

# CORRECTED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into budget estimates 2011–12

Melbourne — 17 May 2011

#### Members

Mr N. Angus

Mr P. Davis

Ms J. Hennessy

Mr D. Morris

Mr D. O'Brien

Mr M. Pakula

Mr R. Scott

Chair: Mr P. Davis

Deputy Chair: Mr M. Pakula

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

#### Witnesses

Mr A. McIntosh, Minister for Crime Prevention,

Ms P. Armytage, Secretary,

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

Ms J. Brennan, Director, Crime Prevention, Department of Justice.

**The CHAIR** — I now 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 crime prevention portfolio, having unfortunately ignored welcoming, which I now do, Ms Julianne Brennan, Director of Crime Prevention, Department of Justice.

**Overheads shown.**

**Mr McINTOSH** — I also acknowledge Julianne Brennan, as you did. Julianne is the newly appointed Head of the Crime Prevention Unit inside justice. It is a re-established unit. It was abolished under the former government and re-established under this government given its importance in the whole process.

I say that the policy objective, of course, of crime prevention is delivering on our community safety and crime prevention program, and it is one of the highest government priorities. My portfolio principally will develop leadership in coordinating across government to develop economic crime prevention policies, frameworks and programs to help make our community safer. We will do this by, importantly, leading the development and implementation of a whole-of-government crime prevention framework; promoting coordination across government to embed crime prevention into relevant social and economic policies; identifying and targeting priority crimes and behaviours in the community with specific strategies to reduce crimes against people and property; and finally building and maintaining engagement and capability in local communities to implement effective crime prevention responses to local issues.

Importantly we have initiated a whole-of-government stocktake of programs contributing to crime prevention objectives to help inform this work. What this means is that every government agency, every government department, will have to do a stocktake in relation to those projects they have got in relation to crime prevention. I will give an absurd example. Obviously in something like the education department, education itself can be a crime prevention matter, but it is not just about education. It is not necessarily just about health. It is about specific crime prevention programs. What we have certainly uncovered is that there is a hodgepodge of these programs, and perhaps I might speak about those at some later time.

In relation to my specific area of crime prevention, we have got a \$39 million community crime prevention program, \$19.75 million for public safety infrastructure, \$5.25 million for a community safety fund, \$13.5 million for the anti-graffiti plan and a \$550 000 boost in the funding for Neighbourhood Watch. All of these are important programs, and I am happy to clarify the details in relation to those. The first one is the public safety infrastructure, which is a fund of \$19.75 million over four years, which will provide grants for up to \$250 000 for councils to develop major infrastructure systems, which may include CCTV cameras and other supporting technologies to increase the safety in and around council properties. This includes council assets used by the public, such as sportsgrounds, parks and public buildings. Guidelines are being prepared to assist councils to develop the CCTV infrastructure proposals.

In relation to the Community Safety Fund, again it is about local communities delivering local solutions. The Community Safety Fund — \$5.25 million over four years — will fund a wide range of groups, including community and sporting groups, business associations, community service groups and local councils, to develop and deliver practical community safety initiatives. The first round of applications is for grants of up to \$10 000 from the Community Safety Fund for local community and safety groups to implement practical community safety initiatives such as lighting, locks and fencing. Future funding rounds will be informed by consultation with local councils and also key partners. The focus will be on supporting local partnerships to develop and deliver crime prevention initiatives that best meet the needs of their local community.

The anti-graffiti plan involves \$13.5 million to stamp out graffiti. The government's \$3.3 million for an anti-graffiti plan — \$13.5 million over four years — will provide for offenders on community-based orders to clean up state, local government and community assets, and it will support local communities to remove and prevent graffiti. There is \$4 million to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to graffiti and \$9.5 million for a graffiti prevention and removal strategy. In the first year of operation the graffiti clean-up program will remove up to 290 000 square metres of graffiti, providing over 90 000 community work hours for offenders to make reparations to the community. Using offenders to remove graffiti not only improves the visual amenity of local communities but also provides offenders with the opportunity to make reparations for their crimes. Wherever possible, graffiti offenders are scheduled to work on graffiti removal teams as part of their community work.

