



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

RADIO NETWORK

Old Parliament House, Adelaide

Wednesday 31 May 2000 at 11.40 a.m.

(OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT)

PARLIAMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

MEMBERS:

Mr I.P. Lewis MP (Presiding Member)
Mr G. Scalzi MP
Ms L. Stevens MP
Ms M.G. Thompson MP
Mr M.R. Williams MP

WITNESSES:

PETER FOWLER, Executive Director, and KEN PATTERSON, Project Director, both of Department for Administrative and Information Services, GPO Box 2962, Adelaide, 5001, both called and examined:

1 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Welcome, and thank you for appearing before the Public Works Committee today. Before proceedings begin I would like to bring the following matters to your attention. Sections 28 and 31 of the Parliamentary Committees Act outline the privileges, immunities and powers of the committee. Witnesses should note that this hearing is a lawful function of Parliament and, as such, warrants the same respect which Parliament itself demands. These proceedings are open to the public except when the committee is deliberating on evidence that it has received or if witnesses request that part of their evidence be submitted in private for reasons of justifiable confidentiality. Evidence given in this hearing is not to be disclosed to any other person without the authority of the committee. You are reminded that the publication or broadcasting of evidence given to the committee is prohibited until the committee's report is tabled in Parliament and becomes a public document.

All evidence presented at this hearing will be recorded by *Hansard* reporting staff and a copy of the transcript will be forwarded to witnesses to check for accuracy. We ask you to introduce yourselves for the record so that people reading what goes on the public record in 500 years from now will know what your roles and responsibilities are.

MR FOWLER: I work with the Department of Administrative and Information Services and I am the Executive Director responsible for the SAGRN.

MR PATTERSON: I am also from the Department for Administrative and Information Services. I am the Project Director for the South Australian Government Radio Network.

2 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: We have asked you to come before us this morning to help us understand more clearly what you said to us about progress in the construction and establishment of the public work involved in the Government Radio Network

contained in your quarterly report of March, which came to us earlier this month with a covering note dated 11 May. In the main our anxieties arise from our inability to understand from that report where we are up to. Could you therefore tell the committee how many different government services in what broadly defined regions of the state are using hand held equipment, mobile equipment in motor cars and any other kind of messaging or paging device envisaged in the network and whether or not the installation of those items of equipment in keeping with the original schedule you submitted to us at the time we heard the evidence?

MR FOWLER: I will refer to the construction of the network and where the agencies are in terms of moving on to the network.

MR PATTERSON: The construction of the South Australian Government Radio Network is to take place over approximately 2.5 years, of which we are effectively one year down the track since the commencement of the contract on 24 May 1999. In that time Telstra has been designing the network and has commenced building the network. The coverage area was split into five regions covering the coverage area and the first region of that was split into two.

3 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: What is region 1?

MR PATTERSON: That is the area south of Port Wakefield, east to Murray Bridge, the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.

4 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: That is part 1: what about part 2?

MR PATTERSON: Part A is the metropolitan area of Adelaide and part B is the remaining area.

5 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Does that extend from Gawler to Noarlunga?

MR PATTERSON: That has been constructed and within the contract with Telstra we asked it to give priority to that area for the construction of the networks operation control centre that you visited this morning and for the first five sites within that area to be up and running by 31 December 1999—the millennium change.

6 MS THOMPSON: What do you mean by 'Noarlunga'? Is that as far as Sellicks?

MR PATTERSON: It depends on the coverage of the sites. A site at Trott Park will provide coverage into that area. We are looking at coverage of the basic metropolitan area. It does not encompass every part of Adelaide.

7 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: This is 1A. You are saying that for 1A the towers

are up, they are all energised and transmitting, and have hand-held vehicle installed equipment and paging services?

MR PATTERSON: Yes. The mobile data network, the third network, is also being constructed at the same time.

8 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: When will that be completed?

MR PATTERSON: It is not split between 1A and 1B but is in total and comprises three sites within the metropolitan area.

9 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: That is for the police?

MR PATTERSON: That is police and ambulance.

10 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: That is the data network?

