

# VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into budget estimates 2010–11

Melbourne — 14 May 2010

#### Members

Mr R. Dalla-Riva

Ms J. Graley

Ms J. Huppert

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

Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

#### Witnesses

Mr B. Cameron, Minister for Police and Emergency Services,

Ms P. Armytage, Secretary,

Mr T. Leech, Executive Director, Police, Emergency Services and Corrections, Department of Justice; and

Chief Commissioner S. Overland, Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the 2010-11 budget estimates for the portfolios of police and emergency services. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Honourable Bob Cameron, MP, Minister for Police and Emergency Services; Ms Penny Armytage, Secretary of the Department of Justice; Mr Tony Leech, executive director, police, emergency services and corrections; Mr Simon Overland, APM, Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police; departmental officers, members of the public and the media are also welcome.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his/her chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council committee room; they are specifically that the filming is confined to those people who are speaking.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. There is no need for evidence to be sworn. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript, to be verified and returned within two working days. In accordance with past practice, the transcripts and PowerPoint presentations and other material circulated will then be placed on the committee's website.

Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions relating to the budget estimates. The procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the legislative Assembly. I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off; in the last two hearings, people's phones have gone off, so make sure they are off, please.

I now call on the minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of police and emergency services.

**Overheads shown.**

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Chair, and committee members. I will just take you over some slides to open it up for discussion and then we will have discussion, as we have had on previous occasions; and as has been the case on previous occasions, with questions, either I or the Chief Commissioner or the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Penny Armytage, will answer them, but the questions will be directed to me. If we have to follow up with information, as has been the case in the past, we will do that as well.

The first slide that we have just shows a breakdown in the justice budget. You will see there the break in the Department of Justice amongst all of its various components; with police you have the \$1.99 billion budget.

If we go to the next slide, around the police budget, really this just shows the way in the past decade that budget has nearly doubled. This year we get to \$1.99 billion, an increase of 97 per cent from the 2000-01 budget. That is a record increase for Victoria Police and has enabled the government to fund a lot more police over the last decade — nearly 2000 extra, a 20 per cent increase, in police numbers.

If we go to the next graph, it actually shows the police numbers. At the end of the 1990s we had police declining under the Liberal Party policy. What you see there is the increase in numbers — around 2000 up to this year but also, as a result of the budget commitments, additional police over the course of the next five years.

The next graph just goes to the overall crime rate in Victoria. We had that increase there during the 1990s, the blue graph, and then you see with the red one there that we have had a reduction — since 2000-01 we have had a reduction in the overall crime rate of 25.5 per cent. But if we are to break that down into broader categories, if we look at offences against the person, taking out family violence, we see that that has been relatively stable over the years.

But if we look at the next graph, what you will see there is in fact quite dramatic declines in offences against property. Really it is those other offences which have driven down the crime rate, the 'offences against the person' category remaining relatively static.

If we go now to the 'Focus on the streets' slide, there has been a big focus by Victoria Police, and with the new Chief Commissioner of Police, Simon Overland, we have wanted to make sure that there was that front-line focus in targeted hot spots. If we just look at the CBD, I have asked police if they could pull out some figures for the six-month summer period this year, comparing it to the previous summer period. This data is yet subject to confirmation, it is preliminary data; nevertheless, it is generally accurate.

What you see there is an 18 per cent decrease in (non-family violence) street assaults over this summer six-month period compared to the summer before. Of course there have been a range of issues there. There has been the police approach, but there has also been the increased use of banning notices.

You will remember we introduced banning notices from entertainment precincts. We have seen across the state over 3000 of those, a lot of them being used in the CBD. During the course of last year police very much got into the pattern of using them.

Also in December we introduced laws for on-the-spot fines for drunks, so you go to the cells and you also go with a fine. Previously there was not a financial penalty.

We have also introduced move-on powers. We have continued the support for the Safer Streets Taskforce and, as you also know, a couple of months ago — that is only at the tail end of this — the operational response unit was established, which we funded when the chief commissioner came to us last year.

If we just have a look at the sort of key things about investments in police in the budget: 1700 extra police by 2014–15, funds to redeploy 200 white shirts to free up police officers, and also funds for the D24 arrangements at ESTA. That is going to free up 66 police who are otherwise 000 call takers. There is also an investment there about accommodation in the city, really crime department-type functions, and bringing them all together. And \$9.7 million is also allocated for new police stations at Daylesford, Trafalgar and Loch Sport and we will be acquiring land at Echuca for a new station. This of course builds on the very long and successful program that the government has had in investing in police stations and police facilities.

Also there is funding for additional specialist equipment, some covert video equipment, audio transmission and transmission systems; a replacement Air Wing video downlink system, making that the newest and the latest; a diving support truck; X-ray bomb units; and water police vessels.

I just want to turn now to road safety. This is a graph over a period of time. It is a little bit of a historical piece, but you go back to 1970 when we had 1061 deaths on our roads. These have really been the key changes that have occurred over time: compulsory seatbelts being introduced; breath testing, and you see the reductions there; you see what has occurred around 1990, with the introductions of speed cameras and high-volume random breath testing; you go on to the next thing, additional hours; and also, in the last few years, drug testing.

Overall what we have ended up with is a situation last year with our lowest road toll ever. I want you to compare that bar on the right-hand side to the left-hand side. It is less than a third, nearly a quarter of what it was. I want you to just think how many extra cars are on the road since 1970. There are probably three times as many cars on the roads. I think that is something where government, police and community have all worked very well, to bring about that result.

Just in terms of the road safety initiatives, last year was the lowest road toll ever. This year we are slightly above last year. It was below a couple of weeks ago; now we are up. Just in terms of police Operation Aegis, 75 000 offences detected to date. There is also a new investment around automatic numberplate recognition over the next three years. That is really aimed at detecting vehicles that should not be on the road or alternatively detecting people who have outstanding warrants with the sheriff or the like.

We will just go now to emergency services and meeting the challenges post 7 February, the challenges that that has bought about and the funding that we have received as a consequence. We saw that funding in last year's budget and following the interim report of the royal commission. You know there has been a lot of work done since that time. We had an independent monitor, a former chief commissioner, Neil Comrie. It was his view that overall the progress to date has been good.

But going forward, we have to meet the challenges. In terms of this year's state budget initiatives, there is the project 000, bringing the country D24s into ESTA at Ballarat. On training arrangements, last year's budget was

for ambulance and getting the platforms ready for police; this year it is around police coming in. Last year it was around the supervision, clean-up and demolition. This year what we did after the royal commission interim report was a lot of initiatives over summer. They are embedded in this budget as well. They include community bushfire education, the integrated 000 and also bushfire reconstruction and recovery as well as a whole lot of training around incident management, particularly in the CFA.

Here we go over the key activities in the 2009–10 budget. I will let you read that because we will be running out of time otherwise. But they were the key activities last year. In terms of the budget activities this year — you know in the mid-year budget update there was \$61 million — it sets out all those things there. I will let you read them at your leisure.

In terms of this budget, funds are provided there for the forward estimates period. It is around all those things there. I just added the Kinglake and Whittlesea ambulance services. I know that is in health, but it was just in terms of completeness.

The volunteers are so important when it comes to emergency services. Here you have the changes that have occurred in volunteers over the last year. We have more than 1000 extra volunteers in the CFA and more than 1000 in VICSES. When you think about what that is in terms of increases as a percentage, that is really enormous.

Life Saving Victoria has also had a big increase in its volunteers as well. So across the board we see a lot of people wanting to volunteer in the emergency services space. That really concludes the presentation. We will open it up now for questions.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much for that, Minister. We have until 11.45 a.m. for questions from committee members. I would just like to begin as I have with other ministers: the budget puts aside funding for next year and the out years for stated government priorities against outcomes to be achieved. The committee is interested in terms of medium and long-term plans and strategies on which the budget for your portfolio is based, and whether there have been any changes in the past year.

**Mr CAMERON** — Obviously what we want to do is when we factor into the budget the things that we want to do, we put those into the forward estimates. Policy does change over time, and as those policies change they have to be incorporated — either in the next budget or in the half yearly update.

I might get the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Ms Armytage, to go over the way the department approaches this, given that that is the basis of your question — how the department goes about this.

**The CHAIR** — Yes, we are interested in the strategies and the plans on which you base things.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Thank you. We have developed a broad service strategy that looks at what we think will be some of the demands and challenges across the portfolio for the upcoming 10–year period. We then look at it in terms of the next three to five years — what we think are the more medium-term issues that will have to be addressed. Annually we produce a strategic priorities document that we look at, and having taken account of that context what do we think we need to focus our corporate effort on in the coming period.

On 17–18 March this year we had our executive retreat in Marysville, where we undertook that task to try and look at those priorities. For example, last year this was our 2009–10 priority document, and we are just finalising what that will now look like for 2010–11. That gets finalised in June, once we have concluded those deliberations. That will look at what are the challenges that we think are there facing us in this coming period and how well do we position the portfolio. I am more than happy for the 2009–10 document to be made available, and as soon as the 2010–11 document is concluded that can also be brought to the committee's attention.

**The CHAIR** — That would be very useful, because we want to just ensure that there is proper medium and long-term planning in terms of fiscal management here in Victoria. Are there changes from time to time between last year and going forward?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Yes. Certainly in terms of the portfolio priorities and the issues that we have seen, the big effort has been about responding to the bushfires, and that has continued on. That has been a very large

priority. Because we are yet to receive the final report of the royal commission, that needs to be factored in to what will be the challenges we face in implementation.

We are coming to the end of the gaming licence review process; that has also been a major priority for us. We are moving towards what we need to do to enhance our regulatory environment. So there have been some key changes. There is also a continued focus around public safety, but because of the nature of the long-term commitments we have, that will continue. Those will continue to be some of our priorities going forward.

**Mr WELLS** — Thank you, Minister. I want to refer you to budget paper 3, page 139. The heading ‘Police Integrity’ shows the OPI has reached its target investigations leading to significant outcomes. I find that target benchmark quite bizarre. I find it hard to believe and I would like to explore that with you today.

The latest OPI prosecution of Mr Ashby has been one of the greatest debacles in years. We are funding this agency \$26 million a year and all we get are cover-ups. I have here today a copy of an affidavit that was prepared in 2007 by Assistant Commissioner Luke Cornelius in relation to the failed OPI investigation and prosecution of Mr Ashby. In paragraph 113 of that affidavit, this is what Mr Cornelius states:

QUOTE NOT SUPPLIED IN TIME FOR VERIFICATION.

It was recognised that the issues arising out of Briars might reawaken calls for a royal commission.

Minister, I would like you to explain to us what were the issues that might warrant a royal commission that were of great concerns inside the highest levels of Victoria Police, and can you confirm that the type of issues about which there was serious concern was corruption inside Victoria Police?

