portfolio.

Senator FAULKNER—Is that a criterion?

Senator ROBERT RAY—Where is that?

Senator FAULKNER—So that might be expected by whom?

Mr O'Neill—Well, in the correspondence or the guidelines or the—

Senator FAULKNER—Are there any guidelines?

Mr O'Neill—Not formal guidelines in the sense of—

Senator FAULKNER—Are there any informal guidelines?

Mr Henderson—Well, we need to talk with the contact officers in the department to determine—

Senator FAULKNER—Is that a way of say, 'No there are not'?

Mr O'Neill—The guidelines will be developing as we go through the process.

Senator FAULKNER—So there are not any guidelines, formal or informal?

Mr O'Neill—Not at this time.

Senator FAULKNER—So there are not any. Are there any plans to have any?

Mr O'Neill—That is something on which we need to see what guidance the people in the departments require and what assistance they might require.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What do you mean 'the people in departments'?

Mr O'Neill—There would be a process to bring forward nominations.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Why would there be? You do not require it. What is to stop a minister picking out his preselection panel and giving them all a centenary medal? You have got no guidance there at all.

Mr O'Neill—I cannot comment on that aspect.

Senator FAULKNER—There are either guidelines or there are not, and you have told us there are not. So you can comment on it. You have in fact commented on it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Again, remembering the restrictive that we are not worried about the states and we are not worried about a few others but the political process, whose idea was it that, for instance, each portfolio minister give out 200 medals?

Mr O'Neill—The arrangements have been approved by the Prime Minister.

Senator ROBERT RAY—What I am saying is: I cannot go to advice you have given government, but this is an initiative—I think we can say in these broad terms—from government rather than the bureaucracy. You have been given the guidance.

Mr O'Neill—I will just repeat that these arrangements have been approved by the Prime Minister and everything has been put in place.

Senator ROBERT RAY—I know they have been approved by the Prime Minister. I am asking whether your unit was given guidance as to this—otherwise I have to go to questions of how you calculated the various proportionalities. But if you were given guidance I do not have to go to those questions.

Mr O'Neill—Certainly, proposals, options, were put to the government and the result is the process that has been put in place now.

Senator FAULKNER—Is this before it went to cabinet in 1996?

Mr O'Neill—No, after that.

Senator FAULKNER—So when?

Mr O'Neill—I will have to take that on notice. I do not know the exact time, but certainly in the second half of last year would be the closest I could pin myself down to.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So it is determined then that the Governor-General gets 25 medals: on what basis is he getting 25?

Mr O'Neill—In a sense, the Governor-General will be outside of the system. The Governor-General may wish to recognise people who, in his opinion have made a significant contribution—

Senator FAULKNER—What do you mean ‘in a sense he will be outside the system’? He is right in the system, isn’t he; he has 25 medals?

Mr O'Neill—Yes, he is in the system now. That is what I am saying. I was answering Senator Ray’s question about why the Governor-General would get 25 medals.

Senator FAULKNER—You just said that, in a sense, he is outside the system.

Mr O'Neill—That was in answer to Senator Ray’s question—that, in a sense, he would have been.

Senator FAULKNER—What sense?

Mr O'Neill—The other option, of course, is none; he would be outside totally.

Senator FAULKNER—I am sure that was given consideration.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The other option is that the Minister for Finance is getting 200 medals and the Governor-General is only getting 25. That is the other way of looking at it.

Senator FAULKNER—The other option is that we give the Governor-General the whole bang lot of them. I have a lot more faith in those arrangements than some of the claptrap you have got that has been announced previously.

Mr O'Neill—All of the medals are being awarded by the Governor-General, of course, on the recommendation of ministers.

Senator FAULKNER—Are nominations going to be called for?

Mr O'Neill—That would be a matter for the states to determine in respect of the great bulk; for the Commonwealth, I am not sure—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Why don't you speak for what you are responsible for and not for the states? Will nominations be called for those 30 per cent at Commonwealth level?

Mr O'Neill—I do not know what the arrangements will actually be until we have gone through a process of discussion with portfolios and agencies.

Senator ROBERT RAY—So we are spending \$443,000. Are the states picking up part of the tab for the medals?

Mr O'Neill—They will pick up the cost of bringing forward their own nominations.

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, the actual production cost of the medals: do they contribute to that?

Mr O'Neill—Consistent with normal practice, the Commonwealth will meet the cost of that.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We pay about \$450,000 for the medals.

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Of which the only criterion is that you be alive and, at least, from a Commonwealth level they are allocated out by ministers. Let us just check that. Can we check that the figures are right. The PM gets 350?

Mr O'Neill—That is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The Deputy PM gets 275?

Mr O'Neill—That is right.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Fifteen portfolio ministers get 200 each.

Mr O'Neill—That is right.

Senator FAULKNER—That is 3,000, I think, if you actually multiply it out.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, not being a portfolio minister, gets 200?

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—The minister for aboriginal affairs gets 200?

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Minister Moore gets an additional 200 because he is Minister for Defence?

Mr O'Neill—For the uniformed branch, yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do we have any guarantee that these are not all just going to be handed out to the public servants who work in the departments—political friends and sycophants?

Mr O'Neill—At the end of the day, all names will be published and they will be on our web site.

Senator FAULKNER—It is only political sycophants that are alive that have a chance. There are 100 for the National Council for the Centenary of Federation?

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—They are four times more important than the Governor-General. I cannot believe it.

Senator FAULKNER—The Leader of the Federal Opposition scored 200?

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Senator FAULKNER—The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives get 25 each?

Mr O'Neill—Yes.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And Senator Ellison nothing.

Senator FAULKNER—There are 100 unallocated. Senator Ellison, you are an automatic recipient anyway, aren't you? You are in the swim.

Senator Ellison—I do not know about that.

Senator FAULKNER—Mr O'Neill can tell you.

Senator Ellison—They just send me to estimates.

Senator ROBERT RAY—You deserve a medal for that.

Mr O'Neill—There would not be an automatic allocation for a minister.

Senator Ellison—But the Leader of the Opposition has his own quota.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Yes, he has 200. I am going to be looking at the criteria he uses, because there apparently aren't any. This is just an absolute political rort, Minister. You have decided to award a medal out and you have given it to ministers to extend patronage. It is nothing more simple than that. There are no criteria, there is no fairness in it. It is going to cost the taxpayer \$450,000, and we are supposed to just sit here and wear it. It is absolute nonsense.

Senator Ellison—These awards, of course, will be public, and any minister who makes any award will have to justify his or her actions publicly. It will be in the public domain, and there is that imperative.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Thank you. You must have actually started to assuage me. You are saying that when the announcement of the medallions occurs 200 Minister Fahey nominees will be attributed to Minister Fahey and not just by way of the Governor-General and an 18,000 person announcement; you are saying that they will actually be identified?

Senator Ellison—No.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Favourite sons and daughters will be attributable to their choice: is that right?

Senator FAULKNER—They will all be living in the electorate of Hume, in his case.

Senator Ellison—I can see, Mr Chairman, the golden opportunity for these estimates committees to trawl over these appointments, as they do with everything else

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, you have made BS. You have made the BS—the big statement.

Senator Ellison—No, I have not.

Senator ROBERT RAY—That ministers will be responsible for their choices because it will be published. I am asking: when the names are published, will the ministers who recommended them be attached to those names so we can actually—

Senator Ellison—I do not know whether that is the case but there will be—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Of course, you don't know.

Senator Ellison—as you know, Senator Ray—

Senator ROBERT RAY—Do you want to have a bet on it, Senator? I bet it doesn't. I bet no-one is held accountable and I bet that if we start FOing it we will be denied it.

Senator Ellison—Well, Senator Ray, it will be in the public domain and it will be up to the public—public reaction will determine—

Senator ROBERT RAY—You are saying there will be 18,000 names in the public domain.

Senator Ellison—You know yourself, when the Orders of Australia are announced, what the public reaction is like. If it is a popular—

Senator FAULKNER—They are not appointed by portfolio ministers. Don't—

Senator ROBERT RAY—You have a special process. You have a proper process.

Senator Ellison—They are very public and there is a reaction to them.

Senator FAULKNER—You know the difference between those awards and these that are just patronage. 'Line up with your mates in the Liberal Party or the National Party and collect your award.'

Senator ROBERT RAY—Or the Labor Party for that matter.

Senator FAULKNER—or the Labor Party or anywhere else.

Senator Ellison—All I am saying is that if we have public awards there is a public reaction to those, and whoever makes the appointment is—

Senator ROBERT RAY—But we won't know, according to you. You are going to get 18,200 names eventually approved by the Governor-General with no sifting process at that end, and we are not going to know which minister or which individual has put these people forward. Will we know, Mr O'Neill, the difference between a state and a Commonwealth award? Will we know whether a recipient has received it by way of nomination from a state or federal when it is announced?

Mr O'Neill—There will be a list of names of persons who have received it. It would not be possible to distinguish between them

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, you will not even know whether they are state or Commonwealth nominated, will you?

Senator FAULKNER—Would it be possible, administratively, to do this? You are going to have those awards flowing in, aren't you—or recommendations flowing in? Or don't you really know how you are going to organise it yet?

Mr O'Neill—No, arrangements are well in hand but it is—

Senator FAULKNER—I mean, Dr Wooldridge might get 200 radiologists and give them medals. Wouldn't you be able to identify them

Senator ROBERT RAY—He has already given them something better than the medals. They have taken the money, not the box.

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, that question is something the official cannot comment on. It is a hypothetical.

Senator FAULKNER—Okay, well you comment on it?

Senator Ellison—It is hypothetical.

Senator FAULKNER—Will you be able to identify the medals that are awarded to recipients by cabinet ministers? The 3,000 medals—

Senator ROBERT RAY—No, no plus.

Senator FAULKNER—I am sorry, you are quite right because you have got to add Mr Howard and Mr Anderson, that is right, and Mr Moore, of course.

Senator ROBERT RAY—And Mr Scott, so we up to 4,000.

Senator FAULKNER—Mr Scott is not a cabinet minister but you are right—the best part of 4,000 are going to be handed out by cabinet ministers. Are you going to be able to identify which minister makes the nomination of a recipient?

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, I am not dealing with this particular area, and I will take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER—You do not know: let's ask Mr O'Neill and see if he knows.

Mr O'Neill—In all of the honour system there is no connection between a nominator and the recipient.

Senator FAULKNER—But there is here. You see, this is not the honours system as we have known it.

Mr O'Neill—It is part of the honour system.

Senator FAULKNER—This is patronage. There is a direct link here between the nominator and the recipient. In this situation, cabinet ministers and portfolio ministers, 15 of them, get 200 each, the PM 350, the Deputy PM 275, Vets Minister 200, Mr Moore another 200 for ADF personnel, Senator Herron 200 and Mr Beazley 200. This is not the way that the honours system has ever worked before. This is direct patronage—a direct decision of a parliamentarian to award an honour to a very significant number of recipients. So no comparisons with the way the Australian honours system has worked in the past are valid.

Mr O'Neill—With respect, Senator, I disagree in the sense that most honours in the Australian honours system are by direct nomination by ministers, office holders or other persons.

Senator ROBERT RAY—Mr O'Neill, how many times does the nominator go out to Yarralumla and sit on his nomination and judge it? Zilch, basically. Zilch, that is the difference.

Senator FAULKNER—More to the point, Mr O'Neill, how many of the nominators get a quota? None of them, do they?