MR PATTERSON: Yes.

11 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: The advice and so on is separate but an integrated function?

MR PATTERSON: Yes, there are three services: a voice service, a paging service and a mobile data service and they are all applications on the infrastructure provided by the towers, the network operation centre and linkage through the microwave linkage. A basic infrastructure is being built and on it three services are provided: voice, paging, and mobile data.

12 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: 1A is finished. How far away is 1B?

MR PATTERSON: By the end of June this year.

13 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: And that will embrace the three services in an area roughly bounded by Port Wakefield and Morgan?

MR PATTERSON: I think Morgan is just outside the coverage area.

14 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: It is across the Barossa Valley to Murray Bridge and Murray Lakes to near Milang?

MR PATTERSON: Yes.

15 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: What about the Fleurieu Peninsula and the West Coast? Kangaroo Island is part of that?

MR PATTERSON: Yes.

16 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: And therefore one assumes Backstairs Passage and the lower part of Gulf St Vincent is also now covered?

MR PATTERSON: It will be by the end of June.

17 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: And is that in compliance with the schedule you gave us?

MR PATTERSON: Yes it is.

MR FOWLER: The only clarification I make is that Telstra is advising us that it is on time, but it has put a caveat on it in terms of the weather. There has been some bad weather that could affect a couple of sites. We are conscious of dragging bulldozers up wet hillsides in order to make a difference of a day or two in terms of construction.

18 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: So they will have to wait until the ground is firmer?

MR FOWLER: Of all the sites there are two or three with which they might have weather difficulties. At the moment Telstra is saying it will meet its contractual obligations, which is to have business region 1 completed by the end of June. It did complete the metropolitan area on time and handed it over to us on time. We are fairly confident that it will achieve those dates. Everything is suggesting that that will be the case.

19 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Is the electromagnetic radiation from these towers any different from the electromagnetic radiation from mobile phone towers? If so is it only in terms of frequency and not in terms of the intensity?

MR FOWLER: Mobile phone services are quite different from that. The services that the SAGRN offers—

20 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: I am talking of the physics—the electro magnetic radiation?

MR FOWLER: It impinges on that in terms of the technology used in mobile phones. That is what is called small cell technology. The type of cells we use are large cells. So, mobile phone towers are typically located closer to population centres. We typically try to

find high spots for our distribution points. In terms of the actual radiation, it is electromagnetic radiation, as you say; it is the same. The type of modulation used by the mobile phone service as compared to the GRN is a different type of service entirely; it is a different type of modulation format so you cannot directly compare them.

21 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: What does that mean?

MR FOWLER: How the signal on the frequency is interposed onto the carrier is different on the GRN from the mobile phone service.

22 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: But it is still electromagnetic radiation travelling through the atmosphere from one place to another and being rebroadcast?

MR FOWLER: It is that.

23 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: We are not having any trouble in getting public acceptance of the need for our GRN towers, are we?

MR FOWLER: Ken is probably better able to answer this in detail about particular sites. There is a public consultation process when we or Telstra acquire a site. Some members of the community have expressed concern about this, particularly in my local area around Hallett Cove, because there is a site at Trott Park. Members of the community were concerned about that.

24 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: And when they realised it was Government Radio Network?

MR FOWLER: When they realised it was for the provision of services into their community, people were much more relaxed about that. People are able to draw a distinction in their mind between a mobile phone service and a service that might in future save their life.

25 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: So, it has more to do with their feelings about it than the consequences for their health?

MR FOWLER: Yes.

26 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Let me come back to the installation and commissioning. What is the next deadline for which zone; and can you broadly define the perimeters?

MR PATTERSON: Each of the regions is built on a six month time frame. Region 1 is to be completed by about June 30. The next region is the South-East, which will

be completed at the end of the year. That is region 2.

27 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: The South-East extends from where?

MR PATTERSON: It extends all the way from the lakes close to Adelaide down through Mount Gambier and into certain sites in Victoria.

28 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Is it from the mallee to the southern extremities of the state?