**The CHAIR** — The minister needs to relate this to the estimates. So your answer needs to relate to the estimates, not something which happened in the past or which should be covered — —

**Mr WELLS** — No. This is about — —

**The CHAIR** — Excuse me, I am speaking as the Chair — —

**Mr WELLS** — Yes, I know, but I do not want you to railroad this witness.

**The CHAIR** — I am not railroading anything — —

**Mr WELLS** — I do not want you to railroad this witness.

**The CHAIR** — We have clear and specific — —

**Mr WELLS** — We want an answer about the integrity of Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR** — We have clear and specific arrangements in terms of this inquiry. It is dealing with the budget estimates. If there are other issues that are outside the budget estimates, there are other places to raise those issues. I am asking the minister to use his discretion in this regard, but it is very clear that these are estimates hearings; they are not about 2007. So I am insisting — —

**Mr WELLS** — No, you are railroading this witness — —

**The CHAIR** — I am not railroading anything, and I ask you — —

**Mr WELLS** — There are measurements — —

**The CHAIR** — I ask you, as Deputy Chair —

**Mr WELLS** — I am asking you in regards to police integrity

**The CHAIR** — — not to interrupt.

**Mr WELLS** — This is regarding police integrity and the benchmark — —

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells! Would you like to show some respect to the proceedings and not interrupt, please? If you wish to make a point of order, you can make a point of order.

**Mr WELLS** — Don't railroad the witness.

**The CHAIR** — I am not railroading any witness. That is a most intemperate statement. The minister, to answer in respect of the estimates and not other issues.

**Mr CAMERON** — Just in terms of the estimates, you will know that our policy has been to properly fund the OPI. You will know that at the last election the policy of the Liberal Party was to keep the OPI but to slash funds to the OPI. We rejected that. We rejected that outright. What we have done is make sure that we increased funds — —

**Mr WELLS** — But it is ineffective, Minister.

**Mr CAMERON** — We increased funds to the OPI — —

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Mr CAMERON** — We have in place Michael Strong, a former County Court judge who is the Director of Police Integrity — an appointment supported by both sides of politics. Michael is a man of enormous integrity, and he is going about his business accordingly. In relation to the matter you referred to — some affidavit — my understanding is that police have dealt with that previously. Do you want to make a comment, Chief Commissioner?

**The CHAIR** — I would prefer it if it related to the estimates, Chief Commissioner.

**Mr WELLS** — No, hang on. This is a very important point.

**The CHAIR** — It may be important, and you can raise it in the house and you can raise these things elsewhere.

**Mr WELLS** — You have an assistant commissioner who believes it is so serious in Victoria Police that — —

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Mr Wells!

**Mr WELLS** — He maintains we should have a royal commission.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, I ask that you — —

**Mr WELLS** — I am sure an assistant commissioner — —

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, you do not have the call.

**Mr WELLS** — I am sure a royal commission call is a serious matter.

**The CHAIR** — You are interrupting the proceedings. I would ask you to refrain from interrupting.

**Mr WELLS** — Do not try to shut down my question.

**The CHAIR** — I am not shutting down any questions that relate to the estimates. This is an estimates hearing. It is not something about something else — —

**Mr WELLS** — And a call for a royal commission will have an enormous impact. A call for a royal commission — —

**The CHAIR** — If you do not wish to respect the procedures and the arrangements of this hearing, of which you are the deputy chair and should understand what we are about, and if you wish to raise other matters which do not deal with the estimates, then they are dealt with in other ways, either through other parliamentary committees or in the house, in terms of questions, or indeed in terms of questions on notice. There are other

ways of dealing with these things. Do you wish to add anything, Minister or Chief Commissioner, insofar as it relates to the estimates?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Any comment I would make, Chair, does not relate directly to the estimates, but they are matters I have previously made public statements about.

**The CHAIR** — Okay. Ms Graley?

**Mr WELLS** — Okay, in regard — —

**Ms GRALEY** — I would like to ask a question.

**Mr WELLS** — No, no, hang on! In regard, Chief Commissioner, seeing as you started answering — —

**The CHAIR** — Ms Graley has the call.

**Mr WELLS** — What are your comments in regard to your assistant commissioner's call for a royal commission?

**The CHAIR** — Ms Graley has the call, Mr Wells.

**Mr WELLS** — Surely that is a serious point.

**Ms GRALEY** — I would like to be able to ask my question.

**The CHAIR** — We have one question at a time.

**Mr WELLS** — Did you agree with the assistant commissioner?

**Ms GRALEY** — Minister, I would like to ask you a question from your presentation about police numbers.

#### **Members interjecting**

**Ms GRALEY** — I refer to the slide that you presented for us all to see of police numbers. I would like to ask you if you could inform the committee of the plan to increase the police numbers by 1700 over the next five years?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Ms Graley. What we want to do of course is totally reject the Liberal philosophy, which you see there at the end of the 1990s, which is about promising police and cutting them.

**Mr WELLS** — We would not attempt to cover up.

**Dr SYKES** — At least we did not create corruption in this state.

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Ms GRALEY** — I would like to hear the answer to my question.

**Mr WELLS** — If we knew there was one sniff of corruption, we would be in there trying to fix it.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells!

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So you can talk about the past, but we can't?

**The CHAIR** — We are meant to be talking about the estimates and moving into the future.

**Mr WELLS** — No, he is not. He is talking about the past, so it is okay for him, but when we want to bring it up the issue of corruption in 2007, you want to shut it down.

**Mr CAMERON** — Of course we totally reject that, so that is what you see in terms of the increases. You will see going forward for the next five years our plan is to put on an additional 1700 sworn police.

**Ms GRALEY** — I would like to hear the answer.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, you are — —

**Mr WELLS** — There is a real smell about this.

**Mr CAMERON** — In addition, as part of what the government wants to do, we want to free up police who are attending to other duties by employing people — white shirts — to do those duties so that we can have more police actively doing policing duties.

In addition, at the moment across the D24s — that is, the regional call-taking centres; if you ring 000, you go to a D24 if it is in country Victoria — what we want to do is aggregate all of that in Ballarat with essentially civilian call-takers. That will free up 66 police. As a consequence of what we intend to do over the next five years, that comes to 1966 additional police. The chief commissioner of course has to make sure that he can train all of those people, and he is committed to do that. Do you want to make some comments, Chief Commissioner?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Yes. Obviously this is a significant increase in police numbers. It is 450 in the next year that we need to deliver. We are actually well placed to do that. We have been recruiting and growing very heavily this year, so the academy and our recruitment services are geared up. I am anticipating that we will be able, and we are planning, to deliver the full 450 by 30 June next year.

We will shortly need to start an advertising campaign to attract more potential recruits to the organisation. That is the first time that we have needed to do that for some time, but given the growth that we have had and the growth that we will have, it seems prudent to us to start an advertising campaign. There is funding provided for that, so there is some initial advertising that will start very shortly and then a more formal campaign later in the year that is designed around making sure that we get the right people wanting to join us. There is no intention to dilute our standards; in fact we are raising the standard that we are applying to our recruits, because we think it is important that we have the right people working for us.

We obviously want to broaden the base that we are recruiting from. It is still part of our intention to recruit from right across the community. It is a very diverse community we have here in Victoria, and we think it is important that we have appropriate representation within the police organisation from across the broad spectrum of ethnic groups living within Victoria. It is going to be a challenge for us, but we believe it is one that we are up to.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much for that. Mr Rich-Phillips?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — I would also like to go back to the issue of the Office of Police Integrity. I refer to the affidavit that Mr Wells referred to from Assistant Commissioner Cornelius. At paragraph 116 it states:

QUOTE NOT SUPPLIED IN TIME FOR VERIFICATION.

We thought Mr Frank Costigan would be good to have on board because of Frank's prior involvement in royal commissions. We acknowledged around the table if these things go horribly wrong for us and we do find ourselves in territory where we might need to concede that there should be a royal commission, then Frank Costigan would be a helpful person.

Assistant Commissioner Cornelius then explains that the circumstances under which a royal commission may be necessary include a catastrophic leak. Given that everything did go horribly wrong for you — you had a series of catastrophic leaks and evidence emerged of corruption within Victoria Police — why did you then not establish a royal commission? You and the Premier have been running around for years saying no royal commission is necessary, no traditional inquiry is necessary, no ICAC is necessary, but at the same time Victoria Police was preparing for that exact eventuality. Victoria Police knew there was a huge problem at OPI that it could not manage, and you have spent years covering up corruption issues. Victoria — —

**The CHAIR** — We have not — —

**Mr WELLS** — Hang on. No, let him finish the question, with respect.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Why are we spending all these funds on OPI when even Victoria Police say that a royal commission or judicial inquiry is required?

**The CHAIR** — Once again it needs to relate to the estimates.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Twenty-six million dollars.

**Mr WELLS** — How many people have to die before you are going to act on corruption?

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, would you stop interrupting. Your behaviour is not showing respect to the parliamentary procedures.

**Mr WELLS** — Because we are sick and tired of cover-ups, and we want some action.

**The CHAIR** — You have just done it again. We are dealing with the estimates hearing here. Other issues can be dealt with elsewhere.

**Mr WELLS** — We are dealing with a cover-up of police corruption.

**The CHAIR** — They are your words, and in fact they are completely incorrect in terms of these proceedings.

**Mr WELLS** — The assistant commissioner says they are getting ready for a royal commission.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, that is the seventh time you have interrupted this morning. Your behaviour is actually inappropriate. It is not showing respect. For someone like you, who is a senior person and deputy chair of this committee, I ask you to behave yourself and show respect for the proceedings. Minister, in so far as this relates to the estimates — I find there is very little that relates to the estimates as the question was given — it is in terms of the funding for the OPI.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — There are still investigations on foot that relate to the matters that were subject to the affidavit.

**The CHAIR** — I do not think anything about the affidavit deals with this — —

**Mr WELLS** — No, the case is finishing.

**The CHAIR** — That is the eighth time, Mr Wells.

**Mr WELLS** — It is — —

**The CHAIR** — That is the ninth time.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — There are still investigations under way into the matters that are referred to in that affidavit. I know you may well have an affidavit where I express similar views. Our desire was — —

**Mr WELLS** — Does that mean you were preparing for a royal commission?

**The CHAIR** — The 10th time! Mr Wells, behave yourself!

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — If I could just explain myself, my preference was to not have a royal commission, so that we could get on with the important work we had to do, which was to investigate very serious allegations of police corruption with the OPI. That is what we have done; that is what we are continuing to do.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Despite the fact that it has not worked and that Assistant Commissioner Cornelius is suggesting the prospect of a royal commission?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — The investigations are ongoing.

**Mr NOONAN** — Minister, I refer to your presentation where you talked about the crimes against the person and provided some statistics for us, as well as the strategies that have been adopted in more recent times in

relation to tackling street violence. I just ask if you could detail for the committee's benefit how this budget will assist those strategies.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Mr Noonan. Could I just go back and go over some of the key issues? While we have seen decreases in a range of categories, when it comes to offences against the person — we have taken out family violence there — what we have actually seen is that it has been relatively static. That is something we would like to see be far more on a downward trend, even though over the last decade we would have put on 2000 police, the biggest increase in police over a decade ever in Victoria. But we want to build on that and have the biggest increase ever over the course of the next five years.