Mr O'Neill—Well, in some components, for example, the National Medal, there is no such thing as a quota; it is as many as required.

Senator FAULKNER—These ministers and others are being given a quota of medals to hand out, to spray around. You cannot compare that with the Australian honours system works?

Senator ROBERT RAY—For all its faults.

Senator FAULKNER—Anyway, Mr Chairman, the problem we have now, of course, is that it is nine o'clock and we are going to have to revisit this along with a couple of other elements of program 4, I am afraid, on Wednesday. We might flag those privately with Mr Henderson. That might be the easiest way to do it.

Senator ROBERT RAY—We will still try to do it within the two hour cap that we put in for the GCU.

Senator Ellison—There are still areas other than this particular one.

Senator FAULKNER—There is the Government Communications Unit which you are aware of.

Senator Ellison—We have already set that.

Senator FAULKNER—There are issues in relation to this, I think, and if we could limit it to this and official establishments I think we can get through. I will leave other matters to another day.

Mr Henderson—So we will be finishing off awards and national symbols and official establishments—

Senator FAULKNER—And the GCU in program 4.

[9.02 p.m.]

Output Group 2—Social policy advice and coordination

Senator MACKAY—I just wondered, Ms Caldwell, whether you could take me through what has happened with regard to the OSW budget in the PBS.

Ms Caldwell—I may defer to my colleague Ms Bentley to give you a detailed breakdown of our PBS figures.

Ms Bentley—You are referring to the figures that are appearing for women's programs?

Senator MACKAY—It is fairly scant. That is why I am asking for a general summation at this point.

Ms Bentley—The estimated outcome for this financial year, 1999-2000, is \$4.178 million, and the budget estimate for 2000-01 is \$9.797 million. We have actually rephased \$4.27 million from 1999-2000 into 2001-02 and 2002-03. The women's programs consist of three or four items—basically, the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program, the National Women's NGO Funding Program and the other women's program funding.

Senator MACKAY—I was actually after a little bit more information than that. What has happened? Why was the underspend there?

Ms Bentley—The underspend is all in the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program. That consists of two parts: the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program, stage 1, which was announced in 1997; and \$25 million, which was announced in the 1998-99 budget—a further \$25 million. Partnerships stage 1 is due to finish next year. We have carried over about \$1 million worth of funding in that program. The Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, stage 2—the \$25 million—was allocated across four years from 1999-2000 through to 2002-03. We have now had time to get the program off the ground, analyse what we are going to be doing with that and make some more forward plans in terms of the expenditure. In doing so, we found that we need to expend more funding at the end of the program on some larger items, particularly communication strategy. We have sought to rephase funding from this year into the third and fourth years of the program.

Senator MACKAY—So the big ticket item, in terms of this program, is towards the end of the four years, and you specifically mentioned communication strategy. What is that?

Ms Caldwell—Of the \$25 million that was additionally allocated last budget for Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, stage 2, that differed from the initial tranche because the second part of partnerships will be looking at key thematic areas. These include the areas of indigenous family violence, on which a large amount of work has been done; the effect of domestic violence on children; work on programs for perpetrators of domestic violence; and community education activities. Of the \$25 million, \$10 million is for those community education activities to encourage people to take action and speak out against domestic violence and to act on situations where they occur. By the nature of designing community education and the payment that occurs around the public presentation of those activities, the expenditure is lumpy. That is why most of the expenditure is expected to fall in the later years.

Senator MACKAY—When you say 'later years', which later years, specifically, do you think that those funds will be—

Ms Bentley—It will be in 2001-02 and 2002-03.

Senator MACKAY—Do you have figures for us in terms of those out years, prospective expenditure?

Ms Bentley—We have some rough estimates at this stage.

Senator MACKAY—What would they be?

Ms Bentley—For the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, part 2, we anticipate it will be about \$9.7 million in 2001-02 and \$10.7 million in 2002-03.

Senator MACKAY—What about the remainder of the \$25 million.

Ms Bentley—That will be expended this year and next year.

Senator MACKAY—On what, specifically?

Ms Caldwell—We have, for example, \$6 million towards indigenous family violence. The government has advertised indigenous community grants to assist local communities in their efforts to combat domestic violence. That builds on work through the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs.

Senator MACKAY—Is that \$6 million to be expended this financial year?

Ms Caldwell—No. It is \$6 million over the life of four years.

Senator MACKAY—What is happening in this financial year?

Ms Caldwell—In this financial year the community grants program was developed, building on consultations held by Senator Herron with a range of indigenous men and women involved in combating domestic violence and also working with Senator Herron's colleagues on the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs. As a result of that work, it was identified that that \$6 million should primarily be devoted towards assistance to local communities in their own efforts to address domestic violence. In this year that community grants program has been advertised. The applications have now closed and we have approximately 131 applications from various community-based indigenous groups interested in funding for the first round of grants. We are expecting selections and an advisory committee to be established later this financial year to give advice to the minister as to selections from that grants process.

Senator MACKAY—How much is proposed to be expended?

Ms Caldwell—That would not result in large amounts of outlays this year. The grants themselves will be contracted and expended starting from next financial year, and we expect the \$6 million to flow at roughly equal proportions over the remaining three years of the proposal.

Senator CROSSIN—Ms Bentley, or Ms Caldwell, could you just clarify for me that you are suggesting that the figure which has been underspent is a result of you actually getting all of the domestic violence money up-front for a four-year period?

Ms Bentley—No. We received an original allocation across the forward years as a result of a decision made in a budget context. That was allocated during that budget process. It was a small amount up-front this year, about \$5 million next year and \$8 million in the final two years, adding up to \$25 million. We have now had a chance to actually sit down and do some evaluation to get some work up off the ground. We have now reviewed the situation and sought to rephase the funding.

Ms Caldwell—Essentially, that \$25 million was spread by \$3 million in the initial financial year of 1999-2000; \$5 million next financial year; then \$8 million and \$8 million. Since the appropriation of that money we have been in a position to actually schedule the expenditures under each of the elements of that second phase of partnerships. As Ms Bentley indicated earlier, there is also some carryover between this year and next year with respect to Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, Stage 1, which was in the nature of demonstration projects and work with state and territory governments. We have had some slippage in the past with state and territory governments in the contracting of their locally initiated projects for that so we have a smaller carryover to next financial year. Essentially, that underspend, that rephasing, consists of the bulk of the \$3 million allocated this year for part 2 of partnerships and approximately \$1 million for partnerships stage 1.

Senator CROSSIN—Why have you used the term 'rephase' as opposed to—

Ms Bentley—It is a Department of Finance and Administration term that we have adopted. Under the guidelines you can seek from the minister for finance to rephase appropriations between years. That is the process through which we went in order to rephase the funding from this year into future years.

Senator CROSSIN—So this is terminology you have picked up—

Ms Bentley—From the Department of Finance and Administration.

Senator CROSSIN—You also go on to say on page 16 of the PBS that this has resulted in lower than originally estimated expenditure in 1999-2000, with a commensurate increase in the following years. Why did it result in a lower than originally estimated expenditure?

Ms Caldwell—As Ms Bentley indicated earlier, the initial estimate was to provide the second tranche of partnership's money in, essentially, an increasing but smooth array across the four years concerned—that is, \$3 million, \$5 million, \$8 million and \$8 million. Further development of the specific activities and examination of the likely time scales of expenditure incurring under those thematic activities resulted in us rephasing or rescheduling to reflect our expected cash outflows.

Senator CROSSIN—Can you take us through the PBS for this year? On page 18—

Senator MACKAY—I was going to ask another question about domestic violence, if that is okay. Did you want to get to that?

Senator CROSSIN—I have a lot of questions about the domestic violence strategy, but it might lead us off the path of budget and money.

Senator MACKAY—I just wanted to clarify with the officers at the table in which year the Partnership Against Domestic Violence program was announced.

Ms Caldwell—That money was appropriated in the—

Ms Bentley—In the 1998-99 budget.

Senator MACKAY—Right. How much has been spent so far?

Ms Caldwell—I am sorry, could I correct that partnerships 2 was announced actually in the 1999 budget.

Senator MACKAY—How much money has OSW spent on Partnerships Against Domestic Violence? Why is the underspend there? How much money has been spent?

Ms Caldwell—I will get some specific advice on that while we are speaking. The reasons for the underspend are the delays in contracting with states and territories for a further \$1 million worth of partnerships projects. Those projects are advancing well but there are processes which involve state and territory governments also advising the Commonwealth through a task force structure their priorities for those expenditure and entering into contracts with the Commonwealth for the specific projects. That results in some slippage year to year.

Senator MACKAY—That is \$1 million.

Ms Caldwell—That is for \$1 million. The remainder of the underspend, or the rephasing, refers to \$3 million that was appropriated in the 1999 budget for expenditure in 1999-2000 against Partnerships against Domestic Violence stage 2, and our outlays in this first year of operation of partnership stage 2 have been very low because of the lead times involved with, for example, going to a tender process for indigenous family violence, holding a major seminar on young people in domestic violence, to informing our further work with children,

to consulting with states around the issues of perpetrator programs and to the actual development work for community education.

Senator MACKAY—So how much has actually been spent?

Ms Bentley—I do not have actual year to date expenditure figures here but we are on target to meet an estimated outcome for the 1999-2000 year of just over \$3 million in the partnerships program, and we expect to fully expend our NGO funding and other women's programs, bringing the total spend to the figure of \$4.178 million appearing in the PBS.

Senator MACKAY—So how much has been spent on Partnerships Against Domestic Violence.

Ms Bentley—It will be approximately just over \$3 million.

Senator MACKAY—So far this financial year, how much has been expended?

Ms Bentley—I have not got the figures with me this evening. I would have to run the system and take that on notice.

Senator MACKAY—Has any money been spent?

Ms Bentley—Yes, money has been spent.

Senator MACKAY—What on?

Ms Bentley—A variety of—

Ms Caldwell—Senator, the bulk of that \$3 million has been expended—or we have accounts on hand for the expenditure, so the bulk of that \$3 million on partnerships has been fully expended.

Senator MACKAY—No, fully allocated, not expended.

Ms Bentley—No, it has been fully expended.

Senator MACKAY—It has been fully expended?

Ms Bentley—The bulk of it has been fully expended. We have incurred expenditure in the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program to date. I do not have the exact figure of what is on the system right now but we anticipate with the six or seven weeks to go that we will fully expend \$3 million.

Ms Caldwell—Senator, there is very little remaining.

Ms Bentley—We can provide the actual year to date expenditure to you.

Senator MACKAY—Good, thank you.

Senator CROSSIN—The domestic violence strategies did not start in the 1999 budget though?

Ms Bentley—There are two parts.

Senator CROSSIN—Part 1 started in—

Ms Caldwell—In the 1998 budget.

Senator CROSSIN—And all of the part 1 money has been expended?

Ms Bentley—No, we have carried over approximately \$1 million dollars from Partnerships this year into next year. The program will run—

Senator CROSSIN—Let us go back to 1998. What did you carry over from 1998 to 1999?

Ms Bentley—We carried over \$79,000 from 1997-98 into 1998-99 and we carried over approximately \$1 million from 1998-99 into 1999-2000.

Senator CROSSIN—Can you give us a breakdown of exactly what that money was used to spend against what programs in the domestic violence strategy in those early years?

Ms Bentley—Can I take that on notice?

Senator CROSSIN—Yes.

Senator MACKAY—Just to clarify, we would like a picture on notice about how much of the money has been spent, when, what form and also year to date.