MR PATTERSON: From the south of the mallee, north of the Ngarkat conservation park, is the South-East region, region 2. The next region is Mid North and Yorke Peninsula and into the Flinders Ranges, and also includes remote townships such as Marla, Mintabie and Oodnadatta. That will be in the next six month period, which would take us to July 2001.

29 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: That is region 3?

MR PATTERSON: It is region 4, but is the third in line. Region 3, which comes fourth, is the Murray-Mallee and the Riverland.

30 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: When will that be completed?

MR PATTERSON: It is to be completed in about December 2001. Then, into July 2002, the fifth and final region is the Eyre Peninsula out to the West Coast and over to the Western Australia border.

31 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Is there any variation in the coverage across coastal waters between what was originally planned and thought to be capable and what now appears to be provided by the network?

MR PATTERSON: Not in terms of the design; there is nothing we have said we want any less of or anything like that. If anything, the coverage that the network can provide may be greater than we have specified in some areas, because where Telstra selects the sites the coverage may propagate out further than the design specifications. So, there is nothing less, but the potential of more.

32 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: So, on a clear day, Thistle, Wedge and South Neptunes will be covered through one or other of them?

MR PATTERSON: They may be, but until they are built you cannot tell.

33 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: How many people at present (of course, I am talking about those with proper authority) have been provided with the hardware that hangs off the transmission towers and the installation of the software that goes with the computers and so on? How many people in the government services are presently able to use the system in a way in which they will be able to continue using it for the foreseeable future?

MR PATTERSON: I will break that by agency. I will preface that by saying that, as the metropolitan area was commissioned in January this year, we have tried to encourage each of the agencies, rather than migrate their whole agency, to undertake pilot use of the network in either particular parts or particular geographical areas. The South Australian Police Force has determined that it will use the South Australian Government Radio Network for its 2000 Olympic obligations to SOCOG. At the moment approximately 80 to 85 portable hand-held radios will be used by the South Australian Police Force for their operations primarily for the soccer, at Hindmarsh stadium, the paddocks, a number of city hotels and so on. They have used them and have been assessed by SOCOG to ensure that those communication facilities meet the security arrangements.

34 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: They have been accepted by SOCOG, in spite of the reservations New South Wales government had about their Motorola CRN Smart Chat?

MR PATTERSON: Yes, they have. The South Australian Police Force has about 80 for its Olympic requirements but, has put in orders for equipment as we roll it out. A number of agencies are waiting for the roll-out of the full region 1, because that will cover most of the their operations before migrating to the SAGRN. The police are included in that. The state emergency services have their northern region in pilot mode utilising the is SAGRN services.

35 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: What is the northern region?

MR PATTERSON: The Enfield command; the metropolitan area of the SES. It is utilising the SAGRN with about 30 radios in that pilot group. That has been proven to be most successful for the SES and they have been using that not just for pilot testing of their own procedures but also even last week using it as part of the search for the missing mother and daughter in the gorges in the area around Northfield. The CFS, primarily the Burnside brigade, are also utilising the SAGRN in pilot mode. Again, they have been using it not just for testing their procedures and training but also in real life situations. As recently as last week there was an accident involving a spillage of LPG on the freeway, and they preferred to use the SAGRN rather than their existing radio network because the existing network did not provide coverage in that area, whereas the GRN did.

36 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: How many hand-sets are they using?

MR PATTERSON: That is about 10. So, they are the agencies that are currently on the network. A number of other agencies are in the planning and implementation phase. The Passenger Transport Board for some of the new bus operators, Forestry SA, the environment and heritage department have all gone through the planning processes and setting up what they require, awaiting the network operating effectively in a month or so, the equipment being ordered in, arriving and in transition.

37 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Who is ordering the equipment for that?

MR PATTERSON: The SAGRN unit; we do, in fact.

38 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: And what manufacturer or manufacturers are able to tender?

MR PATTERSON: For the voice equipment it is Motorola products; for the paging equipment, a range of products from different manufacturers is available and agencies choose the terminal equipment, hand-held, pager or radios that best suits their needs. So, whatever equipment is applicable to suit their needs, whether it is digital and encrypted for police use or analogue for other agencies' use and different types of pagers, they choose them from the range. You may have seen the range of pagers that were at the operation centre this morning.

