

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4

Tuesday 6 June 2000

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

**URBAN AFFAIRS AND PLANNING,
ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, AND HOUSING**

The Committee met at 8.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. I. Cohen

The Hon. D. T. Harwin

The Hon. J. Hatzistergos

The Hon. I. M. Macdonald

The Hon. Janelle Saffin

PRESENT

The Hon. Dr A. J. Refshauge, *Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing*

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning

Ms S. Holliday, *Director-General*

Mr P. Campbell, *Manager, Financial Services*

Department of Housing

Mr A. Cappie-Wood, *Director-General*

Mr W. Bailey, *Director, Finance*

Department of Aboriginal Affairs

Mr A. Cappie-Wood, *Acting Director-General*

CHAIR: I welcome you to this public hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 and thank the Minister and his officers for attending. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the portfolio areas of Urban Affairs and Planning, Aboriginal Affairs, and Housing. There are some procedural matters to be dealt with before we proceed—firstly, the broadcasting of proceedings. As you would be aware, part 4 of the resolution referring the budget estimates to the Committee requires the Committee to hear evidence on the budget estimates in public.

Under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council, this Committee has resolved to authorise the media to broadcast sound and video excerpts of its public proceedings held here today. The Committee's resolution conforms with the guidelines governing the broadcasting of proceedings adopted by the Legislative Council on 11 October 1994. The attendant on duty has a copy of those guidelines. I emphasise that only members of the Committee and the witnesses before them may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery are not considered to be part of the proceedings and, therefore, should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee, as with reporting the proceedings of both houses of Parliament, you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation is placed on anything that is said before the Committee.

With respect to approaches to the table, while there has been provision in previous years' budget estimates resolutions for members of a Committee and substitute members to refer directly to their own staff at any time, there is no such provision in the current resolution. Members and their staff are therefore advised that any messages should be delivered through the attendant on duty or the clerks. For the benefit of members and Hansard and for the effective operation of this Committee, it is very important that departmental officers identify themselves by name, position and department or agency before answering each question. With respect to the types of questions and the validity thereof, there is wide latitude allowed in asking questions on any of the budget estimates and related documents before the Committee. However, where a member is seeking information in relation to a particular aspect of a program or a subprogram, it will help the Minister and the Committee if the program or subprogram is identified.

I advise the Minister that the Committee at its deliberative meeting has decided not to deal with the portfolios in any rigid way but it would be sensible for Committee members to ask a series of questions on one particular portfolio so that the Minister's advisers can approach the table at the relevant moment. We have agreed also, Minister, if there are any divisions that we will stop the clock and of course allow you to attend to that matter, and we will adjourn until you are able to return. The Committee has also resolved that if there are questions that are outstanding that members really want to ask personally rather than on written notice, the Committee is prepared to stay behind beyond the 10 p.m. deadline. Obviously, the Committee is in your hands in that regard but rather than call the Committee back for another expensive hearing, that is the way that we would prefer to do it, if we can work that way. I now declare the proposed expenditure open for examination and ask for any questions.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Minister, I refer to the Ministerial Development Corporation program, in Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, at page 22-65. Could you explain the Ministerial Development Corporation program and its spending of \$33.658 million last financial year?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I think Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2 has a good description of the origin of the Ministerial Development Corporation and the fact that effectively one of its jobs is to wind up the activities of a number of the growth centre corporations that were set up under the Development Corporations Act 1974, for instance Macarthur and Bathurst-Orange. Mainly I think it is the Macarthur area that is being wound up. It depends effectively on the price that we are getting, what we are selling and what the market is showing at the time. Sales in 1998-99 were \$6.1 million. It is anticipated that 1999-2000 sales will be \$31 million, and \$16.7 million for 2000-01. So it really is winding up the old growth centre corporations.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So this winding up explains why there is hiving off.

Dr REFSHAUGE: It will vary according to what we are selling and what it is.

The Hon. I. COHEN: In Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, at page 22-27, subprogram 74.1.2 Regional Planning describes plans for the implementation of coastal policy. Minister, will you be creating a statutory framework for the implementation of the coastal policy? I refer to the annual report of the Coastal Council of New South Wales at page 21, which states:

The Coastal Council's considerations have addressed two other important and related areas: the enforceability of the Coastal Policy and the attitude of the Land and Environment Court to its role in ensuring compliance with the coastal policy.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I think it is fair to say that the Coastal Council has done a great job since it has been established. One of the changes, I suppose, that has come through the years is that DAs or changes to zoning subject to a LEP [local environmental plan] that went to the department now goes through the Coastal Council as a bureaucratic formality. That does not mean that it ticks them off as a formality. It uses its own analysis to look at any proposed changes to see that they fit in with the coastal policy. As a result, it has effectively been a major part of the assessment that is happening as well.

We obviously would like councils to work with the Coastal Council earlier on if that is seen as appropriate. But at the moment there is not a government position to change legislation, as you are suggesting, to have a statutory base, apart from, I suppose, the possibility of looking at regional environmental plans, which would be the way in which we would incorporate the Coastal Council's views into projected changes, or also through state environmental planning policies (SEPPs).

The Hon. I. COHEN: Could you advise what funds are made available for land acquisition?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Usually \$1.5 million a year for the coast. Last year we combined two years together to purchase one block of land at Goalen. We combined two amounts of \$1.5 million, the allocation for two years, to make up \$3 million last year, but the yearly allocation is \$1.5 million. The most recent acquisitions were 80 hectares at Cullendulla Creek at Batemans Bay in 1997, which is now a nature reserve; 106 hectares at Goalen Head at Tathra, now part of Mimosa Rocks National Park; and 0.8 hectares at Boat Harbour in Port Stephens in 1999.

[Short adjournment]

The Hon. I. COHEN: Minister, you did identify a number of areas of acquisition?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are there other areas that you could identify, and what the criteria are used to assess priority areas for acquisition.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I very much work on the advice of the Coastal Council and the department in regard to acquisition. It is a matter of strategically looking at parcels of land that really have significance in protection of the coastline and making sure that issues of public access and special scenic and conservation values are part of that determination.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are you talking about biodiversity as well?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, I suppose in the broader sense. The Coastal Council uses that definition. It works on the definitions. I take its advice.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to the section commencing with the heading "Total Expenses" on page 22-4, Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2. Could you explain, Minister, the allocations to regional planning \$15.1 million, sustainable development \$10.9 million and planning system \$7.5 million?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, I can. The department's funding is broken up into a number of subsections, because it has, I suppose, followed the way in which the department has been fulfilling its role. There is obviously metropolitan planning, which deals with the greater metropolitan region and all the planning issues in relation to that. Regional planning goes with areas that are outside the greater metropolitan area. Also within the budget papers RACAC [Resource and Conservation Assessment Council] comes under regional planning as well, so some of the significant changes from year to year in the funding for regional planning have included changes in the budget supplementation for RACAC and the process of dealing with the regional forest agreements, which are one-off. Therefore, you might have more in one year and less in another year because of the size of the regional forest agreements that are done in those particular years.

