

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 1

Monday 2 July 2001

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

PREMIER, ARTS AND CITIZENSHIP

The Committee met at 5.30 p.m.

MEMBERS

Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile (Chair)

The Hon. Amanda Fazio
The Hon. Patricia Forsythe
The Hon. G. S. Pearce

The Hon. P. T. Primrose
The Hon. H. S. Tsang
The Hon. Dr P. Wong

PRESENT

The Hon. R. J. Carr, *Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Citizenship*

Premier's Department

Dr C. Gellatly, *Director-General*

Mr A. Smith, *Executive Director and Chief of Staff*

Ms H. Silver, *Director, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services*

Cabinet Office

Mr R. Wilkins, *Director-General*

Mr D. Mitchell, *Principal Policy Officer*

Community Relations Commission

Mr S. Kerkyasharian, *Chairman*

Ministry for the Arts

Mr R. Wilkins, *Director-General*

Ms R. Lennon, *Manager Finance*

CHAIR: I welcome you to this public hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No 1. I thank the Premier and his departmental officers for attending tonight. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, the Community Relations Commission, and the Ministry for the Arts. Before questions commence there are some procedural matters that I need to put on the record. Paragraph 4 of the resolution referring the budget estimates to the Committee requires that evidence be heard in public. The Committee previously resolved to authorise the media to broadcast sound and video excerpts of its public proceedings. Copies of the guidelines for broadcasting are available from the attendants.

I point out that in accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for broadcasting of proceedings, only members of the Committee and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photos. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation they place on anything that is said before the Committee. There is no provision for members to refer directly to their own staff while at the table. Witnesses, members and their staff are advised that any messages should be delivered through the attendant on duty or the Committee clerks. For the benefit of Committee members and Hansard could departmental officials identify themselves by name, position and department or agency before answering any question referred to them.

When a member seeks information in relation to a particular aspect of a program or subprogram, it would be helpful if the program or subprogram is identified. The Committee has agreed on the time allocation of 20 minutes for the Opposition, 20 minutes for the Government, 10 minutes for Dr Wong and 10 minutes for the Chairman. The questions will be left to the Committee members. Does it pose any problems for you, Premier, for questions to go straight through all positions and for the questions to go backwards and forwards through departments?

Mr CARR: No.

CHAIR: The Legislative Council is sitting at this time, but we do not anticipate that any divisions will be called. If a division is called, this hearing will have to be adjourned. I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Premier, did you consider asking Walt Secord to resign in much the way that Patrick Low was asked to resign?

Mr CARR: No.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Did you consider his behaviour in any way different?

Mr CARR: What does your question refer to?

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: He is on your staff.

Mr CARR: What line item?

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: It does not have to be a line item.

Mr CARR: I am here to answer questions about the allocations to my portfolio.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Yes, and in fact you are able to answer questions in relation to your staff.

Mr CARR: But I am not sure what line item that refers to.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Premier, in relation to the budget we are asking you broad questions. That has been the standard practice throughout all the estimates hearings. I am asking you a question in relation to the performance of your staff member, Walt Secord.

Mr CARR: Mr Chairman, I am puzzled by the line of questioning. I am here to answer questions about budgetary allocations and I am not sure whether this, by any test, is a reference to a budgetary allocation.

CHAIR: Could the Hon. Patricia Forsythe relate the question to the allocation for the Premier's Office?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Unless the Hon. Patricia Forsythe is totally happy with the budget, in which case we can all go home, if that is what she wants.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: No. We can ask questions in relation to the operating expenses of the Premier's Office.

Mr CARR: I am still not sure how your question relates to that.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Do you have something to hide by not answering it?

Mr CARR: No. I am not here to duplicate question time in my House, but to answer questions relating to the estimates. That question is not related to the estimates.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: But certainly the performance of your staff—

Mr CARR: Is not related to the estimates.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: If you are not prepared to answer that question I will return to it later, because we do have some other questions in relation to that. I believe that the question is in relation to the operating expenses, the budget of your office and the performance of your staff.

Mr CARR: I make it clear that I am not here to duplicate question time in the Legislative Assembly. We have had a significant number of sitting days. I am here to answer questions about the budget, the budgetary allocation, and I am happy to do that. But this is not a court of appeal from the Legislative Assembly.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: It certainly is not.

Mr CARR: Your party has failed to ask me questions about a subject in the Legislative Assembly. In the last week of the Legislative Assembly sitting I had no questions from the Opposition. I am now here to talk about the estimates, and I will talk about the estimates. But I am not going to talk about matters about which your party passed up the opportunity when the Legislative Assembly had question time after question time and I was not asked about these matters. The question must be related to the estimates.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Thank you, Premier. In relation to the work of your Community Relations Committee—

Mr CARR: Commission.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: —Commission, relating to advice to government departments, does the commission have a role in ensuring that government departments provide information on policy or decisions taken to communities in languages that are appropriate to those communities?

Mr CARR: It has a role in advising the Government on the working of policies and multiculturalism; it advises the Government.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Does the Government have a policy to ensure that communities are informed of decisions taken by the Government in appropriate languages?

Mr CARR: Yes, we do.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Are you able to explain why, for example in the Marrickville community, no information has been provided in relation to the closure of that school in any language other than English, given that the school community has 44 separate communities that speak in excess of 30 languages?

Mr CARR: You should have asked that question of the Minister for Education and Training. That would not have been a function of the Community Relations Commission.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: So the Community Relations Commission has no role at all in oversighting?

Mr CARR: It does not have a direct role in education policy.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: But does it have a direct role in general policy in ensuring that government departments provide information in languages appropriate to various communities?

Mr CARR: Where appropriate and where practicable. That question should have been directed to the Minister for Education and Training.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Will you now ask the chairman of the Community Relations Commission to provide advice to the Department of Education and Training about the provision of information in relation to school closures or other matters in appropriate community languages?

Mr CARR: I am not sure that is his function. I would like to think that the Department of Education and Training would take it upon itself to do that, where there was a need.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: But what if it does not?

Mr CARR: Our policy is to see that material is supplied in languages other than English where that is practical and appropriate.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Does it disappoint you to know that the Department of Education and Training provided no information in languages other than English in relation to the school closures, particularly to the school communities that have a significant non-English-speaking background community?

Mr CARR: I do not know that that is the case. I would need advice from the department on whether they considered it or whether they had any reason for not pursuing it. I am happy to seek advice.

CHAIR: Do you take that question on notice, Premier?

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Premier, when did you first become aware of the \$2 billion deficit in WorkCover?

Mr CARR: That material is publicly released. That deficit is a matter of public information. WorkCover itself releases that information.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: My question was when did you first become aware of the \$2 billion deficit in WorkCover?

Mr CARR: I would have to consult my files.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Is it that you do not know, or you do not remember?

Mr CARR: You are asking me to now recall when I was first told about the emerging deficit in WorkCover.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: No. I was asking you when were you first told that the deficit was \$2 billion?

Mr CARR: I would have to consult my files. I would not recall that date. That is an unreasonable question.

CHAIR: Is the honourable member asking for a specific day, month or year?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Premier, do you recall how you found out about the \$2 billion deficit in the WorkCover: whether it was leaked by someone, or by a letter?

Mr CARR: The deficit of WorkCover was trending unsatisfactorily for some years. That is why my Government has sponsored legislation before now. Some of the legislation to reform WorkCover has been blocked in the upper House. The deficit is a matter of public record. WorkCover releases that information.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I asked you a simple question. When did you become aware that the deficit was \$2 billion? It is a very simple question.

Mr CARR: I answered that I cannot recall. It is unreasonable to expect me to recall when a piece of paper arrived at my office stating, "As of now the deficit is \$2 billion." With due respect, I do not think it is germane to the debate we have been having or the debate that has just been taken place in your House.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We are not here to discuss the debate in our House. I have asked you a question.

CHAIR: Let the Premier answer the question.

Mr CARR: I cannot see that it is a matter of great excitement.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is a matter of great excitement—

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Mr Chair, will you ask this rude member to allow the Premier to answer the question.

CHAIR: I have done that already.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have asked the question three times and the Premier has said he does not know the answer.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: You keep badgering him and interfering. Let him answer the question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: He has said that he does not know when the deficit reached \$2 billion.