We recognise that a lot of the work that police have to do will be time-consuming. We know that if police are to have more presence on the streets, that is time-consuming. We know that tackling issues around family violence is time-consuming but extremely important, and that is something the police have given a lot of focus to. We have introduced random searches, and police are warning the public up to understand that, but if we are to have more of those in the future, we know those things are time-consuming.

Given that, that is why we have announced the very large increase in police to build on the decade that we have already had. I might ask the chief commissioner if he wants to outline some of the strategies and the issues that he sees going forward in terms of the additional police that he will have.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — The safe streets task force has now been running for a number of years. In late 2008 there was an additional \$11 million provided to us to boost the presence of police, particularly in and around the CBD where this problem of alcohol-fuelled violence has been most concentrated. That task force has been very, very active. Since its inception it has visited over 51 000 licensed premises, issued over 18 800 infringement notices, detected over 8000 drunks and arrested over 3300 people, so it is very active.

We are continuing to expand on that with the establishment of the operations response unit, which is a new unit that came into existence in March this year. The 120 additional police that were delivered on top of the original commitment by the government in this current financial year have all gone to the operations response unit.

Over time we see that unit building up to being around 500 or 600 in strength. We are really using it to target trouble spots right across the state, primarily initially focused on public order issues in and around licensed precincts but also on the public transport system and around particular rail stations where our intelligence indicates that a lot of crime is actually concentrated.

The initial feedback from the ops response unit has been very positive. They have been involved with the transit safety unit in the deployment of the new knife search powers. We have run six such operations since the new legislation came into effect; in fact, we are running another one today. Again, we will look to evaluate that, but the anecdotal feedback that we have been getting from members of the public has been very, very supportive. They do not mind being searched; they actually feel safer coming into stations and onto trains, seeing a very strong police presence. I think it is a sign of reassurance to the community.

We have also continued to focus on family violence. That partly explains the increases we have seen in the assault category. I think there is sometimes a degree of sophistication that needs to go into analysis of crime data. If you look at offences against the person and you look going back to 2000–01, the two categories where you have a persistent increase are rape, where there has been a 10.8 per cent increase over that period of time; and assaults, where there has been about a 39 per cent increase over that period of time.

With respect to family violence we have been actively encouraging reporting, because we know it is a massively underreported crime; similarly with rape, we have been actively encouraging reporting. We have done a lot of work in trying to reform the way we deal with both family violence and sexual assault.

We never like to see the figures go up, but in a way there is kind of the good news message in there which we think is partly down to greater reporting. I guess also you could look at other crime data and you would see, for instance, if you looked at last year, offences around behaviour in public have increased by 90 per cent. You could be alarmed by that, but we would actually say that is a good news story, because it reflects that we are out there, enforcing strongly, dealing with the issue of alcohol-fuelled violence in and around licensed precincts and also concerns about the transit system and people's feelings of safety on the train corridor in particular.

**Mr CAMERON** — When it comes to the banning notices, since they have come in more than 3100 have been issued across the state; 2700 of them in the city. So we are seeing police really ramp those up, and we are also seeing on-the-spot fines for drunks, with over 5700 infringement notices being given to drunks to date.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Thank you. Minister, I would like to refer you to budget paper 3, page 139, and it is relation to the Office of Police Integrity, again, about the quality and the outcomes expected as one of the measures.

I would also like to refer you to the affidavit of Assistant Commissioner of Police, Luke Cornelius, who at paragraph 114 warned that inside Victoria Police at the very highest levels of command there was serious concern. In the affidavit he says:

QUOTE NOT SUPPLIED IN TIME FOR VERIFICATION.

... of the potential of one of the witnesses being identified and killed by people interested in keeping them quiet **NOT VERIFIED**

What is more staggering, Minister, is the very serious concern about somebody being killed. In the affidavit, it was decided by Victoria Police to develop a media strategy. So I find it quite extraordinary that the first thing that is done is to prepare a media strategy when somebody's life is at risk.

My question, Minister, is: how much worse does it have to get than one of your top police command, in an affidavit, stating that he is concerned that witnesses could be murdered by organised crime figures or corrupt police? Do you believe that Victoria Police should be looking at this issue more in-depth? Should there be an ICAC? Do you think that there is capacity for the Office of Police Integrity, in the forward estimates, to be able to manage such an enormous amount of corruption that appears to be occurring?

**Mr WELLS** — So you are more interested about a media strategy — —

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, that is the 12th time you have interrupted.

**Mr WELLS interjected.**

**The CHAIR** — That is the 13th time you have interrupted.

**Mr WELLS interjected.**

**The CHAIR** — That is the 14th time you have interrupted. Would you like to show a bit of restraint, please? Mr Dalla-Riva has the call.

**Mr WELLS interjected.**

**The CHAIR** — That is the 17th time; your behaviour is most inappropriate. I am quite concerned about your behaviour.

**Mr WELLS** — I am sick and tired of the cover up.

**The CHAIR** — I apologise on the behalf of the committee for Mr Wells's behaviour.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you. The Chief Commissioner of Police totally rejects that assertion.

**Mr WELLS** — But it's part of the affidavit. You were more focused on a media strategy — —

**The CHAIR** — Your behaviour is inappropriate, Mr Wells.

**Mr CAMERON** — The Chief Commissioner of Police has totally rejected that assertion. Let us go back to the OPI — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Minister, who was going to play you in *Underbelly 5*?

**The CHAIR** — Mr Dalla-Riva!

**Mr CAMERON** — Let us go back to the OPI. We have an OPI: it is effectively a standing royal commission.

**Mr WELLS** — Luke Cornelius called for a media strategy! What is the priority for Victoria Police?

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells! That is the 27th interruption that you have made. This is a hearing. Do I need to explain to you for the umpteenth time that the way these things work is: questions are asked, people get the call, and then answers are given without interruption? Interjections are unparliamentary. You are a senior member of the Parliament; you know that. I would like you to reconsider your behaviour and act accordingly. The minister has the call, without assistance.

**Mr CAMERON** — In relation to going forward, what we will continue to do is fund the OPI, and as head of the OPI we have a former County Court judge — someone that the opposition recognises is a man of enormous integrity.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Clearly, you have not got the capacity to deal with the endemic corruption — —

**The CHAIR** — Do you wish to ask a follow-up question through the Chair?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I do. There is \$26 million in the forward estimates for the OPI. Do you honestly believe that that \$26 million is value for money? Do you think that there is capacity within the OPI? Clearly it has been demonstrated over the years that it has not had the capacity to deal with the corruption that you have created under your government. So when are you going to get serious — —

#### **Members interjecting.**

**The CHAIR** — Members of the committee! That was an interesting discussion, because Mr Dalla-Riva was seeking further clarification and in fact the Deputy Chair spoke over Mr Dalla-Riva. We need to respect each other here, all of us, and that includes Mr Noonan. We want these things to proceed smoothly with questions and answers: not statements, nor interruptions. I will keep doing this all day if you do not wish to follow the procedures of the Parliament.

**Mr WELLS** — So when are we going to get an answer?

**The CHAIR** — You have just done it again. You are being very rude in interrupting me yet again. The minister has the call to answer without interruption.

**Mr CAMERON** — I have provided the answer. The director of police integrity, Michael Strong, has the funds to be able to do his job. He is someone of enormous integrity: someone who the opposition says has enormous integrity. I am confident that he can do his job because Michael Strong has not suggested to me that he needs any additional resources to do it.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Of the potential of one of the witnesses being identified and killed — —

**The CHAIR** — Mr Dalla-Riva! Ms Huppert has the call.

#### **Members interjecting.**

**Ms HUPPERT** — Thank you. In your presentation and your answer to Ms Graley's question, you touched on the redeployment of the police force as a means of increasing the numbers of police on the street. I wonder if you could expand on the plans for redeployment over the forward estimates period?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you, Ms Huppert. Redeployment is going to be one of the ways that we end up with more front line police as part of the government's announcement to have 1966 additional front-line police. To do that, in terms of the freeing up of 200, I will take you to the government announcement on the day about what is going to occur in the next financial year; there will be 150, and in the following year, 50.

What the chief commissioner is going to have to do is work out those areas in Victoria Police where he can make that change from work which is at the moment being done by a sworn officer which can be done by an unsworn person, by a civilian, so that we can bring about what will be a net additional 200 in relation to

operational, front-line police. But the chief commissioner might like to expand on that further and how he wants to go about addressing that.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Thank you, Chair. This is an issue I have been concerned about for some time, which is about police officers being in non-operational roles. So part of my mantra is initially to say every police officer needs to be operationally ready and operationally deployable and available to do operational work, regardless of where they are working. In addition to that, though, it is about then trying to identify roles that can be perfectly well undertaken by public service staff, recruit public service staff, have them fill the roles and then redeploy the police out of the non-operational roles into operational roles.

At this stage I do not want to go into exact details about the areas that we are focusing on. There are obviously some industrial sensitivities to this, and we need to work through this, which we will do. We need to talk directly to our staff — the staff who are affected — and engage them in the process. So we are planning to do that, and we will commence that process from 1 July. As the minister said, the intention is to redeploy 150 staff in the first year and 50 in the second year. I believe that we will be able to do that. I think that will be a really good outcome in terms of getting police back doing the sorts of things they should be doing, which is operational police work.

But, as I said, there are some sensitivities so I do not want to particularly pinpoint the areas that we will be focusing on, but they are areas that in effect are back-of-house support and, as I say, can quite adequately be done by public servants. So we think it is a really good initiative and look forward to a net increase of 200 operational police over the next two years.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Minister, I have a question that is slightly related to the OPI as well. Given the high level or significant level or concerning level of complaints made to the OPI relating to treatment of people in police cells and in police stations, some of those include alleged human rights abuses, and given that many police stations still do not have CCTV installed in police cells and interview rooms, according to my information — you may update me on that — and in your slide you had ‘investing in equipment and infrastructure’, does that include making sure all police cells and interview rooms are fitted with CCTV?

**The CHAIR** — There are a number of issues there.

**Mr CAMERON** — There are a number of things. I will just go back in relation to interviews: interviews are generally conducted by audio, but what we announced — was it last year in the budget? — was a change going forward around that, moving to a digital system. In relation to cells, that will depend on the nature and the category of cells, and I will get the chief commissioner to take you over how that works.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Yes. So I would like to know what the plans are going forward.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Certainly. There are a couple of issues there. In respect to the cells, and I stand to be corrected, my understanding is we do currently have CCTV coverage, certainly in all of our 24-hour police stations, our major cells, the category A cells, where our preference is that is where people are held. We do not like holding them in other cells for very long periods of time.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — They are held in other cells.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — My understanding is, and I stand to be corrected and I am happy to come back if this is not right, that pretty much in every cell where we do keep people there is CCTV coverage. It may not be perfect, but there is CCTV coverage. If I am wrong, I will come back and correct that. But certainly in the category A cells there is, and it is extensive CCTV coverage.