You will find that each of the areas, I suppose from a bureaucratic point of view, is trying to give a clear direction of emphasis. Sustainable development and regional planning do, to some degree, overlap. Some of the people working in regional planning in previous years are now being seen to be working more in sustainable development, so there is an increase in the sustainable development area and a decrease in regional planning, but it really is an internal change in numbers that has occurred. On the other hand, we have also had a

specific increase in funding for regional planning, which is a number of specific projects to assist areas that could do with our help, particularly taking on issues like the major investment and job creation that is going in the Griffith area to assist the councils in that area to be able to cope with the hoped for influx of people to take up those jobs.

The Hon. I. COHEN: At the end of the section headed "Total Expenses", which begins on page 22-4 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 22-5 states:

The department will initiate seven new projects, four in regional NSW and three in Metropolitan Sydney, which will actively involve local government, the community and other stakeholders in ensuring the planning framework is in place to ensure jobs and investment in New South Wales.

What are these seven new projects?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I will give you a copy of the press release I put out on budget night because it goes into them in a bit more detail. Four are in country areas. Eden-Bombala-Bega is one of them; Griffith, Leeton and Narrandera is second; Lismore, and I suppose I should call it Cellulose Valley, is the third one; and Port Kembla-Tallawarra is the fourth one. In the city there are three—the St George-Sutherland area, the Parramatta-Chatswood rail corridor, and the region around the Olympic site at Homebush, but it is the greater Homebush area. Obviously the focus has been on the development of Homebush Bay for the Olympic site, but it is important that in the future we do not lose whatever values it provides. We are also doing effective planning for the surrounding areas to maximise effective land use in those areas, but it is a matter of dealing in almost all cases with problems of growth. We are trying to assist local councils and the communities to maximise the effective use of their land

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to subprogram 74.1.1 Metropolitan Planning, at page 22-25 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2. Given that the budget papers claim at page 22-4 that a major feature of the department's strategic direction includes ensuring that development is environmentally sustainable, what proportion of the \$10.9 million allocated for sustainable development, referred to on page 22-4, will be spent on urban sustainability projects, and could you perhaps outline the nature of these projects?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I will take further advice on that. I think it might be difficult to disaggregate that to say how much is spent on metropolitan and how much is spent outside metropolitan.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Perhaps you could let the Committee know in general terms how the department will ensure that these funds are spent on sustainability projects, which includes substantial community participation.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I suppose it is fair to say that our concern is to make sure there is community participation in decision making about land use, changes of land use and effective land use.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you have specific funding directed towards that?

Dr REFSHAUGE: The department's role generally is to oversee that legal processes have been gone through, significantly through the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which prescribes community input and how it should happen. When difficulties or major projects are involved, part of the role of the department is to work with the council and the community to try to resolve some of those difficult issues. With any developments in, say, State environmental planning policies, we have legal requirements about how we would consult on them and follow them through. To bring that together with the idea of sustainable development, I think it is fair to say that we have been looking at and been part of a change in Australia that is focusing more on sustainable development issues. If you look at the early days of this Government, and for instance at the Newington development in the Olympic village, a lot of issues in regard to sustainability have been built into the structures there, into the houses.

The more recent proposal for development of the ADI site at St Marys has significant sustainability focus in the draft REP [regional environmental plan]. At the moment we are going through a process of community consultation which will allow significant comment about sustainability. A recent master plan that I approved around the White Bay area had significant changes in regard to sustainability as a result of the community consultation process that we had gone through and specific suggestions that had come from the community, including community representatives from Leichhardt Council. I think we can point to a number of areas where we are not only specifically and legally having to consult but in which changes have occurred as a result of that consultation and particularly in enhancing environmental sustainability in the end result.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is there provision in the budget for staff training in relation to urban sustainability issues?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is certainly provision in the budget for staff training. Sustainability would be a reasonable area for people to be seeking to further their expertise in. Certainly I take seriously the need for staff training to be an important part of modern management of agencies.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I refer to Budget Paper No. 4, page 83, and to the Foreshore House costings. Minister, would you be able to tell the Committee what was the original budget for the refurbishment of Foreshore House? What was the final cost of the refurbishment of Foreshore House, and can you provide a breakdown of the full costs associated with the refurbishment?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, because it has not been completed. We do not have the final details.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Are you able to provide the Committee then with an interim figure up to this time?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I have provided that to the House already. That was a question on notice and it has been answered. I will see if I can find what question it was and refer it back to you.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: How many days a week does the chairman of the authority spend in his role as chairman?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I require him to be available to me seven days a week, 24 hours a day as chairman, as I do for all of my people who are responsible to me. Formally he works four days a week.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Minister, are you able to provide the Committee with a costing for the cost of the chairman's desk in his office?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes—zero. He is using his existing desk.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What was the total cost of the furnishings in the chairman's office, including art works?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Zero. We are using the existing work.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What is the total amount of fees that are currently paid to the chairman?

Dr REFSHAUGE: For that job only?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Thank you, Minister. Yes, for that job only.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I do not have that in front of me. I will find out for you. Board members are remunerated through an assessment through the Premier's directives for particular categories of responsibilities. I presume that in time one would be expected to work within those, but we have not gone outside them.

CHAIR: That is a question on notice.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Is the chairman entitled to, or did he receive, a bonus in either 1998, 1999 or 2000?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I have no idea about 1998—I was not the Minister then. No, he did not.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: He did not receive a bonus in the other years?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What is the nature and cost of the secretarial support given to the chairman?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is one person who is support for him, shared with the Darling Harbour Authority as well.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: One staff member?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Part time; she has full-time responsibility for the chief executive of the Darling Harbour Authority and provides on top of that secretarial assistance to the chair of the Sydney Harbour Authority.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Does the authority provide the chairman with a mobile phone?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No. Does the department provide you with one?

The Hon. I. COHEN: We all get one.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I do not, not from the Parliament. What else do you get?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Has the chairman travelled overseas during the past financial year on authority business?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Not for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Do you say there was no cost associated with the chairman's position to the authority in relation to overseas travel?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Not in a broad sense, no.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Was the chief executive officer of the authority entitled to, or did he receive, a bonus in 1998, 1999 or 2000?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I do not know for 1998 but for the present year, 1999-2000, yes, he did.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: How many court actions on any matter was DUAP [Department of Urban Affairs and Planning] a party to over the last financial year?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We do not know but we will get the information for you on that.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Would you like me to repeat the question? It is on the record.