CHAIR: I ask for order in the Committee. Will the Premier take that question on notice?

Mr CARR: I said I cannot recall and it is unreasonable to expect that I could recall when I was first advised that the deficit reached \$2 billion or \$2.18 billion or \$1.8 billion or whatever. How am I expected to recall now when that information first became available to me? The fact is that the deficit of WorkCover has been a matter of concern for the Government. It is why this latest legislation was only item No. 5 or 6 in the different attempts to reform WorkCover that we have advanced and presented to the Parliament.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: On 24 May 2000, over a year ago, the Minister for Industrial Relations, John Della Bosca, told the Legislative Council, in relation to the WorkCover deficit that—and I will quote *Hansard*—"the bottom line as at December 1999 is \$1.8 billion, which is projected to increase to more than \$2 billion by 30 June 2000". Did he tell you about this?

Mr CARR: What line item is this related to?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I do not have to identify a line item.

Mr CARR: You have to relate it to the budget estimates. This is not—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did the Minister for Industrial Relations tell you on 24 May—

CHAIR: Stop interrupting the Premier while he is answering a question. We are not here to harass any witnesses giving evidence but simply to ask questions.

Mr CARR: There has been a debate in the Parliament about reform of WorkCover, reform prompted by the need to get a sustainable scheme. I am not going to rerun that debate here. I am here to answer questions about the estimates that I am responsible for. I gave a very long speech in the Parliament about WorkCover. I spoke in the debate and I have given numerous public media interviews about it.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you cannot tell us whether Mr Della Bosca told you about the \$2 billion deficit as at 24 May 2000; you cannot tell us when you found out about it? Did anyone else tell you about it?

Mr CARR: I am sorry, I am not here to rerun the debate about WorkCover.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you not agree that if you had known about the \$2 billion deficit earlier, perhaps last May, it would not have been necessary for the extraordinary events of the last two weeks and we would not have seen the spectacle of the Premier of New South Wales entering Parliament by scurrying through a drain.

CHAIR: Can we have questions and not statements. You are making a statement.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How did you get into Parliament two weeks ago?

Mr CARR: Mr Chairman, I have come here every year I have been Premier to be co-operative with the Committee that explores the estimates. This is the first time I have come here and had questions directed at me entirely unrelated to any line item. I have not had that experience before. I am not going to rerun debates about general policy issues that have occurred. I have never been asked to do that in any other estimates committee I have attended.

CHAIR: I rule that question out of order.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Before you rule the question out of order, a point of order has not even been taken.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: I move that you rule the question out of order.

CHAIR: The question has nothing to do with the estimates.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It has a great deal to do with the estimates and is a matter of great public interest: that is, the \$2 billion deficit of WorkCover and the policy response of the Premier.

CHAIR: I am referring to the question about the tunnel, which was the last question you asked.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In relation to the tunnel, we have asked the Premier how he got into Parliament and the only explanation put forward is that he scurried in through a drain.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Point of order: Mr Chair—

CHAIR: The question is out of order.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What procedures do you have in place to alert you to possible blow-outs in the State's finances and liabilities? What checks and balances do you have?

Mr CARR: Again, what line item are you asking me about? Again, this is the first time I have come to an estimates committee and not had questions related to a line item. Again, in the words of the Hon. Peter Primrose, I am delighted to come to a Committee where there is general satisfaction with the budget.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: My question was—

CHAIR: The point the Premier is making is that this is not question time but an estimates committee.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I understand that, and in each estimates committee on which I have participated the Chair and the committee have permitted a line of questioning which relates generally to the budget and the administration of the budget. My question is about the budget and the administration of it.

CHAIR: A question about the tunnel has nothing to do with the budget.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: No. I have moved on from that.

CHAIR: You asked the question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The question I put to the Premier was: What procedures do you have in place to alert you to possible blow-outs in the State's finances and liabilities—what checks and balances, what alarm bells?

Mr CARR: This bright budget is able to boast, from recollection, a \$9 billion reduction in the State's debts and liabilities in the period I have been Premier. There has not been a six-year period in the history of this State when there has been a reduction in debts and liabilities.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How often does Cabinet receive a report as to the WorkCover deficit?

Mr CARR: I am sorry, you are not asking me about the estimates.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am asking about the administration of the budget.

Mr CARR: In every estimates—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am asking about the finances and liabilities of the State and you just choose to answer by referring it—

Mr CARR: You may have been a hit in the lower traffic courts—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have not been into a lower traffic court.

Mr CARR: —but here in the estimates committee the practice has been to ask a question related to a line item in the estimates. In that spirit I, as Premier, have always been happy to co-operate. I might say, I have gone away from these meetings able to pursue matters of concern raised by Independent members and by Coalition members with public servants and with the organisations that are part of my responsibility. I welcome that sort of exchange, but the idea of using the estimates committee just to rehash question time or a debate that took place last week when I have spoken in that debate is, I believe, out of order. I am not going to participate in that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am sorry, Mr Premier, but how can I ask you about a line item when you do not even know when you found out about the \$2 billion deficit in WorkCover and what procedures are in place?

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Point of order: Mr Chair—

CHAIR: You are repeating the earlier line of question. Ask a definite question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How much GST has been received from the Federal Government over the last 12 months?

Mr CARR: What line item is this in reference to?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How much GST has been received from the Federal Government over the last 12 months?

Mr CARR: Again, you are asking a question that should have appropriately been addressed to the Treasurer. It is not addressed to a line item in my area of responsibility.

CHAIR: We have had estimates committee hearings with the Treasurer and with the Minister handling WorkCover.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: They were very full and satisfying.

Mr CARR: You understand that WorkCover is off budget anyway. It is not part of my ministerial responsibility and its deficit is not part of the budget. I am very eager to answer questions about my portfolio responsibilities related to line items and the papers before us.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: In relation to the State Electoral Office, will the Government support measures to deal with fraudulent enrolments as recommended in the recently released report of the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters?

Mr CARR: I have not read the report, but we would certainly co-operate with any technology for reformed practices that would provide a guarantee of minimal opportunity for fraudulent enrolments.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: A key point of the committee's report is the recommendation that there be a joint electoral roll agreement between the Commonwealth and States. Will the State give a commitment to stay within that joint Commonwealth-State electoral roll framework?

Mr CARR: I think there is a huge advantage in retaining a joint Commonwealth-State roll, so that would be our goal at all times. The one test for us would be the practicality of doing whatever has been suggested by the Commonwealth. But our goal would be to maintain a joint roll, and we would be as co-operative as possible with the Commonwealth on issues.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: One of the initiatives proposed is the inclusion of the gender and date of birth of electors and a certified list of voters in elections, which is no longer in the current electoral roll. That would require some changes.

Mr CARR: So there would be full names, addresses, dates of birth and genders on the electoral roll. We would be very happy to co-operate with that. The State Electoral Office advises me that it is placing emphasis on procedures and processes of an information technology nature and that actions have already commenced to develop and/or enhance computerised programs to facilitate the conduct of the next general election.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-54. Can the Premier advise on the role of the Premier's Department in responding to issues raised by the Drug Summit, particularly problems in the Redfern area?

Mr CARR: Yes. I have been distressed by evidence that has reached me—some of it through the local member of Parliament—about entrenched problems in Redfern. We are responding to needs in that area through the Redfern-Waterloo community drug action team, which is one of 56 teams across New South Wales supported by the drugs and community action strategy, which is administered by the Strategic Projects Division of the Premier's Department. The Redfern-Waterloo team is developing a drug action plan for the next year, and I am pleased to advise that the Government will provide additional funds to expand drug treatment services in the Redfern area. An additional \$450,000 a year will go to the Aboriginal Medical Service [AMS] at Redfern, with \$200,000 in recurrent funding from New South Wales Health and an additional \$250,000 a year for two years drawn from the confiscated proceeds of crime account.

The Redfern AMS was established in 1971 as Australia's first Aboriginal medical service, providing culturally appropriate health care. It has been providing drug and alcohol services for the past two years. It reports considerable success in encouraging drug users from The Block and surrounding areas into treatment. About 60 patients are on the methadone program at any one time, and compliance rates are between 85 per cent and 95 per cent. I am advised that this is better than usual. It also provides counselling, assessment and referral, primary medical care, infectious disease screening and outreach services. The additional funds will provide two Aboriginal health workers and one youth worker. The purchase of a car will enable additional outreach work on the street and liaison with Aboriginal patients in mainstream detox and rehabilitation services. Overall, the additional funding will provide for a 20 per cent to 25 per cent increase in the services provided.

