

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**

**Inquiry into budget estimates 2009–10**

Melbourne — 14 May 2009

Members

Mr R. Dalla-Riva  
Ms J. Huppert  
Ms J. Munt  
Mr W. Noonan  
Ms S. Pennicuik

Mr G. Rich-Phillips  
Mr R. Scott  
Mr B. Stensholt  
Dr W. Sykes  
Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt  
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Witnesses

Mr B. Cameron, Minister for Corrections,

Ms P. Armytage, Secretary, and

Dr R. Kelleher, Executive Director, Police and Emergency Services and Corrections, Department of Justice; and

Mr R. Wise, Acting Commissioner, Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice.

**The CHAIR** — I welcome the Minister for Corrections, Ms Armytage, Dr Kelleher and Mr Rod Wise, Acting Commissioner, Corrections Victoria. I call on the Minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 5 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information relating to the Corrections portfolio, and after that Ms Pennicuk will have the call.

**Overheads shown.**

**Mr CAMERON** — We have a few slides to go over, then questions, and if there is any other information, we will follow that up later, as is the normal course. If we have a look at the corrections system, there are 4052 male and 267 female prisoners, so 4300 in the system at the present time. There are 1420 parolees. That also includes commonwealth parolees, because the commonwealth does not look after their own prisoners and parolees; they effectively contract that out to the states to do. There are also those who are community corrections offenders — over 8000.

**The CHAIR** — I assume the commonwealth pays for these?

**Mr CAMERON** — They do, yes.

**The CHAIR** — Can you include that in your report of the department?

**Mr CAMERON** — Include that, from the discussion we had at the very outset? Yes, we can put that in. When it comes to staff, you can see the numbers there are over 2500. There are 11 public prisons, 2 private prisons and 59 community corrections locations across the state and one transition centre, the Judy Lazarus centre down in West Melbourne.

Just going over things from last year, what we are building on — Better Pathways is a major initiative to address women's offending and reoffending. That includes infrastructure upgrades at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and the establishment of a 20-bed inpatient unit, which we call Marmak, at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and a range of support programs, employment, child care, housing, a transport subsidy for women on community based orders, sexual assault counselling and services to try to break what are often ongoing issues for women prisoners. If we can break those issues, we will hopefully avoid reoffending as we go forward.

We are also building confidence in corrections. What we saw was more beds in the system at Port Phillip, Dhurringile and Beechworth and also 100 flexible beds across the rest of the system, across the state. There is funding for the next year coming up for 100 flexible beds across the system, to be operational by 2012.

If we just go back to where we were, we opened Wulgunggo Ngalu down near Yarram. That is for young Aboriginal offenders on community-based orders. So they are not in custody as such, but they can opt to go and live there. It is an in-house residential program. It is seen as an important program, but time will tell. The feedback to date has been positive.

Transitional housing is a partnership with the director of housing and the regional housing agencies to access affordable housing across Victoria for exiting prisoners identified as being at high risk of homelessness. With people coming out of prison, one of the key risks for them reoffending comes to the issue of housing.

That is why we see that work occurring. We have seen the first full year of operation of Melaleuca, essentially the prison within a prison at Barwon — a high-security state-of-the-art security facility. We have seen that first full year of operations completed during the current financial year, back in September. Some of the people in there are gangland figures, who you have probably read about in the newspapers during the year.

I turn to some of the work that is done by prisoners, particularly in the low-security prisons but also sometimes from medium security. Obviously it is only related to certain types of prisoners but they have done work helping with the clean up with bushfires or fencing. Dr Sykes is probably aware of some of that up and around his area.

**Dr SYKES** — The community is very grateful for what the fellows from Beechworth have done.

**Mr CAMERON** — That is building on after what occurred after 2006–07, also assistance given after the floods and also in relation to the Landcare work more generally.

The graffiti removal program with Community Corrections — —

**The CHAIR** — It has been removed [from the slide]!

**Mr CAMERON** — Community Corrections has been on this slide! It has been removed for some reason. That is really just a program of trying to use community offenders to bring about a public good, particularly working with the likes of councils, and there is a program around that.