CHAIR: That is a question on notice.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I might add the following matters, since they are related, and if you want to take them on notice, that is fine. Was the department or the Minister sued in 1999-2000? If so, how many times was it sued and on what basis were the actions brought?

Dr REFSHAUGE: What do you mean by sued?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Just the common ordinary usage of the word, of legal action being taken against the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning in relation to matters arising out of portfolio responsibilities.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Both the department and the Minister?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Yes.

Dr REFSHAUGE: We will take that on notice and get back to you.

CHAIR: That is a question on notice.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I might clarify that further—any civil action that was brought against you basically.

Ms HOLLIDAY: So you are talking about civil actions rather than—

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Yes, indeed.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Is that only civil actions that you are asking for information about?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Yes, civil actions, if that clarifies the request and makes it easier for you.

Dr REFSHAUGE: We will get the answer to you.

CHAIR: That again is on notice.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What was the total cost of external legal services, including counsels' fees in 1999-2000?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We do not have details on that. We will get back to you.

CHAIR: Again, that is a question on notice.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Is there any accounting of internal legal costs, and, if so, what was the total of all legal costs incurred in 1999-2000?

Dr REFSHAUGE: If it is a matter of legal costs that are associated with the general functioning of the department, many of those would be seen as the core business of the Government or agencies, for instance, Parliamentary Counsel developing LEPs [local environmental plans]. We do not have a costing of that because that is done as core business and it is not necessarily costed. It is a significant part of the responsibility of the agency, though, so I do not think we would be able to give you a figure.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I might give that some further thought during the next block of questions and see if I want to make that more specific for you. Minister, when you are going through these matters, would you provide details of the ongoing costs of the initial action and the appeal in the case of *Meriton Apartments Pty Limited v The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning*, and could you itemise it that rather than just including it in the overall question that I have asked, so that it could be specifically identified?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Do you mean the action in regard to Green Square?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Yes.

Dr REFSHAUGE: That was against the local council, not against the department.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: You were joined as a party, thought, were you not?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, but the action was not against us.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Yes.

Dr REFSHAUGE: You might want to think about that. The cost of any action that we would have taken about the appeal would be very small, because the appeal has not taken place. Any costs associated with the appeal would be very small.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: But you were legally represented in the initial hearings, were you not, as a party joined to the action?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, but the appeal has not taken place, so there would be very little cost in regard to the appeal, as I said in answer to your question.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: No, my question was about the ongoing costs of the initial action to which you were a party in which there was a judgment handed down by the Land and Environment Court last December.

Dr REFSHAUGE: There would be no ongoing costs.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Well, the costs.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: And also, as part of that answer, could you specify what the council's fees were for Mr McClellan, QC, and Mr Galasso?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I do not have that information.

CHAIR: Could the Committee get that information provided on notice?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, because I would not have information on what the local council is paying for its fees.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I turn to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Minister.

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is not my responsibility.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Sorry to keep swapping agencies.

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is not my agency responsibility either.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Has the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority prepared any plan to assume control of the Museum of Contemporary Art building? If so, what are the details? Does the authority have any interest in assuming control of the building?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Thank you.

Dr REFSHAUGE: There have been plans about how the Museum of Contemporary Art may function better in the future. A number of people, including the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, have thought about and have been contemplating that. The museum is in a very prominent part of the Sydney Harbour foreshore, but as far as assuming control, no.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, on page 22-12, under Asset Acquisitions, states:

Significant land acquisitions are being finalised in respect of the Western Sydney open space corridors.

Minister, could you explain the plans that this statement refers to, and do these plans include the former ADI site at St Marys?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No. In fact, I will refer you to a press release that I put out yesterday, which is reported eloquently in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* by another person in this room, that highlighted a major corridor of some 26 kilometres.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Just send me your press release.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I will send you the press release.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I would appreciate it. In the last Parliament I received your press releases. I do not get them any more.

Dr REFSHAUGE: The fax streaming must have changed. As your name begins with a C, you should be right at the top.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I would like to think so, and as a Green also.

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, it does not include the ADI site.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Has any funding been provided for development and implementation of an REP to cover the former ADI site?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, but that is in response to a development proposal by the Federal Government and Lend Lease for the Federal Government site, the ADI site.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is there any provision in this budget for the provision of infrastructure if urban development results from a decision to proceed with proposed development of the former ADI site?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is still ongoing action by the department. We have put out the plan for community consultation. That is being assessed. The councils themselves are responding, as is the community. That will then be assessed by the department. Obviously, part of its normal ongoing function is to assess REP submissions and then advise me of any changes that should be made to that REP if the Government's decision is to go ahead. So, yes, ongoing funding would be provided, but it would be hidden within the normal functions of government. You would not be able to work out what that is costing completely for a major site in the metropolitan area.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is there potential for preservation of that site if community consultation overwhelmingly points in that direction? Is there opportunity or potential for the protection of that site?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, there is. At the moment the draft REP conserves a major part of that site, some 670 hectares.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Out of how many acres?

Dr REFSHAUGE: A total of 1,545 hectares.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Less than half, Minister. It is hardly a major part.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Well, if you think Centennial Park is not a major park.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Not a major part—it is less than 50 per cent.

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is not a majority part but it is a major part, obviously. You are a major part of the upper House but you are not a majority.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I would be happy to be a minor party if there was some agreement on the ADI site.

Dr REFSHAUGE: That is in the draft REP that is being proposed. Some submissions suggest that that should be expanded. Obviously we will look at submissions on that.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to page 22-25, Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, subprogram 74.1.1 Metropolitan Planning. Given that two major changes to the planning system will be required as a result of the part 3 review, have any funds been designated for establishing improved community participation processes? Specifically, what provision is made for improved regional planning?

Dr REFSHAUGE: The proposed changes to part 3 have not been finalised so, in that sense, there has been no determination of the direction in which the Government will go. Certainly a number of options and submissions have been received, but there is no government policy determination on that. I am not sure what you are suggesting, but if, in the upshot of our determination, there is an area in where we believe community consultation should be expanded or particularly made an appropriate part of it, it would be, in most cases, the responsibility of the local authorities to ensure that community consultation took place and not the role of the department to organise it.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So you are saying the department does not have any funds designated for that process?

Dr REFSHAUGE: That process has not been completed, so it is not as if the outcome is known. As far as community consultation on the part 3 report is concerned, we have already been doing that and have already expended money on that.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to the department's total expenses by program area, on page 22-4 of Budget Paper No. 3, volume 2. Of the \$45.9 million allocated to the Metropolitan Planning program area, what

allocations will be made for a review of the Illawarra REP 1986 and implementation of the recommendations of the commission of inquiry in relation to the Illawarra escarpment? What proportion of these funds is allocated for consultants' fees? What proportion is allocated for implementation of existing sustainability planning strategies carried out by bodies such as the Illawarra Catchment Management Committee?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I think the suggestion is that we would divide our budget to, say, the Illawarra escarpment commission of inquiry, which is completed, and now we will spend some time working on that. We do not divide our budget like that. We expend resources in the sense of having people in the department to work on it and to develop whatever is required through that.