MR FOWLER: We have presented an overall forecast of loadings that to the steering committee and there is a plan, which we are required to do. You recall we were forecasting of the order of 12 000 voice terminals, 8 300 paging terminals and 400 mobile data terminals. Our current forecast to that committee is that by the end of November this year we expect to have 3 450 voice terminals, which is 29 per cent on the network by the end of November and 5 316 paging terminals on the network by the end of November. The Department of Justice is currently going through an ROI process for the selection of the mobile data terminals and, when it has completed that process, we will then be able to produce a forecast for the number of terminals it will be putting on the network.

39 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: What does the Department of Justice cover?

MR FOWLER: It covers police, ambulance, fire service, state emergency services and corrections. It is under the justice portfolio. In terms of meeting the overall numbers that we were forecasting when we were last before the committee, it is very likely that those numbers, particularly in the paging area, will be significantly larger by probably a quantum of two.

40 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Does that mean it will be double the size or increased by an amount twice the size of the proposed amount?

MR FOWLER: It will be twice the number of the proposed amount. It has no cost impact in terms of additional cost, because of our fixed price contract with Telstra but, rather, the per unit cost of providing the service will go down significantly. In the voice area, too, we are finding a significant amount of interest from other organisations such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service and so forth to join the network. So, we expect the actual numbers of terminals that will use the network will be larger than our original forecast, which means the per unit cost of the provision of the service is less. The Northern Territory government has moved in a similar way to the South Australian situation, and it is finding that numbers of commonwealth agencies are interested in joining its network. It is quite likely that we will see a similar effect.

41 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Are they using the same software and systems that hang off it as does the South Australian Government Radio Network?

MR FOWLER: The voice service in the Northern Territory is the same technology that we are using, which is ASTRO SmartZone, and the New South Wales government also uses the same. So, we now have three jurisdictions using similar technology. Also, major commonwealth agencies, such as the Department of Customs, are using the same technology that we are using. I think the implication for this is the railway line story, where no-one can talk to anyone. There is a move to—

42 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Standardise?

MR FOWLER: I would not call it standardisation. But by a set of circumstances I think there will be this opportunity for better inter-operation than perhaps we had anticipated in the past.

43 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: So, at present, the number of handsets and so on that have been put out there is fairly minimal.

MR FOWLER: Yes, and that is in line with our testing.

44 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Seeing that it all works and that there are no bugs in the computer.

MR PATTERSON: It is more than even testing it to get it to work: we are confident that it works. It is also testing the operating procedures of the agencies to be able to use the radios in the best way to ensure that they work in the best way—that training is undertaken—and also to ensure that the whole dispatch and receipt of calls and all those sorts of procedures—back of house, if you like—are in place within those agencies.

45 MS STEVENS: Mr Fowler, can you run through the costings of the project that you mentioned when we were on site in terms of the cost of the network itself and the rest of the costs that are included in the \$247 million total?

MR FOWLER: The cost of the network with Telstra—that is, the three networks and the integration facilities that you saw today—is \$109.4 million. That is a fixed cost—except for variations of exchange rates and so forth; but it is fundamentally a fixed cost. The cost contracted—again, which is fixed—over the seven year period for the operation of the network, is \$50.9 million, which means that the cost of the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the network over the seven years is a fixed price with Telstra of \$160.3 million. There is an estimated amount for terminal equipment of \$38.5 million. Other terminal equipment costs which relate to producing a whole of life situation for the terminals—that is, things dealing with the operation and maintenance of it; installation and so forth—are estimated to be \$14.1 million over the seven year period. Site costs, which are about the rental on sites for the towers and so forth, are estimated to be \$5.6 million. Training costs for the considerable number—thousands—of users are estimated at \$1.9 million. There are other costs that include exchange rate, hedging, insurances and so forth that are estimated at \$4.8 million, and there is a contingency amount of \$22.5 million.

46 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: That totals \$240 million plus.