I am also pleased to advise that the Government has supplemented the funding of another non-government organisation in Redfern, We Help Ourselves [WHO]. WHO is a therapeutic community that was established in 1972 and provides a three- to six-month rehabilitation program for men and women. The organisation will receive an extra \$51,000 a year, providing for an increase of around 10 beds. Last year WHO treated about 250 people and the additional funding will allow it to treat another 60 people a year. The new services in Redfern will go a long way to giving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike the key to a life free from the destructive influence of drugs.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, page 2-54. Can the Premier give details on youth initiatives in the Premier's Department Strategic Projects Division budget?

Mr CARR: The Government is committed to working in partnership with business, community groups and, most importantly, with young people to forge solutions to their problems. That is why we established the youth partnerships initiative as part of the Strategic Projects Division of the Premier's Department. The project is designed to broker resources for innovative youth projects and forge meaningful partnerships between business, government agencies and philanthropic trusts. The youth partnerships initiative does not involve a recurrent budget allocation of the Premier's Department. Funding is provided by contributions from agencies such as the Department of Education and Training, Health, Housing, the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Motor Accidents Authority. In 1998-99 and 1999-2000 New South Wales government agencies contributed a total of \$280,000 to the cost of the program. In 2000-01 it is expected that \$540,000 will be expended. I have asked Ministers with responsibility for issues affecting young people to make further contributions this year.

Since establishing this project we have seen some very good results. Some 11 projects have been implemented at a total value of more than \$2.1 million, with Government contributions amounting to \$235,000 and an average of five partners to each project. It is my great pleasure to announce that one project brokered by the youth partnerships initiative has now reached fruition. Over the past 12 months the Premier's Department has been negotiating with the Visy Cares Foundation and Fairfield City Council to establish a youth centre in Sydney's west. The Government, Mr Richard Pratt's Visy Cares Foundation and Fairfield council will each contribute \$440,000 to making this centre a reality. It will be a state-of-the-art facility and cost a total of \$1.32 million.

The youth centre will service the needs of more than 40,000 young people in the Fairfield local government area, including Cabramatta. It will provide a focus for youth services and ensure that these young people have the best possible opportunity to succeed. The Visy Cares youth centre will provide educational and employment services, with TAFE, job network agencies and other vocational training providers encouraged to run courses from the centre. The centre will also focus on providing information and referral services, recreational activities and health, legal and housing services. It ably complements the Government's Cabramatta strategy. It is an innovative project built on a partnership between government and the private sector that will deliver better and more integrated services for young people.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, page 2-54. Under the Premier's Department Strategic Projects Division, could the Premier please provide an update on the activities of the Migrant Heritage Centre?

Mr CARR: Australia is a nation of migrants. Immigration shapes who we are and what we will become. The people of New South Wales now come from more than 200 nationalities and speak more than 80 languages. At least one quarter of the people of New South Wales were born overseas. It is important for us to tell the story—a story of courage and persistence; a story of newcomers who changed the face of this nation beyond all expectation.

In 1998 I announced the establishment of the Migration Heritage Centre to tell that story. The centre is a partnership of the Premier's Department, the Community Relations Commission, the Ministry for the Arts, Tourism New South Wales and the New South Wales Heritage Office. In establishing the centre I was determined to give enduring public testament to the importance of migrants and their contribution to the life of our nation. The centre assists cultural institutions, such as the Powerhouse Museum and Casula Powerhouse, to highlight cultural diversity through their public programs.

In all these areas, the Migration Heritage Centre has been an outstanding success. To date, the centre has completed 16 projects, for example, mapping Italian and Chinese heritage. It has undertaken five reports on aspects of migration heritage and has participated in 19 launches of migration heritage projects. Through its projects the centre has worked with 75 different culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It has assisted or managed projects in 28 different locations across New South Wales, working with 35 cultural institutions and 14 State government agencies.

Today I would like to announce another exciting project to be developed by the Migration Heritage Centre in partnership with the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. For the first time, New South Wales students will be able to experience our migration heritage through walking tours. These walking tours will take place in Sydney's central business district, attracting an estimated 15,000 primary and secondary students each year. The tour themes will include the history of Chinatown, beliefs and ideals of migrant groups, recreation, migration after World War II, migration in the Australian workplace and motivations for migration. The tours will provide students with an opportunity to view the city through the eyes of migrants. They are great Australian stories to explore and celebrate in this historic centennial year.

An active museum of this type—walking tours that enable people to walk through a part of the city with a guide as to the history of migration—is more attractive than a static traditional museum. I have seen a few museums of migration around the world. The most effective I have seen was in New York's lower east side. The tenement museum, as it is called, is a shopfront and provides a guide, who is an academically qualified postgraduate student or lecturer in history, to conduct a walk through the neighbourhood. The guide draws attention to significant events in terms of the arrival and experiences of migrants in New York. I saw a building that had been a synagogue of the Bulgarian community and is now a centre for the Fukkien community. The history lived in a way it could never live in a traditional static museum. That is what I would like us to do with the Migrant Heritage Centre. That walking concept, which could be replicated in Fairfield and elsewhere, would treat the history of migration to Australia in a lively fashion.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-54. Can the Premier give details on the Rural and Regional Miscellaneous Grants Fund and the type of projects that receive funding?

Mr CARR: The Rural and Regional Miscellaneous Grants Fund helps country towns and villages upgrade community facilities and services. Most requests for assistance are for community-based projects that local councils and organisations cannot fully fund themselves. The fund helps fill that gap. It has been instrumental in upgrading town halls across the State. Town halls play a crucial role in small communities and villages. We have upgraded halls at Nana Glen, Stokers Siding, Tabulam, Collins Creek, Gwabegar and Tingha, to name but a few. Some of these communities require only a few thousand dollars to install new windows or lights or to upgrade airconditioning.

This fund delivers for even the smallest of projects. The fund does not only upgrade town halls. We approved a \$50,000 grant to Bega Valley Shire Council to build an outdoor performance stage at Merimbula Lake. That means that Merimbula can now host major regional events.

Recently, I understand the Hon. Tony Kelly, member of the Legislative Council, visited Tambar Springs, a community of only 100 in the State's north-west. Members of the local parents and citizens association have been working hard to raise funds for sporting facilities. We provided a grant of \$10,000 to the local public school to help it purchase sporting gear and upgrade playing fields. The fund has also helped students such as Jillian Norton. Jillian, from Richmond River High School, was one of four Australian students selected to perform at the Globe Theatre in London. Because of the recent floods, fundraising on the North Coast was difficult. Through the fund, we were able to allocate \$3,000 to help cover her travel costs. The fund has also helped provide for a new basketball court for young people in Moree. Last month the Government announced \$20,000 to help fit out the Mudgee Youth Cafe. The Rural and Regional Miscellaneous Grants Fund gives the Government the chance to respond with timely help that is practical and often delivered in partnership with rural communities, where it is needed.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-98. Could the Premier provide details on the additional funding for the Railway Street Theatre, which forms part of the increase in the cultural grants program in the grants and subsidies area?

Mr CARR: The Railway Street Theatre is a remarkable success story. It has been taking quality theatre to regional New South Wales since the Q Theatre at Penrith and the Armidale-based New England Theatre Company merged in 1998. Last year the company toured *Summer Of The Seventeenth Doll* to 17 regional centres across New South Wales. In March this year *Much Ado About Nothing* toured to 11 regional centres. Both these tours were critical and popular successes. After the company visited Warren, Mr Bill Freeburn from the Warren Arts Council wrote to me:

Recently we had the Railway Street Theatre Company perform at the Nevertire Hall and they gave a wonderful performance of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. Being a small population of 2,200 often makes it difficult to raise sufficient numbers for many shows ... Fortunately the performance attracted an extraordinarily large crowd of 300 and thus yielded a substantial profit ... It has been amazing to note the pleasing effect this recent performance had on local residents from villages and small towns in the area. So many are still commenting on the wonderful evening at the Nevertire Hall.