If consultants are required—it is rare for the department to spend a lot of money on consultants on a commission of inquiry report, because the information would have been there in most cases through the commission of inquiry process. No decision has been made about the commission of inquiry report recommendations as yet, but we have been having serious discussions with council and the community. People have their views about how they would interpret the commission of inquiry recommendations. To ask what is the budget allocation is not a productive question because we do not allocate it in that way. We do not disaggregate in that way.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Ms Holliday, what was the total amount spent on consultants in 1999-2000 by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning? How much does the department anticipate spending on consultants in 2000-01?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I seek your advice, Chairman. I thought the protocol was to ask the Minister, and I may, if I want to, ask a departmental officer to answer the question.

CHAIR: A member may ask a departmental officer, but if you persist in answering, that is in order.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I am able to ask Ms Holliday directly myself, if you wish. But I do not need to restate it, as I have asked my question.

Dr REFSHAUGE: The consultant expenditure in 1999-2000 was \$1.9 million. The expectation in 2000-01 is \$2.2 million.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Ms Holliday, how much is the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning paying the University of New South Wales Faculty of the Built Environment or others for the review into SEPP 1? Why is the department not undertaking this review itself?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is paying \$17,000. We believe the expertise is there, and it has reviewed it.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Ms Holliday, I am talking now about the current financial year, 1999-2000, which we are still just in by a matter of weeks. Have any department staff travelled overseas during the past financial year? If so, how many staff have gone? Where did they go? What class did they travel? What was the total cost of each trip?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Three departmental officers travelled overseas. The Director-General, Sue Holliday, travelled to the United States and Europe at the beginning of this financial year and more recently to Lord Howe Island to review its REP. The third trip was by Deborah Dearing, who is in New Zealand at the moment on a strategic leaders program.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: The balance of my question, Minister, I assume you are going to take on notice: In what class did they travel and what was the total cost of each trip?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

CHAIR: We will now proceed to the Housing portfolio.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to page 22-40, subprogram 76.1.1 Housing Assistance. The budget papers note that the total number of households receiving ongoing housing assistance is 140,488 for 2000-01. How many public housing dwellings are still located in the Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks areas?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I will take that on notice. I do not have the actual figures.

The Hon. I. COHEN: No idea at all?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, I do have lots of ideas but I do not want to mislead you. I will give you an exact figure.

The Hon. I. COHEN: If you do not know how many, given that there are quite a few, I understand, does the Government intend to sell any of these public housing dwellings?

Dr REFSHAUGE: A large number of them are leased, not owned.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Leased by the Government?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, and therefore negotiations with the landlords would determine what the outcome would be in the long term. It is not necessarily within our ability to totally determine what the future will be.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You are talking about Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks area as three separate areas where dwellings are leased—

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, a significant number of boarding houses are leased.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are they individual dwellings or boarding houses?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Boarding houses.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you own any in that area?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you know how many you own?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, but we will get the specific figures for the Committee.

CHAIR: That is a question on notice.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Regardless of whether you know how many the department owns, perhaps you could tell the Committee whether the Government intends to sell any of the ones the department owns?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We have a program that is trying to disaggregate large collections of public housing, so we may sell some in an area and buy others in that same area. If there is an answer yes to your question, then the answer is yes. If it is about changing the proportion, then the answer is no.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So you do not maintain the same proportion but you might—?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We also change proportions depending on where the demand is, so we are not locked into only having places where they exist when there might be pressure to have places where people want to live elsewhere where their family or friends are, where their social support levels and health support systems are. Our system does move. There is no guarantee it stays static. That movement will depend on both the dynamics at the local level, whether the community would be better served by having less density of public housing, by scattering or pepper-and-salting it through that area better, or whether it would be better served by transferring housing to areas of greater need according to our clients' requests.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I take it from your last statement, Minister, that people in public housing who prefer to be in any of those areas will not be forced to be relocated to other areas of Sydney?

Dr REFSHAUGE: People in leased accommodation, when the owner of the building decides not to renew the lease, would have to move.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do those people have any security of geographic tenure to be able to remain in that community?

Dr REFSHAUGE: They do not have absolute guarantee but certainly we work very hard to keep them in the area of their choice. Some of them might chose to move elsewhere.

The Hon. I. COHEN: When you say you work very hard, do you have the resources, personnel or staff to put into that?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We have the resources of the staff of the department.

The Hon. I. COHEN: That is pretty weighty. Does that guarantee them—

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, because if the only place that is available right at that time is very expensive, we are unlikely to be spending, say, a million dollars buying a unit for somebody if that is the only place that is available at that time. We would have to use a certain responsibility for taxpayers' money to ensure that we are getting effective use of that money for the people we are trying to serve.

The Hon. I. COHEN: With your responsibility to the taxpayer, you would be talking also of selling off some government-owned dwellings or properties in that area and encouraging people to move out?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Not necessarily at all.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is that no, or not necessarily? I do not quite understand.

Dr REFSHAUGE: As circumstances change, our policy will evolve to meet those circumstances. I do not want to say that things are static and they will never move. They do move. We need to move with the needs of the community, the needs of the people of New South Wales on whose behalf we are spending taxpayers' money. We will not move away from those requirements. Those are important things, to have a dynamic system and a system that is responsible for the community needs. If you are in a place in a particular area that is owned by us and you are eligible to be in that place, we would not be trying to move you out unless there was mutual agreement.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So people who wish to stay in those particular areas I have mentioned have every support of the department to stay there; is that what you are saying?

Dr REFSHAUGE: If we see that the building is falling down and it might be better to replace it rather than keep it, then we would be looking to trying to get an agreement with the existing tenants on where they might want to spend their time while the place is being replaced, or they might want to move. So, yes, there are things that will push us if there is a requirement for us to be doing things to our stock.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Would those same people get a guarantee of return to the refurbished place if they so desired?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is almost always the case. The service that we provide is obviously more effective if people live where they want to live. We try to do that for their benefit, but it also has obviously a benefit for maintaining an effective community.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You do not have any knowledge of people being moved out of those areas against their will?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, but if people are convicted of serious crimes that are occurring in those places, like selling drugs, and causing major disruption, we have a good neighbour policy and we are prepared to take people to the Residential Tenancy Tribunal and seek eviction.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Other than that, though, if they are law-abiding citizens, you would not do that?

Dr REFSHAUGE: That is correct.