The state budget delivers the commitment to provide \$550 000 to Neighbourhood Watch to secure accommodation for a Victorian headquarters and to appoint a state manager to provide administrative support to centrally coordinate activities. The funding will also be used to restore Neighbourhood Watch access to local crime statistics. A lack of funding support has diminished the capabilities and outputs of Neighbourhood Watch. This has contributed to diminished perceptions of public safety within our community. Neighbourhood Watch Victoria cannot afford to staff a full-time manager, which has resulted in dysfunction in communication throughout the network and a notably reduced presence in some Victorian communities. The initiative will fund a state manager to refocus and invigorate local engagement and mobilisation. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is currently in discussions with the Chief Commissioner of Police on the issue of restoring access for local Neighbourhood Watch groups to local crime statistics.

I will just mention one of the problems. Yes, it was a commitment of ours in the lead-up to the last election that we would restore local crime statistics to Neighbourhood Watch groups. What we have discovered is that it is difficult to get those crime statistics from the LEAP database because a lot of crimes are not necessarily geotagged — that is, there is no specific location provided in relation to that crime and recorded on the LEAP database. That will perhaps render access to the statistics a little difficult to roll out. That has been looked at, and discussions are occurring between the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Chief Commissioner of Police. Our intention is to try to alleviate that problem and deliver on that commitment.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, we now have less than 35 minutes available for questions on the crime prevention portfolio, so thank you for your presentation. I wish to turn again to a relevant aspect of a driver in relation to crime prevention, and that is population. Can you inform the committee of how predictions concerning population growth have shaped the budget for 2011–12 and the out years in relation to this portfolio?

**Mr McINTOSH** — The additional money that I have just spoken about is for new initiatives. Certainly there have been graffiti programs before, but we are adding to that. Just in my little quarantined area of crime prevention the most important thing is that these initiatives will hopefully address some of the issues relating to preventing crime. There is not only the opportunity to be punished and therefore to make reparations to the community by involving yourself in graffiti removal but also the initiative to give communities a focal point around which they themselves can participate in crime prevention initiatives.

There is \$10 000 for local communities, be they sporting clubs, business associations or otherwise. Providing extra lighting is one example of using the \$10 000. Also the councils may want to avail themselves of the infrastructure grants of up to \$250 000. One of the examples we have used is CCTV cameras. Of course they are not limited to that sort of technology. If they have some other infrastructure proposal in relation to crime prevention, certainly we will be interested to hear from those local councils.

All of this is coupled with a whole range of different crime prevention initiatives in relation to other portfolio responsibilities — for example, the justice project for refugees. In another area of justice, ‘Step Back. Think.’ is one other program that could be thought of in another portfolio responsibility. The idea is to try to get all of those identified to identify gaps.

Perhaps I can highlight one good example that I have come across recently. I recently visited the Justice for Refugees project in Flemington, which particularly deals with refugees who have come to this country quite legally. They have been perhaps left to some extent after they have arrived without a terrible amount of support. There is a project called the Justice for Refugees project that deals with Horn of Africa people in Flemington. It arose out of concerns about the interaction between police and refugees, and certainly it has addressed a lot of those things. This project rolls out an awareness of the justice system, rights and responsibilities, highlighting these things in relation to a community that may not necessarily have the same acceptance of those standards and the same understanding that there are certain factors. That project has been rolled out and represents a significant investment, but that investment only relates to some 18-year-olds; plus it is in justice, and of course justice really is in relation to adults. If you talk to the head of that organisation, Abseselom, he will say, ‘I would like to be able to deal with kids who are 11, 12 or 13 years of age as well’, and that certainly is a gap that has already been identified in the last couple of weeks.