In relation to interviews, we are in process of replacing our old system which was a tape-based system — it was audio only and analogue — and we are moving to a digital system that is both voice and video. That is rolling out and has been substantially rolled out across the state. Feedback from that has been very positive. So it means now that every interview of a suspect is both audio and video recorded.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — When you say it is rolling out, it is not completely rolled out?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — No, it is not completely rolled out. It is in the process of being rolled out.

**The CHAIR** — If you could give us, on notice, progress for that it would be useful. Is that what you are looking for, Ms Pennicuik?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — That is the issue that has been raised with me, yes, in terms of it. I would like to know when the estimated time of completion of that is and the extent and scope of it across the police stations and interview rooms.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Certainly. I am happy to come back to you with that information.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, I think we might come back with some information about when you use audio, when you use audio and video, depending on the nature of the crime and the issue around the cells, if you like?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Yes. And the costs of that.

**Mr CAMERON** — Because there will also be the issue of where people are just being held, like in a holding cell as distinct from a normal category A or category B. So we will come back to you about that. I think that is probably what you are getting at.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Bearing in mind, anything that can arise in a complaint to the OPI can happen in any of those cells.

**Mr CAMERON** — That is right. But can I just say, the whole move to audio, like what occurred in the 1980s, was actually a very great step forward. There was a lot of apprehension in police about that time, but prior to that remember it used to be typed up as a question and answer and there used to always be this argument about, ‘Did the defendant say this’ or ‘Didn’t the defendant say that’. The move to audio just took away all of that. So at the time there was apprehension in police, but police, looking back, will say, ‘That was a great thing’; it just avoided a whole lot of argument going forward’.

I think that is a fair assessment, Mr Dalla-Riva?

**The CHAIR** — I am sure Mr Dalla-Riva will agree with that.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — The old typewriter, yes.

**The CHAIR** — He is very much a two-finger man.

**Mr CAMERON** — The problem with the old tapes is that there are not many of them left, so it is important that we go to a new system. But you have to line this up across the whole criminal justice system. So it is not just police; you have got to line it up — DPP, courts. It is from one end to the other.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Yes, if you could furnish me with all that information.

**The CHAIR** — The minister has promised to provide material on notice.

**Mr SCOTT** — I refer to your presentation, Minister, on the reduction in crime, and I ask: could you give a bit of a general overview of trends in crime and any planned activities of Victoria Police designed to further reduce crime in the context of current trends?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Mr Scott. When I went through those figures — and we will quickly look at those graphs now — there was the overall crime rate, but then we broke it up we found offences against the person had been relatively static, and when we take out family violence — and there has been an increase in reporting of family violence, which is something police have encouraged. But then when we go to the crimes against the property, other volume crime, what we see is that reduction.

Really what we want to see in terms of a trend is a downward trend in relation to offences against the person. We have got those other trends — and, yes, we want those other trends to continue — but it is the offences against the person which are an issue. When we go into that, what we want to see is especially being able to tackle issues on the streets and around assaults. That is why, for example, at the end of 2007 we introduced the banning notice concept. That is why last year we introduced the on-the-spot fines. That is what safe city task

force was about. That is what the chief commissioner was about when he came to us and said, 'Would you fund 120 police for the operational response unit?'. We want to build on that with additional police.

I have shown you those figures about police activity over the CBD over summer. That is good, but it is no consolation to anybody who is involved in a crime. The quest has to be to continue to work it down. That is one of the key things that Simon Overland made very clear to us at the time he became chief commissioner, giving that focus. I might ask the chief commissioner if he wants to address some key trends that he has issues about.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair. One of the key issues for us in recent times has obviously been robberies. If you go back over time, we have actually done quite well with robbery offences. Again, if you go back to 2000–01 through to 2008–09, you see we have had nearly a 34 per cent reduction in robberies across the state. Over that period of time we have actually done quite well. In more recent times, though, we have seen a slight upward kick, and that has obviously driven a lot of concern in the community around the prevalence of robbery offences in general.

In addition to focusing on other violent crime happening in public places, we really continue to focus on this. Last year, 2008–09, rapes per 100 000 of population decreased by 1.7 per cent, but armed robberies were up slightly by 6.2 per cent. Certainly there is more consciousness of this in the public's mind, so we have had to focus on this. We have done a whole series of things around doing that, including increasing resources to the Embona task forces which particularly investigate this. But again our intelligence indicates that a lot of this offending is located around public transport corridors — not so much on the public transport system but around the public transport corridors. We have developed a new strategy that we are putting into place and have been putting into place, which is again around running high-visibility operations in and around those areas. The strategy is called Operation Guardian. It is proving to be again quite successful, as we are targeting the offending that is happening in around those areas. Interestingly our analysis is showing that both victims and offenders tend to live within a 2 to 3-kilometre radius of particular railway stations in and around metropolitan Melbourne. That is very much where we are concentrating our efforts.

The knife search powers, or the weapons search powers, are a part of that, because again the key message that we want to get across with these powers is that it is both illegal and not okay to be carrying weapons in public. Again, the more we can do to get that message across, particularly to people under 25 years of age, the happier we will be. We think that has been a good move and one that we are looking to exploit, which is really around trying to deal with this problem at a number of levels — one, in terms of targeting offenders but also changing the culture so that people understand that it is simply not okay to be getting about with weapons of any kind on their person. If they are, there is a likelihood they are going to be apprehended.

In relation to assaults, which of course is the other category causing concern, I think we have talked a lot about what we have been doing around that, around the increasing numbers, the increased presence, the various legislative reforms that have been brought into play, the banning notices and the infringeable offences. Again, we are seeing that starting to have an impact — the fact that drunk is now an infringeable offence, and the penalties for that are about to double. Our experience says to us that in dealing with public order on the streets, it is about taking action early. It is about taking strong and decisive action early and actually not allowing behaviour to continue — to de-escalate. We see that these sorts of infringement powers — the banning notices, infringing for drunk and for disorderly conduct — are really key ways of actually establishing appropriate standards of behaviour on the street and then having people adhere to those without them going to the next step where they actually go on and commit violent crime.

**Dr SYKES** — My question relates to the statewide network of incident control centres — page 286 of budget paper 3.

**The CHAIR** — It is at the top of the page.

**Dr SYKES** — The royal commission recommended last August that the state ensure that pre-designated level 3 incident control centres are properly staffed and equipped to enable immediate operation in the case of a fire on high fire-risk days. Why has it taken up until now to provide a budget for training the additional level 3 personnel required to fully staff all 43 incident control centres across the state; and when will there be sufficient qualified level 3 personnel within the ranks of CFA and DSE to fully staff all 43 incident control centres across the state?

**Mr CAMERON** — We allocated \$27.6 million to the CFA and the DSE in 2009–10 to upgrade equipment and training for level 3 ICC. What this budget does is allocate \$35 million over four years for personnel training at incident control centres across the state. That includes \$25 million for the delivery of incident management team training over the next four years and \$10.2 million for a command structure. Last year and this year what we have wanted to do is increase the capacity, and the objective with this initiative — and this is after discussions with the agencies — is to try to make it a lot broader. What we are really trying to do at a lot more levels within the CFA is bring about that level of training.

**The CHAIR** — Did you wish a clarification, Dr Sykes?

**Dr SYKES** — A clarification: when will there be sufficient level 3 qualified personnel to fully staff all 43 incident control centres?

**Mr CAMERON** — Penny, do you want to go into the details of that?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — Clearly we have been very focused on making sure that there are sufficient staff able to be deployed, and clearly planning needs to be done. In the course of the last year we have been working with the CFA and DSE, but also talking with the MFB in terms of the role they could also play in bolstering that capacity. Year round for normal bushfire events we have sufficient capacity to be able to deploy the staff and fully staff incident management teams to the levels that are specified.

It is about the planning for major code red-type events such as we had on 7 February where the system has been most tested and looking at how we can complement and deploy rapidly the capability that might be required on those days. At the moment the planning is being done in order to ensure statewide coverage and make sure that there is coverage in the most risk-prone areas, what is the number of incident management teams we have to have at those 43 ICCs and which of those we have to have preformed in anticipation of that sort of day.

We have made great efforts, and I think Mr Comrie's report highlighted the progress that was made in the lead-up to the fire season just past. We had to look at what we did on 11 and 12 January this year in terms of that preparation, and we are satisfied that we are making good progress and that we definitely have the capability to deal with issues on a normal fire danger day. The big issue is about making sure that we have that deployment and we are continuing to work on that training. This new allocation will help to ensure that we maintain a level that will satisfy normal fire events but also that we have sufficient surge capacity, effectively, to make sure we can respond in circumstances such as 7 February again.

**Dr SYKES** — Through you, Chair, my question was quite specific. I appreciate the answer that has been given, but it is really quite specific.

**The CHAIR** — Perhaps they could give more detail on notice.

**Dr SYKES** — When will there be sufficient qualified level 3 personnel within the ranks of the CFA and DSE — and if you want to add the Metropolitan Fire Brigade — to fully staff all 43 incident control centres across the state? What you have told me is you are working to a target, and normally you need a target to work to, so what is the target date when you will have the capacity?

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — I need to clarify because there are two targets that we need to work to: what is a normal fire season and what we would anticipate. We believe we have the staff required to meet that.

**Dr SYKES** — I understand that.

**Ms ARMYTAGE** — In terms of if there was another major event and forecasted extreme conditions, then we are making progress, but we have not finally determined exactly how many level 3 ICCs you need to have on those days and what is the correct deployment. A new model has been brought in this year for area-based responsibilities to try to look at what is the broader area you might need to cover rather than saying all those 43 ICCs necessarily have to be geared up at once.

**Mr CAMERON** — While these are matters before the commission, what we are trying to do is get the maximum extent of training across the CFA that is possible.

**Dr SYKES** — I find this intriguing, Chair, because it is a very simple question. We have had enormous publicity in the last 12 months about catastrophic code red days and how the whole state should be on alert. We have these mass evacuations in areas, and yet the minister is not able to tell me the answer to a simple question.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Dr Sykes. As I have reminded other members and I will continue to remind them, it is not a matter of making statements here; you can make them in the Parliament itself. Thank you for that, but the question has been answered. If there any further details, I ask the secretary and the minister to provide them on notice, but you have had a considered response. Ms Graley?