There is also work happening around animal care and fostering. That has been expanded a little bit this year; we have a greyhound adoption program. There are other things, like at Beechworth they are looking after eagles, and there have been other initiatives. If prisoners look after animals and pets, for some people it actually has quite a therapeutic thing about the need to look after others. On the face of it you say, 'Why would you do that?', but there is actually a logic to it which is the evidence base.

**The CHAIR** — I think a former member of Parliament, Jan Wilson, is very strongly involved in this program.

**Mr CAMERON** — She is, because she is the chair of the greyhound racing board.

**Dr SYKES** — As an ex-prisoner?

**The CHAIR** — No, the greyhound adoption program. She is great to be one saying how very successful it was.

**Mr CAMERON** — She has been very persistent about that over time with Corrections Victoria. There is the new Ararat prison, as you know, which is being planned for. Expressions of interest closed in early April they are being evaluated and that project is due for completion in 2012. That is the prison next to the prison at Ararat.

If we go to the next slide, with this initiative around demand management, with the detention in home expansion, that is subject to legislative change, but at the moment that is not a statewide program. The objective is to try and make that broader rather than be just the metropolitan unit.

With new accommodation units, I mentioned earlier 100 beds across the system to be operational by 2011, and also some work in relation to infrastructure about flexible accommodation.

If we just have a look at this overhead, they are the prison numbers and the growth there — what was predicted and actual, which is a fraction under the actual.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — It does not really fit in with the decline in crime, does it?

**The CHAIR** — Seasonal variations.

**Mr CAMERON** — We are tough on crime and this is the graph that shows it. In each of the years you can see in January there is a dip down and then it grows. That is a seasonal thing. It is to do with the courts and when the courts operate, so that is why that occurs. It goes up and down.

You will be aware of measures that have been done around sentencing and the different approaches that are particularly taken in relation to sex offences.

We can have a look at imprisonment rates around Australia; however, Victoria does have a relatively low imprisonment rate around the rest of Australia.

**Mr WELLS** — Yes. Tougher sentencing.

**Dr SYKES** — Soft on crime.

**Mr CAMERON** — That has increased a bit. But as the Liberal Party knows, because they have invited the Ombudsman to report on the Ombudsman's report of that, that Victoria is the low-crime state.

The last graph is the recidivism rates for people who go into prison and reoffend within a couple of years. We have seen that consistently decline. We are the only state to have that decline for a period of six years in a row.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, thank you very much for that, although I do not think we needed the last page.

**Mr CAMERON** — Was there one more?

**Ms MUNT** — Yes; some diary entry on the last page.

**The CHAIR** — We are happy to give that back to you.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I am interested in the slides showing the increase in prison numbers. Certainly the Minister would be aware that we have raised concerns about that in terms of dealing with offenders and the policy of incarceration as a last resort, particularly young offenders. On your third slide you mentioned transitional housing and you made a few remarks about that. Minister, you would be aware that the Australian Institute of Criminology, in its ex-prisoners housing and homeless paper, described:

... a picture is merging of ex-prisoners in Australia facing significant barriers in attempting to secure accommodation on release from prison.

That report also concluded:

... that imprisonment, even for a short period, is associated with increased homelessness ...

and homelessness in turn is associated with re-incarceration. This report and many others found that accommodation is a major factor in preventing return to prison. I say this, too, in context of we know there is a housing shortage and there is an increasing level of homelessness in the general community. On page 38 of budget paper 3 under 'Reducing homelessness' it says:

Additional assistance will ... be provided for clients in the mental health and justice systems who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

I presume these are the small programs that are already in existence that do not service all prisoners and are currently underfunded in any case. So my question is: in this budget and going forward, how much money will be provided specifically for accommodation programs for ex-prisoners, both male and female, post-release?

**Mr CAMERON** — You probably overheard the conversation I just had with the secretary.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — No, I didn't, because there is another one going on over here !

**Mr CAMERON** — It is about trying to get a break-up of figures from housing. We will get that information so that we can provide it to the committee. But what you say is right, and as I outlined in the slides, homelessness is a key issue, particularly around reoffending; and transitional housing is important.

That is not to say these things are easy because it is difficult to provide providers and to find accommodation, but it is important and it is one of the key reasons why we see recidivism rates continue to come down; but it is a challenge and I will get the acting commissioner to talk about some of the initiatives at the present time.

