

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 Corrections,

Ms P. Armytage, Secretary,

Mr T. Leech, Executive Director, Police, Emergency Services and Corrections, and

Mr R. Hastings, Commissioner, Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice.

The CHAIR — On behalf of the committee I welcome the Honourable Bob Cameron, MP, Minister for Corrections; Ms Penny Armytage, Secretary of the Department of Justice; Mr Tony Leech, executive director, police, emergency services and corrections; and Mr R. Hastings, commissioner, Corrections Victoria. I call on the minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 5 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information relating to the budget estimates for the corrections portfolio.

Overheads shown.

Mr CAMERON — First of all, I will quickly take you through a slide show that we have, and then you can ask questions in the normal way, and we will give you the answers or get back to you, just like we did last time.

First of all, we go to the corrections system. As at 11 May there were over 4200 male and 320 female prisoners, 1530 on parole and just over 9000 on community corrections orders of some type who had to be managed by community corrections. In terms of staff there are 2679. There are 11 public and 2 private prisons. In relation to CCS, community corrections, there were 54 locations, and 26 of those are full-time locations, but there are others that are part-time, as Dr Sykes will be aware, particularly in country locations. There is a transitional centre and a residential facility at Ararat.

If we just go down, that slide there gives you the budget breakdown in relation to the Department of Justice. In the coming financial year the budget for corrections, as you will see it set out there, is \$639 million.

Obviously the key priority for corrections is to enforce the sentences of the courts and also try to reduce reoffending through rehabilitation and community re-integration. That is obviously important on two fronts: it is important for the community, because if there is no reoffending that is a good thing; and it is also important for the offender.

If we have a look at the recidivism rates, Victoria is the only state to have seven years of decreasing recidivism — this is people returning to prison within two years. The top line there is the return to corrective services, and the lower line is a return to prison. We are the only state that has been able to achieve that. Obviously I think that says something good about the people who work within the corrections system.

Have a look at recidivism rates. Have a look at where Victoria sits vis-a-vis other states. You will see that South Australia is slightly lower. We are well below the national average. You might ask why is the ACT zero.

The CHAIR — It has not got any prisons.

Mr CAMERON — That is because the ACT did not have any prisons. That will change in the future, because they have in more recent times actually opened a prison.

On imprisonment rates you will see where Victoria sits in relation to the rest of Australia. If we go to the major activity that has been occurring since July 2009, we see 191 extra beds — that is, 58 at Barwon, 20 at Loddon, 54 at Dhurringile and 59 at Port Phillip, and there are a further 40 at Beechworth due for completion shortly. There are also the 350 additional beds at Ararat with the new prison that was part of that whole complex, for which contracts have just been entered into.

Also on the major activity front there has been effective management of offenders by Community Correctional Services. The Auditor-General did a performance report which was tabled at the end of last year. He commended the offender management framework used by CCS. He acknowledged that they are being managed effectively and recognised the value of CCS quality assurance at the local, regional and statewide levels. Of course we have to understand that the natures of some of the people that we are dealing with are extremely difficult. Clearly the Auditor-General has looked at it through that frame.

It has also been improving justice outcomes for indigenous people in terms of programs. Also at Wulgunggo Ngalu in South Gippsland there is a residential accommodation place for Koori people, and Corrections Victoria is the lead agency for that.

Here we have the monthly average prison numbers. It just shows that over a time frame. In relation to the budget, in the women's prison system there is \$59 million over the four years. In addition there is the Better Pathways strategy. The effectiveness of it has been acknowledged; it is important, and that is to continue. In the men's prison system, there is \$18 million and \$28 million TEI for an additional 85 beds.

If I just go back to the women's system, we are seeing a growth in the women's system — not in community corrections order numbers but in prison numbers. There is a plan there for 18 beds at Tarrengower and 140 beds at Dame Phyllis Frost near the city.

Under the graffiti removal program we have seen since late 2005 the equivalent of 32 playing fields of the MCG. We have also seen prisoners involved in some bushfire recovery work. In relation to the initiatives — I am going fast because I recognise we are tight for time.