This year the Railway Street Theatre will receive \$377,260 from the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts. In this year's budget I announced an extra \$80,000 per year to expand its regional touring schedule. That extra money means that up to 30 small and isolated New South Wales towns and centres, such as Bingara, Nyngan, Inverell, Broken Hill and Moree, will be visited by Railway Street. This will almost double the number of centres Railway Street can visit each year. The company is planning to tour Cowra, Mudgee, Coonabarabran, Gunnedah, Goondiwindi, Bingara and Woolgoolga in November with a new production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Unfortunately, funding from the State Government has not been matched by the Federal Government's arts funding body, the Australia Council. Since 1998 Railway Street has applied to the Australia Council in every round of grants for which it was eligible. Only two of its applications have succeeded, worth in total \$48,643.

Despite the lack of Federal funding, the company is being hugely successful both in regional New South Wales and at its Penrith base. The company presents nine major productions each year, as well as hosting numerous local amateur and school shows. Railway Street deserves a new home befitting its importance to the region. In March I announced funding of \$4.5 million towards expanding and refurbishing the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. I hope with Penrith Council's co-operation this will include a new and larger theatre for the Railway Street Theatre Company.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: With those few questions, we now share the Opposition's general level of satisfaction with the budget.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-137, line item Total Expenses. What were the causes of the Community Relations Commission expenditure for 2000-01 blowing out from its budget of \$12.347 million to \$13.466 million? What component of this was redundancy payments for staff made redundant in the restructure of the Ethnic Affairs Commission to the Community Relations Commission?

Mr CARR: With the permission of the Chair, I refer that to Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian, the Chair of the Commission.

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: The increased expenditure in terms of employee-related expenses was due mainly to the payment of redundancies, which was \$496,000; \$350,000 was supplementation from Treasury and the rest was carried by the commission. That was the main reason why there was an increase in the expenditure in the line item.

The second reason for the increased expenditure was increased activity in our interpreting and, particularly, in our translating area. We experienced an increase in the number of translation work we did, which brought in additional revenue, and it also brought with it additional expenditure on salaries.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-137, line item Total Expenses, and to page 2-140, line item Average Staffing. As the total budgeted expenditure of the Community Relations Commission has increased by 1.7 per cent, slightly less than the consumer price index, why was it necessary to reduce the number of staff undertaking research and policy advice from 28 to 22?

Mr CARR: I would have regarded 28 staff researching policy as excessive, I must say, if that were the case. If Dr Wong wants to focus on the research staff I had better refer that question to Mr Kerkyasharian.

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: With the new legislation there is also a changed way of operating for the Community Relations Commission. We are more focused in terms of outcomes, in terms of projects, and therefore we are maintaining a more flexible approach to staffing. And as the commission is given responsibilities, or as new opportunities arise—for example, the Cabramatta project and other areas in which the commission is going to get involved—it is our intention to use some of the salaries or some of the savings which accrued to us through the redundancies to employ people on a project basis who can deliver on those projects on a temporary project basis. Therefore, we are maintaining a flexible arrangement towards staffing.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-140, line item Expenses, Grants and community outreach. What is the rationale for the Community Grants Program of the Community Relations Commission remaining static once again at a \$1.546 million, which is a real cut of 2.25 per cent after inflation? As the Government did not increase this program's funding in dollar terms over several years and its real value has, therefore, been eroded by inflation, what does this say about the Government's commitment to this program and its commitment to multiculturalism?

Mr CARR: The Grants program is designed to focus on small or emerging communities, or communities with special needs. I think when, in the early 1990s, it attempted to do much more than that it really got into trouble. I just think we have to be more discriminating and more selective about the way we direct grants in this area. But I would congratulate the commission on achieving economies with staff. Dr Wong's earlier question was a reminder to me of how we need to work in government to limit the growth in so-called policy officers. It is that approach I have taken across the Government sector. I wanted to see the focus on providing front-line services. I think, over the years, both sides of politics and at both levels of government, both Federal and State, have allowed the policy advice areas to grow in areas where we know what the policy advice is and where we need more attention to front-line services. But the commission should be congratulated on finding opportunities for doing more with less, for containing the pressure on budget.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Although the Premier congratulates the Community Relations Commission on its achievements, no doubt he is aware of numerous complaints received by me and, in fact, his own departmental research that former staff members of the Ethnic Affairs Commission are highly dissatisfied with the Community Relations Commission. How will he ensure that the new Community Relations Commission will not repeat that degree of staff dissatisfaction?

Mr CARR: The first point I make is that I do not think that throwing money at problems is good policy. Second, I would make the point that the harmony of the communities in New South Wales is pretty remarkable. When you think of some of the war-torn parts of the world—the former Yugoslavia, for example, or the Middle East—and the community relations that exist in Australia, I think you have to reflect on the fact that Australia is one of the most harmonious societies in the world. The Community Relations Commission is there to assist round the edges, but we are not dealing with a community here in Australia that is in crisis, that is in desperate straits, that is tearing itself apart. Community relations are very, very good. When I went to Cabramatta yesterday I went into the RSL club and I met a big group that included people of Serbian, Croatian, Chinese, Vietnamese and other Indochinese backgrounds. They were sharing tables and they were talking to one another. They had a common interest in the community of Cabramatta doing better, and welcomed the Government's recent packet of initiatives. Maybe former members of the commission about whom Dr Wong is talking—

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I am talking about staff.

Mr CARR: —or former staff members of the commission to whom Dr Wong speaks have a different view, but I think Australia has done a good job and I think the commission has done a job that, in every sense, is appropriate and sensitive. You don't have to splash money at this problem because Australians from diverse ethnic backgrounds, diverse community backgrounds are doing very well getting on with one another. I think we can all be

proud of that. It is, quite possibly, the most harmonious society of diverse origin in the world and around Australia other governments are looking at our model, the Community Relations Commission. They are genuinely interested in how we have structured.

CHAIR: Regarding the Cabinet Office, page 2-3 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, states:

Over the last five years, the core responsibilities of The Cabinet Office have remained unchanged.

The statement then refers to co-ordination and development of social policy and producing evaluations, and so on. In regard to social policy development, does the unit look at the impact of legislation, particularly on the family? In that regard, does it look at the impact of gambling that currently is causing major social problems in this State? Does it look at your plans for the poker machine freeze that has been finalised? Will you comment on how the Cabinet Office handles that?

Mr CARR: The Government receives advice on gaming policy and its impact on families, partly through the Cabinet Office. That advice would draw on major sources of studies in this area, for example the Productivity Commission report and a report by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. The Productivity Commission report would be the most comprehensive and the most useful. I remember the Cabinet Office referring to me the conclusions of the Productivity Commission report in respect of the percentage of gamblers in New South Wales who could be described as problem gamblers.

The Cabinet Office distilled out of that report some data about the growth of gambling in New South Wales compared to other jurisdictions. In fact, the last briefing I got from the Cabinet Office on this very subject would be worth reproducing. The last pink I got on the subject would be about two months old, and it has some useful comparative data.

CHAIR: Will you table that?

Mr CARR: Yes, as an example of the sort of distillation of research material on gaming through the Cabinet Office. I will supply the Committee with that two-page summary.

CHAIR: You will supply that to the Committee in due course?

Mr CARR: Yes. Cabinet Office assesses different approaches to harm minimisation. There is nothing particularly surprising about the document that I am referring to, but it would be one example of the flow of information that would reach me, as Premier, through the Cabinet Office drawing on a range of sources about gambling in our society.

CHAIR: Has that lead you to a decision regarding the freeze on poker machines?

Mr CARR: The freeze continues while the Government finalises, I would say, the few aspects of the total package remaining to be finalised.

CHAIR: In Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, pages 2-29 and 2-30 refer to the Audit Office of New South Wales. Page 2-30 refers to the core business of the Audit Office. It states that the core businesses include a number of matters, particularly "special audits that provide an independent assessment on selected government programs or activities in terms of their economy, efficiency, effectiveness and compliance with appropriate legislation".

That means that the Audit Office has to make some judgments which may be critical or praiseworthy. What action is the Government taking to restore the ability of the Auditor General, particularly to carry out his duties in view of the recent advice by the Crown Solicitor that appears to place some restrictions on his ability to be fully frank in his report? If you agree that there is a problem, what is the timetable for rectifying it?