**Dr SYKES** — An inadequate response.

**Ms GRALEY** — Minister, I would like to refer you to the presentation about emergency services and meeting the challenge. I notice that in the budget there has been some provision over four years to upgrade and improve bushfire warnings, to upgrade intelligence gathering, the analysis and alerting capabilities of fire and emergency services, including funding for the bushfire information line and the emergency alert. I know this is very important to Victorians. I would like you to outline to the committee how you think emergency alert is helping Victorians to better prepare for emergency situations now and in the future.

**Mr CAMERON** — Emergency alert, as you know, is something that Victoria has taken a position on over a long period of time. Importantly it had to have access to the telephone database, and those federal laws are now in place. Victoria led this on behalf of all jurisdictions across the country, except for Western Australia. which wanted to do its own thing, a different sort of emergency alert. The purpose of it is as a message. It is a call to action for people to do something, and it is a way of getting a message out. What we have seen is that the system has been used 32 times across a number of jurisdictions: Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. It was used in Victoria three times last summer: in the north-east near Corryong, and it was used at Cann River and at Mount Clear near Ballarat.

We see this as something that is very important. We are now trying to go to the next phase, which will be by the use of a mobile phone in the location, not just by billing address. At the moment you only get a mobile phone message if your mobile phone is registered in the area where the emergency might be. What we are now trying to do is go to the next stage, and that work is being done so that the message can go to that mobile phone, if the mobile phone is in that area.

**Dr SYKES** — Just a clarification on that. That approach I understand has been used by commercial radio for some years. Why was it not able to be the first choice — that is, sending the messages to the mobile phone in the area that the phone is in, rather than the billing address?

**Mr CAMERON** — It is actually a technical issue, Dr Sykes. That has not been possible. Trying to do this is quite a significant technological challenge. Can I just say that the emergency services commissioner, Bruce Esplin, and his deputy, Joe Buffone, have led this through the national forum, and the quest is to overcome those issues so that we can bring this about.

**Dr SYKES** — So commercial radio has been doing it for a number of years but you are not able to implement this system?

**Mr CAMERON** — What we are talking about here is people not giving their phone numbers in advance. This is being able to send a general message to any mobile phone that happens to be within the locality of that tower.

**Dr SYKES** — I understand that, but what I am saying is that commercial radio has been using and applying this technology commercially. When someone rings in, they respond and direct the caller to the area related to where that call has come from, not the billing address of the phone. I am intrigued that commercial radio has been able to implement this, but not government agencies.

**Mr CAMERON** — I think you are talking about where people have provided their information in advance, Dr Sykes. I will check that.

**Dr SYKES** — No, that is not the case, Minister.

**The CHAIR** — It will be checked.

**Mr CAMERON** — This will be a national first, for this to be able to work, and that is why so much technical work and expertise is going into it at the present time.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you for that.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 139. I would like to draw your attention to the OPI's *Review of the Victoria Police Witness Protection Program*. There was a damning report in 2005 by the OPI into witness protection; essentially it calls for wholesale reform of the program. I would like to quote from page 6 of that report:

The cancer of witness intimidation, left unchecked, could pervade the whole administration of criminal justice.

It has now been five years since that report came out. Can you tell us what you and Victoria Police have implemented in regard to the recommendations of the report? Namely, where in the forward estimates have Victoria Police introduced the multilevel witness protection program recommended in the report? Have Victoria Police introduced a second-level scheme of protection for witnesses who are not on the witness protection program but who are assessed as being at risk? Has the government, not the police, conducted an inquiry, as recommended, into the nature and extent of witness intimidation? Can the minister please indicate the total boost in resources and staffing for Witsec since the report was released in 2005? And what is your media strategy for the witness protection shambles?

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. Minister, insofar as the questions relate to the estimates and the ongoing programs of the — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — They all relate to the estimates.

**The CHAIR** — There is a couple that do not.

**Mr CAMERON** — Witness protection is part of the ongoing and future work of Victoria Police and the record budget that they have. In 2005 there was a report around witness protection. My advice from my department is that at that time police undertook an examination of their practices and their procedures. As a consequence of that, that obviated the need for future legislative amendment because of the procedures which Victoria Police actually put in place. There was an amendment, however, which we did last year, which was a specific amendment that came out of that report in relation to an appeal to the director of police integrity, and that related to a time line of 3 to 14 days.

This is something that police continue to monitor. I might get the chief commissioner to make some comments. The chief commissioner was the former assistant commissioner crime. Witness protection of course is very important to many prosecutions and has been very important. The chief commissioner, either in this capacity or as assistant commissioner crime, has had to deal with these issues to bring about these successful prosecutions of a lot of people. Of course most of the time where witness protection has been involved, that has been unbeknown to people, which has demonstrated in those cases how important witness protection has been.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Victoria Police has conducted a review and continues to review witness protection arrangements, particularly having regard to the recommendations of the OPI report. The majority of recommendations have been adopted while some have not, on the basis that existing Victoria Police practices either address the concerns raised or we do not support the OPI's assessment. We now have an effective multitiered process in that levels of protection are also offered to witnesses at risk who are not able or not prepared to enter the formal witness protection program. We have in effect implemented a level 2 protection regime.

I start to run into difficulties here in terms of talking about exactly how we do that. These matters are normally subject to public interest immunity claim when we are questioned about these things, and I think you will understand well the sort of operational and legal reasons why there is a limit beyond which I do not think it is appropriate to go in a public forum.

**The CHAIR** — The committee understands that.

**Mr WELLS** — Okay, but can we just seek clarification and not the detail about how the program works?

**The CHAIR** — This is a level 2 program.

**Mr WELLS** — Has Victoria Police introduced the multilevel witness protection program recommended in the report?

**Ms HUPPERT** — You just asked that.

**The CHAIR** — You asked that one.

**Mr WELLS** — I know. That is why I am seeking clarification. For goodness sake

**Ms HUPPERT** — And you have had an answer.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — My recollection of the OPI report — —

**Mr WELLS** — No, hang on. We need to see — —

**Mr CAMERON** — He is answering your question.

**The CHAIR** — He is answering your question, if you would just be quiet.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — My recollection of the OPI report is they recommended a three-tiered system. We do not agree with the three-tiered system, but we have implemented a two-tiered system.

**Mr WELLS** — So it is not a multilevel witness protection program as recommended by the OPI?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Not as recommended by the OPI. It is a two-tiered system, which is the formal witness protection program — which is covered by the Witness Protection Act — and we do have tier 2 arrangements which exist outside of the formal Witness Protection Act arrangements.

**Mr WELLS** — So you have introduced a second-level scheme, as recommended by the OPI?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — We have kind of always had one, but we have accepted that there are occasions, and this always needs to be done on a case-by-case basis. Our preference is, wherever possible, to be working within the legislative framework provided by the witness protection regime. It very much, in my experience, depends on the preparedness of the witness to actually work with us. Some witnesses, for a variety of reasons, are not prepared to and will not — and we cannot force them to — enter into the formal witness protection arrangements, and in appropriate circumstances we use, in effect, what is a two-tier arrangement, which is we do our best to provide for their safety outside of the formal Witness Protection Act.

**Mr WELLS** — Okay. Minister, then, has the government, not the police, conducted an inquiry as recommended into the nature and extent of witness intimidation, as a recommendation of the OPI? Has that taken place?

**Mr CAMERON** — As I already said to you, in 2005 there was the report, and my department advised that as a consequence of police doing their review and changing their procedures and their practices, that obviated the need for that because of what police had done. As the chief commissioner has expressed and as I said to you before, police continue to always examine these issues, because witness protection is so important to key prosecutions.

**Mr WELLS** — Okay, but the recommendation stated that — —

**The CHAIR** — No, we are now — —

**Mr WELLS** — Hang on. It is still the same question.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells! Just allow me — —

**Mr CAMERON** — I answered the question.

**Mr WELLS** — It is the same recommendation.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells! Would you — —

**Mr WELLS** — Has your government conducted an inquiry, as recommended, into the nature and extent of witness intimidation?

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, would you allow me to comment on this, please, rather than you interrupting me?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — We are not after your comments; we are after the minister's answer.

**Mr WELLS** — It is a straightforward question. Has the government — —

**Mr CAMERON** — Well, I answered it.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, the minister has dealt with this one.

**Mr WELLS** — This is a serious issue.

**Mr CAMERON** — And I answered it.

**The CHAIR** — It may be a serious issue. I have no problem with it being a serious issue.

**Mr WELLS** — What do you mean it may be a serious issue?

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance, thank you. We are actually dealing with the estimates here, and the minister — —

**Mr WELLS** — Hang on. I said clearly, 'Where in the forward estimates are these issues?'. That was the first thing — —

**The CHAIR** — No, you asked for a clarification about whether the government conducted an inquiry in the past on the basis of this.

**Mr WELLS** — No.

**The CHAIR** — The minister has provided an answer on that, but I am asking: are you are asking for further clarification? You have already asked the question, and the minister has answered. I think you have had a good run. But if you have a quick clarification in terms of anything to do with the estimates rather than looking at something in the past, then I am happy to indulge you. Very quickly, please.

**Mr WELLS** — Okay. This is a serious issue, and we need to — —

**The CHAIR** — All issues are serious. There are places to raise certain issues and certain other issues.

**Mr WELLS** — We are talking about the forward estimates.

**The CHAIR** — Correct.

**Mr WELLS** — We made that very clear at the start of the question: 'Where in the forward estimates', I did start it. Minister, can you indicate the total boost in resources and staffing for Witsec since the report was released in 2005, of course including the resources over the forward estimates?

**Mr CAMERON** — The resources for Victoria Police for the coming financial year are \$1.99 billion.

**Mr WELLS** — No. In regard to witness protection.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Mr Wells. The minister, to answer.

**Mr WELLS** — Is there no increase — —

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes, there is an increase in the police budget to \$1.9 billion — —

**Mr WELLS** — No, to witness protection.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells — —

**Mr CAMERON** — And this is part of the core business of police.

**The CHAIR** — Stop interrupting the minister.

**Mr WELLS** — There is no increase in resources in witness protection — —

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, stop interrupting.

**Mr WELLS** — Is that what you are saying?

**The CHAIR** — I think we will move — —

**Mr CAMERON** — I am saying that witness protection is a core role of police, and police have a budget in the next financial year of \$1.99 billion.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Is it adequate?

**Mr WELLS** — So you cannot tell us —

**The CHAIR** — We will move on to the next question.

**Mr WELLS** — You have no idea how much the resources are — —

**The CHAIR** — The minister has answered the question. Mr Noonan has the call.

**Mr WELLS** — That have been allocated to witness protection?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — That is not an answer. That is like saying — —

**Mr CAMERON** — I can tell you that the chief commissioner has been very happy with that level and has not raised the issue over what we have done — —

**Mr WELLS** — Maybe the chief commissioner can tell us how much.

**Mr CAMERON** — But what we have done is put in a budget of \$1.99 billion, just as we have seen those increases over the years and the increase in resources and police. They use those resources to attend to their core business on behalf of Victorians.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — You have confidence that the witness protection — —

**The CHAIR** — Okay. Mr Noonan?

**Mr WELLS** — You have no idea.

**Mr CAMERON** — I have confidence in the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR** — Okay. Can you ignore interjections; interjections are unparliamentary. We will move on to the next question, which is from Mr Noonan.