The Hon. I. COHEN: On page 22-40, subprogram 76.1.1 Housing Assistance, Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2 notes that the total number of households receiving ongoing housing assistance as 140,488 for 2000-01. How many boarding houses does the Government license, and does the Government have concerns about the closure of boarding houses?

Dr REFSHAUGE: None. We do not license any. That is done by the Department of Community Services or the Ageing and Disability Department.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You do not have anything to do with boarding houses at all?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Nothing to do with licensed boarding houses. We certainly deal with unlicensed boarding houses.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you have any concerns about the closure of boarding houses?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We always have concerns about the closure of boarding houses but we do not have responsibility for licensed boarding houses.

The Hon. I. COHEN: New households assisted with public community and Aboriginal housing, excluding crisis, are listed at 13,372 for 2000-01. Minister, how many people are still on public housing waiting lists after the 13,372 new households have been accounted for?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Some 97,000.

The Hon. I. COHEN: What is the current average wait for public housing?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is hard to say what an average wait is because we are significantly housing people under a joint agreement with the Commonwealth and other States on a priority basis. So we are targeting our housing much more carefully. It is not just a matter of get on the list and wait your turn. It is really a matter of targeting the housing need, and it varies enormously. If you are talking about all of the housing that we are able to provide, as I said in the House today, for a woman who is escaping domestic violence, we will be trying to house her right now, so her wait, hopefully, will be very short. Other people who are already in accommodation and are able to afford that accommodation, who have no external issues in regard to accommodation and are better eligible on an income test, will obviously wait a lot longer. At the moment, 75 per cent of people housed are housed because of priority.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is there any way of measuring this?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We have a number of different averages. If you would like to give us some suggestions of the different types of groups, if we can we will get you the information.

The Hon. I. COHEN: If we can compare that with previous years—

Dr REFSHAUGE: The other thing is that it will vary from area to area.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you have any figures to compare your effectiveness, be it crisis housing—

Dr REFSHAUGE: I am sorry, I misread my note. It is not 75 per cent of applicants who are housed but 75 per cent of our priority applicants who are housed within three months. So that is 2,000 people a year who have priority.

The Hon. I. COHEN: How do those figures in that particular area of priority housing compare to previous years?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is unchanged so far as how long they wait. It has increased so far as the number of people we are housing in that time. So we are doing better in the sense that more people are being housed but within the same time frame.

The Hon. I. COHEN: In Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, at page 22-7 it is stated that the housing assistance program assists people with priority needs, including those who are in danger of becoming homeless. Could you give an undertaking that the Government during 2000-01, particularly in the lead up to the Olympics, will provide boarders and lodgers with statutory protection from unfair eviction and will act to prevent the conversion of inner-city boarding houses into expensive flats and tourist accommodation?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Firstly, could I refer you to the speech I made in Parliament today at question time about what we are doing.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I am obviously listening to the wrong House.

Dr REFSHAUGE: You certainly are. I think it covers a large amount of what you are saying. Some of the other areas are outside my responsibility—they are the responsibility of the Minister for Fair Trading. Otherwise I think it is covered in my speech. Sorry, the SAP [supported assistance program] sector is covered by the Department of Community Services.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is the prevention of violence and intimidation outside your portfolio?

Dr REFSHAUGE: That is a police responsibility and probably also a community responsibility. We all have a responsibility for it.

The Hon. I. COHEN: We do, indeed. I refer to page 22-40 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2. The first home plus scheme will replace the New South Wales first home purchase scheme from 1 July 2000. The income test for the new scheme will be abolished. The Government has suggested the first home plus scheme will create savings of \$52 million in 2000-01. Given the government estimates of \$2 million savings through the first home plus scheme replacing the New South Wales first home purchase scheme, will the Government use these savings to supplement the budget of the Department of Housing to avoid a department sell-off of \$56.5 million in public housing assets in 2000-01?

Dr REFSHAUGE: The first part of the question really you should be asking the Treasurer. The Treasurer runs that scheme. The answer to the second part is that it is important for us to be selling part of our public housing stock, part of our assets, so that we get a better use of our assets. Often we want to mix up what would be otherwise a suburb of public housing, to have public and private housing there and use the funds that we get from that to build houses elsewhere or buy houses elsewhere. So I think it is important to understand that the sale that we have is not a sale in any way to get out of providing public housing; it is to rearrange where our public housing is and the quality of our housing as well.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you stick to a formula? Does the department have a formula for a guaranteed public housing mix?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, it does not. It certainly, though, is working at factoring in the community dynamics, which is probably more important than a benchmark formula about how many and what style we should have. Some people actually like to live in particular types of housing and they work as a community very functionally there. If they were not the people living there, it may be a very dysfunctional community, so it is important for us not to have a rigid benchmark but to look at and work with the community that is there and the community dynamics that are positive and healthy and correct for the communities rather than just have a benchmark. It is interesting also to note that some 30 per cent of our sales of houses are to tenants. Tenants buy their houses, which means they are effectively doing what we want, which is changing the mix in a particular area but often without disrupting the community because the tenants themselves are buying and staying in that area.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Mr Cappie-Wood, I presume that the 97,000 figure given to a question asked by the Hon. I. Cohen was in relation to 97,000 applicants?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Can you say how many people those 97,000 applications represent?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, I cannot.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Is there any way of being able to do that?

Dr REFSHAUGE: If you wanted to count them all, you could, but, no, we do not have them tabulated that way; neither did the Coalition, actually, when in government.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: In which regions are those 97,000 applicants, and in which category are the waits for public housing longest?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We have provided that information to the Parliament a number of times in answers to questions on notice. You can be directed to those.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What are your forecasts of the number of applicants for the coming financial year? Do you have a forecast for the number of applicants you expect during that financial year?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I would think actually it is going to grow less than it has. It is interesting to note during the last four years of the Coalition that the increase in the waiting list was 23,000 in four years. In the four years of Labor Government the increase is 11,000, so our growth rate was less than half the Coalition's growth rate. So long as Labor stays holding the continuing respect of the community and stays in government here, I would expect it to be continuing to be at that level. With a change of government I would expect there would be a dramatic increase in waiting lists going just on past performance.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Mr Cappie-Wood, can you advise what the peak number of applicants waiting on the housing list has been in the last financial year and the date upon which that number was arrived at?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is done on an annual basis so it is always at 30 June.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: So that is a 30 June 1999 figure?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Thank you. Are any boarding houses being transformed into low-cost accommodation, to the best of the department's knowledge? If so, are you able to specify where and how many?

Dr REFSHAUGE: By the department?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: No, it was a general question.