The CHAIR — You need to go fast, yes.

Mr CAMERON — I will keep moving quickly so we can have more questions. In relation to the future for the coming financial year there will be additional beds in the men's system, additional beds in the women's system, importantly, and a continuation of the Better Pathways program.

In relation to challenges, it is meeting the demand in the women's prison system because of those issues that I touched on briefly. We might want to touch on that a bit more in questions, if you want to, and also the Better Pathways. We will open it up from there.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister. I asked you before in respect of police and emergency services, and I would like to ask a similar question. In respect of corrections in terms of this budget for next year and also the out years going forward in the corrections system, what strategies and plans do you have in the medium and short term for the corrections system? Have there been any changes to that over the last 12 months?

Mr CAMERON — This budget is predicated on the policy arrangements that were in place in relation to the budget. If I could just go over some of the key broad challenges in Justice — I do not know whether you want me to go over those. I think Ms Armytage went over those.

The CHAIR — No, I am more interested in corrections and exactly what plans and strategies you have.

Mr CAMERON — In relation to corrections it is going to be about managing demand for correctional services, whether that is prison or CCS in community corrections; providing appropriate prison facilities; dealing with issues around serious sex offenders and ESOs and the complicated challenges as we have discussed on previous occasions that that brings about; and trying to improve recidivism rates even further. We have had that seven-year downward trend but we are trying to get it to occur again. Those objectives have not changed from last year.

Mr WELLS — Minister, I refer you to page 152 of budget paper 3.

The CHAIR — That is 'Enforcing correctional orders'?

Mr WELLS — 'Prisoner supervision and support'. It states that the government is building safe communities and has fully reached all benchmarks in keeping prisoners safely and securely contained. I am particularly concerned about the safety of prisoners and correction officers in a system that fails to provide secure correctional facilities.

Minister, can you explain how it is that the most secure prisoner in the most secure wing of the most secure prison in Victoria, Carl Williams, was able to be brutally attacked and killed and left to die for over 20 minutes without protection or assistance from correctional officers?

I appreciate that you are conducting an inquiry into this, and I would like you to explain to us how any inquiry conducted by the department of corrections into its own prison is in any way independent, given the extreme failure by the department itself to keep prisoners safe and secure — that just does not make any sense. How many of these shams and cover-ups are we going to have before you will admit that you have a major problem with corruption in this state and you cannot even protect the most secure prisoner we had?

Mr NOONAN — You failed to mention the other inquiries.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Mr Noonan; the minister, to answer the question.

Mr CAMERON — Let us just look at this generally, and I will come to the specific issue in a minute. In relation to assaults in prison, if we go back to the end of the last decade, every year, per hundred prisoners, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults were around 12 per cent. That has reduced and is now down to — sorry, that was about 13 per cent. That has reduced and is now 7.5 . We have seen a substantial reduction. That has been about prison management and how it manages prisons.

In relation to the specifics, you will be well aware that there are three main investigations; internally, from the perspective of the Department of Justice, there is another investigation. That investigation is not going to go to the core issues around the allegations of murder; that is going to occur at a police level. But in relation to the OCSR — the Office of Correctional Services Review — it has appointed an independent investigator; in this case, Bill Stoll, a former chief commissioner of the ACT, to do its work.

What you are seeing is a range of inquiries. This is something we take very seriously. It is an issue we are very concerned about; that is why you see Bill Stoll doing that work. That is why police are taking this very seriously and there will ultimately be a coronial inquiry as well.

Mr WELLS — How many of these reports — —

The CHAIR — Do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr WELLS — A supplementary. How many of these — —

Ms GRALEY — We do not have supplementaries.

The CHAIR — Go on.

Mr WELLS — What is wrong with a supplementary?

The CHAIR — A clarification, rather.

Mr WELLS — I am surprised by the Labor side. This is a serious matter.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Mr Wells, I have given you the call to ask for clarification.

Mr CAMERON — It is a serious matter, and there is a very serious investigation under way.

Mr WELLS — It is a very a serious matter.

The CHAIR — If you do not wish to take these proceedings seriously and ask a question rather than just indulge in a running commentary, then I will not give you the call. Mr Wells, to seek clarification.