Ms Bentley—Yes, we can do that.

Senator CROSSIN—And similarly for the last financial year, if you can tell us that you have nearly expended \$3 million, we would like to know—and we are assuming that is all on domestic violence—the programs of your domestic violence outcomes broken up and the amount of money that you have allocated and spent against each area.

Ms Bentley—Yes, we can do that.

Senator CROSSIN—Before we move off that, can I go back to something you said earlier, Ms Caldwell, regarding consultations that Senator Herron held with ATSIC for the indigenous communities?

Ms Caldwell—No, Senator Herron held consultations with interested indigenous men and women involved in domestic violence, last year.

Senator CROSSIN—Are you able to provide us with a list of who was involved and where those consultations occurred and when?

Ms Caldwell—They were organised through our Office of Indigenous Policy, Senator, so I would have to take that on notice.

Senator CROSSIN—That is all right. I will ask them that on Wednesday and save you the trouble. You have also said you are about to set up an advisory committee to look at the grants that have come in under that program. Who is on that advisory committee?

Ms Caldwell—We are still settling the membership of that. We will be looking at a range of officials from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as well as indigenous people familiar with the issue of family violence.

Senator CROSSIN—Have you called for expressions of interest, or are these people you would use off a database? How do you ascertain which people will use the advisory committee?

Ms Caldwell—We would take advice. Within OSW we have an extensive knowledge of experts in the areas of domestic violence and indigenous family violence, and we would consult with colleagues in OIP and other experts known to them in indigenous affairs who deal with family violence.

Senator CROSSIN—And you have had 131 applications for an amount of how much money to be expended?

Ms Caldwell—That will depend on the projects we receive, but we would anticipate attributing that \$6 million broadly equally across three years. The funding guidelines allow for applicants to have some latitude in the size of grants that they seek. So until we have had an assessment and the minister has considered that assessment in terms of the expenditure, no

firm decision has been made about whether it will be exactly even across the three years or whether it will be loaded. For example, some people in this early round may say, 'I have a proposal that runs for a longer period of time and costs a bit more.' We are expecting that it would be around \$2 million per year, but that would depend on the actual field that presents itself at this stage.

Senator CROSSIN—Sue, have you got any other questions on —

Senator MACKAY—On the budget?

Senator CROSSIN—domestic violence?

Senator MACKAY—Like Senator Crossin, I am curious to know how much has been expended irrespective of whether we are talking tranche 1 or tranche 2, irrespective of whether it is phase 1 or phase 2, from the initial announcement to now. I am still unclear. I do not know about Senator Crossin.

Ms Caldwell—I can give you some advice on that, though, as Ms Bentley indicated, to give you details of exactly how much of that expenditure has gone out even as we speak we would need to consult with our financial management system. There has been in the order of 70 or 80 projects under Partnerships against Domestic Violence, stage 1. These have been a mix of state sponsored projects or projects that are identified to us from state and territory governments for funding.

Senator MACKAY—How much has been expended from the initial announcement of PADV to now?

Ms Bentley—In 1998-99, we spent just under \$2.5 million.

Senator MACKAY—Yes.

Ms Caldwell—Senator, I can give you some details about the projects if you want the particular figure aggregating back on past years and year to date figures, as opposed to estimated outcomes for this financial year. We would need to take that on notice and provide you—

Senator MACKAY—So we know that \$2.5 million was spent in 1998-99. How much is the total program?

Ms Caldwell—It is \$25 million.

Ms Bentley—There was \$25 million of funding, but not all of that funding was allocated to the Office of Status of Women.

Senator MACKAY—No, a minute proportion went to regional.

Ms Caldwell—Approximately \$12 million of that initial \$25 million was administered through the secretariat for partnerships which is located in OSW. The remaining \$13 million, in round figures, went to individual portfolios. For example the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs did some work with it. The Department of Family and Community Services and our regional colleagues also did some projects across six different areas between those departments.

Senator MACKAY—So you will hopefully get it to us on notice or before the end of the night how much has been spent so far. We know there has been \$2.5 million out of the \$25 million—

Ms Bentley—That is in Partnerships against Domestic Violence, stage 1, and we can get to you the expenditure year to date as of today on notice. I cannot get it to you this evening; I do not have any officers in the department.

Senator MACKAY—Fair enough. Is the underspend entirely PADV?

Ms Bentley—Yes.

Senator MACKAY—Entirely?

Ms Bentley—It is a rephrasing. It has simply been moved to the other end.

Senator MACKAY—It is called ‘reprofiling’ in other agencies.

Ms Bentley—Yes, reprofile.

Ms Caldwell—I do have some additional information which may go some way towards answering your questions on previous years’ expenditure. States and territories each received \$200,000 in 1997-98 and will have up to \$250,000 per year over three years for projects under Partnerships against Domestic Violence, stage 1. It—Partnerships—is coordinated through a task force administered through OSW so as to ensure there is no duplication and that these projects come together logically and share good practice.

The point I was going to most make was that all the 1997-98 and 1998-99 state and territory projects are well under way, with a goodly portion of those completed. Most states and territories have successfully finalised contracts for their 1999-2000 expenditures, although final contract negotiations are still being held with Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. So, while that stops short of your request for specific details, which we will have to take on notice for you, it shows that there has been substantial progress under Partnerships, Stage 1 of that \$12 million we had allocated through OSW. The 1997-98, 1998-99 and most of the 1999-2000 projects are contracted for and are now proceeding as planned; hence we have a minor carryover and we expect to catch up in the final year of the program.

Senator CROSSIN—Ms Caldwell, in a chart that you provided as a result of a question on notice last year, OSW administered funds for 1999-2000. The allocation for Partnerships against Domestic Violence then was around \$4.3 million. You are suggesting that in 1998-99 you have expended \$2.5 million of that. Is that correct?

Ms Bentley—Senator, the figure you are referring to is an estimate for the 1999-2000 year for stage 1 of Partnerships against Domestic Violence. The spend figure of \$2.5 million is in reference to the 1998-99 financial year for Partnerships against Domestic Violence, stage 1. So you are comparing different years. The \$2.5 million expenditure in 1998-99 was against an allocation of \$3.5 million. So there was a \$1 million underspend in 1998-99, which I referred to earlier.

Senator CROSSIN—Has that then flowed through into the \$4.3 million that is on this chart?

Ms Bentley—That is correct.

Senator CROSSIN—So, with your domestic violence strategy phase 2, this chart I am reading from has \$2.9 million as the 1999-2000 estimates.

Ms Bentley—That is for Partnerships against Domestic Violence, stage 2.

Senator CROSSIN—That is right. Then how do we come up with a rephrasing of \$25 million?

Ms Bentley—We are rephasing \$4.127 million.

Senator CROSSIN—You are rephasing only \$4.127 million?

Ms Bentley—Yes.

Senator CROSSIN—Out of—

Ms Bentley—Our original 1999-2000 estimate, as appeared in the last portfolio budget statement, was \$8.454 million for the entirety of the women's programs, which includes Partnerships against Domestic Violence, the NGO liaison and other women's programs. Of that \$8.454 million, we have rephased \$4.127 million from this financial year into 2001-02 and 2002-03.

Senator CROSSIN—So that is the rephasing. Could I just take you back to this 1999-2000 chart and the \$2.9 million set against domestic violence, mark 2. Is that still a current figure?

Ms Bentley—That figure was current, as the 1999-2000 estimate, at the beginning of the year.

Senator CROSSIN—So what is the estimate for 2001-02?

Ms Bentley—Can I take that on notice?

Senator MACKAY—That is fine. You can understand why we are asking these questions—the PBS is just extremely unhelpful. For example, there is no forward estimate for women's programs.

Ms Bentley—The forward estimate for 2000-01 is, as the PBS says on page 18, \$9.79 million.

Senator MACKAY—Yes, but where is the breakdown? It does not tell us any information.

Senator CROSSIN—It is just an end figure, really. We do not know how much of that is being rephased; we do not know whether it is a change in forward estimate.

Ms Bentley—The 2000-01 estimate has basically stayed the same. We have moved funding from this financial year, 1999-2000, missing next year and landing in the second and third year.

Senator CROSSIN—Pardon?

Ms Bentley—The estimate for 2000-01 has remained the same, so, if that is point B, we have moved funding from point A to points C and D. We have not moved any funding into—I am confusing myself now, sorry.

Senator CROSSIN—Imagine how we feel! What was your budget estimate for 1999-2000?

Ms Bentley—Our original budget estimate was \$8.454 million.

Senator CROSSIN—That was for last year, for 1999-2000?

Ms Bentley—Correct. And against that figure we—

Senator CROSSIN—What you then did last year—and what I have in front of me is a sheet that was revised on 14 September—is provide us with a breakdown. I have not added up what the total is for this column; I am assuming it comes to \$8.4 million—but one should probably not assume this. I would like the same thing done for this year because the \$9.797 million does not tell us in any way whether or not there is a positive or negative adjustment to

all of the many programs that I have listed as women's programs, going from avant-garde right through to indigenous women in leadership, for example.

Ms Caldwell—We can certainly provide you with that breakdown. It was in the interest of clarifying what movements had occurred in our phasing that the note on page 16 of the agency budget statement, under 'Administered appropriations', was put there, in which it was clearly stated that the \$25 million of PADV has been allocated against strategic elements, resulting in lower than originally estimated expenditure, with a commensurate increase in 2001-02 and 2002-03 financial years.

The issue that I hear you asking about is, among other things, whether the annotations in the agency budget statements provide some information on how that money has been rephased and any other adjustments. I would simply draw your attention to page 16, in which the changes in the Office of Status of Women rephasing administered appropriations is noted to be offset fully with commensurate increases in the outyears.

Senator CROSSIN—We noticed that, but what we are alluding to is that that paragraph, put against the one-line figure on page 18, does not actually show us where the rephasing fits in, if you can understand what I am saying. There is a significant lack of detail in the PBS against particular women's programs. Can you tell us why that is, why we have to ask each year for this sheet of a breakdown of your programs, as opposed to it being just an additional page in the PBS?

Ms Caldwell—The information presented in the PBS does indicate our expenditure. In years such as this, where there has been an adjustment to the expenditure, that is annotated on page 16 as clearly as we could put it. There is a separate item under 'Departmental appropriations' comparing, for output 2.2, the estimated actual 1999-2000 outcome of \$4.294 million with the budget estimate for 2000-01 of \$4.355 million.

Senator CROSSIN—Sorry, could I just ask you to go back there. I do not have a column in front of me that says that last year's estimated amount or expenditure was \$2.2 million.

Ms Caldwell—I am looking at page 18 of the agency budget statement, under 'Departmental appropriations', output group 2, output 2.2. For the 1999-2000 year completing, we have an estimated actual output of \$4.294 million and we have a budget estimate for the coming financial year of \$4.355 million.

Senator CROSSIN—All right, but just a moment ago you quoted a figure to me of '2.2'. What was that? Was it an estimated expenditure or an actual expenditure?

Ms Caldwell—No, it was 4.2, Senator. It was \$4.294 million, compared with \$4.355 million for next year.

Senator CROSSIN—I am sorry, you quoted three figures at me. I thought there was a column on your piece of paper that I did not have.

Ms Caldwell—No, I am looking at the PBS.

Senator CROSSIN—Yes, I am looking at the PBS as well. I am just trying to clarify what has happened here.

