

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2013–14

Melbourne — 13 May 2013

Members

Mr N. Angus
Ms J. Hennessy
Mr D. Morris
Mr D. O'Brien

Mr C. Ondarchie
Mr M. Pakula
Mr R. Scott

Chair: Mr D. Morris
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Witnesses

Mr E. O'Donohue, Minister for Corrections,
Mr G. Wilson, Secretary,
Ms J. Shuard, Commissioner, Corrections Victoria,
Ms J. Griffith, Executive Director, Corrections, Health and Crime Prevention, and
Ms L. Strong, Director, Justice Health, Department of Justice.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the 2013–14 budget estimates for the portfolios of corrections, crime prevention and gaming regulation. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Honourable Edward O’Donohue, MLC, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation; and from the Department of Justice, Mr Greg Wilson, Secretary; Ms Jan Shuard, Commissioner, Corrections Victoria; Ms Julia Griffith, Executive Director, Corrections, Health and Crime Prevention; and Ms Larissa Strong, Director, Justice Health. Members of Parliament, 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 gallery that they cannot participate in any way in the committee’s proceedings. Only officers of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the minister by leave of myself as chair. Written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council Committee Room. TV cameras must remain focused only on the persons speaking; panning of the public gallery, committee members and witnesses is strictly prohibited.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act. It attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing or on social media from this hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. This committee has determined that there is no need for evidence to be sworn. However, witnesses are reminded that all questions must be answered in full, with accuracy and truthfulness. Any persons found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for fact verification within two working days of this hearing. Unverified transcripts and PowerPoint presentations will be placed on the committee’s website immediately following receipt, to be replaced by verified transcripts within five days of receipt.

Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions relating to the inquiry. Generally the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off or turned to silent. 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 that relates to the budget estimates for the corrections portfolio. Welcome, Minister.

Mr O’DONOHUE — Thank you, Mr Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon. Mr Chairman, corrections represents 16.5 per cent of the justice budget, or \$887.1 million. The 2013–14 state budget includes two significant investments in the corrections portfolio. The first being high-security and management prisoners — \$52.9 million to fund infrastructure upgrades and a new 40-bed unit at Barwon prison to increase capacity to manage high-security and management prisoners. The budget also includes \$78.6 million for increased prison capacity, to provide for 357 prison beds across the male prison system to accommodate demand pressures — a total of \$131.5 million in this budget, on top of the \$670 million in the budget last year for corrections infrastructure.

The coalition government had three key election commitments that impacted the corrections portfolio.

The CHAIR — We were having some sound difficulties this morning, so as close as you can comfortably be would be helpful.

Mr O’DONOHUE — Certainly. I hope that is better for Hansard. As I was saying, Mr Chairman, the coalition government had three key election commitments impacting the corrections portfolio. The first was to deliver 500 new prison beds this term of government; to introduce a new, single, flexible community correction order; and, third, to enhance electronic monitoring.

As noted, the 13–14 budget will fund 397 prison beds, which includes a 40-bed high-security unit and 357 beds in existing male prisons. This is on top of the 395 beds and a new 500-bed prison at Ravenhall announced in last year’s budget and 108 beds in the previous year’s budget. This significant investment exceeds our election commitment for additional beds. On 16 January 2012 we delivered on our commitment to introduce a new

single, flexible, community correction order. I am also pleased to advise the committee that we are delivering on our commitment to enhance electronic monitoring for serious offenders.

The government's prison expansion program is well under way. This will modernise and upgrade Victoria's prison system. During the year a number of beds were opened: a new 118-bed Fishburn unit at Port Phillip Prison, 84 beds at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, and work has commenced on the expansion of the Loddon prison. The current demand pressures are a legacy of previous underinvestment, which has significantly compromised the prison system.

Ms HENNESSY — Nothing to do with your sentencing laws!

Mr ANGUS — Don't interrupt the minister! Cut that out, come on.

The CHAIR — Order! Let the minister continue. Let us just listen to the minister for the presentation.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Chair, to address long-term capacity demands the government is in the process of delivering the largest prison expansion program in Victorian history. As I said earlier, the 13–14 state budget provides for 357 male prison beds. These are in addition to the 108 beds funded in 11–12 and the 395 beds and 500-bed prison at Ravenhall funded in the 12–13 budget. During our term of government we have to date opened 519 beds, providing much-needed prison capacity.