Mr WELLS — Of these reports or investigations, how many will be made public?

Mr CAMERON — Ultimately there will be a coronial inquiry and when there is a coronial inquiry, the coroner will determine what is released.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — And the other two?

Mr WELLS — The one that I asked you about; the internal one by the department of corrections?

Mr CAMERON — It is going to be a question of to what extent they are able to release it, given the various legal proceedings.

Mr WELLS — You are the minister.

The CHAIR — Without assistance, please.

Mr CAMERON — I have to comply with the law. The law has to be complied with, and I will make sure the law is complied with.

Mr WELLS — So if there is a chance of a cover-up, there will be a cover-up and you will guarantee — —

Members interjecting.

Mr CAMERON — The law will be complied with.

Mr WELLS — No, it won't. You will cover it up.

Mr CAMERON — There will be full investigations. There will be a full coronial investigation.

The CHAIR — Ms Huppert?

Mr WELLS — Here we go; another spin!

Mr CAMERON — Don't have a slight on the coroner, please.

Mr WELLS — No, we have the utmost respect for the coroner. It is you we have the concern about.

Ms HUPPERT — On page 135 of budget paper 3 — —

Members interjecting.

Mr WELLS — The more you cover it up, the bigger problem you are going to have.

Mr CAMERON — All matters will be before the coroner.

Mr WELLS — The more cover-ups you have, the more corruption issues you are going to have.

The CHAIR — Mr Wells, you are out of control again. Show more respect for the proceedings here, please.

Mr CAMERON — And show some respect for the coroner and the coronial process.

The CHAIR — Have some more respect for what we are doing here. Ms Huppert has the call, without assistance from any member or, indeed, any witness.

Ms HUPPERT — Minister, as I said before, on page 135 — —

Mr WELLS — I was just concerned about a cover-up.

The CHAIR — Excuse me, but I am getting a bit tired of this. I just asked members to respect the proceedings and immediately the Deputy Chair decided not to do so. I have lost count — it is probably up to 60 times you have now intervened in an intemperate way, Mr Wells. I would like you to desist, please. Ms Huppert has the call.

Ms HUPPERT — Page 135 of budget paper 3 lists one of the department's challenges as 'changing the patterns of offending and re-offending'. I note in your presentation you touched on Better Pathways, which is a program to address women's offending and reoffending. I also note that we have some fairly good statistics in relation to recidivism rates, which you also showed us in your presentation. Minister, could you please outline for the committee what is going to be done during the budget forward estimates period to further reduce recidivism rates in Victoria?

Mr CAMERON — Reducing recidivism, if that can be brought about, benefits everybody. Obviously it benefits the offender and their family and friends if they are not involved in crime, but importantly it benefits the public because the offence that would otherwise occur is not occurring. When you look at the graph and that downward trend, what that reflects is the public and other people being saved from a particular crime.

In Victoria we have the second-lowest rate, after Queensland, of prisoners released who return to corrective services either in prison or community corrections within two years after release. We are getting down and hopefully we can ultimately surpass them. In 2000–01 the recidivism rate was 2.4 percentage points of the national average, and by 2004–05, it had fallen below the national average. We were a bit above and now ultimately we are under.

The way that has happened is through the success of the Reducing Reoffending Framework, which has provided for targeted rehabilitation programs within prison but also targeted transitional support for people going from custody out into the community. It is those things — what can happen inside and what can happen on the way out — where Corrections Victoria has taken it. I will get the corrections commissioner, Bob Hastings, to take you over some of the things that Corrections Victoria does on this front.

Mr HASTINGS — Thank you, Minister and Chair. As the minister said, there has been a growth in the number of women prisoners. Through the Better Pathways strategy we will continue to work with women because they do have their own issues around accommodation: they are often the primary carer, so they need additional support in terms of how they transition out of the system. That is part of what Better Pathways is about; it is about setting up these health regimes, housing regimes, programs that make them able to go back into the community in a way so we do not get them back. We find this is invaluable in terms of keeping our recidivism rates low and not filling up our capacity in our women's prison system.