**Ms HENNESSY** — Minister, if I can just refer you to budget paper 3 and pages 236 to 259, there is not one output measure that relates to your crime prevention portfolio to which the government has committed itself in this budget. I mean not to be churlish when I suggest that perhaps there is not much to it, but for example,

specifically in your presentation you spoke of your anti-graffiti plan and the coalition's commitment to stamp out graffiti. Why would you not put an output measure in there to which we and the Victorian public can hold you to account in respect of this portfolio?

**Mr McINTOSH** — As I said, in regard to the government's intention by creating the portfolio of the Minister for Crime Prevention, yes, there are these projects which I have just announced which are directly in relation to my portfolio, but what we want to develop is an all-of-government response, which means that these particular initiatives are just one part of my responsibility. As I said, we have commenced the process of perhaps auditing all of the crime-related proposals across the whole of government that do not necessarily relate directly to my portfolio, and I gave two examples there — the Justice for Refugees program and the 'Step Back. Think.' program. Both relate to different portfolio responsibilities, but the most important thing is that the critical factor here is that we have got to develop an all-of-government response.

Also we want to be able to perhaps take a leadership role in a national initiative which the Commonwealth Government is sponsoring through the national crime prevention framework, which is yet to be settled. There was a discussion paper being produced by the Australian Institute of Criminology. As I said, it is about providing programs, identifying where those gaps do exist and perhaps addressing those gaps. Whether I have responsibility for them or other ministers have responsibility for them, that is the way government operates. Rather than getting it done piecemeal, we have to develop a whole-of-government response.

**Ms HENNESSY** — You would agree that it looks a bit light on, though, would you not?

**Mr McINTOSH** — I just do not agree there at all. The reality is that there are numerous crime prevention programs — —

**Ms HENNESSY** — But there is nothing we can hold you to account for.

**The CHAIR** — Ms Hennessy! That is enough.

**Ms HENNESSY** — It is the vibe portfolio, isn't it, Minister?

**Mr O'BRIEN** — On a point of order, have you taken the minister to pages 239 to 240 — —

**Mr PAKULA** — Do you want to be the minister?

**Mr O'BRIEN** — No. I am just pointing it out. You are saying there is nothing in there — —

**Ms HENNESSY** — I am just saying in the community safety and crime prevention output measure was there nothing?

**The CHAIR** — Ms Hennessy, you have had a good go. I am going to move on, and you will be able to come back to this issue if you wish later on.

**Mr MORRIS** — Minister, perhaps we could stick with that theme, and in particular in the output statement for DOJ. Page 236 of budget paper 3 indicates one of the objectives of whole-of-government crime prevention, which you referred to in a general sense in your answer to the previous question. Can you indicate to the committee how the budget allows the department to provide leadership for a whole-of-government crime prevention program?

**Mr McINTOSH** — As I said, addressing the complex factors that drive crime and victimisation requires a coordinated, whole-of-government crime prevention framework. It is not just about police. The police are clearly important, and I am very proud of the government's commitment to increase the numbers of Victoria Police by some 1700, together with the 940 PSOs at train stations in metropolitan and selected country areas from 6 o'clock to the last train. It is not just about the courts and things like that — reforming sentencing and perhaps delivering a sentencing outcome that better reflects the communities expectations in crime. It is also about what we do after and what we do before.

As I said, the critical factor here for me is not just to concentrate on police, courts or sentencing, or indeed on prisons, it is about a whole range of things that we need to do right across government. Indeed I have been involved in one recent matter, which was the 'Step Back. Think.' program. I have had briefings in relation to a

lot of other matters, but the critical factor here is to develop a whole-of-government response, and indeed as I said a critical factor there is the audit, which has commenced in relation to finding out exactly what we have got out there to deal with crimes, to find where the gaps are and to deal with those gaps.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, I want to take you up on your answer to Ms Hennessy's previous question. We had the Premier in here on Friday, and when we spoke to the Premier we did a back-of-the-envelope sum that said that the dollars in this budget on your tough-on-crime approach were approaching \$1 billion, when you add the 1700 new police, the PSOs, 108 prison beds and the community corrections officers; that was before the other 392 prison beds had been accounted for and your revelation today about having to build a new prison. I suspect once we add all that up we are in the \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion sphere. I asked the Premier, and I ask you: what percentage reduction in the crime rate is your target as a consequence of that \$1 billion to \$2 billion in spending in your tough-on-crime approach? What target are you prepared to commit to as your benchmark, your performance measure, for the spending of that money.