High-security and management prisoners are the most high-risk prisoners within the prison population. These groups require separation from the general prison population to ensure the safety and good order of the prison system. Due to previous underinvestment in the prison system there has been no increase in high-security and management beds since 2007. This has placed considerable pressure on the system. To address this previous underinvestment the coalition government has allocated \$52.9 million in this budget to build and operate a new 40-bed high-security unit and upgrade the existing Banksia management unit at Barwon.

Mr Chairman, as I said, on 16 January last year we delivered our policy commitment to introduce a new single, flexible community correction order. This year we will continue to strengthen this order with new conditions and powers. Commencing this month, as an added incentive for the offender to comply with their CCO, the courts are able to impose a monetary bond on the order that the offender must pay. The bond is liable for forfeiture if the order is breached. The coalition government has also introduced legislation that will allow electronic monitoring to be included as a condition on community correction orders made in the higher courts for the monitoring of curfew and place and area exclusions. Corrections Victoria staff will also gain new powers to impose administrative sanctions in response to less serious offender non-compliance. Offenders may incur a fine, up to 16 hours of additional community work or an extension of their curfew. These reforms are part of our continuing commitment to provide judges and magistrates with the tools, discretion and flexibility they need to sentence offenders while ensuring that sentencing laws reflect the community's needs and expectations.

Victoria is introducing the most comprehensive and wide-ranging electronic monitoring system in the country. For the first time in Victoria GPS technology will be available to monitor some of Victoria's most dangerous criminals, including serious sex offenders and parolees, under the new electronic monitoring program announced today. The Department of Justice has signed a contract with G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd to deliver new electronic monitoring technology for the next three years. G4S has a strong track record in delivering these systems across the globe.

Under the expanded monitoring program the courts and the adult parole board will have greater ability to impose electronic monitoring, including GPS, on offenders they believe could pose a risk to community safety. Sex offenders on post-sentence supervision orders, parolees and even offenders sentenced to a community correction order in the higher courts — subject to legislative changes — will be covered by Victoria's new electronic monitoring regime. It introduces the most advanced alcohol-monitoring technology in the country, which alerts authorities if someone breaches an alcohol abstinence condition.

The CHAIR — We are starting to get close to time.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you, Mr Chairman. Community Corrections Services oversees the supervision of adult offenders sentenced by courts to serve community-based orders or conditionally released from prison on parole by the adult parole board. CCS services are available in all regions at more than 50 locations. On

31 March this year CCS was managing 8835 offenders. In the year to date more than 1000 community organisations, such as schools, charities and local government, benefitted from the work and skills of offenders, who did 445 255 hours of unpaid work valued at \$11.14 million. Mr Chairman, I could continue to — —

The CHAIR — Sadly your time has expired. Thank you, Minister. We have about 35 minutes left for questions, so I will kick off the questioning. Minister, in the context of this year's budget, can you outline to the committee examples of capital infrastructure projects in your portfolio which will be either commenced or completed in the next financial year?

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you for the question, Mr Chairman. This budget continues the coalition's work in undertaking the largest expansion of the prison system in Victoria's history. As I mentioned in my introduction, the budget funds a new 40-bed high-security unit at Barwon prison, and that unit — a highly specialised design and construction project — will be built to hold some of the worst criminals in Victoria.

This budget also funds 357 beds, both in terms of expanding capacity and maintaining some of the surge capacity we have been forced to accommodate. It provides both capital and recurrent funding to do so. That is on top of the projects which have already been funded by the coalition government, many of which are under way, including an extra 120 beds at Loddon prison, a new unit at Marngoneet Correctional Centre, a new unit at Port Phillip Prison, continued expansion at Langi Kal Kal and of course continuing work towards the construction of the new 500-bed medium-security prison at Ravenhall. The further spending on prison expansion in this budget is necessary because of recent history in this sector.

Mr Chairman, we came to government with a promise to deliver 500 new beds during this term of government to cover our much-needed sentencing reforms. Of course it is now well known that upon coming to government the neglect we inherited became clear. What also became clear was the level of spending which would be required to fix some of that neglect. The debilitating capacity pressures created by the previous government in the prison system were clarified late last year by the Auditor-General. He found the previous government was advised three times by the Department of Justice to build a new prison, and three times the Labor Party rejected that advice. That is the new prison the coalition is now building.