Senator MACKAY—Do you have a revised copy of this very useful chart that we got last time? It shows the OSW administered funds 1999-2000, as revised 14 September 1999. Have you got an update?

Ms Caldwell—No, Senator. I do not quite—

Senator MACKAY—We got this at estimates last time.

Ms Caldwell—I think that, at the time we were speaking of it, we indicated that it was an internal work plan, a document for planning. We would certainly be happy to provide you with details of actual expenditures for this year so you might peruse that.

Senator MACKAY—Do you have that—

Ms Caldwell—I do not have those details in that format with me.

Senator MACKAY—You do not have these sorts of details with you. What details have you got?

Ms Bentley—We basically have the estimated outcome and the 2000-01 estimate, broken down into Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, the NGO funding program and the other women's program.

Senator MACKAY—How does that differ from what is on page 18 of the PBS that we are looking at?

Mr Henderson—It is more disaggregated. There are three programs, or three sub-elements to women's programs. We can give you recent history, spread across the four elements of the women's programs line there, of which Partnerships Against Domestic Violence is the overwhelmingly important one. We can give you—from when those particular programs started, which is 1997-98—1998-99 and 1999-2000. You have asked for year to date, 1999-2000, and we can give you the components for the estimate that add to \$1.667 million. As to the forward years, we can probably tell you what is the aggregate amount that is available for Partnerships Against Domestic Violence. But in administering these programs you need a little flexibility between them. My colleagues have been outlining a number of consultation processes associated with making sure that these grants hit the spot. You need a little flexibility within years between these elements, but there are commitments in relation to the second stage of Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, as \$25 million, and that will be met.

Senator MACKAY—But we do not have the type of breakdown that we received—

Mr Henderson—No. We regret that, but we will provide that to you as soon as possible.

Senator MACKAY—So it will be in the format that we received when we got this chart?

Mr Henderson—Perhaps you could share that with us, and we will make sure—

Senator MACKAY—The chart was provided by the department.

Ms Bentley—My recollection is that that document was our internal planning document, which had a number of projects with indicative allocations against the year.

Ms Caldwell—Senator, we can certainly provide you with an itemised list of the expenditures in projects undertaken, to the best of our recollection in the same format as we would have used at that time. It will be itemised in terms of the areas in which we undertook work and expended administered funds.

Senator CROSSIN—Can I take you to page 18. With respect to women's programs, what programs make up the difference between the \$4.1 million and the \$9.7 million—between the estimated actual and the budget estimate? Why is there an increase there? What is it that is causing that increase?

Ms Caldwell—Our administered appropriations for items other than Partnerships Against Domestic Violence are essentially stable between the two years. So the difference between the

1999-2000 expenditure of \$4,178,000 and the budget estimate for next year comprise the coming on line of the additional partnerships' money.

Senator CROSSIN—The increase from \$4.2 million to \$4.3 million under the Office of the Status of Women is for what purpose?

Ms Caldwell—That is under our general departmental appropriations. Obviously, the fine detail of that is still subject to our future year work planning process. So there are no specific large cost items driving that. It is just the normal ratcheting up of expenditure, yet to be settled in fine detail through our 2000-01 work planning process.

Senator CROSSIN—On page 20 you have got an itemised box under 'women's programs'. Are there any new initiatives in that area?

Ms Caldwell—Page 20 deals with administered items, which basically cover Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, the non-government organisation funding program and the other women's administered funding program. So the description on page 20 covers those funding sources in terms of prevention of domestic and family violence and the provision of grants to women's non-government organisations in particular, and also project or research work to inform current policy issues and strategies for women. I note that on page 22 there is further information about our social policy advising and coordinating role.

Senator CROSSIN—Some time last year—it must have been at the budget hearings in May last year—Senator Mackay asked you for a table in relation to forward budget estimates for OSW. It was question No. 67. You provided a table that covered the year 1999-2000 and went to 2003. You also provided a table which gave details of OSW funding over the last five years. That table went from 1993-94 to 1997-98. We do not have details for 1998-99. Could you provide us with those, to fill in that gap where one table stopped and the next table started? There was a year missing.

Ms Caldwell—Certainly, Senator.

Senator CROSSIN—I have got a copy of those questions, if you wanted to see that table so that you know what I am referring to.

Senator MACKAY—Who put together the *Strengthening our Commitment to Women* document?

Ms Caldwell—That was prepared within our office as part of the budget documentation.

Senator MACKAY—Presumably, the office can take editorial responsibility?

Ms Caldwell—Yes, we obviously consulted with our colleagues on the description of the items because of the need to coordinate with other budget materials.

Senator MACKAY—Why was 'potential leadership and local communities' included on page 4 as a 'strengthening our commitment to women' initiative?

Ms Bentley—That is one of the 'stronger families and community strategies'; it is a subelement.

Senator MACKAY—It does not actually mention women at all under 'potential leadership and local communities'? There is no mention of women.

Ms Caldwell—We would certainly expect women to be potential leaders in local communities.

Senator MACKAY—On that basis, you could put anything in this document?

Ms Caldwell—Our discussions with women through the roundtable, through the non-government organisation funding program that we undertake and in other consultations and discussions with departmental colleagues, make clear that healthy communities are of vital interest to women, as is leadership in local communities. In fact, there are many women who would say to us that it is leadership at the local community level in which women are already active and are keen to have this better recognised—that is, they are the community and volunteer workers in many urban and non-urban communities across Australia. So I think that in the discussions we have had and the feedback we have received from colleagues in AFFA and Transport and Regional Services on, for example, the outcomes of the Rural Women's Advisory Committee, the issue of leadership and access to leadership, not only in formal and professional structures but also at the local community level, are of vital interest to women.

Senator MACKAY—The National Skills Development Program for Volunteers does not mention women either.

Ms Caldwell—As I mentioned in my earlier evidence, women are highly represented as volunteers. The celebration of the International Year of the Volunteer—

Senator MACKAY—So the short answer is ditto. 'Local solutions to local problems'—there is no mention of women. 'Can do community initiative'—there is no mention of women at all.

Ms Caldwell—I would put those together under the rubric of a strategy that builds better communities and strengthens local community activism is of keen interest to women.

Senator MACKAY—The national alcohol strategy—there is no mention of women. Why is that shoved under a statement called 'strengthening our commitment to women'?

Ms Caldwell—The short answer is that while there are stereotypes, such as alcoholism is more an issue for men, there are clearly women who are affected by alcoholism. There are particular issues around natal health and substance abuse, including alcoholism during pregnancy, as well as the role of women when their partners are affected by alcohol.

Senator MACKAY—What about improving the safety of fresh blood products? It does not mention women either.

Ms Caldwell—That includes cord blood banking. I should say that, with the national alcohol strategy and all of those initiatives under 'women and health', health is of vital interest to women.

Senator MACKAY—The national depression initiative does mention women, so that is good. The Jobs Pathway Program on page 15 does mention women, but it actually mentions men as well. The Australian Student Traineeship Foundation mentions males and females, and under 'Vietnam veterans and their families' women are not mentioned at all. So if you were going to actually use what I would regard—and I appreciate that this is not your fault—some sort of spurious nexus that women are involved in everything, why don't you just table the budget papers?

Ms Caldwell—We did consult with colleague departments through the budget process on those initiatives that were likely to be of particular interest to women in all of those areas—as I said, communities and health issues, especially blood-borne transmission of viruses as opposed to other forms of transmission of viruses. Also veterans and their families have a clear link in terms of the morbidity study, which looked not only at veterans' personal health but also at the health of their families and children—particularly their children.

Senator MACKAY—Some of whom are women.

Ms Caldwell—In answer to your question, the budget ministerial statement involves sifting through a variety of budget initiatives to try to select those which, from our involvement with women and the feedback we get from a range of women's groups, do draw attention to those measures which are most likely to be of interest to women. Some of those will be women specific. Many of those will have a broader focus but are in areas that we believe women to have a keen interest in.

Senator MACKAY—So why is there no other mention of some of the regional programs then, like rural plan, regional communities or rural transaction centres? Why are they not included?

Ms Caldwell—We consult with—

Senator MACKAY—Networking the nation?

Ms Caldwell—We consult with each of the colleague departments and ask them to identify which of their budget measures they believe are most relevant to women.

Senator MACKAY—This is the result of feedback from agencies, is it?

Ms Caldwell—A combination of feedback from agencies and our own editing process or consultation with them, in terms of saying that women are interested in this or you have identified something and we cannot see women's interest in it so it would not make the cut.

Senator MACKAY—I do not want to labour the point but, if it were not sad, it would be funny.

Senator CROSSIN—Can I just ask you a few questions about this blue booklet? If I am a single female, what indicators do you take me to through here?

Ms Caldwell—There is quite an amount of this in terms of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act, the women in small business and participation of women in rural industries, which are not dependent on family status. The health initiatives are not particularly dependent on family status, apart from the child nutrition one in particular. There are indigenous employment strategies and also the sport and education issues as well, off the top of my head.

Senator CROSSIN—So you are saying this blue document is actually put together with advice or suggestions you get from agencies on their budget measures. Is that correct?

Ms Caldwell—On their budget measures.

Senator CROSSIN—Who, then, is responsible for putting out this little booklet on Australian women for International Women's Day?

Ms Caldwell—Our office, through the minister.

Senator CROSSIN—How was that put together? Did you in fact ask agencies for their initiatives or suggestions on their portfolio areas in respect of women?

Ms Caldwell—The International Women's Day issue from recollection—I was in fact involved with Beijing Plus Five when that was put together—was a mix of measures and information and facts about women maintained by our office throughout the year. It is somewhat different in nature from a budget document which is obviously locked into the particular processes of the approval of budget measures.

Senator CROSSIN—That is the point I want to make, because if you put the two side by side the document that was produced on 8 March is actually just a summary of the budget document that you produced on 10 May. How do you explain that? There are many lines, programs and money amounts in the 8 March document that reappear in your 10 May document.

Ms Caldwell—Senator, some of the material to which you refer would of course be measures that were announced out of budget and were subsequently appropriated in the budget cycle. For example, the Stronger Families was a budget measure in this year's budget but was announced by government prior to budget. Had Stronger Families been announced prior to March, it would have been reflected in that March statement.

Senator CROSSIN—But this March statement does not actually allude to future policy statements or initiatives.

Ms Caldwell—It is not a budget document, Senator, so it refers to initiatives announced by government up until March.

Senator CROSSIN—That is what I am saying. Your budget booklet just reaffirms some of those initiatives announced in March as opposed to perhaps providing a picture of what the future is from the 10 May budget onwards. Why is that?

Ms Caldwell—I do not have the benefit of having our March statement in front of us, but I think you are reflecting on material in one of two circumstances. One is where there has been announcement ahead of budget night as to measures and initiatives to be taken by government which are being included in the budget appropriations and which would legitimately be available in the public view, both from the time of their public announcement and as a specific outlays figure in the budget process. There are also circumstances—this is without benefit of having our March document in front of us—where there are programs of an ongoing nature which may receive further additional funding in the budget. For example, we would have covered Partnerships against Domestic Violence before the second tranche came through, but we would certainly have indicated that additional funding in the relevant budget. So in both cases there are issues of timing.

Senator CROSSIN—On page 16 of the blue booklet, there is a little section called 'Veterans' home care'. Is that a paragraph that was put together by your office?

Ms Bentley—That would have been provided to us by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Senator CROSSIN—Do you check paragraphs when they are provided by departments—

Ms Bentley—Check with whom?

Senator CROSSIN—for their accuracy or their content before you print them?

