

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL
RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

BENEFITS OF VIDEOCONFERENCING

In the last full year (2008/09) 53,799 appearances used videoconferencing. The value of the benefit gained, predominantly in cost avoidance, across the justice sector is \$47.32 million to date. This is based on:

- Reduction in the number of transports conducted by the Department of Corrective Services and the associated vehicle and staff cost
- Reduction in the number of air charters required to transport juvenile offenders from metropolitan centres to remote courts
- Reduction in costs associated with expert witness appearances in court
- Reduction in costs associated with travel, accommodation and hours for interpreters to regional areas
- Reduced travel costs by Legal Aid in house and external resources
- Avoidance of construction work on holding cells.

In addition to the tangible benefits, a number of intangible benefits were reported. These include:

- More effective utilisation of resources: Videoconferencing prevents thousands of hours of Corrective Services, Police and Legal Aid time from being spent in travelling between correctional facilities and courts. When not spent on the road, this translates into thousands more person hours policing on the streets, on duty in correctional facilities or providing legal advice to clients.
- Similarly, the time of expert witnesses, such as medical specialists, can be reduced significantly, reducing cost to the system and reducing the broader community impact. For example, there is an impact on patients and waiting lists for every hour a psychiatrist spends travelling to court or waiting for a matter to be heard.
- Improved, more productive, use of resources, including interpreters, will assist with the management of rising demand across the justice sector.
- Reduced risk to the community and officers from escape or attempted escape during transport.
- Reduced OH&S risks from assault during transport and from fatigue caused by excessive hours on the road. Police, in remote areas particularly, can spend as much as 10 hours a day on transport duties.
- Improved prisoner wellbeing, through reduced transport, maintenance of education, especially for juveniles, and improved access to specialist services.