There have been some terrific benefits of this program and they continue to be sound benefits. We also had PricewaterhouseCoopers do an evaluation, which actually highlighted some of those key benefits that came through and continue to come through as part of this program.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I would like to go back to the issue raised by Mr Wells and the output group that says the correctional services objective is to keep prisoners safely and securely detained. We had a spectacular failure of that with the most secure prisoner in the most secure unit in the most secure prison. In the aftermath of that, the Premier said there was no need for an independent judicial inquiry into the attack on Williams because he was a serial killer. Is that the minister's view — that we do not need to independently investigate gross incompetence in the prison system that has resulted in the death of someone in correctional services custody?

Mr CAMERON — Let us see the outcome of all of the inquiries, and I have told you of the range of inquiries that are taking place. One of those will be by a judicial officer, being the coroner.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Is Corrections Victoria preparing for a royal commission in the same way that Assistant Commissioner Cornelius suggested with Victoria Police?

Mr CAMERON — Corrections Victoria is participating in all of the inquiries, as you would expect. Of course, various people will obviously be interviewed, and matters will be carefully examined. As you know, police have a very intensive investigation, and that will occur. There will also be the coronial inquiry and there is also the inquiry, which I referred to previously, that the former commissioner from the ACT is doing.

The CHAIR — Did you wish to ask for clarification?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I wish to ask my question and have the minister respond to it.

The CHAIR — You have asked two so far.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Is Corrections Victoria preparing for the eventuality of a royal commission into this matter?

Mr CAMERON — They are preparing to work with the three investigations, as I have said.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Is it a fact that Commissioner Hastings admitted or conceded there may be corruption in Barwon Prison?

The CHAIR — Mr Rich-Phillips, you need to ask your question. When we come around again, you can ask the question next time.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Did Commissioner Hastings concede that there may be corruption — —

Mr CAMERON — Come back to it.

The CHAIR — We will come back to that one. Mr Scott has the call.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — If the minister is happy for it to be on the record and not address Commissioner Hastings's comments about corruption in Barwon Prison.

The CHAIR — You can ask it next time.

Mr SCOTT — I want to ask a question regarding projected future demand in the corrections system, which is referred to both in the minister's presentation and in budget information paper 1 on page 13. Minister, can you detail what the government is doing to address the demand for prison beds in Victoria, especially in the women's system?

Mr CAMERON — As I had on the slide, I will just touch on the male system. There are additional funds for this year. There is the activity that is occurring at the present time, with 58 beds at Barwon, 20 at Loddon, 54 at Dhurringile, 59 at Port Phillip and 40 at Beechworth coming on soon. We have now entered into a contractual arrangement for the Ararat prison to come on in late 2012.

However, in the women's system, as you referred to, there are significant challenges. There has been a dramatic increase in women prisoner numbers. We think that that is because there have been quite a number of women involved with others in relation to serious drug trafficking. When you have a look at the entire system and the community corrections orders, we have not seen that dramatic increase in the number of women, but we have seen that dramatic increase when it comes to women prisoners.

As a consequence of that, there will be 18 beds put in at Tarrengower, which is just outside Maldon, and there will be additional beds put in at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. This is the way that we will be addressing that issue. It will be maintaining two women's prisons: both the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower.

Ms PENNICUIK — My question is about that very issue. In your presentation it is with regret that I note that in the last 10 years the total prison population has gone up by more than 1000. The concern is that the women's prison population has increased 25 per cent in one calendar year.

Mr CAMERON — I think it is more like 30.

Ms PENNICUIK — The budget papers only refer to 2008–09, where it says 5.3 per cent. But if you look at figures, I think the figure you have here is — —

Mr CAMERON — Which figure in the budget paper, Ms Pennicuik?

The CHAIR — Could you please give us the reference, please, Ms Pennicuik? Budget paper 3?

Ms PENNICUIK — Budget paper 3, page 432. At the bottom of page 432 it refers to the number of women prisoners. It has risen from 244 to 257, which is a 5.3 per cent increase, but in your presentation I think you have the more up-to-date number, which is — —

Mr CAMERON — That is 'Imprisonment rate by gender' — —

Ms PENNICUIK — It is 320 female prisoners. In 2008–09, it was 257; is that right?