Ms Caldwell—We certainly endeavour to do so.

Senator CROSSIN—Are you aware, then, that the veterans' home care budget was cut by \$57.3 million this year?

Ms Caldwell—The paragraph on page 16 is talking about the transfer of the home care services to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Senator CROSSIN—Are you aware, though, that in terms of the provision of home care services that particular budget has been cut by \$57.3 million this year?

Ms Caldwell—I would certainly have to check that figure.

Senator CROSSIN—If you are not aware, I am suggesting that perhaps you ought to have been, and I wonder how that budget cut in the home care to veterans actually assists in your booklet being titled *Strengthening our commitment to women*.

Ms Caldwell—Could I take that on notice? I certainly recall related measures to what you are discussing and I am not in a position tonight to confirm that net outcome. There were some transfers of activities between departments and some additional funding in some other areas, so I would need to confirm whether the net effect was a \$57 million cut, having regard to other measures in other portfolios going to this issue also.

Ms Bentley—Could you clarify the figure? Was it a 57 per cent cut or—

Senator CROSSIN—\$57.3 million.

Ms Caldwell—Cut from which portfolio, Senator?

Senator CROSSIN—I understand that the Department of Veterans' Affairs is to cut the home care services by \$57.3 million over four years.

Senator Ellison—We would have to check that figure. I do not recall that in this budget that has just been presented. What we are talking about here is a transfer of the program from Health to Veterans' Affairs, which was widely welcomed and was considered to be a good move.

Senator CROSSIN—You might perhaps check that advice from Veterans' Affairs and how it fits in with your context of a strengthening for women budget.

Ms Caldwell—I believe it was in the context of transfers between portfolios, which is why I would like to check the figures on other portfolios that may have had a commensurate increase in the transfer.

Mr Henderson—Could I return to some comments Senator Mackay was making? The women's budget statement—it is not called that this year—has been in existence for more than a decade, for six or seven years before I had direct responsibility for the document, but certainly it is not a recent development that that document includes a substantial number of programs that are not confined to women. It has never been a document covering solely programs that are only available to women; it has always included a number of programs that are of particular relevance to women.

Senator MACKAY—I understand that, Mr Henderson. Last year's—

Mr Henderson—Well, that is not what—

Senator MACKAY—Can I finish? Last year's statement was 47 pages long and this year it is 14 pages long. What was in last year's statement, which is not in this year's, is Women and Violence, Women in Rural and Remote Areas, Women in Education and Technology—these are all headings in last year's statement—Promoting Leadership for Women, Women from Diverse Backgrounds, and Women, Defence and International Issues. None of those are in this year's. My point is: on what basis do you actually get a grab bag of issues, including national alcohol strategy and depression, and put them into a statement called 'Strengthening Our Commitment to Women'.

Mr Henderson—Grab bag is your description.

Senator MACKAY—That is correct.

Mr Henderson—What I am saying is that on your definition you probably could have described the Women's Budget Statement going back a decade or more as a grab bag of

issues, to use your phrase. It is not unique in the 1999-2000 or the 2000-01 budget to have a document that describes programs that are available to—

Senator MACKAY—Mr Henderson, I know that. I understand that. If we went back a decade, which we could, we would find a number of programs that went specifically to women. My point is this—and if you want to talk about policy matters rather than the minister that is your prerogative—

Mr Henderson—It is not policy. I am discussing the content of the Women's Budget Statement.

Senator MACKAY—I understand that. My point is this: matters are so light on in relation to this government and women that for some reason there has been an arbitrary picking out of programs which I find extraordinary in terms of establishing some nexus between this statement and women. That is why I made this somewhat facetious comment that you may as well table the budget documentation. My questions went to why these particular issues and why not some of the ones which were contained in last year's statement. I understand completely what you say.

Senator Ellison—I want to correct one thing where Senator Mackay is wrong. Leadership is included in this. It is not deleted; it is included—Potential Leadership in Local Communities.

Senator MACKAY—Yes. Last year, Minister, it was called Promoting Leadership for Women. This year it is not called that.

Senator Ellison—Because the headings are not exactly the same does not mean to say that the turf is not covered, and I think that the minister this year—

Senator CROSSIN—I think the turf has been dug up.

Senator Ellison—wanted to present something which was a brief summary, something which is most succinct, and that is a question of style. When you look at the number of issues here from families, parenting, national skills development, leadership is mentioned there. Children, the child support package, communications, superannuation, and family law—I would have thought that was a very big one and one which developed during the year, I might add, with that crucial ground-breaking legislation which enabled women in the family law sector to access superannuation which they could not before. Women in small business, equal opportunity—

Senator McLUCAS—With respect, Minister, I think we have been through it.

Senator Ellison—No, I do not think we have. It is being said that this is a grab bag and I am just showing you what a wide ranging selection of issues and topics there are.

Senator McLUCAS—Minister, I think you are misrepresenting the former women's budget statements as they used to be presented, which were, in fact, an assessment of all departments and all departments' commitments to women. It was a full assessment of a government's commitment to the women in its community. This is not. This is just an isolated selection of particular items with no relevance at all, with no cohesiveness as a document about policy and about any government's commitment to women. Let me point you to the issue that I think is the most ridiculous part of this document. In my assessment of governments' interactions with women the one issue that comes out first is education. Education features after sport in the second last chapter in this document and I think that is an insult to women.

Senator Ellison—I think where it appears really is quite facile.

Senator McLUCAS—No, I do not. I think it is actually a policy direction that is telling a message to the women of Australia.

Senator Ellison—When I was Minister for Schools I gave the isolated children the first increase they had had for some time and I am glad to see it was repeated. Of course isolated children are most relevant to the state of Queensland.

Senator McLUCAS—Absolutely.

Senator Ellison—And that is education. So is youth allowance. So is the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation, and Jobs Pathway is even more crucial. Where they appear in the document is, I would suggest, facile. What we are doing about it is the main thing; it is all there.

Senator CROSSIN—I would have thought that at least education would have been foremost in any document that had to do with strengthening women's commitment. Once again this year, the point we are trying to make in the extremely limited time we have available to question representatives from the Office of the Status of Women is that there is a lack of detail in the PBS that actually breaks down the areas of women's budgets and the itemised amounts next to them, and there is a lack of detail in this blue booklet. I can remember that last year Senator Mackay and I went to great lengths, having to ask for detail that does not appear in other portfolio areas that are there and are explicit in budget statements. Again, this year we have another good example where we do not get the detail from the Office of the Status of Women unless we spend at least the first hour wasting our time trying to pick the eyes out of some of these figures.

Senator Ellison—The time spent on this item is not of the making of the department, Senator Crossin.

Senator McLUCAS—I would like to move to the issue of the Office of the Status of Women's provision of policy advice to government. I apologise for being late, and I am not sure to whom this should be directed, but can you advise me what role the office had in providing policy advice to government about the proposed changes to the delivery of child support through the child support package.

Ms Caldwell—The Office of the Status of Women was consulted on those measures in our normal policy advising role. We worked closely with other areas of the department within the social policy group who were responsible for child support issues.

Senator McLUCAS—Did you write a paper? Sorry, I need something more than 'consulted'.

Ms Bentley—The carriage of the package of measures which relates to child support was developed by the Department of Family and Community Services in conjunction with the Child Support Agency. I believe there was an IDC. It was prior to my arrival in the office. That IDC was attended by OSW officials. In the lead-up to the budget, OSW was certainly consulted about the development of the package. It had numerous meetings with officials from other departments and, through the normal process of developing a cabinet submission, provided advice.

Senator McLUCAS—What analysis did you do to form the advice that you were providing to the government on the whole issue of the changes to delivery of child support?

Ms Caldwell—OSW has taken an interest in the area of child support for some time, so we had a range of analyses available to us. We are also in discussion with colleagues from other departments who were working on the detail of that budget measure.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you proposing to monitor these changes as they impact on women as they are being implemented?

Ms Bentley—In what respect? Sorry, I just need a bit more clarification on the question. Monitoring in broad terms or—

Senator McLUCAS—There will be a change to the way child support is received by receiving parents, and 91.7 per cent of receiving parents are women. So there is potentially going to be an impact on the way those people receive child support and also on the way that they care for their children.

Ms Caldwell—We will continue our customary role in consultation with colleagues from elsewhere in the department. Obviously, from OSW's point of view, we will be particularly interested in the impact of the measures on women, which is, of course, a combination of women who are the payee parents in child support arrangements. There are also women in second families, for example, who also have a keen interest in child support changes over time. So we, from OSW, will take a keen interest in women in both of those circumstances as well as consulting with colleagues elsewhere in social policy group within the department on these measures.

Senator McLUCAS—When you say you have got a keen interest—I understand that—how does that turn into some rigorous sort of assessment of these impacts and their potential impact on women?

Ms Caldwell—That analysis is undertaken through processes leading up to the budget in the main. We would also be, if you like, monitoring in terms of post-implementation impact to look for any unintended consequences or any particular difficulties with them. In the first instance, it would be through our input to the budget process and the cross-departmental work that Ms Bentley referred to in looking at this package of measures under the Child Support Scheme.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you aware of any academic studies done on changes to child support, not necessarily in Australia but internationally, and how they impact? I think the important word is change: when things change, what happens to women? Has there been any assessment of research nationally and overseas about what is around?

Ms Caldwell—I am not sure if you are alluding to a particular study that you have in mind.

Senator McLUCAS—No, I am not.

Ms Caldwell—The research that I am aware of is that, for example, the payment rate of child support liabilities is greater where there is ongoing contact between the parents with the child post separation. I am trying to recall the particular source of that and to clarify in my own mind whether it was Australian or internationally based research. But there is a body of research that essentially says one of the best guarantees you can have that child support liabilities will be attended to is the continuing involvement of parents with their child. That is, non-custodial, mainly fathers, who lose touch on a real personal basis with their children are those most likely to be delinquent of their liabilities.

Senator McLUCAS—What other women's groups did you consult in developing OSW's policy advice?

Ms Caldwell—We would not have consulted with women's groups on a specific budget measure. This was a budget policy proposal. So, by virtue of the budget process, we would not have gone to a community group and said, 'What do you think about this cabinet-in-confidence budget measure?' As you are aware, we do provide funding to the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children and we are also in dialogue with other groups who have a keen interest in low income women, in sole parents and in other women throughout the community. But I did not take advice on the specifics of any budget measure before the budget was brought down.

Senator McLUCAS—Maybe not on the specifics, but on the generalities?

Ms Caldwell—I did not undertake separate consultations on this particular issue of the child support changes. As you know, there has been quite an amount of background to child support going back through several reports and committees looking at this whole area of finding the best possible balance between the needs of all the parties and the paramount importance of the child.

Senator McLUCAS—I think you would agree that there has been a fairly major shift in policy and that it is gender based. I would imagine that OSW should have been keenly involved in that policy change. Is that a reasonable assessment of the situation?

Ms Caldwell—I would not share your characterisation of that. I can say that OSW was keenly involved throughout the development of this policy. That is, we held discussions with the department from the very early stages of looking at these policy proposals, or looking more broadly at the issue of child support, the difficulties with the current system which had not gone unremarked upon over many years from previous reports. But the particular work that was done on the situation of original and subsequent families was in terms of the variety of changes picked up in this package of measures, including the treatment of overtime and the formula arrangements. So OSW was very closely involved with the processes of putting together this package of measures. As Ms Bentley indicated, the primary agency in the budget context was the Department of Family and Community Services through its responsibility for the Child Support Agency, but that department consulted with our department and with OSW in particular through the detail of looking at these measures and the likely impacts on the range of families.