**Mr WISE** — This has been a big focus of corrections over a number of years. Indeed, we have had funding over the last few years to increase our stock of transitional housing. The link between homelessness and recidivism is very well-known, so we have invested significantly in it.

We are looking at 78 new housing options over the next three years, to bring them online. We have entered into partnerships with the Office of Housing and a number of housing providers in order to do that, and over the last few years we have also invested heavily in a number of our transitional programs — the Link Out program for men, which provides up to 500 places for men exiting prison; WISP for women exiting prison, and that is another 90 places for women exiting the system and going out into the community; and we just recently introduced the Konnect program for Aboriginal offenders, both male and female.

A huge focus of each of those integrated programs is on finding appropriate housing for people exiting prison. The workers on each of those programs have the opportunity to catch up with the prisoners while they are still in prison, to understand what their needs are and to make arrangements prior to the prisoners' release, and then ensure that appropriate accommodation is provided once the prisoner is released.

So we will continue on with those transitional programs quite clearly, but we will also be able to draw upon a much greater stock of appropriate housing in the community over the next three years.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — To follow up, Chair, the Federal Government has a white paper on homelessness which establishes the policy of no exits into homelessness from custodial settings. Are there any performance indicators being developed to ensure compliance with Victoria's obligations under that partnership?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Just in terms of the agreements that there have been historically, in terms of access to housing for exiting prisoners, that is why they have not been the priority target group until now, and that is why we have developed these transition housing options. They are eligible, when they are back in the community, as everybody is to public housing; but in terms of that transition, that first step from exiting prison back into the community is the responsibility of corrections, and that is why our budget increase has been done — to accommodate that fact.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — But I am interested in the performance measures — getting to that agreement of 100 per cent.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — That is beyond our brief, though.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — But that could be in the budget as an output measure, right?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — No, it would not be in the state budget in terms of our agreement around the corrections budget; that would be in the accounting budget.

**The CHAIR** — It comes back to the original question I asked in terms of accountability mechanisms.

**Mr SCOTT** — Minister, I would like to draw attention to your presentation where you made reference to the number of female prisoners in the corrections system, and also the Better Pathways program, and I ask: can you advise what is being done to address the specific needs of women offenders through the Better Pathways strategy?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you, Mr Scott. This was an initiative of the government. Additional funding now in this budget will take the strategy forward this financial year.

The strategy has been around infrastructure upgrades at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, which is the women's prison in Victoria. We have only two women's prisons because of the relatively low number of women prisoners; there is also one in the country at Tarrengower for the lower-risk females, but in terms of the one high and medium-security prison, the establishment there of Marmak — the integrated mental health unit— has been important.

The needs of women around mental health are very significant. They are often people who have been abused; they are vulnerable people, and therefore this has been very important because it can provide 24-hour care.

There has been the Women's Integrated Support Program, which is pre and post transition support for women exiting the prison, and to date 366 women have been through that program. And there have been 10 supported transitional properties for women through the Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment program — the CREDIT program — which is now combined with the bail program, to improve the chances of women being granted bail and successfully completing the CREDIT program during the bail period. In addition there are two transitional properties for indigenous women who are released on bail, who exit prison on parole.

In terms of child-care and transport subsidies, 4500 subsidies approximately have been issued to date. There is also a multicultural liaison officer in the women's prisons, and sexual assault counselling services for women prisoners, and to date more than 116 women prisoners have accessed that; and an independent evaluation of the strategy is under way and will no doubt inform planning for the development of future initiatives to address women's offending and reoffending. Is there anything you would like to add to that, Mr Wise?

**Mr WISE** — Just to pick up on that last point, although we still have not received the evaluation report, there are certainly some indications that the Better Pathways strategy has already been successful, although in terms of recidivism data it is still too early to assess.

But in terms of the manageability of the prison system, the Better Pathways initiatives have made an enormous impact. Marrmak has taken some of the most problematic women and provided them with the appropriate treatment they require.