Mr CAMERON — Yes, in the last financial year.

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, and now it is 320.

Mr CAMERON — We have seen that dramatic increase, as I have said, yes.

Ms PENNICUIK — You mentioned something about, and I think you were reported in the press, too, speaking about something to do with drug offences.

Mr CAMERON — Yes.

Ms PENNICUIK — My concern is that even if that is the case, it is a very large rise in the prison population amongst women.

Mr CAMERON — It is; it has been quite a spike.

Ms PENNICUIK — There is supposedly an interdepartmental review of this issue. Can you tell me the status of that review, and when the findings and recommendations might be released to the public? Apart from — —

Mr CAMERON — You say, ‘the review’. Is that the review about demand management?

Ms PENNICUIK — It is the review about why there is an increase of 25 per cent in the number of women put in prison.

Mr CAMERON — That is about the demand management.

Ms PENNICUIK — Which is a major concern; it is a huge jump in the number of women.

Mr CAMERON — It is, yes.

Ms PENNICUIK — So I want to know when that interdepartmental inquiry is going to be released to the public, because this is a very serious issue. You might talk about demand management. What I am interested in is: is the government going to just respond to this by putting more beds in Tarrengower and Dame Phyllis Frost, or is to going to do something about reducing the number of women going to prison, which is the better outcome, I would think?

Just tied in with that, in the reporting there were concerns about the accommodation at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre anyway. Can you give me information about reports in the press that it is overcrowded by one-third in any case, without this 25 per cent increase. If you could comment on all that, how that is being addressed.

The CHAIR — There is a large plateful there.

Mr CAMERON — There is a range of things — —

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, there is a range of things, but it is a very important issue.

Mr CAMERON — I will go back and we will try to work through them. In relation to why we believe this has happened, as I said, the main driver seems to have been the number of women associated with others in relation to serious trafficking. That is what we believe. So that is what has brought it about. In relation to — —

Ms PENNICUIK — Is that what the interdepartmental committee is finding?

Mr CAMERON — No, this is — —

Ms PENNICUIK — This is just your belief?

Mr CAMERON — This is the view of Corrections. Looking at it, this is their view as to why we are seeing that spike. Of course, in relation to Corrections, people are directed to Corrections; the courts send them there. Someone is going to jail for a certain period of time, and Corrections then has to deal with it. If you look at the issue of recidivism, if you look at the issues of trying to connect women from prison into the community and the Better Pathways program, and the results of that program, we believe that is important and that has to continue. That is what we are seeing from a Corrections perspective.

To go back, then, you refer to an issue in relation to an overall view around demand management — I think that is what you are referring to — from a whole-of-justice perspective, and I will get the secretary of the department to talk about that from a whole-of-justice perspective.

Ms ARMYTAGE — We have spent a fair bit of time looking at what we can do in relation to this and, as the minister has indicated, there is balancing between the demand management strategies — so how we prepare to make sure there are adequate facilities — and that is what the budget has forecast, there will be growth in capacity at both Tarrengower and at Dame Phyllis Frost to allow us to improve the physical infrastructure that will be available to these women, and that will be rolled out.

We have evaluated the success also of the Better Pathways project. PricewaterhouseCoopers came in and undertook an evaluation that helped look at what we can do to reduce recidivism further and address the causes of women’s offending. They indicated through that evaluation that the program was reducing the rate of

imprisonment for women, we have been increasing the responsiveness of the corrections system, and that access overall to services had improved. As a result of that, whilst the nature of the crimes is driving up the women's imprisonment rate, we are hoping that that sort of investment will mean that the recidivism will decline in relation to that cohort of women, and they will be better supported in terms of their return to the community. We would be hopeful that that trend can be reversed, but at the moment that trend is there because of the nature of those crimes.