**Mr WELLS** — How can we have confidence in the witness protection program — —

**The CHAIR** — Mr Wells, you are out of order.

**Mr NOONAN** — Can I go to the issue that you have raised in your PowerPoint in terms of investing in more equipment and infrastructure, which no doubt goes to the increased investment in policing. I just wonder whether you can outline for the committee what the key issues for the police IT system are currently and what they will be over the forward estimates period?

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Mr Noonan. When it comes to police IT and in the coming year, there have been issues around procurement which were raised with me at the end of 2008 when I got the

commissioner for law enforcement data security to do a review around governance and wanted the Auditor-General notified, which occurred, and the Ombudsman subsequently had a report around that. Certainly, one of the key priorities for the new chief commissioner was around the whole issue of information technologies for police. I might get the chief commissioner to go over that, and go over what is happening this year with the HRMS system, but his approach in his organisation to the issue of IT.

**The CHAIR** — Chief commissioner?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Thank you, Chair. The starting point is that I have certainly reorganised the senior executive in the 14 months that I have been chief commissioner. That has included bringing in Mr Michael Vanderheide who has, as part of his responsibilities, oversight of our IT arrangements.

He comes with extensive experience and background in these matters. He is now directly accountable to me for carriage of all IT matters. I have also appointed a new chief financial officer, who again provides oversight around budget expenditure on IT but also has carriage for the whole issue around procurement and contract management.

We are doing significant pieces of work in both areas to improve our performance. It is on record that we have been criticised by the Ombudsman and others for our performance in both areas. We have accepted the recommendations that have come out of the Ombudsman's review about tendering and contracting of information technology services. We are well down the track of implementing all of the recommendations that the Ombudsman has made with respect to those issues.

We report quarterly to the Ombudsman about progress of those matters, and I understand he will in due course provide his own report back to Parliament around more broadly the question of implementation of his recommendations in a number of reviews, which obviously include a number of reviews that he has conducted into Victoria Police.

My intention in this area is to go from obviously not being best practice to being absolutely recognised as best practice in the Victorian public sector. That is obviously going to take us a period of time to achieve, but we are committed to doing that. In addition we are taking the whole issue of information management and information security much more seriously. We are working with the Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security around those issues. He has set out a set of standards that we need to meet. Those standards are going to take us some period of time to meet.

The reality is you just cannot throw the switch and be compliant with all of the Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security standards overnight, but we are committed to getting there over time. Again Deputy Commissioner Sir Ken Jones has corporate sponsorship of that. We have appointed a senior officer to actually drive improvement in this area.

One of the things to note is that we have actually successfully delivered IT reform: the human resource management system, and no-one has heard anything about it, strangely enough.

**Ms GRALEY** — You do not want good news!

**Mr NOONAN** — You might want to share some of the success with us.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — It is actually on track. It is delivered on time, and it is doing everything that we expected to do. We are continuing to obviously monitor it very closely because we are going through that implementation process as we speak.

The other thing that I have done though — I was disturbed to find that we did not have appropriate disaster recovery arrangements on my becoming chief commissioner. We had it for LEAP but we did not have it for other core operational systems. We have over the 14 months moved to now having full disaster recovery for all of our core operational systems.

Again that is something we have just gone about quietly. You have not heard anything about it. The media has not focused on it because it has actually gone well. There are signs of improvement. I appreciate we have got a long way to go, but clearly we are focused on this.

I guess the other issue is the LINK system itself and the announcement I made recently to suspend the project for six months. I want to make it clear that we are very happy with the product that we have bought. We have bought an off-the-shelf product from Niche Technology to be our core operating system. Other jurisdictions have invested in it. For instance, Queensland police use the same system and police organisations in Canada and the United Kingdom use the same system, so we think it is a good system.

The problem we have is that because it sits at the heart of our IT infrastructure, we need it to relate to or interface with more than 20 other systems. In the original planning that was done we always saw that as being an issue, and we planned for that by buying a piece of what is called ‘middleware’, which effectively allows interfacing between systems. The original project plan indicated that that piece of middleware would provide the solution for us.

As we have gotten further and further into this we have realised that the issue of interfacing is a whole lot more complex than originally envisaged. There was no clear way forward for us, so I have decided to stop the project while we go back and look at this whole issue of interfacing again. We have experts from within government and out of government helping us to do that. I believe there will be an answer to that.

Everyone who I talk to and knows about these things agrees that there has to be a way forward for us that is both reasonable and appropriate, and so we taking the next little while to actually clearly identify what that is. I did not want to let the LINK project just keep going because there just was not a clear way forward for us in terms of how we could actually effectively interface it with all of our other operational systems.

On the procurement side of things, again we are very focused on procurement. I have just had two senior officers in the UK looking at that same issue there. The metropolitan police were in a similar position to us seven or eight years ago: it was very, very bad, and they have now gone to being seen as best practice. We have been over there, talking to them and learning from them. We have made a number of other very useful contacts over there around we can actually improve our overall management of procurement and contract management and benefit realisation. It is going to take us a period of time, but my aspiration is to get it to be recognised as best practice in this regard.

**The CHAIR** — Okay, thank you very much. This is an issue which we have followed up in some of our other inquiries as well.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to go back to the OPI report on the Victoria Police witness protection program and ask you about some specific recommendations that were made.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Firstly, you mentioned before in your answer to Mr Wells that there has been an amendment to the Witness Protection Act. Has your department undertaken a full review of that act, including consideration of other jurisdictions, as recommended by the OPI; is the Witsec committee now chaired by an assistance commissioner, as recommended by OPI; have you, the minister, raised the prospect of a national witness protection scheme with other jurisdiction police ministers, as recommended; and what proportion of Victoria Police budget is committed to witness protection matters?

**Mr NOONAN** — There are four questions, Chair.

**The CHAIR** — There is quite a number of questions there. Minister, insofar as it relates to the estimates?

**Mr CAMERON** — Can I just say at the outset that police will not reveal the level of resourcing put into this area, because, as the chief commissioner outlined earlier, he does not want to compromise or provide information about a very important area. As I said to you before, in 2005 there was a report. As a consequence of police deciding to do a review of all of their procedures and practices the Department of Justice did not do it. As a result of what police did and the changes that they made, it did not necessitate legislative change. However, legislative change was required in relation to an appeal to the director — from 3 days to 14 days — and that legislative change was made.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — So no review was undertaken of the act or consideration of other jurisdictions?

**Mr CAMERON** — No. As I said, going back to 2005, as a consequence of police — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — You said they changed their procedures, but — —

**Mr CAMERON** — As a consequence of police doing that — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — You did not undertake a review of the act?

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Mr CAMERON** — That satisfied the department. In relation to who chairs or does not chair, I do not know if the chief commissioner would want to go into any of that.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — I am actually happy to answer that question. The committee continues to be chaired by a commander. That is one level down from the assistant commissioner.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Why did not the VicPol accept the recommendation? — —

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Because we believe that the commander is the appropriate person. He is very experienced in these matters. Changing rank was not going to make any difference, to be quite frank. We believe we had — —

**Mr WELLS** — But it is someone more senior.

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — We believe we had the appropriate person chairing that committee. It is something we can review from time to time, but at the moment I am satisfied that we have got the right person with the right level of experience and the right level of seniority chairing that committee. There is only one difference between a commander and an assistant commissioner.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Seniority.

**Mr WELLS** — Seniority.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — One rank; there is only one rank level. I do not think that making it an assistant commissioner would have had any impact on the overall effectiveness of the scheme, and I am more than happy with and have every confidence in the person who is currently chairing that committee and has been chairing it for sometime and doing a very good job.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Do you have confidence in the witness protection program?

**The CHAIR** — I think we will — —

**Mr CAMERON** — Sorry, I think there was one other issue back in 2005.

**The CHAIR** — As I said, it has to relate to the estimates. If you wish to take that on notice, that is fine.

**Mr WELLS** — No, he can answer.

**Mr CAMERON** — It was just that the issue was raised about a national scheme.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — A national scheme.

**Mr CAMERON** — There is a national scheme, and that is administered ultimately through the Australian Federal Police. They operate a national program, and there are arrangements with jurisdictions to allow witnesses to enter into other programs.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — And the budget issue, you will not address?

**The CHAIR** — I think the minister has addressed that.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — That is an operational matter. I do not brief on the budget on the operational details of the witness security arrangements or how those matters are funded. Suffice it to say a lot of our recent

success in dealing with high-end organised crime has been predicated on very successful use of the witness security arrangements, and I ensure that it is appropriately resourced.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The Victorian public is not entitled to know how much is spent on — —

**The CHAIR** — All right.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — No, it is an operational matter. I do not talk about it.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — How much is spent on the media unit? Can you tell us how much the police media unit costs?

**The CHAIR** — All right. Thank you very much, Minister. It is time to have a break.

**Ms HUPPERT** — Minister, we can see on page 139 of budget paper 3 that there has been a significant increase in the Victoria Police budget. You have touched on the increase that is accountable by the increasing police numbers, but I am wondering if you can expand on some of the other initiatives and how this additional investment will assist in further reducing crime?

**Mr CAMERON** — Maybe we will bring the graph up on the screen, which is about the budget and the increases we have seen. In the next financial year the budget is going to be \$1.99 billion for Victoria Police. In that budget there will also be infrastructure, which I mentioned at the outset, and also there will be not only in the city but some new police stations in the country. While at the last election we listed an array of projects we wanted to do, these are additional projects over and beyond that.

In addition there is also ‘equipment’. That equipment is covert video, audio transmission and recording systems, a replacement air wing video, down-linking system to make sure they have got a much better system given that the air wing plays such an important role these days with Victoria Police, a bomb X-ray unit — an upgrade there — water police vessels and the automated numberplate recognition technology.

That technology is going to be important to pick up people, like those who are driving whilst disqualified. At the moment — think about it — maybe you have been .05 a couple of times and you are off the road for a lengthy period of time. If you are careful, that is you carefully obey the road rules and you are not .05, it is only going to be very occasionally when you might have a random license check. This new technology is going to be very important.

For example, we have seen the breathalysers. You know there is a fair chance with a breathalyser of being pulled over. That is what has done with the road toll. It is just like what we have seen with speed cameras; you know there is a chance of being caught. Just like we have seen that regarding the road toll, we hope that this here will also effect a change in behaviour of those who should just not be on the road. That will be one of the benefits of it.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Minister, I refer you to page 139 of budget paper 3. This relates to policing services and the proportion of the community that has confidence in police as an integrity indicator. I note that the indicators are saying that police have met their target of the community having total confidence in police.