Mr CARR: Last Friday at a press conference, in answer to media inquiries, I said that I do not want there to be any doubt about the undiminished authority of the Auditor General. On Friday I said that I would ask the head of the Cabinet Office to meet with the Auditor General and assure him that that was the case. I said that, moreover, I would instruct each and every public servant in New South Wales to co-operate fully with the Auditor General on any inquiries as if his powers were uncompromised by the Crown Solicitor's opinion.

I can report to you that Dr Wilkins, the head of the Cabinet Office, met with the Auditor General late this afternoon to give him that assurance and explore whether he needed any co-operation from us in the three months

before Parliament will pass the legislation that corrects the anomaly that the Crown Solicitor's opinion is said to have produced.

CHAIR: So you are drafting legislation, but it cannot be introduced before this session ends?

Mr CARR: No, that is right. I want the legislation to be ready the first week that Parliament meets in September. In the meantime I do not want the Auditor General to imagine that his powers are being diminished in any way. If necessary, I was prepared to instruct chief executive officers to treat inquiries from the Auditor General as if the Crown Solicitor's opinion had never been produced. I am assured by the head of the Cabinet Office, Dr Wilkins, that that will not be necessary. I will ask Dr Wilkins to add to his advice to me.

CHAIR: Could the legislation perhaps have a retrospective application that takes effect from 1 June?

Mr WILKINS: Yes, that may well be the solution to the problem. The Auditor General said that he was quite happy to sit down and negotiate about what needs to be in the legislation to restore the status quo. Perhaps the retrospective concept that you, Mr Chairman, referred to might be the way to give him the sort of assurance he needs. He did not seem to think that he needed any particular memorandum from the Premier to the public service.

Mr CARR: Something I was prepared to do.

Mr WILKINS: His issues are more in relation to his power to report to Parliament. We are talking that through and will put a proposal to the Premier and the Treasurer in the next couple of weeks.

CHAIR: Dr Wilkins, you are probably aware that in the Auditor General's Report 2001, Volume Three, he has drafted or recommended the legislation?

Mr WILKINS: Yes, there is a version there that has been drafted. We have also drafted the version which has been sent to the Auditor General. They are not on all fours, there are differences of opinion as to what needs to be done. The material in there actually goes beyond simply curing the Crown Solicitor's advice. It also puts in other issues on which he would like to expand his powers. That is another issue for Cabinet to consider.

CHAIR: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-6, where there is reference to the Premier's Department and special projects to be undertaken or continued in 2001-02, and to community drug strategies. In view of the role played by the Special Minister of State in regard to the Drug Summit how is co-ordination occurring in the area of drug strategies between your office and his office? Are they one and the same thing?

Mr CARR: The people involved in my department in the drugs area report to the Special Minister of State. The implementation of the drug strategy is one of his projects. It resides in the Cabinet Office but it reports to him. It was simply a way of seeing that we could do the things we wanted to do out of the Drug Summit without establishing a new bureaucracy. I always prefer to draw on existing personnel and existing resources where we can and seek to avoid duplication.

CHAIR: What is the position with the report of the task force dealing with the use of marijuana for cancer patients experiencing pain? Has that task force report been considered by you or by the Special Minister of State, and has the Government taken note of the report of the United States Supreme Court that rejected that type of legislation?

Mr CARR: I want to answer your question precisely. If I can get a note, I can give you the precise status of the consultation process and the drafting of such a policy.

CHAIR: We will defer the answer until later in the hearing.

Mr CARR: Later this evening, yes.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: If I can just return to your answer on the Auditor General. I am sure we all welcome the swift response to the Crown Solicitor's fairly narrow interpretation. Why did you not take similar action in relation to the Community Services Commission?

Mr CARR: In what respect?

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: The Crown Solicitor gave advice about the powers—

Mr CARR: What line item is this a reference to?

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: It is merely following on from an answer you just gave.

Mr CARR: But the Auditor General has a line reference.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: I thought you might wish to clarify the situation.

Mr CARR: No. I will speak about matters related to the budget papers before the Committee, as I have been doing.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: In relation to your budget, how much is spent by the Premier's Department on media monitoring of communications?

Mr CARR: I do not know that. Can we take that on notice and report back to you?

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: And that will be a precise answer?

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Is that likely to be before the end of tonight?

Mr CARR: I do not think so.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: In relation to that, then, could you also advise who has access to that monitoring service? Is it provided on behalf of all Ministers or do Ministers undertake their own monitoring? Also, separately, how many press secretaries or media officers are on your personal staff and how many are employed within the Premier's Department?

Mr CARR: Let me say about media monitoring that we inherited the present structure from the previous Government. It was not created by this Government; it was inherited from the Fahey Government and, as under the Fahey Government, it provides monitoring services to the Premier, Ministers, the Parliamentary Library and several government agencies. I am happy to provide details about the total cost of the service if I can take that question on notice.

CHAIR: You referred to the Fahey Government. It would have been introduced by the Greiner Government, would it not?

Mr CARR: I imagine yes. We inherited the structure. I did not create it. Our Government did not create it.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-35, refers to "Special reports to Cabinet, Premier and unforeseen expenses approved by the Premier". You had a budget allocation last year of \$36,000 but you actually spent \$187,000. What were the special reports and the unforeseen expenses?

Mr CARR: Two items that contributed to that were \$171,000 to conduct the review into the Joint Coal Board of New South Wales, and \$16,000 towards the creation of a database of salinity projects and funding to assist with reporting to the Premier and Cabinet on progress with the Government's salinity strategies.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I refer you to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-104. Last year's budget papers state that 140 local councils would be connected to the New South Wales Internet. This year's budget papers reveal that only 117 were connected to the system. Which 23 local councils missed out on the Internet link-up?

Mr CARR: The 2000-01 budget papers projected that 140 local government areas would be connected as of June 2001. In fact, 117 have been connected as at June 2001. The figures are projected to rise to 125 in 2001-02. I would have to take on notice the 23 councils that have not been connected. I have not got those.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, at page 2-98, reveals that the Government allocated \$725,000 for funding of Carnivale in the last financial year, yet underspent by \$60,000. This year's forecast spending is \$705,000. Can you explain the cut in funding?

Mr CARR: Yes. I am advised that the variation between the 2000-01 budget and the expenditure is a cash flow issue between financial years. Carnivale has been provided with a number of advances against the following

year's grant so that their expenditure cash flows are met by their revenues. The 2001-02 budget reflects those elements: \$555,000 base funding and \$150,000 supplementation granted in 2000-01.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, at page 2-140, reveals that the Community Relations Commission had its staff cut from 64 staff members to 58.

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Can you assure the ethnic communities that the Community Relations Commission has not been downgraded since the change of name from Ethnic Affairs Commission?

Mr CARR: Yes, I can. It has not been downgraded. I refer to my earlier remarks about the high level of community harmony in New South Wales—80 languages and people from 200 nationalities, but an extraordinary level of social co-operation, an extraordinary level of harmony across these communities—as witnessed, you will recall my saying, by my meeting in the Cabramatta Services Club yesterday.

People from a range of communities are focused on making better partnerships to solve the problems of Cabramatta. Given our success—a success that was manifest to many overseas visitors during the Olympics—we can, in a modest way, tighten up our delivery of services. The measure of our success is not how many staff are employed. With the experience we have gained, I think we can trim policy advisers somewhat and focus on the sorts of specific programs we are running in Cabramatta and elsewhere.

The chair of the commission, Mr Kerkyasharian, was with me in Cabramatta yesterday, and the activities being pursued there would be typical of the active front-line involvement of the commission. I put greater emphasis on that than on having policy officers working on papers in the office of the commission, given the wealth of research that exists in this area and the point I started with: that this is an area of policy success not only in New South Wales but throughout Australia. Our model of the Community Relations Commission is being looked at closely by the other jurisdictions—I note that the Prime Minister likes it, for example.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Last Monday, Police Commissioner Ryan was not truthful to the estimates committee hearing when he said he was not asked to attend the Cabramatta inquiry. What action will you take in relation to that, Premier?