I know it may come as a shock to some, but a new prison cannot be built overnight; it is going to take several years. If the former government had actually done the responsible thing, followed the department's advice and funded a new prison, as we have, that new prison would be opening sometime around now.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr O'DONOHUE — But of course, Mr Chairman, the previous government did proceed with a 350-bed expansion of the Hopkins Correctional Centre at Ararat. As members would know, that project was due to be completed in 2012, but regrettably — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Let me make it clear that if I need to stand again and I do not get order immediately, I will suspend the hearing immediately. It is very difficult for people to hear the answer if there is constant chatter on this side of the table. As has already been remarked, we do not have a lot of time on this portfolio, so it seems to me to be less than helpful to curtail that particular interval even further. If we can just allow the minister to answer the question, then we can move onto the next one.

Mr O'DONOHUE — As I was saying, if the timetable articulated by the Auditor-General had been fulfilled, the expanded prison at Ararat would have been completed last year. Regrettably that did not occur because of the bungling of the previous government, but I am pleased to advise — —

The CHAIR — I would ask the minister not to be too inflammatory either.

Mr O'DONOHUE — No, Mr Chairman. I am pleased that after renegotiation that project is now back on track and contracted to be completed by the end of next year. We have seen significant increase in activity in Ararat, which is good for the local economy, good for local jobs and good for the broader region.

Ms HENNESSY — It is a pity the windows did not fit really, isn't it Minister?

Mr ANGUS — You probably designed them.

Ms HENNESSY — My question is about deaths in prisons. Minister, you would be aware that the report on government services indicated that in the last report there were no unnatural deaths in prisons in the last Productivity Commission report, yet just two weeks ago we had a suicide at the Melbourne Remand Centre. In February we had a 36-year-old hang himself at Port Phillip Prison, and of course on 9 February, just eight days earlier, a 31-year-old man in the high-security Banksia management unit at Barwon hanged himself in a cell that had no hanging points. Of course this is a unit where lockup is for 23 hours, and there is allegedly new and improved CCTV post the murder of Mr Williams. It is my understanding that this man managed to smuggle a mop head into his cell that he used to hang himself. Are you able to provide some detail as to what steps you have taken to ensure that hanging points are being removed and what information you have around the very serious security breach that occurred in the Banksia management unit?

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you, Mr Chairman, and thank you for the question. I can advise the committee that any death in custody is a tragic occurrence. Corrections Victoria and the private prison operators work closely to ensure that systems are in place to identify prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm and that those referred to the health provider for an at-risk assessment receive appropriate treatment and care. The number of deaths in custody varies from year to year. Of course, as the member would be aware, the coroner investigates each and every death in custody, as does the Office of Correctional Services Review. Prisoners entering prisons have much higher rates of mental illness than the general population. Prisoners are also at higher risk of self-harm and suicide. The level and complexity of mental illness amongst prisoners, coupled with logistical and practical issues related to the prison environment, make delivery of mental health services for prisoners very challenging.

At that point, too, I would point to the work the government is doing with the new Ravenhall prison, which will have a 75-bed dedicated mental health unit — a significant investment by this government in mental health for prisoners. General practitioners and qualified mental health nurses provide mental health care at all prisons, with special support from visiting psychiatrists at both locations. Prisoners also receive acute mental health care through two residential mental health care facilities and one residential psychosocial rehabilitation unit.

In relation to the specifics that the member has raised, I would again make the point that the coroner investigates all deaths in custody, as does the OCSR. I would also make the observation, without referring to any one particular case — because, again, they will be the subject of independent review — that prisoners die in custody for a range of reasons, just as in the general population. Many prisoners who die in custody die from natural causes — from health-related matters, matters that are independent of the fact that they are in custody. But perhaps I will, with your indulgence, Mr Chairman, ask the commissioner if she would perhaps like to add some comments from an operational perspective.

Ms SHUARD — There have been 12 deaths in custody this year. The number of deaths in custody goes up and down. There is not a regular number; it can be as high as 14, I think, as it was in 2007–08, and this year so far there have been 12. Nine of those would appear to have been by natural causes, and the other three would appear to be by unnatural causes. But reiterate what the minister said, that it is a matter for the coroner to determine what was the cause of death in those deaths. We have been progressively removing obvious hanging points. As our new infrastructure comes online our cells are built to building design guidelines that do not have any obvious hanging points, but of course that does not prevent people from committing suicide by other means.