However, I refer you to a broadcast on ABC TV last night, in which it was claimed that Nicola Gobbo, who remains a protected witness, is claiming that Victoria Police have ceased all communications and assistance to her and that her calls are not being returned because of her legal claim against the government. Minister, are you not concerned for this witness’s safety; Is this how you are treating all witnesses who are unhappy with the department; and will you provide an undertaking that, one, every effort is being made to ensure the full protection and security of this witness, and two, that because of her legal claim she has not been singled out and subject to retribution by Victoria Police?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, insofar as it relates to the estimates I am not sure particular cases are necessary — —

**Mr WELLS** — But it is a very important case.

**The CHAIR** — As I have said before to — —

**Mr WELLS** — We need to have confidence in witness protection— —

**The CHAIR** — This is the 44th time

you have interrupted today. I have asked you to refrain.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — We have a report about the importance of the witness protection scheme — —

**The CHAIR** — I am in the middle of speaking. In so far as it relates to the estimates, which is what the inquiry is about today, particular issues may well relate to the estimates, but where they do not, questions can be asked in the house — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — In the OPI's report she has said, 'No witness, no justice'.

**The CHAIR** — Excuse me, Mr Dalla-Riva, I have not finished.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — If we do not have a witness, we have no justice.

**The CHAIR** — Mr Dalla-Riva, without any comment please. You can either ask a question or put a question on notice. The minister, to answer.

**Mr CAMERON** — Just in relation to people's confidence in police, if you have a look at where people actually have a dealing with police and you ask them about their dealing, Victoria is at the top of the tree. So when people have had a dealing, they have recognised just how professional Victoria Police is. If you compare that across the jurisdictions, Victoria does very well.

**Mr WELLS** — Are you including Nicola Gobbo in that?

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Mr CAMERON** — Victoria Police does a very good job in the community.

**Mr WELLS** — Are you including Nicola Gobbo in that?

**The CHAIR** — That is 48 so far.

**Mr CAMERON** — You asked specifically about a particular witness. Obviously they are matters that police have to deal with and the chief commissioner might want to make a comment.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — In relation to the effectiveness of the program, I repeat again that we have used witness protection arrangements very, very successfully in this state over the last five or so years. We have been able to keep safe some of the highest risk witnesses that I certainly have had to deal with in my time involved in policing. We have done that very successfully. They have given evidence, very significant criminals have been convicted on the basis of that evidence and those witnesses have been kept safe. I would describe — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Have they all been kept safe?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — I would describe them as being amongst the highest risk witnesses — —

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — — that we have had to deal with in Australia. In relation to — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — The OPI — —

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — In relation to — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Well, he made a statement about — —

**The CHAIR** — Allow the chief commissioner to finish his answer. If you wish to seek clarification at the end of that, you may.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — In relation to particular cases, and in relation to the particular case that you have raised, there are a number of legal impediments still in place in terms of what can be properly said about that matter. I will say this: there have been proceedings issued by that witness. Those proceedings will be vigorously defended by Victoria Police.

**Mr WELLS** — So in the meantime she has been cut loose?

**Chief Comm. Overland** — I am not prepared to comment on the particulars of an operational matter.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So you are confident that there is no witness under the witness protection scheme that has been murdered in Victoria? Are you confident of that?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — I am not prepared to comment on the operational details of the witness protection arrangements.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — So there isn't? You cannot make that assertion?

**The CHAIR** — All right. I think the chief commissioner has answered that one. Mr Scott?

**Mr SCOTT** — Minister, I refer you to the text under the heading 'Victoria Police accommodation strategy' on page 326 of budget paper 3, and I ask: could you detail for us the new CBD accommodation strategy for Victoria Police?

**Mr CAMERON** — In response to the 2009–10 budget Victoria Police prepared a detailed CBD accommodation strategy to deal with its critical accommodation need in relation to the facilities, particularly at 412 St Kilda Road — the crime department — and 452 Flinders Street and the West Melbourne police station complexes. That strategy was to be incorporated into this 2010–11 budget, so the outcome of that was in the 2010–11 budget.

What that will involve is a replacement of 412 St Kilda Road and 452 Flinders Street — that is, the crime and intelligence department. There are also some people at the World Trade Centre who have related activities. It is about aggregating all of them together to provide them with new and much better accommodation so that they can do the very important work they do on behalf of the Victorian community.

What police are now going to have to do is locate a premises that can meet their needs, and they obviously want to do that in a central or CBD area or as close as possible to be able to do that. In relation to those buildings at the crime department and at Flinders Street, there are leases on them. Those leases conclude in 2013, so this work has to happen prior to then so that they can then make the move to the newer and better premises.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Minister, you and the police commissioner have made several mentions today in your presentation of the increased penalties for drunk, and drunk and disorderly, and the new offence of disorderly conduct. In the last six months under two bills that have come through the Parliament the fines have effectively doubled and doubled again for these offences.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — This is despite the recommendation of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee that public drunkenness be decriminalised.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. That is right.

**Mr WELLS** — There was a minority report.

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance!

**Ms PENNICUIK** — It was the correct finding by the committee — it should be decriminalised. Minister, in budget paper 4 page 216 — —.

**The CHAIR** — This is ‘Other current revenue’?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Yes. It says that revenue raised from traffic and on-the-spot fines has increased quite a large amount — from \$381-odd million in 2008–09 to a projected \$476 million in 2010-11, and other fines are projected to increase about \$10 million from 2009–10 to 2010–11.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — My question is: what proportion of those ‘other fines’ is expected to be raised from fines for disorderly conduct, and being drunk and disorderly? My other question to the police commissioner is: given the very loose definition for the offence of disorderly conduct, for what types of conduct have you issued fines under that particular provision?

**Mr CAMERON** — I will address that. In relation to disorderly conduct, there is a whole body of law around that. Drunk and disorderly has been part of the law of Victoria — —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Not ‘disorderly conduct’.

**Mr CAMERON** — Drunk and disorderly has been part of the law for — —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — A new offence of ‘disorderly conduct’ — —

**Mr CAMERON** — No.

**The CHAIR** — The minister, to answer without assistance.

**Mr CAMERON** — ‘Drunk and disorderly’ has been part of the law for a long time.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I am not disputing that.

**Mr CAMERON** — No. To be guilty of being drunk and disorderly consists of two limbs: one, you have to be drunk; and, two, you have to also be disorderly. The issue around ‘disorderly’ has actually been around for a long time.

If we go back though in relation to the fines, what we wanted to do — and the reason I had a discussion with the chief commissioner about this last year — was to set in place social standards. I know that there will be issues that people will say about the decriminalisation, but the view that I formed after discussions with the chief commissioner and my colleagues was that we needed to set in place social standards.

We had a situation where what used to happen was people were picked up, they would be put in the cells for a few hours and then they would go home. They might not necessarily have liked being in the cells for a few hours, but a week or two later it added to their stories of their world weariness. What we are saying is, ‘No, you are going to also be penalised. You are going to go home with an infringement notice’.

We believe that that is making a difference. What we have done is increase that penalty, and those laws have just gone through the upper house, I think in the last week, so they will be coming in force in a month or so to increase the penalty to \$468. We believe it is important that people recognise that their social behaviour on the streets and the way they conduct themselves is very important. That is why we have gone down that path.

I have shown you that slide about assaults in the city over summer. That does consist of many components — there are the banning notices, there have been those changes, there has been the ongoing funding with Safe Streets, and there has been the focus on hot spots, and there has been the liquor licensing work with the inspectors and Operation Razon with police. There have been all of those new things.

In relation to how many fines, ultimately experience will tell us, but to date — since late 2009; you will remember this came in just before Christmas — there have been over 6000 for disorderly and drunkenness offences. In relation to what that will do ultimately — and I will go to net revenue — the experience with the fines is there are some people who do not pay and then you have got to go and enforce it.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Especially since they are so large.

**Mr CAMERON** — We believe that that will probably balance itself out, but we believe that this is necessary to do, because it will help drive behavioural change and set in place the social standards that we want.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — I can add that since the commencement of the legislation in late 2009 to the end of March 2010 we have issued a total of 4018 infringements for disorderly and drunkenness offences. The majority of these infringements — some 3527, or 88 per cent — were for being drunk in a public place; 285, or 7 per cent, issued for drunk and disorderly in a public place; 122, or 3 per cent, for contravening a move-on direction by police; and the remaining 84 infringements, or 2 per cent, were issued for behaving in a disorderly manner in a public place.

The disorderly provision by itself has been used quite rarely. It tends to be used in conjunction with drunk and disorderly, and, as the minister said, it is about ensuring appropriate community standards are enforced early before behaviour deteriorates to a point where you actually get escalation and you get violence, and we believe that it is working.

**The CHAIR** — Would you like a clarification?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I would like a clarification, and I will jump in a comment there, which is it is punishing people for what they might do.

**The CHAIR** — We try to avoid comments.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — What they might do, not what they have done. My question to the police commissioner is: on the disorderly conduct offence, I would like to know what particular conduct infringement notices are being issued for, because that is quite controversial — the definition of ‘disorderly conduct’.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — As the minister said, there is actually a body of law around what constitutes disorderly conduct. The infringement notice is issued; it can be challenged. If people do not believe they have engaged in disorderly conduct, they can go to court and they can challenge the notices through that means, if they wish to do so.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — How can I find out exactly what sort of conduct infringement notices are being — —

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — You can look at the case law around how it has been defined by the courts over the years, as to what constitutes ‘disorderly conduct’.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — No, I want to know what sort of conduct the police are issuing the infringement notices for.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — We are issuing it for ‘disorderly conduct’ as the courts have defined it over many, many years. The point is if an individual does not believe that they have behaved in a disorderly way, they can have it reviewed.

**Ms GRALEY** — Minister, I would like to return to the part in your presentation around emergency services and Meeting the Challenge, and I would also like to refer you to the initiatives at page 280 of budget paper 3, appendix A, in particular the \$38 million investment in the integrated statewide 000 emergency communications. I would like to ask you to give the committee some more detail on this initiative — because I know people are interested in it — and how it will improve Victoria’s emergency services risk capability.

**Mr CAMERON** — I might just start by explaining that when you ring 000, Telstra takes the telephone call and they ask what service you want, and then 000 will direct that to wherever the relevant locality is around Australia.

In Victoria if it is a police call — and Telstra can tell where the call is coming from — and the call is in the city area, it goes to ESTA, which is the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority, in the city, and they will dispatch a vehicle or do whatever needs to be done. However, if the call is in the country, it goes to what is called a D24. There are five D24s in country Victoria: Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura, Wangaratta and the Latrobe Valley. That is equally the case with ambulance; they have five call centres as well, in different locations — they are not co-located.

In last year's budget we put in funds so ambulance ultimately would be aggregated into a central system and also funds for some platform technical work to be done for Victoria Police. This year we have put in the funds for Victoria Police to come in as well. What will happen in the future when you are in country Victoria and you ring Telstra 000 and you ask for police is you will go through to ESTA at Ballarat.