Mr CARR: This is a reference to which line item?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am asking you, Premier—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Point of order: Mr Chairman, this question would have been addressed more correctly to the Minister for Police. I do not believe the question relates to the portfolio areas that we are dealing with this evening.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: To the point of order: I think it is appropriate for the Premier to deal with this issue. If the Premier has trouble finding the course of investigation he should take, he might ask his Police Minister to tell him whether the commissioner was asked last October to appear before the committee but sent along Deputy Commissioner Jarratt as his nominee. The Premier might also ask the Police Service whether the committee expected to hear from the commissioner in May but instead was told that the commissioner would be overseas.

CHAIR: It is up to the Premier whether he wishes to answer that question.

Mr CARR: It is outside my area of responsibility and outside the jurisdiction of the Committee when it has me before it.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Chairman, you have not ruled on the point of order. My concern is that the Premier has told us on a number of occasions about the Cabramatta project and his role in Cabramatta. The issue is that the police commissioner was untruthful.

CHAIR: We are dealing with the Premier's portfolio. The question does not relate to that portfolio. Questions such as that are better asked during question time or in letters directed to the police commissioner.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: With respect, Mr Chairman, the Premier is responsible for public sector management and this is clearly an issue of management of the public sector. I am concerned that Commissioner

Ryan was not doing anything about Cabramatta. He was in London, Athens, Salt Lake City and then in Madrid addressing an international conference.

CHAIR: I rule the question out of order. I will ask the Hon. Greg Pearce to leave the table if he persists in putting on the record material dealing with another portfolio that is not relevant to this hearing. As the honourable member well knows, the subject received an adequate hearing and attention at another hearing.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I take the Premier to the Ministry for the Arts and the item "Special reports for the Premier and unforeseen expenses". What did the total expenditure of \$270,000 consist of?

CHAIR: Before the Premier answers, I remind all Committee members that the estimates committee hearings process is designed to allow members to ask questions, not make speeches. We reserve that for Parliament—in the adjournment debate and other debates.

Mr CARR: The item "Special reports for the Premier and unforeseen expenses" on page 2-50 has increased from \$270,000 to \$278,000. That item is expected to accommodate costs associated with Cabinet meetings in rural and regional New South Wales. It also covers activities related to fire, floods and other natural disasters. This item has been in place for more than 12 years. It is intended to meet the costs incurred by, or on behalf of, the Premier that are not appropriate to debit to other areas.

Those two examples would account for a lot of the expenditure. As at 30 May 2001, no expenses had been recorded against this line item. However, particular costs have been incurred, given the number of natural disasters in 2000-01. It is anticipated that by 30 June 2001 the relevant expenses will be transferred and reconciled within this line item in accordance with the standard departmental accounting conventions.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Premier, could you give us the breakdown of that expenditure? On my reading of the figures, the \$270,000 is the revised figure for the last financial year and \$278,000 is the budget figure for the following financial year.

Mr CARR: I am happy to provide further details on that line item.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Has the Commission for Children and Young People provided any policy advice to assist in improving the work of the Department of Community Services [DOCS] hotline, for example?

Mr CARR: I am not aware of that, no.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Has the commission had any oversight role in relation to the complaints received about the operation of the DOCS hotline?

Mr CARR: The primary responsibility of the Commission for Children and Young People is to oversee the development of whole-of-government policies and approaches for children and young people. The projects it has worked on over 2000-01 are as follows: first, statewide implementation of Families First, which commenced in the Southern Highlands, Central Coast, Central West, Nepean and New England and is already in place in Orana, the Far West, inner western Sydney, the Hunter, south-western Sydney and the North Coast; second, support for the New South Wales Youth Advisory Committee, which consults with young people around New South Wales and advises the Government on youth issues; third, maintaining the Government's youth web site, which provides information about education and health issues facing youth and up-to-date information on youth events such as National Youth Week.

It includes working on the Government's Aboriginal youth strategy to help build leadership among young people in the Aboriginal community and improve services for young Aboriginal people; working with Music New South Wales to provide youth entertainment network grants to young people to fund youth-organised drug and alcohol-free events, such as dance parties for under 18-year-olds; developing better futures; supporting the youth customer group; supporting a conference in western Sydney, bringing together young people, shopping centre representatives and older people, about young people in public spaces; developing an information package to be made available on the youth web site explaining how to bring together unemployed and underemployed graduates with local business; and commencing statewide consultations in 15 locations in order to review the New South Wales youth policy. That is a comprehensive account of the commission's work. It has not had a role in the DOCS hotline.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Do you believe it should have a role?

Mr CARR: I do not see how, no. I think it is a direct DOCS responsibility.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: In relation to the Families First program, since you raised it, I notice in the budget that the operating expenses in relation to that program have not altered very much at all. Is the Government putting more funding into the Families First program?

Mr CARR: An amount of \$54.2 million has been allocated to the Families First program over the four-year period 1999-2000 to 2002-03. It is being implemented in 11 out of 16 areas of New South Wales. In 2000-01 the Cabinet Office allocation was used for temporary staff designed to implement the Families First program, developing different types of services that will meet the needs of families today—training, resources, maintaining a website. During 2000-01 other moneys were allocated to DOCS and to New South Wales Health to expand services for families. Some examples are: starting specialist antenatal care services, mainly for young mothers and Aboriginal mothers; changing the practices of early childhood nurses from providing clinic-based services to visiting mothers in their homes; setting up volunteer home visiting services; new supported playgroups and family workers; a doubling of the number of schools as community centres; expanding transition to school programs to help children have a good start in kindergarten; and establishing services such as toy libraries, parenting centres and other community-based activities which families say they need. There is additional material under each of those heads, and additional heads it seems.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Would you take that question on notice?

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: What is the policy with regard to ministerial study trips? Are Ministers required to seek approval to travel overseas?

Mr CARR: It is exactly the same as it was under the former Coalition Government—that is, Ministers are entitled to one study trip during a four-year term.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: That is of what period of duration?

Mr WILKINS: I think it is three weeks.

CHAIR: We will move on to questions from Government members.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Oh, no! We are keen, from what we have seen, to maximise the time available to the Opposition. We will not ask any additional questions.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I believe that the Ethnic Communities Council has still not received its funding, despite having signed a document of some kind, as requested by the Community Relations Commission. When do you think the Ethnic Communities Council will receive its funding?

Mr CARR: Would it be acceptable to the Committee to have Mr Kerkyasharian answer the question?

CHAIR: We would be very pleased to hear from the commissioner.

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: I wrote to the Ethnic Communities Council last Friday informing it that it can apply, under our Community Development program, for funding for the year 2001-02. I also informed the council that it could apply to us under our Community Partnership program for any special projects that it may have put on hold pending a review of its own activities.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Does that mean that the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales has no guarantee of any funding whatsoever, subject to application?

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: In all the years that I was Chair of the former Ethnic Affairs Commission, and now, the Ethnic Communities Council has always signed an annual contract, one of the clauses of which says that it understands that this is strictly a one-year funding and there is no guarantee of further funding.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I believe it is correct that the Premier, in answer to my question either last year or sometime during this year, assured me that the Ethnic Communities Council will receive its funding at the appropriate time.

Mr CARR: The difficulties are not of our making. The Ethnic Communities Council has its problems of governance. When I have met the council it has said that. It agreed to a report being conducted, I think headed by Mr Neville Roach, into its management and governance. It made recommendations.

CHAIR: From memory, last year during estimates committees there was some problem in that it had not been able to account for all the expenditure of its funds.

Mr CARR: Yes. I think the council understands that it needs to respond to the lengthy recommendations for improvement in governance and management before we can hand over taxpayers' funding. That is the approach we have taken. As I see it, I am waiting for the council to bed down these issues and then we will respond. I think it is inevitable that the council will receive some level of funding. I will take this opportunity to highlight the approach I would like my Government to take in these areas. I would like this sort of funding to be as competitive as possible. If you have non-government organisations getting money from the taxpayer to do things, that ought to be competitive and other non-government organisations ought to have a chance to put in a bid and to say, "We can provide the same services" or, "We can provide the same information network as the organisation that, up until now, has been receiving government funding." I would expect these matters to be resolved. As I said, I think it is inevitable that there will be continuation of government funding. At what level, under what circumstances and with what commitment to accountability is still to be settled.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Is it true that the New South Wales Government subsidy to public libraries is \$2.73 gross per capita per year, compared with \$4.77 per capita from the Victorian Government? Is it true that the New South Wales per capita funding is less than half the national average for the Australian States?