**Mr McINTOSH** — Chair, it is almost impossible at this stage to identify what a target would be. What we want to do is to undertake a whole-of-government approach to crime. As we know, the Premier identified a considerable spend in relation to crime prevention, starting with the extra police and the additional PSOs. There is also a significant commitment, even in this budget, in relation to building new police stations. I certainly see the member for Forest Hill, and I was present at the announcement of that new police station at Forest Hill, something that he has been fighting for a number of years. As I said, there is all of that. There are also upgrades of the police academy, nine new brawler vans and an additional 108 beds in the male prison system. There is GPS monitoring.

**Mr PAKULA** — You are making my point.

**Ms HENNESSY** — What do we get for it?

**Mr SCOTT** — What is the bang for buck?

**Mr PAKULA** — What did you do?

**Mr McINTOSH** — There is electronic monitoring, management of sex offenders, the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund, zero tolerance for graffiti, benefits to Neighbourhood Watch and 'Step Back. Think.', as I said. There is a range of different issues, including additional support for community legal centres. But the critical factor here is that to deal with the issue of crime prevention we have to know where we are at the moment and where we want to be in the future. Where we want to be in the future to get that sort of ironclad guarantee, that commitment, is certainly something that is going to depend on what we have to address.

As I have often said in the public arena, I am probably the only minister in the government who can sit there and say that I may not see the benefits in the course of my term in Parliament. What we are doing is trying to set a government on a course whereby in four years and eight years we may not see a benefit, but in 20 years' time we may see a benefit in relation to crime reduction. We have to address that now. If we just keep putting this patchwork on, we will not solve the problem of increasing levels of crime. What we have to do is to address this matter systematically, and the first stage has been to develop an audit of what we have in order to find out where we are going. When you are dealing with people from the Horn of Africa it is fine to have a well-resourced, well-run program in relation to 18-plus, but if we are not dealing with 11, 12 and 13-year-olds, then I think we have a serious problem.

**Mr PAKULA** — I want to clarify what you have said. As crime prevention minister, acknowledging that the spending on tough-on-crime measures is \$1 billion to \$2 billion over the forward estimates — I do not think that is being contested — you are saying that we may not see a reduction in the crime rate over four or eight years and that it may be over the longer term that we see it. Is that what you have said?

**Mr McINTOSH** — I am certainly saying that is something I may not see, but the point about this is that we envisaged immediate steps in relation to police, for example. If you go back 150 years to the introduction of the first continuing police force, which is London's Metropolitan Police, it was about crime prevention. It was not about arresting people and locking them up; it was about having a visible presence to deter crime. We only have to look at Operation Unite last weekend, which was visible police right across this nation addressing the issue of

alcohol-fuelled violence as a mechanism for preventing crime. What this has to be is a systematic approach to preventing crime.

As I said, it is impossible to say what target I want; the fact is what I want to do is to start these programs and to get a whole-of-government response to fit in with the national framework that has been sponsored by the commonwealth to ensure that we can deliver on our commitment to try to prevent crime. Do we see it in the short term? I do not know, but all we can do is try. These are all tried and true methods that we are adopting. You are telling me an additional 1700 police are not going to make any difference in relation to alcohol-fuelled violence, or why — —

**Mr PAKULA** — I am not telling you anything of the sort.

**Mr McINTOSH** — That is the point. Am I able to say what is going to happen on Sunday morning after Operation Unite or what is going to happen on Monday night? The reality is I cannot say that specifically. All I can say is that we have to adopt a more holistic approach right across government to find out where the gaps are and deliver outcomes for where we have those gaps.