The CHAIR — A supplementary?

Ms HENNESSY — Thank you very much. Hanging points is one issue but, Minister, if I could just take you back to the high-security Banksia management unit at Barwon Prison. This was a cell that did not have any hanging points in it. It is a protection cell in what is meant to be our most secure prison in the most secure unit, where prisoners are locked down for 23 hours a day, with new and improved CCTV observations. How is it that someone manages to smuggle a mop head in? This is different from a coronial investigation in terms of cause of death. But from the security point of view, particularly coming off the back of the Ombudsman's

recommendations post the murder of Carl Williams, how have you assured yourself that this unit is in fact secure, when we have had such a preventable suicide occur?

Mr O'DONOHUE — The Ombudsman's report that the member referred to was tabled in Parliament on 18 April last year. The report made 57 recommendations, 56 of which were directed to the Department of Justice; one, regarding legislative change to the Corrections Act, was referred to the former Minister for Corrections for consideration. The Department of Justice has put in place a high-level governance structure to monitor and review the implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations. Of the 57 recommendations, 52, I am advised, have now been implemented and the remaining 5 are progressing well towards completion.

The Department of Justice has reprioritised \$10.6 million to address the Ombudsman's recommendations, and in relation to the specifics raised by the member I would just repeat what I said in my substantive answer, or to the first question from the member. The coroner will conduct a full and thorough investigation of this matter, as will the office of correctional — OCSR — so I think it would be inappropriate for me to add any further to this matter.

Mr ANGUS — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 31, which highlights increased prison capacity, and I note that you touched on that in your initial presentation and then again in your earlier answer to the Chairman. Can you please provide the committee with more detail about how the budget is accommodating demand pressures and improving the long-term management of the male prison system?

Mr O'DONOHUE — I thank the member for the question. As I mentioned, the budget funds a new 40-bed high security unit at Barwon Prison. That unit — a highly specialised design and construction project — will be built to hold some of the worst criminals in Victoria. This budget also funds 357 beds, in terms of both expanding capacity and maintaining some of the surge capacity we have been forced to accommodate. It provides both capital and recurrent funding to do so.

That is on top of the projects that have already been funded by the coalition government, many of which are already under way: an extra 120 beds at Loddon Prison; a new unit at Marngoneet Correctional Centre, 100 beds; a new unit at Port Phillip Prison, 118 beds; continued expansion at Langi Kal Kal Prison, and; of course, continuing work towards the construction of the new 500-bed men's medium security prison at Ravenhall. I have been fortunate to view that site myself and look forward to that project advancing over time, with a completion date of 2017.

In summary, Mr Chairman, the coalition government came to office promising 500 new beds to cover our much-needed sentencing reforms, but during the first three budgets we have already funded significantly more than that.

Mr ANGUS — Minister, can you provide the committee, as a follow-on to that, with details of how many jobs the new prison will create?

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you for the question. I am happy to provide that additional information. I referenced in my substantive answer the extra 120 beds at Loddon Prison; that will create 120 construction and 40 ongoing operational jobs. The new unit at Marngoneet will create 120 construction and 45 ongoing operational jobs. The new unit at Port Phillip will create 120 construction and 60 ongoing operational jobs. The new expansion at Langi Kal Kal will create 20 construction and 13 ongoing operational jobs. The new prison at Ravenhall will create 450 construction jobs during the peak periods and 400 ongoing jobs. The expansion of the Hopkins Correctional Centre, which I referenced earlier in my presentation, will see up to 500 people onsite when construction is in full swing, with 100 additional ongoing jobs. The new 40-bed high-security unit at Barwon will provide 65 construction and 40 ongoing operational jobs. The 357 beds funded in the current budget will provide 20 construction jobs and 156 ongoing jobs.

Ms HENNESSY — Minister, I wanted to ask a question about the failures in the supervision of Antonio Loguancio, who is known as Mad Dog. Without going into the circumstances of his death, which I understand are the subject of the investigation, what I want to know is this: if Mr Loguancio breached the terms of his supervision order, the breach was not reported for three days; in the interim, he is alleged to have been involved in very violent assaults — Minister, can you just tell us, what went wrong and what steps can you take to improve the system?

Mr O'BRIEN — On a point of order, Chair, I fail to see that this is really a question arising from the budget estimates. I know there is a broad-ranging opportunity to ask ministers questions pursuant to their portfolios, but it really ought to have some budgetary estimates aspect, as opposed to being a question that could be asked in question time.