Mr CARR: I am having those figures checked. I believe funding to libraries in this State is a valid concern. I do not think we have done as well at it as we ought to do. I am proud of the good things we have done, but I will not detain the Committee by running through them in any detail. In our next budget I would like to see us address funding of public libraries better than in this budget. I should say that we have not reduced the funding. Since we have been in office our funding for libraries has increased by 20 per cent but, given the importance of libraries, I would like to see us do better. That per capita comparison does reflect badly on the historic performance of New South Wales. There is nothing new about it, but for a long time that per capita comparison has shown us up to our disadvantage. I think we have to work harder to correct it.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Is it true that the New South Wales Government promotes kangaroo killing? Is the Government aware of the Queensland Department of Natural Resources report of 1996 into the wild harvest and marketing of kangaroos, which states firmly that converting a farm from sheep or beef to kangaroo is simply not profitable and that it is simplistic and unrealistic to claim that the conversion of traditional grazing properties to kangaroo harvesting properties will rectify land degradation? Has the Government taken this report into consideration? If not, why not?

Mr CARR: I assume the Hon. Dr Peter Wong is referring to the line item of the grant to the Australian Museum in College Street, which is conducting research on this subject. I would encourage the museum to pursue its research. In response to the Hon. Dr Peter Wong's question, I could ask the museum to comment on the Queensland research.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Yes, please.

CHAIR: Will you take that on notice?

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Premier, will you explain why you have not followed a recommendation of the Select Committee on the Increase in Prisoner Population Interim Report into Women, notably that a cost benefit analysis be completed into a possible alternative to the new women's gaol at south Windsor?

Mr CARR: I cannot help you by nominating a line item that enables you to ask me about prison policy.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-140. As the Community Support Services program of the Community Relations Commission does not include any indicators of outputs in the budget papers, how do the citizens of New South Wales know that they are getting value for the \$7.827 million projected to be spent on this program in 2000-01? What did this program produce and what work did it complete in 2000-01?

Mr CARR: I will seek the assistance of Mr Kerkyasharian to give an account of Community Support Services.

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: The budget of the Community Relations Commission is broken down into two programs, one being Community Support Services and the other being Interpreting and Translation Services. Essentially, under the Community Relations Commission legislation, the function of the commission is to provide services, including interpreting services, as determined by the Minister. That refers to the second program, which is on page 2-142 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1. Therefore, the program that the Hon. Dr Peter Wong refers to is essentially the program that delivers the functions, and the objectives are assigned to the Community Relations Commission in the Community Relations Commission Act.

A high degree of accountability is built into those functions. One of the functions in the legislation is to carry out an assessment of the performance of government agencies in terms of the principles of multiculturalism and to deliver through the Minister to Parliament an annual report of how the principles of multiculturalism have been met. The legislation lays down the date for this report as being March of every year, starting from next year. Therefore, the specific outcomes that the honourable member refers to are the subject of a separate annual report to Parliament as required by legislation.

CHAIR: As to the controversy about the change of name to Community Relations Commission, has the controversy now ceased and has the name received wider acceptance?

Mr CARR: My feedback from ethnic communities in New South Wales is that they are very, very happy with the change of name. At the launch of the commission at Government House, which was attended by 300 representatives of those communities, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. That was the start of a forum conducted by the commission to brief the leaders of these different communities on how the new commission would work. The forum went for two days. I spoke to His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos at a function only a few weeks ago. He went out of his way to say again how much he appreciated us changing the name Ethnic Affairs Commission to Community Relations Commission. In fact, I can report to the Committee that I have not encountered a critic of it, certainly not in the last six months as people have got used to the idea. I am not sure whether Mr Kerkyasharian would like to add to that impression of how this change has been received. Again, I cannot emphasise enough that from all I have seen and heard it has been overwhelmingly positive.

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: The feedback I am getting is positive, particularly among the communities and, more importantly, among the ordinary members of ethnic communities with whom we are in day-to-day contact. It is allowing the commission to reach out much further. For example, in the Cabramatta project the commission, as the Community Relations Commission, is far more suited to the task at hand with its new name and its new functions. In some cases some of the few very vocal people who opposed it initially have continued with the same line. But the majority of the feedback we have received is very positive. The words of one of the Islamic religious leaders still holds very true. He said: "Until now we were tenants in this house. With the change to Community Relations Commission we feel that we are now one of the owners of this building."

Mr CARR: I note particularly strong support, especially in recent times, from the Arabic-speaking community, the Jewish community and the Chinese community.

CHAIR: Premier, you referred to the need for harmony and said that it is one of the good qualities of Australian society. You also said that one of the objectives of the Community Relations Commission is to promote harmony. Many ethnic programs are now broadcast in various languages, which obviously would not be understood by English-speaking people. Is there any monitoring of those broadcasts to ensure that they are not inflammatory or divisive? Is that one of the roles of the commission? If not, who undertakes that role?

Mr CARR: I do not receive a summary of foreign language broadcasts on community radio stations. I am not sure that one exists, as opposed to a summary of the printed medium.

CHAIR: Have you had any reports of complaints by one ethnic group saying that "Ethnic groups are attacking us on their radio program in Arabic", for example?

Mr CARR: To the best of my recollection, no.

CHAIR: Has the chairman had any reports?

Mr KERKYASHARIAN: We have not had any reports for some time except that I attended a meeting with some Bosnian community members at 8 o'clock this morning at Liverpool. They made allegations that they were not happy with some broadcasts in another language. They did not produce any evidence. I suggested to them that if they were concerned they should provide me with a transcript. But we do not as a matter of course monitor any broadcasts or get any transcripts unless we have a specific complaint.

CHAIR: I wish to turn to the State Electoral Office, which is referred to in Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, on page 2-72. In view of the new requirements for registration, is there a list of parties now registered under the new requirements of 750 members and other aspects? Do you anticipate we will now avoid the tablecloth ballot paper we had last election? I imagine that parties can register right up to 12 months before the next election, so there could still be additional ones?

Mr CARR: Yes. You are right to draw attention to the changes in the registration requirements of political parties as a result of recent amendments to the legislation. They altered the registration entitlement for all then and future registered parties. It is too early, however, to say whether that is going to have an effect. I do not think we can say the State Electoral Office has any confirmation of what effect it might have. Why do I not ask the State Electoral Office to provide some elaboration on that advice, for example, on whether any new parties have registered since the amendments took effect?

CHAIR: Can you table a list of parties that have been registered as at this time?

Mr CARR: The total, a total list?

CHAIR: A list of their names?

Mr CARR: Yes, we can give you that, and the names of those who have been registered since the amendments to the legislation.

CHAIR: Can you give an idea of the number? Is there an approximate figure? Is it 10, 12, 50? I think it was 80 at the last State election.

Mr CARR: We will supply you with that information. I have some provisional information. The State Electoral Office has a web site and the information is available on that. We will test out how good its web site is. We will provide that information on notice.

CHAIR: Page 2-25 of Budget Paper 3, Volume 1, shows the Art Gallery of New South Wales is planning a major exhibition for December 2001 entitled "Buddha". Has the Art Gallery of New South Wales or any other agencies, such as the museum, had any exhibition dealing with the contribution of the Christian Church to our State and nation, particularly in the centenary year? If not, do they have any plans for that before the end of the year?

Mr CARR: That is a good question. I know the Greek community has an interest in bringing to Australia a collection of Byzantine Art. The Greek community was involved with the Powerhouse exhibition of Greek antiquities at the time of the Olympics, and Athens has wonderful holdings of Byzantine art that have recently been brought together for some milestone exhibitions, one at Thessalonika, for example. I have the catalogue. This contains Christian images from the first centuries of Christianity. It would contain the very first Christian images. So, that is one that is being discussed and one that I would be very excited to secure—an exhibition of some of the great holdings of Byzantine art.