I am happy to say that, whereas we had Marrmak full of women at one point, it now has some capacity. We are hoping that the ongoing influence of Marrmak will be that we can return these women with very complex issues back out into the community in a much fitter state so that they do not keep coming back to jail and recycle at a rapid rate. The early indications are very positive, and we will know more shortly.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to ask about the 100 flexible beds, but before I do that, can you clarify — on the slide you said Ararat prison would be finished in 2012?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — When will it open to receive prisoners? Will it be 2012?

**Mr CAMERON** — Commissioned in 2012. There is already a prison at Ararat; it is just a prison next to it.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The 100 flexible beds, or temporary beds as the budget paper refers to them — you said they will be all available by 2011. Can you tell the committee what the rollout of those 100 beds will be over the forward estimates period, to 2011? Where do you plan to locate them initially; where will they be spread? And what category do they fall into in terms of security? What type of facilities are they — single bed, single units or double units?

**Mr WISE** — The 100 beds that will be rolled out by 2011 will be a unit or units that will be developed. We are looking at a number of options to place them, and we will determine where we can get the best value for our money. One of the options is to place them at Marnongneet, where there is space inside the walls. There are some opportunities for us to run some critical programs that are important to corrections, around things such as literacy and parenting. That is some early scoping work that we have done. Alternatively we might place them at somewhere like Port Phillip Prison.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The expectation is they will be placed together?

**Mr WISE** — They will be placed together — the 100 beds, yes. Most of those beds will be single-cell accommodation. There may be some double bunks to increase the efficiency of those operations.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — As to the security level?

**Mr WISE** — It would depend on where they are placed, but they will be secure rather than insecure, so they will be behind a wall.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — That's encouraging!

**Mr CAMERON** — It depends on the nature: if it is low security, it will not be a wall, it will be a fence; if it is medium or high security, it will be thick. There are different categories.

**The CHAIR** — We understand that.

**Mr WISE** — We already have clearly an extensive building program both at Dhurringile and Beechworth prisons, which will introduce significant numbers of minimum-security beds into the system over the next 12 months.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The new 100 — will they all be rolled out in 2011 or will they roll out before then?

**Mr WISE** — 2011, all at the one time.

**Ms MUNT** — I note in your presentation the photo of the men at work on a community work site in Moorabbin cleaning graffiti and also that budget paper 3, page 334 details the graffiti prevention and removal strategy. I was wondering if you could detail for us what is actually involved in that program.

Can I also take this opportunity to congratulate the graffiti task force that has been placed at the Moorabbin police station, which is doing wonderful work in actually apprehending graffiti offenders in our local areas.

**Mr CAMERON** — Community Correctional Services (CCS) wants to try and engage people who are involved in community work in meaningful and good work. They do that using a range of organisations. The graffiti program is a key part of that, particularly in trying to engage with organisations like councils in the work they do around graffiti, with, for example, a community-based order where there is work attached. Once offenders have been screened, they are suitable for unpaid community work, and they are selected to do graffiti, then what occurs is that those linkages are made, and often it is an ongoing program.

In this budget, the budget the Treasurer delivered a couple of weeks ago, we have allocated a further \$4.5 million over two years to build on and continue the graffiti clean-up program, of which \$2.6 million has been allocated to corrections to actively engage offenders in the removal of graffiti. The rest of the program relates to groups and organisations applying for a particular grant. What we hope is that we can marry these things up.

Since it began in 2005 the program has involved 10 000 offenders who have completed over 158 000 hours of unpaid community work. They have removed graffiti off 439 000 square metres — that is like 22 Melbourne Cricket Grounds.

**Ms MUNT** — Does that include graffiti offenders themselves being asked to clean off graffiti?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, that is right — graffiti offenders themselves but also other offenders.

**Ms MUNT** — Offenders on community work-based orders?

**Mr CAMERON** — Community work or for whatever particular reason. They have removed over 13 000 kilograms of rubbish to make sure the vandalised areas are completely clean and ready for the community. That happens through community work coordinators within Corrections Victoria — that is at 14 CCS locations. And there is a partnership between 28 local government and community partners.

Effectively that is around 30 operational days of graffiti clean-up each week. In addition there are 14 graffiti removal trailers that have got their equipment so that when they go out, they are able to do the work. I think, Rod, that probably covers it.

**Mr WISE** — That probably covers it, yes.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — It is interesting that on page 10 of the budget paper there is a picture of one of Melbourne's laneways featuring some graffiti.