Ms HENNESSY — On the point of order, Chair, there are a range of budget outputs in the justice papers that go to the sex offenders supervision scheme, that go to the SSODSA regime — this was a monumental failure, and I am entitled to ask what went wrong with the system.

Mr O'BRIEN — You can ask about those regimes.

The CHAIR — Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but I suggest that it would assist the Chair if there was at least a reference to a budget paper attached, hopefully a legitimate one.

Ms HENNESSY — Will do.

Mr O'DONOHUE — The member referenced the Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009, which requires serious sex offenders who present an unacceptable risk to the community to be the subject of post-sentence supervision or detention. The purpose of the act is to enhance the protection of the community and to facilitate the treatment and rehabilitation of such offenders. Offenders on post-sentence supervision orders in the community may be subject to strict monitoring conditions, including residential curfews, electronic monitoring and strict treatment and rehabilitation regimes.

The member has raised a particular matter and has noted in her question that that matter is the subject of investigation, so I think from my perspective, I will await the outcome of that investigation. But I know the commissioner is well familiar with this matter and may wish to add some further detail.

Ms SHUARD — Yes. There are two provisions in the serious sex offenders act for breaching an order — and remember that only the court can determine if there has been a breach or not for an alleged breach. One provision in the act allows for the secretary, when they become aware of conduct by the offender that could have breached the order, to advise the offender and give the offender 14 days notice that they are likely to have or could have breached the order based on that behaviour. There is a process to go through, and that includes many indiscretions — people being home late from their curfew by, for example, 15 minutes to people perhaps not attending an appointment that they need to attend. There is a case management approach, then a breach process for which people get 14 days notice.

There is another process whereby the secretary or the police can dispense with that 14 days notice if they believe that it is necessary to have the matter brought before the court and the offender arrested. So they can dispense with that 14 days notice and take the matter to court, but it is still up to the court to decide whether they issue a warrant based on the alleged charge of the secretary. So, one of those processes will start and, when there is considered to be a need to dispense with the 14 days, then that charge can be brought more quickly before the court. Both of those things can occur, so it is not necessarily that all indiscretions will automatically go before the court and that the 14 days is dispensed with, because many of those matters will be matters that can be dealt with through the due process of the law.

Ms HENNESSY — How many breaches occurred in the past 12 months?

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am happy to take that question on notice and provide that information to the committee.

Ms HENNESSY — It was about 80.

Mr O'BRIEN — I would like to ask you about enforcement and management of correctional orders as you have set out in budget paper 3, chapter 2, pages 191–2, particularly on the issue of enhancing electronic monitoring, which you have indicated in your presentation under 'Delivering election commitments'. Can you provide details of the coalition government's initiatives in relation to electronic monitoring?

Mr O'DONOHUE — The member is correct in that the coalition government came to office having made a promise to introduce GPS monitoring for a range of offenders. As you may be aware, Mr Chairman, up until now the corrections system has used radio-frequency devices as the only form of electronic monitoring. Radio

frequency can detect when someone is not within the required area, but it cannot show where they have gone. Despite the existence of GPS technology, the previous government refused to commit to introducing GPS.

I am very pleased the coalition did commit to introducing GPS at the last election, and it was my great pleasure earlier today to publicly announce that a tender has been awarded for the provision of GPS monitoring technology for Victoria's corrections system. This technology has been comprehensively trialled since the coalition came to government. It was then put out to market to come up with the latest possible technologies for corrections to consider. As a result of that process, we have achieved an even better result than we had hoped and one we are sure the community will embrace.

From July this year, GPS monitoring will be used for residents at Corella Place — that is, sex offenders on supervision orders. It will be quickly rolled out for use elsewhere in the justice system. The tender has provided us with devices which not only provide GPS tracking but which can also detect alcohol consumption. This is particularly helpful for enforcing the coalition's new community correction order. When the coalition listened to community views and promised to abolish suspended sentences and home detention, it also created the new, much broader committee correction order. This order has already proven hugely popular with judges and magistrates because it offers a much wider range of conditions which may be imposed. Among those conditions is a ban on alcohol consumption.