Senator CROSSIN—Ms Caldwell, did you hold any consultations with the Lone Fathers' Association?

Ms Caldwell—No, Senator.

Senator CROSSIN—Are you aware of anyone in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet who did?

Ms Caldwell—No, Senator, I am not.

Senator CROSSIN—You are not aware then that the national president, Mr Barry Williams, has confirmed that he had an hour long meeting with the Prime Minister as well as meetings with Ministers Newman and Anthony?

Ms Caldwell—I have read a press report to that effect, but that is all my knowledge of it.

Senator CROSSIN—Were the results of those consultations fed to the Office of Status of Women?

Ms Caldwell—No, Senator.

Senator CROSSIN—Are you aware of any other groups that were granted similar consultations or meetings in respect of the changes to the child support measures?

Ms Caldwell—As I said, the only knowledge I have of that are the claims in the media, and my experience has been that not everything that is in the media is necessarily gospel. I am not aware of any other meetings that have been held. I know that Senator Newman, as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, regularly meets with a wide range of women's organisations on a variety of issues, which would include these ones.

Senator CROSSIN—Did your office specifically get any feedback from Minister Newman, or did you specifically consult with particular groups, in relation to the child support package?

Ms Caldwell—No, Senator.

Senator CROSSIN—On what basis did you provide any advice or input into departments that were designing this bill and proposing these changes?

Ms Bentley—As part of the budget process—

Senator CROSSIN—Who did you take your advice from if you did not have consultations with broad community groups?

Ms Caldwell—The Office of Status of Women has a certain level of expertise in how the child support legislation operates under its current arrangements. We have taken a keen interest and been closely involved with its changes over time and with the debate regarding various features of the scheme. As well as that, we have correspondence that is referred to us from individual women's groups. In this instance we were involved with departmental processes from the earliest inception of the thinking around the areas and difficulties of the current scheme that needed to be addressed. We kept a close eye on those discussions as the proposal went through the internal development processes of the Department of Family and Community Services. We were able to say what were the issues in child support, what were the policy options that were available, what impact these policy options would have, what sort of cost these policy options would have, and developing that up into a budget proposal that went to cabinet.

Senator CROSSIN—And you took no advice from women's groups or groups representing custodial parents in forming your view about what that advice ought to be. Is that right?

Ms Caldwell—We have knowledge of the operation of the scheme and we do work with non-government organisations that have a keen interest in issues affecting custodial parents and sole parents. As I indicated earlier, I did not take advice by exposing potential budget measures to opinion groups, but I was well aware of the views and concerns of women's groups around this whole area, and of other women who correspond with the office and with me as acting head of the office in terms of their concerns from the situation of sole parents and also the situation of women in subsequent families who are also very concerned about the balance between the financial resources available to current and former families.

Senator McLUCAS—I just want to go to the issue of OSW's advice to the department on changes to the family tax benefit, and especially the shared care arrangements. Did OSW do an assessment of that policy proposal and its impact on women?

Ms Caldwell—Which particular measure, Senator?

Senator McLUCAS—The change from custodial parents declaring a shared care arrangement in excess of 10 per cent and their FBT being reduced by the percentage of the non-custodial parent's care. It is the shift of the support payment from the receiving parent to potentially the paying parent.

Ms Caldwell—You are referring to that element of the package of measures announced in the child support changes. They were subject to the processes I was speaking of earlier in which the range of specific child support changes were developed within the Department of Family and Community Services in consultation and discussion with ourselves. A range of options were looked at and obviously that was one of the measures which was subsequently adopted by government.

Senator McLUCAS—What modelling was done to assess the impact of those changes on women and children?

Ms Caldwell—The modelling for the likely estimated impact of that was undertaken by the Department of Family and Community Services using, I believe, administrative data from the Child Support Agency. But as I did not do that modelling first-hand, the Department of Family and Community Services could provide further details on how that modelling occurred.

Senator McLUCAS—But you were very aware of that and you could see that there would be a changed impact on custodial parents?

Ms Caldwell—There would be an impact on both custodial and non-custodial families.

Senator McLUCAS—Of course. There is always an impact both ways, isn't there? For how many families will the total level of family tax benefit payable fall? How many families will receive a lesser payment through the new proposal?

Ms Bentley—You are asking for details on policy, which is the responsibility of Family and Community Services. We actually do not have that level of detail. We could get it for you, but we do not have that detail here this evening.

Senator McLUCAS—That would be useful. I would appreciate that.

Ms Bentley—If you would like a lot more detail, you should perhaps direct your questions to the Department of Family and Community Services.

Senator McLUCAS—I just thought, given that you are keenly involved, that that would be helpful.

Ms Bentley—We can undertake to get that information for you.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you.

Ms Caldwell—We do not have that administrative detail.

Senator McLUCAS—How many single mothers will experience pro rata cuts for care under 30 per cent and how many children will this affect? The other question also goes to more of a general policy issue. What analysis were you aware of that was done to establish how the costs for non-custodial parents vary proportionately with time in care? Costs and time in care are not a direct correlation. What work was done on that?

Ms Caldwell—I do know that there was a substantial body of research undertaken in terms of the costs of children which went to the issue you refer to. There are some costs which are a factor of amount of time in care. There are other costs borne in this instance by the non-custodial family in that there are certain items that one needs whether the child is there one

night a week or three nights a week. There has been research undertaken again by the department, and I believe there was some external research that it commissioned looking at just those issues between the fixed costs and the variable costs over time. Those cost estimates were factored into the consideration of how the child support formula might be adjusted fairly to reflect those types of costs.

Senator McLUCAS—What was your assessment of the literature in the proportionality of the costs and how they can be distributed to the non-custodial and the custodial parent?

Ms Caldwell—It was certainly the case that that literature did establish that there were costs for amounts of care below that currently recognised by way of the child support formula. The *prima facie* case of whether the formula should be adjusted for lower elements of care was certainly borne out by that literature. The trade-off, of course, would be when one has a mix of fixed costs and variable costs and one wants to have a formula that is a fair balance of those but has some certainty and smoothness about it. There will always have to be some smoothing of the effect of it. That is, one cannot go to a family and say, ‘Give us your detailed household expenditure and we will develop a formula just for your particular situation.’ But certainly that research, to my recollection, bore out the general thrust of the types of movements in the formula that were subsequently announced by government. But, again, I should say that that was Family and Community Services research work.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand that.

Ms Caldwell—So I am going from recollection here.

Senator McLUCAS—Sure. Has the office made any assessment of whether or not the new shared care arrangements will impact on child-care payments for custodial parents?

Ms Caldwell—I think the estimates of the likely impact of those arrangements on custodial parents would be administrative details and the Department of Family and Community Services might be able to provide you with much more specific projections of exactly how they are likely to impact.

Senator McLUCAS—Was it an issue that was raised with you? That is the fundamental question.

Ms Caldwell—That was certainly part of the considerations in looking at the overall package of measures. There was recognition, for example, that in many cases the amount reduced to a custodial parent under the child support formula changes would be at least partly offset by increases in family allowance or family tax benefit, so there was a recognition in the figuring of how these options might be presented to government and what choices government might make about recalibrating the child support system. There was certainly a recognition that family allowance partly offset any change in the transfers between the couples in the former relationship.

Senator McLUCAS—I have a final question and you might want to take this on notice. It goes back to the issue that I raised before about monitoring the impacts on women especially. I am sorry if I am repeating myself, but can you clearly explain to me what OSW proposes to do to monitor these changes to the child support payments in the short and long term?

Ms Caldwell—I can perhaps answer that to some extent tonight. We would be monitoring that impact in conjunction with Family and Community Services. Obviously the Child Support Agency itself has extensive administrative data, both disaggregated by gender and in particular between custodial and non-custodial clients of the agency, so both they and the

Department of Family and Community Services, through their family allowance and family tax benefit records, would be able to provide us with the information when we ask, for monitoring purposes, what impact the measures are having. A certain amount of that detail I believe was in the budget material. We, with our colleagues in other departments, will monitor to see that it is as expected and there are not unintended consequences.

Senator McLUCAS—You will not actually carry out the monitoring, though—is that what you are telling me?

Ms Caldwell—If we considered there was an area where further research or analysis was needed that was not already covered in the administrative data or the ongoing research undertaken by Family and Community Services, we would certainly be only too happy to look at that. But I know for a fact that Family and Community Services have quite extensive gender disaggregated data which they routinely monitor for program administration purposes and they also have a very healthy research program, so I strongly suspect that if there were issues occurring or worthy of investigation with these, I would expect in the first instance the relevant department would look at them. If we believed there was an area that they did not cover we would certainly have a look under our funding as well.

Senator McLUCAS—What I am trying to put my finger on is what, other than talk to other departments, you really do. You have had money that you were going to spend on DV and it has not happened. You talk to the departments a lot. I would like to see some work.

Mr Henderson—In general, program responsibility resides with the agency running that. OSW has got its own programs and it is responsible for the effectiveness of the grants and support in relation to domestic violence, but OSW has never had an auditing or monitoring responsibility for other agencies' programs. Clearly there are some programs that it takes greater interest in. If issues in relation to program management in those areas come to the fore or come to cabinet, then clearly OSW would be briefing the minister assisting or the Prime Minister in those areas. In terms of the effectiveness of child support, that is the responsibility of the office and the Minister for Family and Community Services in the first instance.

Senator McLUCAS—It says here that the role is to develop policy and influence cabinet and budget decision making to ensure women's interests are considered.

Mr Henderson—That is in the development of programs, the development of policy. But once you have decided on a program and you are administering it, as distinct from developing it—once you are administering the program—that is the responsibility of that program department.

Senator McLUCAS—I would like to think that you would monitor it as well.

Mr Henderson—Clearly, in an auditor's report, for example, an effectiveness review in an audit report, OSW is going to take more interest in the programs that you have just been discussing than it might in some defence program, for example. I am not suggesting they do not have a particular focus, but, in terms of the fundamental responsibility under the administrative arrangements for managing particular programs, the primary responsibility resides with that minister and with that secretary, that agency.

Senator McLUCAS—It just seems probably a little more removed than I would like it to be. It sounds more removed, maybe, than it really is. I would like to see it a little bit more energetic and a bit more outcome focused.

Ms Caldwell—We will be providing, on notice, a list of the particular research and grant activities that we have undertaken this year. Perhaps I did not serve the office well in saying ‘discussing with colleagues’, where the performance indicator is influencing policy. Those discussions with colleagues in departments are part of our policy development. That is, we get round the table and, when other departments are considering potential policy options to address issues that their ministers wish to take to cabinet, we are at the table, we can say, ‘From a women’s perspective, have you looked at your data? This is what we are hearing through our negotiations and liaison with women. Which of the issues that you are addressing, or the options that you are considering, address these issues?’ What is in there in terms of influencing policy development, the forward looking input into future policy proposals, I have—perhaps unhelpfully—described as discussions with departmental colleagues, but that is what we are talking about.

Senator McLUCAS—With respect to that, in a broader sense, we need to measure how effectively we are going. Your position is very difficult, because you cannot say, ‘We moved this department on four places. They were going to do this, and we made them do that.’ But that is the sort of information that I think we need, as a committee, to feel confident that we are progressing along the way. Maybe you are going to have to couch it in slightly different language, but we need to know that there is a rigorous and robust defence of the women’s policy that is occurring in discussions with colleagues.