**Mr CAMERON** — We will have a disagreement on this.

**The CHAIR** — There is some work in my area that they can come along and clean up too, Minister, as well.

**Mr WELLS** — Could you bring up the home detention slide, please? While that is happening: one of these graphs is obviously incorrect — crime decreasing, prisoner rates increasing — fascinating.

**Mr CAMERON** — Increased sentence length; you have to factor that in.

**Mr WELLS** — You are not serious!

**The CHAIR** — Your question, please, Mr Wells.

**Mr CAMERON** — Particularly around sex offenders.

**Mr WELLS** — Just on that, are you happy to provide information about increased sentencing?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Sentence length?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, sentence length.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — For serious offenders — yes.

**Mr CAMERON** — For serious offenders.

**Mr WELLS** — In comparison to people who have been given a suspended sentence and the like.

In regard to home detention, I am just wondering, over the forward estimates, how many convicted criminals who should have been sent to jail you are expecting to go into the home detention program or this soft option, and how many of these criminals who should have been in jail are you anticipating will break the conditions of home detention, based on past experience?

**The CHAIR** — I think the question probably should be properly rephrased. I am sure you will do that in your mind, Minister. The use of imputation against our court system is something which I certainly do not support as the Chair of this committee.

**Overhead shown.**

**Mr WELLS** — Hang on, this is the front end — that is a fact. The people who are on home detention are the front end of those who have been convicted and should have a custodial sentence; they have been given the option of home detention. That is a fact.

**The CHAIR** — The minister to answer. It may well be something for the Attorney-General rather than you.

**Mr CAMERON** — That is not quite right, because the courts at the front end have an option either not to impose a custodial sentence or impose a custodial sentence but not necessarily in custody.

**Mr WELLS** — Yes, but that is what the legislation intends — —

**Mr CAMERON** — But that could also occur by way of intensive correction orders. I think you have to put yourself in the mind of the sentencer and what they ultimately have in mind as to what the punishment is going to be — whether it is ultimately in custody or not in custody. I do not think you can undermine the role of the sentencer in the way that that works.

In relation to home detention, we see how that works because it is available in the city, but it is not available in the country. There is a limit to it in the city of — —

**Mr WISE** — Forty.

**Mr CAMERON** — Within 40 kilometres of the CBD. I suppose essentially there is an issue as to why it is available in one part of the state and not available in another part of this state. Technology was the reason, but in reality, ultimately in terms of equity with country people and city people, it is beneficial to do it across the board.

As at 11 May there were 35 current home detention orders in place, with just three from the front end. The rest of them came from the back end — that is, from the parole board. Quite frankly, the parole board will make its own assessment as to who should be on home detention and who should not be on home detention. I have faith in the courts in terms of looking at all of the options available and magistrates and judges deciding who should or should not get home detention.

In terms of breaches, where there is a breach, application can be made for revocation.

**Mr WELLS** — Application can be made, or should be made?

**Mr CAMERON** — Is made.

**Mr WELLS** — Is made?

**Mr WISE** — Is made — breaches, yes.

**Mr CAMERON** — I will just try and find the number of incidents. I understand there have been 21 revocations due to breaches, and the principal reason for those has related to a positive drug test — where they

have had to provide a drug sample and they have failed the sample and the parole board as a consequence has said, 'You had your option, and it is being revoked'.

**Mr WELLS** — And the change?

**Mr CAMERON** — What the change might be in relation to the country — I will have to get you some other material.

**Mr WELLS** — No, 'subject to legislative changes'.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr WELLS** — What is that legislative change?

**Mr CAMERON** — One of them will be to address the issue that you mention in relation to the fact that they have to be sentenced to imprisonment before being eligible for home detention. It will be around an option of this should be a stand-alone order — so sentence someone to jail if you are going to send them to jail; give them home detention if you are going to give them home detention; or do whatever else. The other thing will be around the city-country issue. That will address your issue about whether they should have been in prison or not. It will give greater transparency.

**Mr WELLS** — They should have been in prison.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Could I just ask the minister to repeat the figure.

**The CHAIR** — Which figure were you looking for, Ms Pennicuik?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — The figure on how many home detention orders were revoked due to positive drug tests. You said a figure.