Our new electronic monitoring devices will be able to detect when those on such alcohol bans consume alcohol. This is a radical step forward in enforcement in this state. It is a farsighted agenda and is what Victorians want and expect their justice system to do to keep them safe in their own communities. Mr Chairman, with your indulgence, I have with me two of these devices, which may be of interest to the committee and to the community. On my left is the alcohol device and this one is the GPS tracker, so it is a very exciting innovation and important technology. As I said in my answer in response to the member's question, it is technology that has been through a rigorous due diligence process, and when we went out to tender the market came back with a very innovative solution. We are looking forward to this technology being rolled out in the coming months.

Ms HENNESSY — Minister, I just want to take you up on the GPS bracelets, because I note the government's commitment was for a \$5 million program and it is now a \$12 million program, and when the department did trials in March 2011 those trials came back showing that there were some significant risks around dropout — that is, not working in underground car parks, shopping centres and the like. So I appreciate and understand why you might need a long period for the purposes of testing and getting the right technology, but at this committee last year the minister gave evidence that the tender was to close a week after he gave evidence. That was in May last year, and in November last year the department confirmed that it had not yet awarded a tender. Here we are a year later, so we have been testing and tendering for two and a half years. I was just wondering why it took so long.

Mr O'DONOHUE — The member poses to me questions answered by the previous minister, the member for Kew, Mr McIntosh. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate him on his stewardship of this portfolio and the crime prevention portfolio. As I say, the member poses questions to me in relation to answers provided by the previous minister. While I am the minister and happy to respond to the member's question, which I will do, it is also impossible for me to speak on behalf of Mr McIntosh. I make that point.

But, in response to the question raised by the member, in the 2011–12 state budget the government committed \$12 million over four years to expand electronic monitoring to better track offenders and protect Victorians from dangerous offenders. This adds to the \$5.7 million per annum already available for electronic monitoring. The electronic monitoring tender to which the member referred was released in March 2012 and sought technologies to facilitate a range of monitoring functions, including curfews, geographical exclusion zones and inclusion zones. A robust tender evaluation process was undertaken, which included site inspections and operational testing of the technology.

As I said earlier, I am very excited that the tender for electronic monitoring has now been awarded. The new contract provides for an expanded electronic monitoring regime including GPS and alcohol-abstinence monitoring. The member made reference to testing in 2011. The government has undertaken a very thorough and very robust process through Corrections Victoria in relation to this new technology, and we believe this technology that has been procured and that will be operational from July is world leading technology. The

contractor has a range of experiences in this field around the world, and we are looking forward to this technology being available in the coming months.

Ms HENNESSY — Minister, my question, which you have not answered, was essentially that the tender closed a week after last year's estimates hearing so why has it taken a year to award the tender. My supplementary goes to this issue. You may or may not be aware that in New South Wales last week two sex offenders cut their GPS bracelets off. A convicted rapist in Queensland late last year managed to get their bracelet off. Can you talk us through how the very well-known risks are being mitigated with this specific piece of technology?

Mr O'DONOHUE — In response to the member's supplementary question, this technology, GPS technology, is a significant advance on the current technology, radiofrequency technology. The member asked questions about risk mitigation. Of course there will always be risks to be managed. Any system will have some degree of risk, but the fundamental point in this technology is that it is a significant advance on the radiofrequency technology that is currently in operation.

Ms HENNESSY — It failed in New South Wales last year.

Mr ANGUS — Listen to the minister, and you will learn.

Mr O'DONOHUE — GPS technology provides much greater capacity to monitor offenders and those who are subject to a supervision order. We believe this technology is a significant advance on the current arrangements that exist with the radiofrequency technology. There may be learnings from other jurisdictions, but as I said in my substantive answer to the member's question, we believe the technology that is being applied and will be available from July this year is world leading technology. Corrections Victoria will monitor risk, but as I say, this technology is a significant advance on the current technology in use, the radiofrequency technology.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Minister, we rushed you through your presentation. I wanted to know a bit more about high-security management of prisoners. I note your comments about the significant underinvestment by the Bracks–Brumby–Lenders governments. I ask, referring you to page 32 of budget paper 3, chapter 1, if the minister can provide the committee with more details about how the budget will increase the capacity to manage high-security management prisoners?