Ms Caldwell—Perhaps I should repeat Mr Henderson’s comment earlier: thus was ever so, by nature of the office.

Senator McLUCAS—To follow on from that, this is my final question. I am sorry for being greedy. Can you give me, on notice, a list of OSW’s policy priorities for the next financial year, with the sorts of issues that you know you are going to be providing policy advice on and the ones that you are generating yourselves—obviously, from your consultations—into the policy process.

Ms Caldwell—The timing of that may be somewhat subject to our internal work plan processes within the department. There is some information that is publicly available on our web site in the broad areas, such as economic security and domestic violence. The fine detail of the particular areas under that broad umbrella that we will be pursuing are subject to being settled through the departmental work plan processes.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you.

Mr Henderson—Mr Chair, could I just make a general comment? I accept that a number of your colleagues have been frustrated by the lack of disaggregation in this area. We will address that issue. I guess the explanation, rather than the excuse, is that, if you look at page 18 of our portfolio budget statement, you will see that—I do not know that we are unique—it is an extraordinary situation. In the old language, our so-called running costs, or the departmental appropriations, of which two-thirds is the salaries of the 380-odd staff, are twice as large as our programs. We have very few programs, a total of \$21 million. One of them is allowances to former Governors-General. We have never had great detail on our programs. I accept the point that OSW and OIP—

Senator CROSSIN—Mr Henderson, with all due respect, though, this is what we heard last year about being improved. You were not at our budget estimates round last year. I am wondering why, as executive coordinator of government and corporate, you are here this year, but I have not been involved in this committee all day today. But the inadequacies of the PBSs

and your promise to do something about them in the following year is what we heard exactly this time last year. We are hearing the exact same promise from you again 12 months later.

Mr Henderson—Senator, with respect, I have been in this chair for every Senate hearing since February 1998, continuously. I do not recall—

Senator CROSSIN—We had a promise from Ms Goward last year that the issues we raised about the lack of detail in the PBS would be addressed and they have not been.

Ms Caldwell—I cannot recall Ms Goward's particular promise on that because I would have expected that—and I presume I was sitting next to her.

Senator CROSSIN—Perhaps you should look at the transcript then.

Ms Caldwell—I would have been sitting next to her during that hearing, but I would have expected that she would of course defer to the department in terms of its corporate PBS standards, which determine the amount of aggregation or disaggregation that we are in a position to publish in the PBS. We are always happy to provide additional detail to you on request, though the requests do change over time. It is not always possible to anticipate which particular items you would like to ask us for.

Mr Henderson—Last year, as I recall, this statement actually had our social policy group all lumped together—OSW, OIP and Social Policy Division. I was here last year and I do not recall giving you any comment along the lines I am just offering now. We are going to consider disaggregating women's programs. I am saying that I accept the points you are making. As to how much detail we go into on the out-years, it is sensible program management to give us a bit of flexibility as between programs, because you cannot always plan precisely the timing that you want to distribute grants programs. There would always want to be a bit of flexibility between the elements.

Senator CROSSIN—Mr Henderson, with all due respect, you may well have been present last year, but my memory serves me very correctly, having just reread it recently today. All of the questions were answered by Ms Goward last year and we drew her attention to the inadequacies of the PBSs, and she did undertake to look at those and seek some improvements. So perhaps we will leave the matter there and suggest a re-read of the transcript at some stage.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Perhaps I can go to a particular area of social policy advice and use this occasion to flesh out some more detail on one area. Does the Office of the Status of Women have a level of expertise, aside from child support, in relation to maternity protection?

Ms Caldwell—We have a watching brief over that from the Status of Women point of view. Many of the international conventions are the responsibility of the portfolio and the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—What does a watching brief mean?

Ms Caldwell—That means that if you are looking at either the domestic legislation, such as the Workplace Relations Act or the International Labour Organisation and the maternity convention for example, the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business is the lead Australian agency. They consult with us in providing advice to their minister and formulating Australia's position. In the case of the work by HREOC in related areas, HREOC is of course part of the Attorney-General's portfolio, so Attorney-General's is the lead agency on those matters.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Australia's initial response on the revision of convention 103 was the subject of some level of public concern last year. Was the OSW consulted on that document which was provided to the ILO before the ILO conference addressed the revision of the convention?

Ms Bentley—Did we consult on it, or were we consulted about it?

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Were you consulted by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business?

Ms Caldwell—I know for a fact that there were some consultations. I am aware that we gave evidence when this was perhaps fresher in our minds, so I would have to remind myself of the details of the consultations that we had. You are talking about consultations at what time?

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—The consultations prior to the Australian government providing its position.

Ms Caldwell—So you are talking approximately February of last year?

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—It could have been slightly earlier than the February. Certainly the Australian government put its position as part of the formulation of a discussion paper in the lead-up to last year's conference in about May.

Ms Caldwell—And, as you point out, there were some consultations before that time.

Ms Bentley—The actual convention was in Geneva in June.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Yes. Each year it is around May or June.

Ms Caldwell—I can say that the office was consulted on that, but I do not have a recollection of the particular chapter, book and verse of the timing of it.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—On notice, I would like you to go back to that consultation and provide me with an answer to the question of whether the Office of the Status of Women raised an issue of concern—which was later discovered by the Australian government representatives at the conference, where they rectified their position—in relation to pregnancy testing with respect to employment.

Ms Caldwell—Certainly, Senator. We would need to refresh our memories, but we can certainly get you that advice.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—I think it is a fairly crucial question in relation to the efficacy of the OSW in influencing government policy development. Further to that question, I would like to know whether the OSW has been consulted in the Australian government's response to the discussion paper which would have been formulated after last year's ILO conference and in the lead-up to the discussions that will occur at this year's conference.

Ms Caldwell—Yes, we have.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—You have been consulted?

Ms Caldwell—Yes.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—What are the issues that you are particularly interested in advancing in relation to the revision of the convention?

Ms Caldwell—Obviously, the maternity protection is of keen interest to us. I am hesitating only because I would not want to inadvertently provide evidence that was in the nature of

advice to my minister. Essentially, the issues around the maternity convention go to the low signature rate of the existing convention because of the fairly prescriptive nature of the existing convention and Australia's negotiating position in terms of the draft revision of the convention which would allow it to be more acceptable to a greater range of countries, including Australia. So there are elements of the previous or existing convention which have led to a process of redrafting so that it is more likely to be acceptable to a wide range of nations by virtue of being less prescriptive of particular dotting of i's and crossing of t's about how countries may reach the aims and objectives of the convention.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—As I recall, there is one issue in particular that has quite significant relevance to Australia there. What is that issue?

Ms Caldwell—There are a number of issues.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Isn't paid leave one of them?

Ms Caldwell—That is one of the issues that are canvassed in the draft convention.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—What position is the Australian government putting in relation to paid leave? You can at least apprise me of the position that was presented to the last conference.

Ms Caldwell—That may be a matter for the relevant department. The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business has portfolio responsibility for the Australian government's position on that.

Senator Ellison—Yes, it may be best directed to that department in the relevant estimates committee.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—That certainly can be done, Senator Ellison. But I am also looking at the level of expertise that the Office of the Status of Women is applying in the policy development process, which is one of its key objectives, and at what appears, at least to me, to be a fairly basic question, which is: what was the position that Australia was putting in relation to paid maternity leave? I would have hoped that officers of the Office of the Status of Women would be able to answer it.

Ms Caldwell—Certainly, Senator. As I indicated, my hesitancy was not because of a lack of knowledge of the issues. I was trying to clarify my thoughts that my evidence did not go to the substance of advice provided by myself to ministers. Given that we are not the lead agency on this, I have questions in my own mind about my capacity to answer your question in terms of providing the committee with advice on Australia's negotiating position because our portfolio is not the ultimate arbiter of Australia's negotiating position and, while I had expertise on the issues at stake, in terms of the process of being able to provide evidence on our negotiating position which may be privy to those negotiations. That is the reason I hesitated.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Ms Caldwell, I will go back to my question: what was the position of the Australian government as presented to last year's conference on paid maternity leave?

Ms Caldwell—On paid maternity leave?

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Yes. It is a matter of public record.

Ms Caldwell—As opposed to—

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—It would be in the conference minutes.

Ms Caldwell—I do think that these questions would be better handled by reference to the relevant portfolio.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—I appreciate that, Ms Caldwell, but if you are providing or meeting a role of influencing policy development and you cannot even tell me what the policy is, one ponders what level of influence you actually have in policy development.

Ms Caldwell—Senator, I do know what the policy is, but it is not my portfolio's responsibility to provide that evidence. That is the difficulty with which I am struggling.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—You can provide this committee with evidence of anything you know to be the case, as long as it is not a matter of a cabinet-in-confidence or policy advice to government type of situation. You were just doing it earlier in relation to child support.

I do not want to bog down the committee's time on a matter that I can search on the Internet quite quickly and ascertain. I will move on to my next question, which is: further to the position that was presented to last year's ILO conference, is OSW looking at the extension of the maternity allowance to the policy proposal investigated some years back of extending it from a calculation of about six weeks social security benefit to 12?

Ms Caldwell—The issue of paid maternity leave, both in the context of the ILO convention and the prescriptions in the formulation of the convention at the moment, and other extension of access to paid maternity leave are subject to government processes at the moment in the context of the HREOC report on pregnancy in the workplace. That in particular goes to recommendations dealing with access to paid maternity leave and access to unpaid maternity leave for other categories of employees. The government has not yet announced its policy response to that.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—That report was issued in June last year.

Ms Caldwell—August.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—August last year. Can you tell us when we can anticipate a response? Or perhaps the minister might be able to answer that for us.

Ms Bentley—The Attorney-General's Department has lead carriage of that process.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Yes.

Ms Caldwell—I believe we have given evidence before that that report contained 46 recommendations spanning a fairly comprehensive selection of government agencies. So with the coordination of responses against each of the very detailed and extensive recommendations crossing over so many portfolio and agency involvements it has taken some time for the government to consider putting together its response to that report.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—So, rather than the normal response time, we are looking at a gestation period here, are we?

Ms Caldwell—We understand that the government will shortly consider the matter.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Shortly, okay. To return to ILO convention 103 and the discussion thereof: is the Office of the Status of Women aware of whether Australia's delegation to the ILO conference on this occasion will include a woman?

Ms Caldwell—Our understanding is that there will be an adviser to the delegation who is a woman, who will attend the June conference.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Are you aware of whether that woman will be attached to the maternity convention?

Ms Caldwell—She has expertise in that area and my understanding was that she was attending in particular to provide advice around the maternity convention issue.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Can you describe for me the role that OSW has played in the development of the government's policy response to the HREOC report *Pregnant and productive*?

Ms Bentley—OSW was a member of an interdepartmental committee which examined the report and met on a number of occasions. OSW has also examined the report on its own and given some considerable analysis of that report, and has also had discussions with Attorney-General's, the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business and various other portfolios about the issues raised in that report.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Do you feel that you have been effective in your role in influencing government policy on this issue?

Ms Caldwell—That is certainly our hope and intention, Senator. Government has not yet finalised its response to the report.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—I can perhaps look forward to my personal interest in the matter and maybe members of parliament will get maternity protection. I conclude my questions.