**Mr WELLS** — Twenty-one.

**Mr CAMERON** — There were 21 revocations due to breach, and there were 14 on that.

**Mr NOONAN** — Minister, I wanted to ask you about drugs in prisons, which has not been covered in your presentation. In budget paper 3, page 157, there are output measures in relation to prisoner supervision and support. My question is in regard to prisoner supervision and whether the minister can outline what the government is doing about containing drug use in Victoria's prisons.

**Mr CAMERON** — Corrections Victoria has this ongoing battle, as you are well aware — and the prisons are continuing to win the battle — against drugs and other contraband. We will get to corrections soon, and Mr Wise will talk about some of the measures, such as what happens when you walk into some prisons and the arrangements that are made there — and that is by use of barrier controls.

The Commissioner will be able to expand on how that works; it is clearly quite technical. The 2007–08 data shows an increased amount of drug seizures from visitors — in other words, they have been detected in advance — and there has been an increase in targeted positive drug test results for prisoners. That is indicative of the improved success of intelligence in identifying drug users within the system. Also there has been a decrease in the number of random positive drug tests from prisoners, which is indicative of a decrease in contraband entering prisons in the first place.

In terms of detection, those ion scanners that I mentioned operate at Barwon Prison and the Melbourne Assessment Prison and the Melbourne Remand Centre, and the Commissioner will outline how that works. MRC — Metropolitan Remand Centre — also uses walk-in security booths and hand-held scanners to detect metal items, narcotic substances and explosives. The Security and Emergency Services Group, intelligence section, works collaboratively with prison management and external agencies such as Victoria Police and they gather intelligence in an effort to intercept contraband and prevent incidents that may threaten the good order and security of prisons. They also use passive alert dogs; they have built them up over the years. They have quite a few now.

At the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, the Ombudsman's report into contraband entering the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre was tabled in Parliament in June last year. There were 14 recommendations highlighting the need to tighten administrative procedures around seizures and the recording and control of contraband in prisons.

Corrections Victoria accepted those recommendations. The actions undertaken so far have included: enhanced security training for staff, improved monitoring of procedural compliance, and steps to upgrade the security management system in the prison gatehouse to improve visitor surveillance. I might now hand over to the Commissioner for anything else that he would like to add. He could also explain how the ion scanner works — the puffing of the wind.

**Mr WISE** — Certainly, Minister. I think the Minister introduced it by saying it is an ongoing battle against drugs in the prison system. That is true. It is probably unsurprising, given that around about 70 per cent of our prisoners who come into the system are drug users on the outside, and the figure is probably higher for female prisoners. I guess it is not surprising that when they do come in and there is a big community of drug users, that they continue to try to acquire and use drugs.

Our battle is to stop them from getting in and, when they do get in, to detect them and to deter people from using drugs, and then if they are habitual drug users, to treat them so that they have less chance of returning to prison on drug-related offences.

A number of the things that we do are around the front of the prisons, the barrier controls. As the Minister indicated, we have ion scanners at a number of our jails — at Barwon, MAP and the Metropolitan Remand Centre. They do puff compressed air over people entering the prison. That dislodges narcotic particles into the air, which are then sampled by the machine, and the machine will then indicate whether that person has been in recent contact with narcotic substances.

It has proved a very effective way of determining whether someone is likely to be introducing contraband into the prison. If someone registers positive during that process, then we will not permit them a contact visit with the person whom they wish to visit, or alternatively, we ask them to submit to a more stringent search to detect whatever items they might have on their person.

There are other technological things that we do at the front including, at a number of our jails, requiring visitors to undergo an iris scan. We have had incidents in the past of visitors being detected bringing drugs in and then trying to re-enter another prison, perhaps under an assumed name or a different name; the iris scanning process allows us to determine that someone who has been banned from visiting is trying to get in. That has been another very significant weapon to stop drugs coming in.

The Minister outlined a number of those other measures that we have in place, and they are all working well. Indeed the results, I think, are fairly impressive. We do a test ourselves on the percentage of prisoners who test positive to random samples. Only 1.28 per cent at the moment of prisoners across the system have tested positive through that random sampling process, which is an extraordinary effort. There is only one prison that is exceeding its benchmark, and that is by 0.08 per cent, I think, of its target. It should also achieve its target by the end of the year.