Mr O'DONOHUE — I thank the member for his question. The government has a responsibility to make sure high-security prisoners are housed in high-security facilities whilst in custody, to protect themselves, other prisoners, prison officers and the community. As I have already advised the committee earlier in my presentation, this budget allocates \$52.9 million to build a new 40-bed high-security unit at Barwon Prison. That money also provides funds to operate that unit with high-quality staff. The construction of this new high-security facility will take place outside of the existing wall at Barwon to maintain the integrity of the prison, and then a new wall will be built around the new unit. This will allow for the most secure and safe construction of the facility and in the fastest possible time, as it will not require builders to go through the daily checks each time they work on the construction site. It also allows for an upgraded security facility within the Banksia management unit and also at Barwon.

Sadly, this attention to and funding for high-security prison facilities has not always been the case. I pay tribute to the hard work undertaken by prison officers who work in all our prisons but particularly those in the high-security and management unit, who have to deal with some of the most difficult and dangerous people in Victoria. I am sure we will all be aware of events which regrettably took place inside a high-security unit of Barwon Prison while the previous government was in office. This government is very aware of the finding of the Ombudsman's report into that incident. We are doing what has to be done and allocating the appropriate funds to ensure that prison officers have the necessary tools to do the job. We are making sure not only that the community is safe from our highest risk prisoners but that they are safe from each other. It is indeed a difficult and unique environment. We are treating it as such, and not before time.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I have the privilege of sitting very close to the minister in the Legislative Council, and he knows a subject that is dear to my heart is employment. How many jobs will be created as a result of this?

Mr O'DONOHUE — The new 40-bed high-security unit at Barwon prison will create 65 construction and 40 ongoing operational jobs. The 357 beds funded in the current budget will generate 20 construction and 156 ongoing operational jobs.

Ms HENNESSY — Just to take up the issue of protection units and the management of high-security prisoners, in light of the revelation of the 1000 files that have been leaked from Victoria Police in relation to various organised crime activities, have you taken any steps to assure yourself that that information has not in any way made its way into the Victorian corrections system?

Mr ANGUS — On a point of order, Chair, I question the relevance of this question to the portfolio we are looking at the moment, which is corrections, as opposed to perhaps to policing or some other portfolio.

Ms HENNESSY — On the point of order, Chair, the minister himself just gave evidence in his previous answer that part of his priority was ensuring that prisoners were safe from each other. It is well known that one of the great challenges in protection units goes to different bikie factions having to be separated. What intelligence have you sought or what assurance have you sought?

The CHAIR — I do not uphold the point of order, and I invite the minister to respond.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you, Chair, for that question, and perhaps in response to the question, I would also just highlight a point I made to Mr Ondarchie that Victoria — the Victorian community, the Victorian government and Corrections Victoria — is lucky to have a very dedicated and highly professional workforce which does a great job every day managing our prison system. In my visits to various prisons in the three weeks that I have been the Minister for Corrections I have been struck by the professionalism and diligence of the Corrections Victoria staff, and I pay credit to them for the difficult job they have, particularly in relation to high-security prisoners.

The member asked a question about intelligence strategies. Corrections Victoria has overhauled its intelligence strategy to enhance its approach to intelligence systems, decision making and governance. The first phase of this work has included the creation of a new security and intelligence division; the procurement of a new intelligence database and IT platform to provide sophisticated statistical analysis; the recruitment of an assistant commissioner, security and intelligence, who reports directly to the commissioner; the employment of intelligence analysts working in prisons and in head office; the strengthened management of intelligence relating to high-security prisoners — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! The minister.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you, Mr Chairman. It has included the drafting of an intelligence operations manual to guide the collection, sharing and analysis of intelligence and to inform operational practices and decision making; enhancing training for relevant staff to further embed the intelligence culture; and working closely with Victoria Police and other agencies. Corrections Victoria will continue to drive improvements in its intelligence strategy and will re-prioritise funding to support this focus. I might ask the commissioner to add some comments, as these matters are largely operational.

The CHAIR — I ask for some brief comments, if I may, because we are out of time.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! We will have a brief response from the commissioner, and then we will move to the next portfolio.

Ms SHUARD — For security reasons, I could not speak about the individual case, but what I can say is that we have a very close working relationship with Victoria Police, so information that might affect the operation of the prison system and the safety of the prisoners in it is shared between Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria. Information that might also be in the public arena that would affect our prisoners is also taken into account. We conduct ongoing risk assessments around people in the prison system to ensure that they are placed in right place at the right time so that we can keep them safe.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you, Minister. That concludes the hearing for the corrections portfolio. I thank Ms Strong and Ms Shuard for their attendance.

Witnesses withdrew.