**Mr ANGUS** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 57, and the community crime prevention program. Can you outline for the committee how the government will deliver the community crime prevention program?

**Mr McINTOSH** — As I said, we have additional funding in relation to the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund and also the Community Safety Fund. They are obviously important issues. To expand on those matters, the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund will provide grants for up to \$250 000 for councils to purchase and install major security infrastructure systems. What we suggest is CCTV cameras, for example. It may be some other form of infrastructure, but that would be a matter for councils to put their proposals to us.

Guidelines are currently being prepared by the department to assist councils to develop those sorts of proposals, and they will have to define not only the problem but also the risks associated with that in assessing the suitability of the infrastructure program they put up, such as CCTV cameras. They will also have to define the planning steps and the objectives; what community consultation they will be undertaking; the policies and procedures to be developed to ensure legislative compliance; and indeed matters relating to data and privacy protection. All of the technical considerations would also have to be included in that proposal, and the department is currently developing those guidelines.

As I said, the Department of Justice will work with local councils on developing those guidelines and assisting them in meeting those criteria. The Community Safety Fund is for grants of up to \$10 000 to councils or community groups to develop and deliver practical community safety initiatives, such as lighting, locks and fencing. On top of that, as I have indicated, we are supporting Neighbourhood Watch along with Crime Stoppers, another significant program which is also being supported to develop an integral link between the community and police, and that has been a very successful ongoing program.

We have a number of other different programs not only in relation to my portfolio responsibilities, such as Violent Crime, We're Over It, Protecting our Borders, Travelling Conmen and the Hoon Hotline, for example — also significant programs. The Finger, a graffiti prevention program, is another one along with Crime Stoppers, as I have said. There is the Knives Scar Lives program. There is Championship Moves. I was down at, of all places, Collingwood headquarters at the Lexus stadium. Mr Angus may have seen in the *Herald Sun* a photograph of me with Dane Swan and Danny Frawley. They had to put me on a very large box to come to their height. Of course there is the 'Step Back. Think.' program, which will get a significant amount of funding. That is something that has been developed from the ground up. It is not a government program, but we are happy to auspice that; and I have mentioned the Justice for Refugees program. All of these are programs that we know about and can talk about, but we want to see what else is out there in the government agencies.

**Mr SCOTT** — I would like to follow up regarding the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund. You identified the potential use, and included in your handout a lovely photo, of a CCTV camera. In regard to the installation of such cameras, how many new cameras does the government expect will be installed as a result of this initiative, and how many of those will be monitored? Have you got any expectations of how many new CCTV cameras would be installed and how many would be monitored from this fund?

**Mr McINTOSH** — This program is running over four years. It is a matter for individual councils to make their submissions and make applications. I imagine those applications will potentially come flooding in, and we will have to deal with those projects.

In relation to cameras, it may not be confined to cameras. We can just use that as an example of one of the infrastructure projects they may want to take up. As I said, it could be lighting, kiosks or something like that. The reality is that CCTV cameras are something that the government considers would be a worthwhile project they can do. I have already had tentative approaches from a couple of councils about this matter. I will not go into the details, but they will be eligible to make their applications in due course.

**Mr SCOTT** — Just to unpick nature of the funding, would it simply provide for the capital infrastructure associated with things like CCTV cameras or would there be funding for, say, their monitoring, to take the example that you have used?

**Mr McINTOSH** — No. I think it is important — —

**Mr SCOTT** — If there is not, would police officers be required to undertake monitoring?

**Mr McINTOSH** — Certainly that would be a matter for the relationship between the local council and police. Having visited the Member for Mornington's police station a few years ago I saw that they have CCTV cameras down there that are linked to the local police station. What we are doing is this: it is an infrastructure fund; it is just the asset that we will provide the grant for. Ongoing maintenance and monitoring of those facilities would be a matter for local councils. It is a provision for the infrastructure.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Minister, I would like to take you to the graffiti prevention and removal strategy, and I refer to budget paper 3, page 124. I also refer to page 57 under 'Removing graffiti — a zero tolerance approach'. I ask you, Minister: are there any policy initiatives in your portfolio that are likely to impact on the graffiti prevention and removal strategy?