**Dr SYKES** — What is your level of confidence in that result? It does seem amazing, based on the drug use coming into the prison and anecdotal claims about the drug use that continues in the prison — do you have a high level of confidence in that result?

**Mr WISE** — I do. The random sampling is truly random and the testing is very rigorous. What we also do in addition to the random sampling, though, is target individuals whom we suspect to be under the influence of drugs or who we might have received intelligence about, who we think are likely to be using drugs at any particular point.

The targeted sampling of those offenders produces a higher rate than the 1.28 per cent. It is closer to 5 or 6 per cent. So there is drug use in our prisons; it would be silly to suggest otherwise. Our intelligence is getting much better at identifying those people who are using. We are constantly trying to establish ways to beat the masking of drug use. But we are very confident that there is a low level of drug use, particularly compared to other jurisdictions nationally and internationally.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. Mr Dalla-Riva, a final question?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Minister, following up from Mr Rich-Phillips's earlier comment about the Ararat prison, I note a reference on page 34 of budget paper 3. I notice it says that the 2009–10 budget allocates \$61 million for the opening of the 350-bed prison in Ararat. Has that prison been built as a part of a PPP?

**Mr WISE** — It is.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — You opposed those.

**The CHAIR** — Without the commentary.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — The capital builds in — —

**Mr CAMERON** — The Government — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — No, I am just curious. Your policy position changes, but anyway — —

**Mr CAMERON** — No, we are talking about a capital build. We have never opposed PPPs with capital — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — We've changed the meaning, have we? That is all right, we just want to get it clear!

**The CHAIR** — Mr Dalla-Riva!

**Mr CAMERON** — I am just telling you; it is the capital — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — No, I just wanted to get it clear, that was all. I needed clarification. So you are now supporting PPPs? Great!

I refer to page 157 of budget paper 3 in relation to — —

**Mr CAMERON** — We have actually said that for years and years, haven't we?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — It follows on about the private and public operators. I am just wondering about page 157, the total output cost of prisoner supervision and support — —

**The CHAIR** — Can we have a question and get on with it?

**Mr CAMERON** — The PPP relates to the — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — We both have corrections in opposition.

**Mr CAMERON** — Then you would know — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — We know what your government's position was, so now you have — —

**Mr CAMERON** — We have talked about PPPs for years and years.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I am just trying to get it clear about the total output costs. In terms of the forward estimates, are you able to provide the committee with the breakdown of the cost of keeping prisoners in a private prison as opposed to keeping prisoners in the public system? You can take it on notice if you are not able to provide it here. Have you got it now?

**Mr CAMERON** — Is that the question?

**The CHAIR** — That is the question.

**Mr CAMERON** — We will see what we might have.

**The CHAIR** — I think we have asked this before — last year.

**Mr WELLS** — Yes, it is a standard question.

**Mr CAMERON** — Comparison is difficult because — —

**Mr WELLS** — Maximum to maximum.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Port Phillip to Barwon for example.

**Mr WELLS** — Yes, Port Phillip to Barwon.

**Mr CAMERON** — I will have to provide that; we do not have that split.

**Mr WELLS** — He has got it in front of him.

**Mr CAMERON** — I have not got it in front of me. There is a handwritten note from the Acting Commissioner that comparison is difficult. Different overheads — —

**Mr WELLS** — Between Barwon and Port Phillip.

**Mr CAMERON** — I do not have those numbers. I will have to provide them to you.

**Mr WELLS** — Ask Rod to provide them now. He would have them at his fingertips.

**Mr WISE** — No, I do not. We have got the whole — —

**Mr CAMERON** — We have only got the whole.

**Mr WISE** — Which includes medians.

**Mr CAMERON** — We will get the information that you requested, as we always do. Thank you very much.

**Mr WELLS** — It is a question on notice.

**The CHAIR** — We are going to get it on notice. Thank you very much. That concludes the consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolio of corrections. I thank the minister and departmental officers for their attendance today. Where questions are taken on notice the committee will follow up with you in writing at a later date and request written responses to be provided within 30 days. Thank you.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you.