Dr REFSHAUGE: It would be outside the department's responsibility.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Has your department estimated, in its forecasting, the number of people who will be on the housing waiting list five years and 10 years from now?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What are your forecasts?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is no doubt there will be a massive increase, an astronomical increase, of people waiting if the Commonwealth Government continues to behave in the way it is and stops any Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement funding. There is no indication at the moment that it will continue to fund housing. We are hopeful that it will, but I would call on you and your colleagues to argue strongly with your Federal colleagues that they do continue to fund the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. Without that, there is no doubt that there will be a massive increase in the number of people seeking public housing.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Mr Cappie-Wood, what percentage of the total housing budget is estimated to be currently spent housing people who are technically not eligible for public housing? Can you tell the Committee what studies have been done by the Department of Housing to establish the number of tenants who the Department of Housing believes may no longer comply with Department of Housing requirements for tenancy? What action are you taking to review the situation to ensure that people who are occupying Department of Housing accommodation inappropriately are removed from that housing to free it up for people in need?

Dr REFSHAUGE: The Department of Housing does not house people who are not eligible for housing.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: That was not my question, with respect, Minister.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Well, restate it.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I am happy to restate it. I am asking a specific question, not in relation to the time at which people are housed but in terms of the continuing occupation of homes and when they may cease to be eligible. That was the specific question. I am happy to repeat the whole question if you want me to.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, do that, because they do not cease to be eligible. Under the rules that your Government introduced they do not cease to be eligible. If they are not in public housing, they may not be eligible to enter new public housing, but they do not become ineligible for public housing, as your Government also saw fit to do.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: My specific question was: what studies have been done by the Department of Housing to establish the number of tenants who the Department of Housing believes may no longer comply with Department of Housing requirements for tenancy?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is nobody who is housed who is not legally entitled to be housed.

CHAIR: Not one person?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is no-one officially. There will be people whose circumstances have changed since they have been housed. Other than that, circumstances could change, but unless there is direct fraud there is nobody of whom we are aware who is not entitled to be housed. We have very few people who are not on benefits in public housing but they have been housed under the guidelines that your Government had and our Government has, and they are still entitled to be housed.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: I would follow up a question that the Hon. I. Cohen asked earlier about the priority housing list. What moneys have you allocated to priority housing in this budget and what increases do you anticipate?

Dr REFSHAUGE: We do not specifically have funding separated in the general public housing between priority housing and non-priority housing. Of about 13,000 that we provide housing for, about 2,000 new families, or accommodation groups, are priority housing, so you could probably get an estimate from that. On top of that, of course, we do have crisis housing that has been provided of some 3,000 accommodation beds per year. About 60,000 people use that. Sometimes it may be the same people, so there is a line item for the allocation for that. If you are asking, for the general program of public housing, what is the size of priority housing compared with non-priority, it is about 2,000 to 13,000, or two to 11. Is that information fair enough to give you the answer to your question?

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Yes. If there is anything further I want on that, I will put it on notice. There is a modest increase in the community housing budget. How do you see the development of community housing as opposed to that provided by the Department of Housing in future years, and will there continue to be further increases in the budget proportional allocated to community housing?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Our policy has been to grow community housing. It provides an alternative, and in many cases it can be a very effective alternative. It is usually run by organisations that have significant links into the community that they are serving and therefore have a flexibility that is valuable. I would see that that growth is likely to continue. We are also keen to make sure that they get to a size that is cost-effective. The number of new community housing organisations that have grown over a number of years has shown the success of that.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Thank you, Minister. In an earlier answer you talked about the desirability of mixing up suburbs and, where appropriate, selling housing stock to facilitate that. At the Airds estate in Campbelltown—where there are a number of issues which might be addressed by, as you say, mixing up the suburb, by selling off some of the blocks of land to bring in an appropriate mix—apparently this approach has not been possible because the Department of Housing when it developed the estate did not provide separate services such as water and sewerage to each house directly from the street. Can you advise whether the department has estimated the cost of redirecting services to the various blocks in the Airds estate and, if so, how many service redirections will be required in order to enable the Airds estate to have separate titles provided to each block? In view of the department's view that it would be preferable to have that mix, why have you not allocated funds in this year's budget to permit a proportion of the blocks to be subdivided and sold?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, you are right, it is quite complex to do that. Different parts of Airds are in different circumstances. The cost varies significantly from place to place in regard to that. We are doing some work on how that is best done. We have also taken the opportunity to show Senator Newman the changes that we have been able to bring to estates that have proved to be dysfunctional, far different from the hopes of the earlier days when they were built, in the hope that she may see some value in a Commonwealth contribution as well. The feedback that we have been getting is that she is impressed with the work that we have been doing to date, but we hope that that impression and attitude might lead to some direct funding.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Obviously there is always community concern about vacant public housing and properties left vacant for some time. There have been a growing number of reports of Department of Housing properties left vacant for, in some cases, up to three years. In a recent report in the *Border Morning Mail* one resident at West Albury estate counted 17 vacant properties at the estate and one house nearby that had been vacant for nine months. What is the department doing to address this issue given the enormous number of people waiting for public housing? There are certainly examples in the city as well, properties such as the double block at the corner of Lascelles Road and Ronald Avenue, Narraweena, that I have just been advised by the member for Wakehurst has been left vacant for two and a half years. What is the strategy there?

Dr REFSHAUGE: The property at Narraweena was originally condemned by the council but with the changes the council has made, it is now able to be used. We wanted to transfer it to a community housing provider. That did not seem to be as successful as we had hoped but we are transferring it to a community housing group. In regard to vacancies, it is important to realise that we do take our commitment to housing people seriously. We do not want to have long-term vacancies if possible. There are reasons for vacancies. One reason is because the house needs to be repaired. To bring in repairers to get that done is obviously important.

Sometimes there is absolutely no call for housing in particular areas and you will find that often a house is vacant because nobody wants to go there. Certainly it was hard to get people to move to some of the old estates in some of the worst times. They would refuse to go to those places, but that has changed. When you look at vacancy rates, it is interesting to see where we fall in relation to the other States and generally. The vacancy rates in the latest report on government services compiled by the Productivity Commission shows that Victoria had a vacancy rate of 5.1 per cent, Queensland of 3.8 per cent, Western Australia of 4.1 per cent, South Australia of 6.2 per cent, the ACT of 4.4 per cent, the Northern Territory of 3 per cent, and the general private sector of the order of 3 per cent.