Ms PENNICUIK — I would just like clarification. I understand what you are saying, Ms Armytage, that there is obviously a need to upgrade the facilities at Dame Phyllis Frost, which has been outstanding for a long time. Can you give me the timetable as to when that will be? But I am also very interested in knowing when the formal findings of the interdepartmental committee looking into this rise of 25 per cent of women going to prison in one year are going to be released to the public. I think that is such an important issue, that the actual way you have arrived at the reasoning as to why it is happening needs to be made public formally.

Mr CAMERON — It is not an inquiry.

Ms ARMYTAGE — The demand management strategy is ongoing.

Mr CAMERON — It is not an inquiry; it is ongoing work.

Ms PENNICUIK — I want to know how the department, the minister or anyone has come to the view as to what has caused that 25 per cent rise in one year.

Mr CAMERON — Corrections Victoria has been able to look at the nature of the offending of those who come in, so that comes in on a prison warrant.

Ms PENNICUIK — Is that publicly available?

Mr CAMERON — What is that?

Ms PENNICUIK — What Corrections Victoria has looked at, to come to that view.

Mr CAMERON — They have looked at the prison warrants. The prisoner comes with a warrant, and it says what they are imprisoned for.

Mr HASTINGS — Just on that, in terms of the variety of factors, as the minister outlined, part of it is general population growth, anyway, because the state is growing.

Ms PENNICUIK — Not 25 per cent in one year.

Mr HASTINGS — Part of it is targeted police operations, because they have been doing a lot more policing targeted operations. Some women are now getting a lot lengthier sentences. Some women are being charged with more serious offences, and therefore bail is being refused. So there are a lot of factors leading to this extension.

Ms PENNICUIK — And is that information publicly available?

The CHAIR — I think Mr Hastings has just given you some information.

Ms PENNICUIK — He has given me some information, but there must be more detailed information available.

The CHAIR — If there is anything else, I am sure the minister will consider the Hansard record and provide it, if it is appropriate.

Mr CAMERON — We will try to put something together to send to you, of those various streams.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, and also when the works at Dame Phyllis Frost — —

Mr CAMERON — We will bring it all together, on the various streams.

The CHAIR — Okay, and provide that to the committee. Thank you, Minister.

Mr CAMERON — Yes.

Ms GRALEY — I would be interested in that information, too.

Mr CAMERON — Yes. It is a significant concern to us.

Ms GRALEY — Minister, I would like to talk about community work programs. I know there are a couple happening in my electorate. I refer you to budget paper 3, page 152, where it gives the total number of community work hours performed by offenders, which is quite significant. I would like to give you the opportunity to talk about the contribution that this sort of community work programs make to the community through Community Corrections Services.

Mr CAMERON — Thank you very much. The management of the community corrections system is very important. That was acknowledged by the Auditor-General, and the performance of community corrections and the way it goes about its work. No doubt, as you would appreciate, sometimes that is a complex environment, given the nature of the people who are on those orders. Part of those orders is often around community work for a certain amount of hours. So for community corrections that poses a challenge as to how to get those hours worked and the involvement and engagement with a whole lot of agencies across the board as to where that work can be done. We see that work occur at all sorts of levels. You have said how that happens in your own electorate. Corrections Victoria goes through a process of trying to hunt out people who want to take up this opportunity, or those people who make an approach. I will get the corrections commissioner to talk about how they do that and various of the programs and how they do it.

Mr HASTINGS — I suppose these community work programs are one of the most visible contributions that these people put back into the community. They seem to attract a lot of attention. I think there has been some enormous work done over time. It is a way of reparation back to the community, it is a way of rehabilitation and ultimately some reintegration back into the community in terms of the individual offenders. It does build on their work-life skills as well.

In 2008–09 there were 800 000 hours of unpaid work completed across Victoria, which was equivalent to about \$18.5 million of community work back into the community. In the 2009–10 financial year to March this year, we have had 598 174 hours of unpaid community work, which is equivalent to \$14 million. There have been some 200-odd organisations and charities that have benefited from this sort of work: 137 schools and kindergartens; 71 sporting clubs; 64 community and neighbourhood houses; 60 churches and other religious groups; 40 cemeteries and historical organisations; 35 parks, gardens and reserves; 23 environmental and conservation projects; 24 indigenous projects; 18 hospitals and health-care centres; 15 aged-care facilities, and so on. I think the list is fairly extensive and wide ranging. The minister has already mentioned the graffiti program, which is another one that is well received across the community in terms of the work done in cleaning up graffiti across the community.