As a result of the ambulance and the police you will see something like an extra 180 staff at the ESTA facility in Ballarat compared to a couple of months ago when they started to do some recruitment around ambulance. For Ballarat it is a big jobs boost. In terms of police, it frees up police who are otherwise taking calls in those five locations, so they can go about normal policing or other sorts of policing activity rather than 000 activity. We believe the call-taking and dispatch arrangements at ESTA are better than those being done at the D24s, and that is why we have gone down this path.

**The CHAIR** — The name D24 is far more evocative of course than ESTA for those who remember the TV series.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, I have a question in relation to resourcing of the SES. I refer you to budget paper 3, page 280, the last item above the line that is two-thirds of the way down the page. I understand that this money has been allocated to assist in the replacement of critical assets such as pagers, rescue trucks and trailers, and the ongoing maintenance of these purchased assets.

When will the new pagers be provided to SES personnel as a result of this initiative? Does this initiative build on previous funding to the SES last year, including a commitment to provide new radios to SES personnel? How many radios have been provided to Victorian SES personnel so far from that commitment last year?

**Mr CAMERON** — There are two separate issues. One is the radio, as distinct from the pagers; they are two separate projects. The radio project is still in the phase where they are going through it, working with ESTA on getting the radios before the rollout occurs. That is what is occurring in relation to the radios.

**Dr SYKES** — So zero radios allocated at this stage?

**Mr CAMERON** — They are still going through that, yes. In relation to the pagers, there are funds for additional pagers which will allow the SES to get them and to provide them in the coming financial year. If you just go back to the whole of the SES budget over time, we have had a substantial investment in the SES. I think of all the emergency services it has been the one with the greatest increase in its budget.

As I showed you on that slide before, there was a low 4000 number of volunteers and now it has gone to more than 1000 more in the last year. The SES I think has become very well regarded by the public. I am sure that what we have been able to do to assist them has helped them to do that and helped them to raise their profile. I think Victorians are very grateful to all the volunteers in emergency services — SES, CFA or lifesavers; across-the-board — for the work they do.

In relation to trucks and other equipment, I think in the budget we have that phase. If you go back to the last, 2009–10 budget, there were 22 rescue trucks and 8 refurbished trucks being delivered in the 2009–10 year, so they have not finished yet.

**Dr SYKES** — So for clarification, zero radios allocated yet.

**Mr CAMERON** — The project is not at that point, but we provided the funds last year so that we could get to that point.

**Dr SYKES** — And the pagers will be completely delivered within this financial year, or the rollout will start in this financial year?

**Mr CAMERON** — I might correspond to you about that. My understanding is that it is, but we will correspond to you about that.

**The CHAIR** — To the committee.

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes. I will have a discussion with them and get back to you. Sorry, I have just had some advice; the SES pagers will be in the coming financial year.

**Dr SYKES** — They will be completely delivered within this financial year?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Dr SYKES** — In the coming financial year?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — The 2010–11 financial year?

**Mr CAMERON** — Yes.

**Mr NOONAN** — Minister, I want to ask a question about tackling knife-related crime, which has been a topic of some community interest over the last short period of time. Budget paper 3, at page 138, goes to performance measures, and obviously crime prevention and community safety checks conducted are quite substantial in terms of those measures. I wonder whether you can provide for the committee some greater advice regarding the enforcement efforts in terms of tackling knife-related crime? I appreciate that the Chief Commissioner of Police touched on this a little earlier in the answer where he talked about the search powers, but this might be an opportunity to talk about this issue in some greater detail.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you very much, Mr Noonan. When we have a look at knives and weapons more generally, we have had a concern about this. The reason we had a concern was that anecdotally we were having kids — young teenagers — carrying knives. I think when we look at older people, when we look at the current generation, we have actually seen a decrease in the number of knife attacks over the years. In the last financial year there was a decrease. But our concern was that there was a generation coming through, some members of which had knives, and we did not want that to become embedded into a culture. You will recall that as a consequence of that we put in place legislation last year in terms of knife-search powers, and I know we had a lot of push back in a lot of quarters because people said that overrode our rights, and I look at Ms Pennicuik in particular —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Yes, I have made my view on that pretty clear.

**Mr CAMERON** — We still have that difference of views. But we thought this was very much necessary; it gave people confidence to know that when they went about their business this was something that could occur. What police have had to do is have some searches — I think one of those might actually be occurring today — to get the public used to this concept that there is a risk of detection. We are legislating it to make some other changes after further discussions with police as to how it worked. We have led the nation — although Ms Pennicuik will probably have a different view — in relation to these laws, because we believe this is important. We do not want to have a situation where a knife culture takes hold with young people. I might ask the Chief Commissioner of Police if he wants to make some comments about how they intend to handle it.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Thank you. We had touched on this briefly. We have conducted six planned searches; there is one happening today at Glenroy. Previously they have focused on the Footscray, North Melbourne, Dandenong, Darebin, Flinders Street and Sunshine train stations. We are finding people carrying prohibited and restricted weapons, prohibited and controlled weapons, in those areas, and we are taking the appropriate action where we find people carrying them. We have also had the recent weapons amnesty in April. I do not have full figures, but the provisional figures to date are that 440 banned items have been handed in, including 243 edged weapons. But as I say, that is preliminary; there is more data that still needs to come in.

As I said earlier — and there has been some criticism around the fact that we need to designate areas and give people seven days notice that we are actually searching those areas — we think there is a place for such an approach, because the key message we want to get across to people is: do not carry weapons. When we are able to run these searches consistently and not find weapons, we think that will actually be a good thing because there will be some evidence that that message is getting across. We are very, very aware of the civil liberties concerns that this issue raises, but I guess we are trying to stop developing here in Victoria what has happened in other jurisdictions, particularly overseas. In Britain, for example, the carriage and use of knives has become a

major social issue, particularly amongst young people. We do not want that sort of culture to develop here in Victoria

We think that this is a very positive pre-emptive step to deal with what is a real problem at the moment. We want to stop it becoming a very significant social problem where we have young people carrying knives. The evidence is that they carry them for two reasons: they carry them because it is cool, and the second reason is that there is this sort of knives arms race going on, where because everyone else is carrying them they think they need to carry them. Sadly the evidence is that if they carry them they will use them at some stage, and that is a devastating outcome obviously for the person who is stabbed but it is also a devastating outcome for the young person who actually uses a knife, because they then find themselves in very, very serious trouble.

That is what we are trying to do. We are trying to get the message across around, 'It is just not okay to carry weapons — knives in particular. Don't carry them on your person. There is no excuse for having them in a public place'. The on-the-spot fines that we will now be able to issue — a \$1000 on-the-spot fine for a first-time offence but also doubling if you are actually caught with a controlled weapon in the immediate vicinity of licensed premises — we think are important. That is in response to some offending that we have seen primarily in line-ups out the front of particular licensed premises where there have been some very nasty incidents that have flared up and knives and machetes have been used against bouncers and other people. Again the point of this law is really to say to people, 'You can't do. It's just not okay'.

**Mr NOONAN** — Chair, I just make the point that a community education campaign seems to be out there as well.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Yes.

**Mr CAMERON** — Very important.

**The CHAIR** — We have time for one more very short question, quickly.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, in regard to police patrolling the rail system I refer to budget paper 3, pages 323 to 328.

**Mr CAMERON** — Let us have a look. Yes?

**Mr WELLS** — The Department of Justice output and asset initiatives and the recruitment of new police officers. Given the Premier has given assurances that all trains will be patrolled by officers, what date will this start and how many police officers will be deployed to ensure that every train is patrolled? How many police officers will be allocated to train stations, which stations will they be allocated to and what hours are you planning to cover those railway stations?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, some of that may necessarily be on notice.

**Mr CAMERON** — I think some of it is misleading. What the Premier said is what the chief commissioner told him, and what the chief commissioner told the Premier and what he told me was that it was his plan to have a greater presence on the railway network. I will just bring up a graph to show you in relation to public transport crime and the work the police have done per million trips. While we have seen the decline — —

**Mr WELLS** — Per million trips?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Is that the measure?

**Mr WELLS** — Is it million or billion?

**The CHAIR** — The minister to answer quickly. We are running out of time.

**Mr CAMERON** — It does not matter, because it comes to a probability. Whether you want to do it per 10 or whatever number, it does not matter. So when it comes to that, we have seen that reduction.

**Ms GRALEY** — He is not good with numbers.

**Ms HUPPERT** — For a shadow Treasurer, he has got a real problem with numbers.

**The CHAIR** — Without assistance, thank you.

**Mr WELLS** — All right. Can we get to the detail of the question, please?

**Mr CAMERON** — We want to invest in police so that we can see that go down further. While we have seen that record investment in police and record numbers in the last decade, the biggest decade ever — —

**Mr WELLS** — Yes, we know all the spin.

**Mr CAMERON** — What we want to see is the biggest increase in the next five years. Part of what the chief commissioner said in relation to the additional resources that he would like, the additional resources that would be brought about as a result of this announcement, was additional police on the railway network and also around it. I will get the chief commissioner to talk to you about what he wants to do to try to get that graph continuing on that downward trend.

**Mr WELLS** — Great; can we get some details?

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — Look, I have already publicly indicated that 200 of the initial 600 additional operational police in the first year will go to the operations response unit. Part of the carriage of the operations response unit in conjunction with the transit safety division — these two units sit side by side — will be around increasing operational patrols in and around the transit system.

The point I want to make is that crime on the trains themselves is decreasing. The issue is now in and around certain stations, so we need the flexibility to be able to move the resources to where the problem goes. Part of it is both about dealing with reality, which is the crime, but it is also perceptions of safety. We know a lot of people, particularly women, do not feel safe using particularly trains in the hours of darkness, so we need to do a lot of work around reassuring the community that the transport system is safe. So we will be running a lot of high-visibility patrols on and in and around the transit system.

I do not want to commit to exact details, because it will be very much determined by what our intelligence is telling us. We know that as we concentrate and saturate a particular area it will do two things: we will partly reduce, but we will also displace. So we then need the flexibility to be able to move the resources to where the crime is displaced. Our intelligence at the moment is telling us that it is being displaced off the trains, out of the stations and now within about a 2 or 3-kilometre radius of particular railway stations across the metropolitan area.

**Mr WELLS** — So you are not able to tell us how many train stations will be covered by this new election promise commitment?

**Mr NOONAN** — He has just answered that question.

**Ms GRALEY** — I think he answered the question.

**Chief Comm. OVERLAND** — It will be driven by the intelligence and by operational requirements.

**Mr WELLS** — How do we know that — —

**The CHAIR** — You have an answer. We have run out of time.

**Mr WELLS** — The Premier has given assurances that trains are going to be patrolled by officers.

**The CHAIR** — The chief commissioner has given an answer. I thank Mr Overland for his attendance.

**Witnesses withdrew.**