New South Wales had a vacancy rate of 1.4 per cent. We are dramatically better off in that sense than all of the other States according to the report on government services by the Productivity Commission. That does not mean that we are satisfied that that is good enough. We still want to make sure that where there are vacancies, we know about them and we make sure that the houses are available for letting, and that people move in as soon as possible. Sometimes we do not get notified. People leave the house and do not tell us, so therefore there may be some delay in notifying. We are trying to fix that as well, so there is a better notification rate. With some targeting of some of those issues we will be able to maintain a reasonable rate, particularly compared with the private sector and other States.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Minister, if I could return to the Airs question, I may have been distracted but I did not actually hear the figure of how much the department estimated—

Dr REFSHAUGE: The total we do not have yet. We are working on it.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: No forecast?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Parts of it would be different costs and we may look at what options there could be, looking at the best value for money and, of course, if there is any contribution, what its requirements would be. There are a number of different ways we could look at it. We do not have a total cost yet of what it would be.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Minister, concentrating on this financial year, 1999-2000, rather than 1998-99 for which we have an annual report, what overseas travel did you take, where to and at what cost were those trips, and what class of travel did you use when undertaking those trips?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Apart from the trip that I booked to this Committee last year, which it was actually taken in this present financial year, I have taken one further trip and that was to France and England, and I paid for it myself.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Minister, I refer you to the Heritage Office program, page 22-33, Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2. Could you explain the reduction of \$28,000 for line item Grants and subsidies, and the \$1 million reduction for line item Other expenses?

Dr REFSHAUGE: The \$1 million reduction in line item Other Expenses is basically due to the finalisation of the St Andrew's Cathedral project. That was a one-off project. The \$1 million which was in the

previous year has been expended and does not need to be expended again. It was a one-off project. In regard to the other grants in general, I announced some six months ago, I think, that there will be a review of our grants program, and the grants will not be in general issued this coming financial year.

The Hon. I. COHEN: No grants issued?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Not totally. There are still grants to a number of organisations, ongoing grants to local councils and to the National Trust.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to page 22-36, subprogram 75.1.1 Heritage Policy and Assistance. A major threat to heritage properties in private ownership is lack of maintenance. Of the \$30 million heritage fund, what allocation have you made to facilitate adequate maintenance by landowners, and what provision has been made for educating architects to design the reuse of heritage buildings without destroying their heritage value, to avoid damage such as the Medina Apartments have caused to the post office building in Railway Square?

Dr REFSHAUGE: For particular and often very important heritage items that would need maintenance, we have an ability, apart from seeking assessment by the Heritage Council of the value of a building, to seek supplementation from Treasury. As I say, there is a review of the grants program and that is why the general grants program is not being followed this coming year. In regard to training, I recently launched a training program that was initiated between the Heritage Council and TAFE to encourage those students who want to work on heritage restoration and conservation work and also trades people who already have their ticket and want to gain skills in heritage conservation to take that up. About 120 places were funded for that. Actually quite a lot of work is available. It was interesting to me that many of the big projects now still have to get people from overseas to come and do the work. I would think there is quite a market for people who want to take up those trades.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You are saying that is training for all trades, including education of architects?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is mostly TAFE training for the trades people.

The Hon. I. COHEN: And educating architects in group design?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I think universities are understanding where the needs are. Those sorts of questions are probably better directed to the Federal Government.

CHAIR: The Committee will move on to consider the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio area.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Can you advise which Aboriginal welfare groups have access to New South Wales prisons in accordance with the requirements of the Royal Commission Into Black Deaths in Custody and what funding your department makes available to such groups for that work?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Access to prisons is a matter for the Minister for Corrective Services, who is being examined by your colleagues right now. I am sure if you asked him that question he would be able to answer it.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: And the funding?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Funding is provided through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs very much on a one-off basis. There is no ongoing funding in the grants program to organisations, but there are a number of organisations or recipients of grants who may see part of their function as visiting prisons. For example, often it is very hard to say that a function of a land council is not to look after its members, and that if their members happen to be in prison their function is not to go and visit them in prison. Therefore, funding that comes through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council to local land councils could in that sense be seen as a grant or funding that provides for that. It would be better to ask the Minister for Corrective Services about other agencies.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: There have been no hypothecated items or grants, for example, in the last financial year specifically for that purpose?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I know of an organisation that has applied. I cannot remember if they actually got a grant. One of their roles was to visit prisoners. So I would expect that it would be organisations who would see their role—although it may not have been their funded role—to be that of visiting prisoners.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: What action have you taken as Minister to ensure that welfare groups are able to access New South Wales correctional facilities in order to carry out liaison with Aboriginal inmates recommended by the royal commission into deaths in custody?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Again, it is not specifically my responsibility—that would be a matter for the Minister for Corrective Services—but if any organisation brings to me their concerns that they may have limited access or they feel access has been denied in any way, I would certainly work with them to achieve a positive resolution by discussing the issue with the Minister and his agency.

CHAIR: Have there been any such requests to you?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There have been some suggestions, though not quite in the same way as is being put. There was a suggestion more in the forensic area rather than in relation to gaols.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: The budget papers disclose that for the first two years of the Aboriginal Communities Development program, which envisages that \$200 million would be spent over seven years, \$19 million has been spent. I suppose the concern is, with an amount of \$200 million over seven years and only \$19 million to be spent in the first two years, whether the program is going to be delivered upon. What programs have actually been undertaken thus far and why is it that only \$19 million has been spent in the first two years? For example, if you were to average out a broad average, you might expect somewhere near \$60 million.

Dr REFSHAUGE: We could. The development of this program had a number of features which would mean that the money would be much spent more at the end of the program rather than the beginning of the program, not for any budgeting reasons but because the process of the program itself required quite significant community consultation and involvement of the community in the decision making on priorities, how to implement the program, and also developing skills within the community not only for training programs but also to ensure that there would be as much sustainability as possible in the end result. As a result, we actually made sure there was less money to be allocated in the first few years than later on. Despite that, even less was spent than we have allocated in the first two years, thus there has been a significant boost to the process of getting approvals coming through.

Just a few weeks ago I signed off for \$53 million of programs for the next phase to go ahead. So, yes, it has been slower than we expected but we actually expected it to be slow for all those reasons. We did take the opportunity, knowing there would be a very slow beginning, to focus early on a number of projects that would not require such significant community input, and there were some urgent repairs to water and sewerage facilities. A significant amount of the early money was spent on upgrading water and sewerage facilities so that now we have six communities, almost 300 people, who, for the first time ever, have clean water.

It has been pleasing to get that there but the broader program is much bigger than just water and sewerage. It is a lot about community development as well as infrastructure that is there. Getting the working parties together with the local communities is a major part, if not one of the significant parts, of the program. We are not going to spend the money until those processes have been secured. That is understood by the community and supported by the community. They are happy for us to do it that way. As I say, another \$53 million has just been signed off, so, hopefully, we will see a significant move in that money on the way through. But I take the point that you are making and I appreciate the points made.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Do you do have a degree of confidence that the seven-year time frame which you originally envisaged is still a realistic time frame and that the whole program will be able to be delivered in that period?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, we do, but I think you are likely to be asking the question every year and I hope that we will be able to have that confidence all the way through.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Indeed.