**Mr McINTOSH** — When you see something like that you can understand why something of the order of 20 per cent of Victorians rank graffiti as a significant local problem. It is only second to the issue of dangerous driving, so it is considered to be a significant problem by a large section of our community. As I said, the \$13.5 million anti-graffiti plan builds on existing graffiti removal programs. The plan is what would happen is that the program would have offenders right through to other people involved in the clean-up of these matters. That is one small example.

The goal is to remove up to 290 000 square metres of graffiti in the forward estimates over the next 12 months and provide over 90 000 community work hours for offenders. The \$9.5 million graffiti prevention and removal strategy uses offenders to clean up graffiti from rail corridors and council and community property. It provides offenders with the opportunity to make reparation through that work, and where possible graffiti offenders work on graffiti removal. From July 2010 to April 2011 some 235 000 square metres of graffiti were removed, so we have upped the ante to almost 300 000 square metres of graffiti being removed.

The critical factor here is that we want a concentrated effort in relation to graffiti. It is seen to be a significant local problem. Even in my area there are issues in relation to people tagging, not necessarily the colourful, big graffiti but just going around tagging poles and fences and things like that. I have had a number of shopkeepers say how annoyed they are by people who just get a spray can and run up and down the shops leaving ugly stains all over the shop, all of which they have to remove themselves. These sorts of things are there to address.

Can I say that obviously we want to adopt a system whereby once graffiti is notified we can take that matter and within 24 hours program it. I cannot say there will be an outcome in relation to removal of graffiti in that space, but certainly we can program as to when that graffiti will be removed. Importantly, this is about getting offenders themselves involved in the removal of graffiti.

**Ms HENNESSY** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 60, to election commitments to be funded in future years and also to your government's pre-election promise to establish an arson prevention task force. I ask: where in the budget papers is the reference to the implementation of that election commitment?

**Mr McINTOSH** — It is not necessarily my portfolio responsibility, but certainly it is a matter that should be taken up with the Attorney-General.

**Ms HENNESSY** — Like the paedophile?

**Mr PAKULA** — Arson is not crime?

**Ms HENNESSY** — He just deals with graffiti and cameras — maybe.

**Mr McINTOSH** — I will take that on notice, but as far as I am aware, it is a matter for the Attorney-General.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. I refer to BP3 at page 57, in particular the community crime prevention program. Will the minister advise the committee on how the government will implement the local crime prevention programs?

**Mr McINTOSH** — What we want is local communities to do it in local plans. It will be the DOJ — Department of Justice — regions that will support that local partnership approach with local communities.

As I said, we are developing guidelines. We want to work with local communities to come up with these solutions to local issues. Not only will it be local councils, there will be local police and key community agencies and groups, residents and citizens to identify and prioritise local issues together with their responses.

There will be targeted grants to support local plans in relation to these crime prevention initiatives. Importantly, what we want to do is to make sure that all these programs, the successful projects, are across the whole of Victoria, and they should not just be confined to one location or otherwise. Certainly the Department of Justice and Julianne Brennan's unit will be working with local communities to perhaps excite them about this initiative and get them involved in making their local plans available for these sorts of grants.

As I said, the local plans themselves will inform a statewide crime prevention framework. It is not only an audit of existing programs but exactly what we are doing in relation to the rollout of those programs. The critical factor here is that we want community engagement and we want the community mobilised to deal with these initiatives, and it is a key outcome to try to engage local communities in dealing with local problems and coming up with local solutions in relation to crime prevention.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, I want to ask about knife laws, which I understand is a portfolio area jointly administered by you and the police minister — or is it you and the attorney? Anyway, you have got part of it, as I understand it.