It is really about developing these people and giving them an opportunity to repay the community for what they have done, and it is quite visible. It just seems to be one of those things that if we can do more of them, that is what we should be aiming to do.

Dr SYKES — I refer to comments by the Premier that the coalition's policy to abolish suspended sentences would cost hundreds of millions of dollars in extra prison costs. Given the government has today backflipped and copied the opposition in abolishing suspending sentences — —

Ms PENNICUIK — Shame on them.

Dr SYKES — I ask: how much additional funding will be provided to Corrections for this purpose, or is this yet another example of policy on the run?

Ms PENNICUIK — It is the law and order agenda!

Mr CAMERON — I cannot agree with that. Let me just reject the assertions at the outset. Let us just go back and think about this. Your policy, as you know, is to abolish suspended sentences for people who are found guilty of driving offences, and you want to send a whole lot of people to jail.

Mr WELLS — No, come on; stick to the main game.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — The minister, without assistance. I know you are all getting excited because lunch is very close and you are probably hungry, but the minister, without assistance, thank you very much.

Mr WELLS — We are fascinated by this response.

The CHAIR — Mr Wells, once again, thank you.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Go for it!

Mr CAMERON — To go back to the Sentencing Advisory Council in 2008 — —

Mr WELLS — No, give us an answer.

The CHAIR — Mr Wells!

Mr CAMERON — I am giving you the history. You do not like it.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Where is your funding? Where is the money? You have no money in the budget.

Mr CAMERON — You might not like the history — —

The CHAIR — Mr Dalla-Riva, without assistance.

Mr CAMERON — But I will tell you the history.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — You made the announcement but did not fund it.

The CHAIR — Mr Rich-Phillips!

Mr WELLS — It is embarrassing; you should be embarrassed.

Mr CAMERON — One of the things that had to happen in preparation around the abolition of suspended sentences for serious offences was other orders in place. One of those was to have home detention as a stand-alone order, something that was always opposed but, as you know, you buckled at the knees last week when that passed through Parliament. So that started to clear the way for us to do this.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — What are you talking about?

Mr WELLS — No, we did not support it; we do not support it.

The CHAIR — Without assistance.

Mr CAMERON — The Sentencing Advisory Council — —

Mr WELLS — We do not support home detention; we made it clear.

The CHAIR — Without assistance.

Mr CAMERON — You passed the bill.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Without assistance.

Dr SYKES — Chair, on a point of order.

The CHAIR — Yes, I hope it is about disruptions.

Dr SYKES — It is about relevance. Can we ask the minister to answer the question, which is really the —

Mr CAMERON — I am telling you the history.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Thank you for that point of order. I will rule on the point of order. The minister is being relevant to the question. Minister, conclude the answer so we can go to lunch.

Mr CAMERON — I will tell you the history. As a result of the last data, the Attorney-General has made an announcement today.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Where is the money in the forward estimates, Minister? There is no money in the forward estimates.

The CHAIR — Mr Dalla-Riva!

Mr CAMERON — And in relation to the budget, all the things that are in the budget are predicated on, are the policies as announced and articulated by the government as at the start of May. As a result of — —

Mr WELLS — Does that mean this one is not funded?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — There is no funding for it.

The CHAIR — Listen to the answer.

Mr CAMERON — As a result of what the Attorney-General has done today with the Sentencing Advisory Council, they will be incorporated into the half-year update.

Mr WELLS — Where is the money coming from?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — There is no money.

Mr CAMERON — It will be incorporated into the half-year update. Thank you.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Thank you. That concludes the consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolios of police and emergency services and corrections. I thank the minister and departmental officers for their attendance today. Where questions were taken on notice, the committee will follow up with you in writing at a later date. The committee requests that written responses to those matters be provided within 30 days.

Witnesses withdrew.