I am certain the exhibition "Buddha" would reflect the specialty that the Art Gallery of New South Wales has in East Asian art. It is one of the specialties of that gallery. That major exhibition will feature the rich and varied artistic tradition of Buddhism from several parts of the Asian region but it will build on the superb curatorial specialisation in the Art Gallery of New South Wales in East Asian art. Of course, it is relevant that in the year behind us the Art Gallery did exhibit the Dead Sea Scrolls, which brought to the notice of hundreds of thousands of visitors material essential to the religious atmosphere in Galilee 2,000 years ago.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: You mentioned your visit to Cabramatta. Will the Premier please provide an update on activities of the City Watch program at Cabramatta?

Mr CARR: Yes. When I was in Cabramatta on Sunday I released details of a comprehensive plan, a very detailed package, for Cabramatta. That plan had details of the Government's legal initiatives, for example, the legislation that gives police power over drug houses and the enhanced powers over component parts of firearms. The plan also contained the commitment to have a street team of seven people, Department of Community Services

[DOCS] people, working with the homeless. For the first time they will be co-located with the police. The DOCS team will work out of Cabramatta police station. The plan also includes, just to refresh the memory of members of the Committee, a commitment to more crisis accommodation, drug rehabilitation, the Gateways program to work with young people at risk in 13 schools in Cabramatta, the new community multicultural drug education program with which the Community Relations Commission has been associated and the youth action team.

That is the package, the three-stage plan announced in March, but commencing on Sunday 1 July. One part of it is a so-called City Watch program. This is designed to improve the flow of information between the community and the police. The program will bring together representatives of local businesses, community leaders, school principals, students, residents, police and the Community Relations Commission to exchange information and develop solutions to local crime. It is proposed that the program will have a two-tier structure comprising the City Watch Council and Living IN Communities program [LINCS] groups, that is groups targeting specific professions, and demographic and resident interests. The program aims to improve security and policing in Cabramatta by developing priorities and carrying forward implementation of initiatives in relation to business and community concerns. It is estimated that an additional \$400,000 will be required by the Community Relations Commission to implement the City Watch program over four years: the first two years will be funded from the commission's cash reserves and the balance will form part of the operating expenses of the commission. The program will be directed by the City Watch Council, which will meet monthly.

City Watch Council will be chaired by the New South Wales Police Service and its membership will comprise the honourable member for Cabramatta, business and community leaders, individuals, members of Fairfield City Council, officers from the Premiers Department and the Community Relations Commission and other community representatives. The role of the council will be to identify activities leading to the progressive formation and strengthening of LINCS; to support LINCS in the exploration of issues and opportunities for community and business participation in community safety and policing; to consider matters raised and activities proposed and/or undertaken by LINCS; to formulate recommendations for action by government or funding by government of community initiatives; to report to the Premier on a yearly basis through existing police and CRC reporting mechanisms; and to participate in a yearly forum of LINCS members, and business and community agreement to broaden business and community participation in police and safety issues. LINCS groups will be formed to identify community security and policing issues, and opportunities to address these at the community and community-government level. The first meeting of the City Watch Council will take place on 4 July. I do not know whether the chairman of the commission would like to add anything to that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What funding and personnel have been allocated to the Premier's Council on Crime Prevention? How many meetings of the Premier's Council on Crime Prevention have you chaired? What have been the outcomes? What are the outcomes anticipated for the next financial year?

Mr CARR: It is the Attorney General's—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: No, it is the Premier's.

Mr CARR: The crime prevention division is administered by the Attorney General's Department, and that provides the staff for the Premier's council. I chaired the last meeting, and I am chairing the meeting tomorrow. The council has non-government and Government members. One example of how it works is: at least a year ago one of the non-government members focused the attention of the council on the need for the Government to properly address the trade in stolen goods through pawn stores, second-hand goods stores, and the need to have a computerised base to keep track of the movement of goods that may have been stolen. As a result of that contribution the Parliament saw legislation, and that legislation has been implemented.

That is an example of a policy development that gets an airing at council. At the last meeting of the council I expressed my concern about the need for the council to be much more practical in its advice, and I said, "I want reports on best practice in a range of different areas. I want reports as well out of Aboriginal communities on programs that are working and programs that are failing to deliver reduction in crime." I do not have the agenda here for tomorrow's meeting, but, as I said, I will chair it and I will lead them through an agenda that focuses on outcomes, practical experiences and best practice in different areas. Another example: local crime prevention plans have emerged from the Premier's council.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You will provide the staffing and funding details?

Mr CARR: Yes. If you want it, yes. I emphasise that it is serviced by the Attorney General's Department, but I will give you the relevant details.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: Returning to ministerial travel policy, because I did not get to finish my question at the time, could you provide details about who is eligible to accompany Ministers? What is the policy in relation to other travel by Ministers? What is the criterion for the selection of various trips? Is it possible to have a list of Ministers who have now completed their study trips in the course of the term of the Parliament?

Mr CARR: Yes, we can give you that list. Again, the practice is the same as existed under the previous Coalition Government: the Minister accompanied by spouse or partner and a single member of staff. There may be exceptions, but I think that is the start. The guidelines are provided by the Cabinet Office from the ministerial handbook. They are the same, in all respects, as they were under the previous Coalition Government. I regard that, as all previous Premiers have, as useful experience for a Minister familiarising himself or herself with what is happening in other jurisdictions. If a Minister proposes travel outside those guidelines, the justification would have to be an advantage to the State in terms of trade promotion or business promotion, for example, attendance at one of the annual or biannual meetings that are held with our sister State of Guangdong Province, or accompanying a business delegation, or trade promotion delegation. That would be the sort of justification that would be sought for ministerial travel beyond the once-a-Parliament study tour.

CHAIR: Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, at page 2-11, refers to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. As you know, the tribunal now has a role in supervising WorkCover in the workers compensation situation. It comes under your influence, even though its main role is under the Minister for Industrial Relations. I understand that you played a role in helping to bring about the progress of the legislation by providing some letter of agreement to the union movement. Is that letter a public letter? Can you table that letter?

Mr CARR: Yes. The letter that was referred to followed the meeting, I think, on Monday last week with representatives of the Labor Council of New South Wales. It was a meeting of the State Labor Advisory Committee. Six or seven items were raised at that meeting. They involved requests for clarification of the Government's reform agenda on WorkCover. I was happy to sign a letter—at least, I recall signing that letter; I certainly sighted the letter; certainly the letter was discussed with me—providing that clarification, and there would not be the faintest difficulty in making that available to the Committee. In fact, I would think it was canvassed by the Minister, Mr Della Bosca, in speaking in the debate.

CHAIR: Will you therefore make available the letter to the members of the Committee?

Mr CARR: Yes, indeed.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 2-135, line items Young filmmakers-Productions assisted and Young filmmakers-Funds provided. The expenditure for 1998-99 was \$449,000, for 1999-2000 it was \$388,000, and for 2000-01 it was only \$105,000. Can you explain why young filmmakers' productions are receiving a reduced allocation?

Mr CARR: Yes. The funds operate on a four-year budget cycle, and they will vary from year to year as a result. Once in every four-year cycle \$200,000 is allocated towards a co-production initiative with a broadcaster. These funds can be allocated during any of the four years. For example, funds were allocated for DAY-TV in conjunction with SBS. There are usually two rounds of young film-makers funding each year. Each round is approximately \$100,000 to \$125,000, but each round and the number of rounds can also vary from year to year. If I interpret these figures accurately, \$100,000 to \$125,000 a year, twice a year, is the basic approach, with an increase likely to be reflected in that year in which a \$200,000 allocation is made towards one of those co-production initiatives.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE: With regard to the Cultural Grants Program, has there been any change of policy having regard to the fact that considerably fewer applications have been processed, the number of applications approved has declined, and fewer individuals and organisations are receiving grants but more money is being allocated? Have the criteria for such applications changed?

Mr CARR: I am advised that it is a complicated answer, and we will provide it in writing if that is acceptable to the Committee.

CHAIR: With regard to the questions on notice that you have already received, is an approximate time of three weeks sufficient for your staff to answer those questions?

Mr CARR: Yes, indeed.

CHAIR: Are you happy for questions on notice to be provided to you by 5.00 p.m. tomorrow?

Mr CARR: Within reason.

CHAIR: You will then have a period of 35 days in which to answer the additional questions.

Mr CARR: Yes. Of course, they will be related to line items. So we will have a look at that and be open minded about the possibility of a reply.

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.