Dr REFSHAUGE: At the moment, I do not see that that would not be the case. Also, we have modified some of the listed targeted communities through our co-operation with ATSIC [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission] because it, to some degree, has similar infrastructure funding. We wanted to make sure we maximised both of our funding programs, so there has been some change that has occurred and some slight delay in getting our ATSIC programs and our State programs aligned to maximise the advantage across New South Wales.

CHAIR: Minister, on notice, could you give the Committee a list of the projects signed off in relation to that?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, and if you would like I will give you a full list of all the projects that have been funded to date, as long as you promise to put out a press release highlighting the program.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Minister, I suppose that might subsume what I was about to go on to, that is, how many of the projects already undertaken under the program have involved the employment or training of Aboriginal people, and to what extent was employment and training available in the programs, but I suppose I would be happy with detail within the projects.

Dr REFSHAUGE: All of them involve training and apprenticeships. Often we have got very strong and good support from the Federal Government in its interaction with us of getting those apprenticeships going. Fifty apprenticeships have been created in carpentry, bricklaying and landscaping.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: How much of the \$200 million that will, we hope, be spent over the seven years is anticipated to come from Federal untied grants.

Dr REFSHAUGE: None, although we are keen to receive extra, and I have talked to Senator Herron about him using the successful model that we have to add to what he might want in order to increase funding availability. I am still waiting for a reply on that one.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Are you aware that there is only one Aboriginal drug and alcohol worker between Dubbo and the South Australian border? Having in mind that drug and alcohol related issues and domestic violence relating to drug and alcohol consumption are substantial issues in the western region, can you point to an item in the budget that indicates there will be more drug and alcohol workers appointed in that region?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I suggest you talk to the Minister for Health or the Special Minister of State, who has taken a significant interest in drug issues.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: Are you satisfied that sufficient funds have been allocated in the New South Wales budget to ensure that appropriate Aboriginal literacy programs are developed in corrective facilities across the State?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Again, ask Bob Debus.

The Hon. D. T. HARWIN: As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, you do not have a view?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I am not here to answer about my views. I am just answering about the budget for agencies under my responsibility.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Minister, in the Aboriginal Housing Office program can you explain the statement "promoting employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in the management, construction and maintenance of Aboriginal housing"?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes. The Aboriginal Housing Office has a statutory responsibility to provide housing for Aboriginal people on the same general lines that the Department of Housing has done for the wider community. This it does so in a number of ways, one of which is through the use of Aboriginal housing organisations. Obviously it is important to develop the skills base of those organisations so that they can maintain the stock that they have, and efficiently manage it.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I have heard of positive programs being undertaken in Queensland, which has resourcing available for the support and training of Aborigines to design and build their own housing.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, they have learned from us. We are actually doing that program. It is the one I have been talking about in which we have done more than just getting people to design and build. We are looking at putting sustainability into them so that self-determination is happening at the local level. The Government is acting as one rather than a number of agencies that come at different times and confuse people because they are giving different messages. We are trying to have government agencies act as one, and

sustainability is a major feature of the end result. Sustainability is not going to be that easy, because sometimes it will require specific skills. We will need to look at sustainability, often bringing in outside agencies like local government, to see if we can be successful in achieving more community sustainability, rather than just Aboriginal community sustainability. We have had some quite significant success with some country towns and councils but not all of them.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Could you give a breakdown of where these programs are happening?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Yes, that is the list asked for earlier that I will be giving the Committee.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is there recognition of native title claimants and support for them separately from the land councils?

Dr REFSHAUGE: New South Wales is the first State to have granted a native title claim on the mainland. That was at Crescent Head. There are quite a number of other claims in at the moment. We are looking at a number of ways in which we will handle it. It is not my portfolio responsibility, but, yes, there are a number of ways of doing that, including the setting up of a register of potential native title claimants in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Was not the Crescent Head claim, though, a land title claim?

Dr REFSHAUGE: No, it was a native title claim.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Minister, I am wondering how many of these opportunities will be available for home ownership rather than rental.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Which opportunities?

The Hon. I. COHEN: The opportunities for native title claimants.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Native title claims are likely to be in collective title rather than individual title. That does not stop there being collective home ownership occurring within the land that has been claimed, but so far we do not have any New South Wales models that I have seen that have been working on native title claims. Are you referring to land council claims?

The Hon. I. COHEN: I think the local custodian on the far North Coast has an issue involving regaining some blocks of land for housing. It is, I think, a native title claim rather than a land council claim, and that is in the Byron Bay area. Are you aware of that, Minister?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Native title claims do not go through the Department of Aboriginal affairs, they go through the Department of Land and Water Conservation. I do not know about that, but there is no doubt that in the general housing scene we are looking at getting people into home ownership. As I say, 30 per cent of the public housing that we sell is sold to tenants. Similarly, we are keen to look at models that would work in the Aboriginal community as well.

The Hon. I. COHEN: At page 22-8 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, Minister, the budget narrative again states there will be \$268.4 million available to provide a total of 2,321 dwellings "across public, community (including crisis) and Aboriginal housing", 1,105 dwellings will be constructed and 1,216 will be leased. Can you clarify how many of these dwellings will be in regional and rural areas and how many will be for Aboriginal housing?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I can, certainly for Aboriginal housing. We are expecting new housing completions to be 194 through the coming financial year, with 60 houses to be transferred to Aboriginal housing, and that will increase the capital stock to 5,375. For the new ones, \$4.6 million will be allocated for the construction and acquisition of crisis accommodation, with 17 new capital properties to be commenced in rural areas; \$110,000 for leasing 11 crisis accommodation properties; \$1.88 million to improve existing crisis accommodation, with 188 properties receiving upgrades; \$1.18 million to be allocated for six dwellings under the Boarding House Tenants Relocation program; \$21.6 million allocated for the construction and purchase of 252 new public and community housing properties for eligible people with low income in regional New South Wales; \$9.7 million to be allocated for the completion of those that were commenced in 1999-2000; and \$1.17 million allocated for 313 new short and long-term lease properties.

That makes more than 5,500 households that will be newly assisted in existing and new public and community housing in regional New South Wales. Capital improvements will be done in existing public and community housing stock in regional New South Wales at a cost of \$46.2 million. We hope to upgrade some 5,700 dwellings. Some 20,900 households will be assisted in the private rental system, which includes private rental subsidies to about 160 people living with a disability.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Could I ask how many of those would be allocated for Aboriginal housing?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I will try to provide that breakdown, apart from the breakdown I gave you earlier.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I am thankful for the detail you have given me.

CHAIR: That question is also on notice. Thank you very much, Minister. I thank your officers as well for their attendance. We will call an end to the proceedings at this point.

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