Going back to budget paper 3 at page 60, under 'Election commitments to be funded in future years' there is no reference there to either the knife amnesty program being extended into schools or the program to ban the sale of knives to minors. Can you tell us whether there are any intentions of doing that over the budget cycle or whether that is only going to be something done later in the forward estimates?

**Mr McINTOSH** — Mr Pakula, can I just say that there is, as I understand it, a reprioritisation of resources in relation to those programs, and I will just have to take that on notice.

**Mr PAKULA** — While you are taking that on notice, I am interested to know when you implement this ban on the selling of knives to minors, how a 17-year-old who moves out of home is going to furnish their kitchen?

**Mr McINTOSH** — I am sorry; what was that?

**Mr PAKULA** — A 17-year-old who moves out of home: how are they meant to furnish their kitchen; how are they meant to buy a knife for their kitchen?

**Mr McINTOSH** — Certainly knives are a significant and growing problem. Even your government recognised it was a problem.

**Mr PAKULA** — Yes.



**Mr McINTOSH** — As I said, I am not aware of the specific matters. The reality is that this is a reprioritisation of resources in the department, and I will take that on notice.

**Mr MORRIS** — I would like to come back to the subject of Neighbourhood Watch, and I ask the minister how the budget will assist Neighbourhood Watch.

**Mr McINTOSH** — As I have said, the government proposes to support Neighbourhood Watch over the four years with the allocation of \$550 00 over the full forward estimates. Also this is about providing an executive officer and indeed a focal point for the Neighbourhood Watch so they effectively have a headquarters. The problem we have had, of course, is perhaps that the interest in Neighbourhood Watch has been diminishing over the last few years, and importantly what the government is interested in is having Neighbourhood Watch refocus their issues in relation to — I will not say different outcomes — mechanisms so they can deal with crime prevention. That is a critical factor, and we want that to occur.

Somebody once said to me that anybody who says that just restoring crime statistics to a local group is going to reinvigorate the group is perhaps barking up the wrong tree. It is an important issue for many people, and certainly we want to provide those local statistics to local groups, but there are difficulties with the rollout of those at the present time.

I understand that the problem with the LEAP database is that it does not geotag particular offences right down to the specific local area, street or otherwise, with street-by-street statistics. What has come to light is that in some cases you have police who deal with the local Neighbourhood Watch from their own personal knowledge or perhaps personal understanding of their own local crime statistics, and they will provide those, but they are not centrally located.

Now of course there is a commitment to return those to Neighbourhood Watch, and as I said, the Minister for Police and the Chief Commissioner are currently working out a mechanism to enable those statistics to be provided. But the clear message here is that Neighbourhood Watch needs to be reinvigorated. It has been a very successful program over the last few years, but perhaps it is just lagging behind the ball at this stage and does need to be reinvigorated and refocused, and certainly we want to provide sufficient resources to Neighbourhood Watch to enable them to do that.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. In the remaining 35 seconds Mr Scott might ask a question.

**Mr SCOTT** — I will ask very quickly. I would also like to follow up on Neighbourhood Watch and your election commitment around street-by-street crime data. You stated that for certain offences, if I heard you correctly, it was impossible to get the geographic information. Why cannot information on other offences, where it is available, be provided, and are you not admitting that you are breaching your election commitment?

**Mr McINTOSH** — Can I just say in relation to that, I do not know the specifics of it. I understand there is a difficulty getting those statistics from the LEAP database because they are not geotagged. On the actual specifics of the offences I cannot inform you. I understand that the police minister is working with the Chief Commissioner of Police to provide an outcome so those statistics can be provided to Neighbourhood Watch on an ongoing basis.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. I regret that we are out of time for the crime prevention portfolio, but I thank Mr Leech, Ms Brennan and Ms Crouch for their attendance, and we will have a very short adjournment.

**Witnesses withdrew.**