Mr Henderson—Mr Chairman, could I just correct some earlier evidence I gave and, in doing so, apologise to Senator Crossin. I was not here for the second night of our budget hearings last year, which covered most of the OSW questioning. I apologise for that. I was taken ill. Whether it was a consequence of the first day of Senate estimates I am not sure.

Senator CROSSIN—I think it was Ms Halton who was with Ms Goward that night.

Mr Henderson—Yes, it was. You are quite right. I apologise for that.

Senator CROSSIN—Ms Caldwell, was the 44th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women held in March of this year?

Ms Caldwell—Correct.

Senator CROSSIN—Did the Commonwealth government send a delegation to that?

Ms Caldwell—It did.

Senator CROSSIN—Who went?

Ms Caldwell—I did, as acting head of the national women's machinery. The delegation also included the senior adviser for legal and international matters in the Office of the Status of Women. We also had on the delegation an officer of the Australian Mission to the United Nations—that is a Foreign Affairs and Trade officer. We also had a number of advisers to the delegation from three community women's groups: Business and Professional Women, the YWCA and the Soroptimists. We also had an adviser to the delegation who was from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

Senator CROSSIN—How were those three community groups chosen?

Ms Caldwell—Late last year we had a meeting with approximately 20 women's organisations who expressed interest in particular or were active in international women's activities, in which we provided a briefing on preparations for Beijing Plus Five, of which the

preparatory committee held in conjunction with CSW 44 was a major part. Following those consultations with a broad cross-section of women's groups, we developed, in consultation with those groups, selection criteria for NGO representatives which were based on Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade guidance on the composition of delegations but on which we also consulted with members in the women's community to make sure that they were appropriate.

We also then invited interested women's groups to nominate to be members of the Australian delegation or for funding assistance. We provided a list of groups who had expressed interest in that. Final decisions on which groups were able to be accommodated were made by the Minister assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women.

Senator CROSSIN—So the minister actually selected?

Ms Caldwell—At the end of the selection process that was developed jointly with NGOs or where NGOs had an ability to inform the selection criteria.

Senator CROSSIN—So how many people in total went on that delegation then?

Ms Caldwell—Seven, I believe. I will get someone to check my maths at this hour.

Senator CROSSIN—I have written seven; I just wondered if there were others?

Ms Caldwell—We also provided funding assistance to some community representatives who are not members of our delegation.

Senator CROSSIN—Can you provide me with a list of those?

Ms Caldwell—We certainly can.

Senator CROSSIN—What was actually reported at that session on behalf of the Australian government? To save time, is there a copy of the report you presented that you could provide us with?

Ms Caldwell—That would be on the United Nations web site and we could get that to you. Most of the business of the meeting was, of course, preparations for Beijing Plus Five which were the negotiation of an outcomes document and a political declaration for consideration by governments at the special session in June. Australia's contribution to those processes is not separately identified because Australia forms part of a bigger negotiating block with a number of other like-minded countries.

Senator CROSSIN—Do you have a budget for this year's Beijing Plus Five delegation?

Ms Caldwell—If I could just clarify, I have just been reminded by my colleague that we did not present a report at that meeting in March of this year. We had in fact lodged a report with the Secretary-General in November of last year as Australia's contribution to the Beijing Plus Five country reporting process.

Senator CROSSIN—The United Nations session in March which was a Nairobi—

Ms Caldwell—No, March was associated with a five-year review of the Beijing world conference on women.

Senator CROSSIN—I am actually thinking of the session that was held in New York from 28 February to about 17 March or so.

Ms Caldwell—Yes, that was through the Commission on the Status of Women. Nairobi was an earlier part of the process.

Senator CROSSIN—Yes. Did you provide a report to that session in New York?

Ms Caldwell—In November, we provided a country report to the United Nations on progress since the Beijing world conference on women.

Senator CROSSIN—And you did not have to report again in March. Is that right?

Ms Caldwell—Our written report was lodged in November.

Senator CROSSIN—I am not sure if, in trawling through our papers, we have got that. A full copy of that report is available on your web site?

Ms Caldwell—I believe so. It is quite a lengthy document, but I believe it is accessible through our web site.

Senator CROSSIN—Have you finalised your delegation for the Beijing Plus Five this year?

Ms Caldwell—The delegation is close to being finalised. There are still some details to be settled.

Senator CROSSIN—How many will be on that delegation?

Ms Caldwell—Subject to the settling of the details, it would have approximately 14 people on it, not all of whom are government officials and not all of whom are funded by the Commonwealth.

Senator CROSSIN—Are there any community based organisations or NGOs?

Ms Caldwell—Yes, Senator. Again we have representatives of the YWCA, Business and Professional Women and Soroptimists who are attending. They are self-funding.

Senator CROSSIN—Just before I get onto Beijing Plus Five, can I just take you back to the New York meeting in February-March? Were there any indigenous women as part of your delegation?

Ms Caldwell—We did not have an indigenous woman on the delegation itself. However, we provided funding assistance for an indigenous woman to attend as a non-government organisation observer. That is, of those women's groups who have taken interest and have been following the process through the UN since Beijing, we unfortunately were not able to identify any indigenous groups or indigenous women who had taken an interest in the ongoing formal UN review process. However, when we canvassed interest in providing funding assistance to women's groups to attend, we did have an indigenous woman assisted by government as an observer.

Senator CROSSIN—Who was that?

Ms Caldwell—Patricia Lees, who was involved with the Queensland government's report on domestic violence as well as the task force on indigenous family and domestic violence which had recently reported as well as having other interests in indigenous affairs.

CHAIR—Excuse me, the committee has an agreement to finish at about 11 o'clock. It is just about that hour now: will you be much longer?

Senator CROSSIN—Can I have another five minutes? The reason I want to get to the end of the delegation for the Beijing Plus Five questions is that we will be meeting after Beijing has happened, you see. The next round of estimates is after Beijing has happened.

CHAIR—If it is five minutes, Senator, of course.

Senator CROSSIN—All right. How long are you suggesting it is going to be before you finalise those 14?

Ms Caldwell—Many of them are finalised. There are still some whom we are awaiting confirmation of.

Senator CROSSIN—Would you be able to provide this committee with that list once it is finalised, or at least the names of those already known?

Ms Caldwell—Yes.

Senator CROSSIN—I have got some questions about funding and preparations for Beijing Plus Five, but what is actually planned to occur before the delegation goes overseas?

Ms Caldwell—My colleague has been in discussion with those delegates. We are looking at continuity. Two of the three non-government organisation representatives were also present with us in March so we have continuity and they are across the arrangements between now and that time, so it is a well-practised team. We also have a certain amount of continuity in the official representation at that meeting as well.

Senator CROSSIN—Will there be an indigenous representative amongst the 14?

Ms Caldwell—We are certainly funding an indigenous non-government organisation. I am not sure if we actually have an indigenous person.

Senator CROSSIN—What organisation is that?

Ms Caldwell—Sorry, an indigenous woman. The indigenous delegate to whom we have made the offer is a woman by the name of Grace Bond.

Senator CROSSIN—And she is from?

Ms Caldwell—She is also involved with the group that undertook the task force on indigenous violence in Queensland that is well connected with a range of indigenous issues, not just domestic violence. She has been pivotal in that process.

Senator CROSSIN—I understand from reading one of the NGO's newsletters that there are training sessions in Canberra for delegations to the United Nations meetings. Can you explain to me what they consist of?

Ms Caldwell—We held one in approximately February of this year as a follow-up to our December meeting. We met with women's NGOs in December to talk about the Plus Five process overall. As a result of discussions at that meeting we undertook to provide some briefing from Foreign Affairs officials—which I believe we did in mid-February in preparation for the March meeting and for the June meeting. The government has also agreed to fund an NGO coordinator and other women in the NGO sector to assist NGOs with their preparations and to be a conduit of information. So those groups with an interest in human rights are also providing some training separate from us or additional to us.

Senator CROSSIN—So is training a fairly harsh word? Would you describe them more as briefings?

Ms Caldwell—I am not sure at this hour I could differentiate in a helpful way.

Senator CROSSIN—I wonder if they were being trained to respond in certain ways on your behalf?

Ms Caldwell—No. The training was simply to acquaint people who have not been through the doors of the United Nations before what the protocols and procedures are and how the

mechanics of that work and the way in which one makes an intervention. It is obviously a very formalised arrangement over there.

Senator CROSSIN—Who are the facilitators at these sessions then?

Ms Caldwell—In the one that we conducted it was people from our own Office of the Status of Women and also people from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who have some expertise on United Nations procedures and how it is organised for the funding that we are providing indirectly to assist with NGO preparations for it, and they would get other NGOs who have experience in operations at the international and global level and with UN processes in particular.

Senator CROSSIN—Do you fund all of these representatives to come to Canberra for these briefing sessions?

Ms Caldwell—I believe we did on those occasions. Yes, we provided—

Senator CROSSIN—So BPW and YWCA are funded to come to those briefing sessions, are they?

Ms Caldwell—Some organisations had representatives in Canberra. For the first round of funding we provided assistance for women to attend that; for the second round of funding we gave a block grant of, I believe, \$10,000 to one of the principal women's organisations and we asked them to administer getting people to and from Canberra.

Senator CROSSIN—Which organisation was that?

Ms Caldwell—Eileen Pittaway, University of New South Wales and Australian National Council on Refugee Women. Eileen has also been appointed by the United Nations to CONGO, the coordinating organisation of non-government organisations.

Senator CROSSIN—We can put the other questions about Beijing Plus Five on notice for you. But there are certainly a number of countries that have responded to the Secretary-General of the United Nations' 1998 questionnaire about the implementation of Beijing Plus Five. A number of countries have put their questionnaire about the implementation on the UN web site; it is available on the United Nations web site. Did Australia respond to that questionnaire?

Ms Caldwell—It did. That is the document to which I referred that we lodged in approximately October or November last year. It has been recorded by the United Nations as having completed the requirements of the questionnaire and it is available both on the OSW web site and, we believe, on the UN web site.

Senator CROSSIN—That is one of my questions. I do not believe it is available on the UN web site and I was wondering if you could find out why that is the case.

Ms Caldwell—We can certainly see, Senator. I am afraid that we provided it to the Secretary-General in October or November last year, so I am not quite sure what delays may have been encountered. We certainly put it on the web site which we have control over. We have little influence over the UN web site.

Senator CROSSIN—I have one last question. Senator Margaret Reynolds, before she left last year, asked you for an update on your response to the 44 recommendations that I think you were—

Ms Caldwell—You are referring to the 12 critical areas of concern. That is contained in that document. It is quite a fulsome document.

Senator CROSSIN—I think you provided her with what you had done about those areas. I thought there were around 44 and you had given her 33 or 34 to 44, but not the first 33 or so.

Ms Caldwell—Senator, we will consult our records. I am not sure if this is actually the United Nations instrument that you are referring to.

Senator CROSSIN—It might actually be CEDAW. It is the CEDAW recommendations.

Ms Caldwell—We can certainly update that for you, Senator.

Senator CROSSIN—We will put the rest on notice.

CHAIR—That brings to a conclusion our examination of the Office of the Status of Women. I thank officers for their attendance and assistance and my Senate colleagues for their questions. The committee will continue tomorrow with an examination of the Finance and Administration portfolio and will resume its examination of the Prime Minister's portfolio on Wednesday, 24 May. I remind you that the committee has set 28 June 2000 as the date by which answers are required. I thank the minister very much, officers Mr Henderson and Mr Oliver for their attendance and Hansard and Sound and Vision for their services.

Committee adjourned at 11.10 p.m.