MR FOWLER: Yes, \$247 million. At the moment, we are within our budget. We have put funds back into the contingency fund but, because of the nature of contingencies, you really do not say that you can realise that benefit until the whole project has been achieved. For instance, part of one of the services we had to provide was a billing service. We have been able to achieve savings there and those savings have been passed back into the contingency act, which is administered by the Treasurer, not us. So, we can put in but we cannot take out. We have also done better—or SACORP did better for us with our insurance arrangements; so, we were pleased about that. We had some exchange rate positive contribution earlier, but because of the way in which the dollar is performing at the moment, it is a good question as to whether that will be an ongoing occurrence. But I can say to the committee that we are certainly operating well within the budget established for us, and we are not expecting any changes in the costing. As I said, the major part of it is fixed.

47 MS THOMPSON: The recommendations that the committee made at the time of the presentation of its report last year were that Motorola be required to provide appropriate software and/or data and/or technical specifications which opens up the interface between the GRN and the peripheral devices such as consoles, subscriber equipment and the like to thus facilitate open market competition; and that, for the GRN system, Telstra be required to endorse other suppliers which can demonstrate suitable experience or compliance with appropriate standards that will allow competition. Can you tell us what progress has been made in relation to those issues?

MR FOWLER: Certainly. I will deal with the second item first. That is embodied in the contractual arrangements with Telstra in terms of its contractual obligations to the state, both in terms of the supplies of equipment and the supplies of services to the network. So, Telstra is contractually obligated to that.

48 MR WILLIAMS: Contractually obligated to do what?

MR FOWLER: It is obligated to endorse other suppliers if they have compatible equipment or services.

49 MR WILLIAMS: As per the recommendation?

MR FOWLER: Yes.

50 MS STEVENS: Has it been doing that?

MR FOWLER: Yes.

51 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: That is with respect to the paging services, is it?

MR FOWLER: It is across the whole gamut of it. It covers both supply of equipment and supply of services. So, that requirement is embodied in the contract with Telstra.

52 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: There is absolutely no impediment to the involvement of someone if they have the professional skills within their organisation?

MR FOWLER: That is right.

53 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: And if they can manufacture equipment that is reasonably robust, are you saying that they can get in and quote to supply?

MR FOWLER: Certainly. Telstra is required to approve equipment that will work on the network. So, that is embodied in the contract. We have written assurances from Motorola that, in terms of things such as consoles and so forth, it will cooperate with other suppliers. We have no evidence to suggest that it will not do that. We have followed this up on a number of occasions and we have received repeated assurances if that regard.

54 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: Do the other suppliers know when the opportunity arises to quote?

MR FOWLER: Certainly, in the area of consoles (and console work is taking place at the moment), we have made it our business to inform other suppliers that this is the case. So, we have not taken an inactive role in this respect. In regard to other suppliers—and, in particular, the other major supplier in that area—we have encouraged them to speak with Motorola to make sure that they follow up on those opportunities. Whether or not they see it as a market opportunity is something that they have to determine, but we have certainly informed them.

In terms of the terminal equipment, Motorola has licensed another organisation. There is no supplier in Australia of terminal equipment of the sophistication that we are talking about: it is just not a business that Australian industry is in. So, there is an overseas supplier, the Transcript organisation from the USA. Motorola has licensed that technology to Transcript—and Transcript manufactures and distributes equipment of the type that would work on the SAGRN in the USA. A local firm here in Adelaide has approached that firm with a view to seeing whether it was a commercially attractive proposition for it to import that equipment and sell it here in Australia, and we have also contacted the Transcript organisation and spoken with representatives. The feedback that I have received from the local person is that the prices at which he was able to purchase his equipment from the USA and bring it into Australia and the support infrastructure required to maintain it, and so on, were such that he did not see that as an economic proposition.

55 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: He did not do that.

MR FOWLER: He chose not to do that. The price that he would have to offer the state was considerably more than what the state is paying now. Nevertheless, we are very conscious of the need for competition in this marketplace, and we could perhaps explore that a bit further. We have continued to have dialogue with the Transcript organisation. In fact, one of my officers will be in the USA probably in the next few months and, depending on our email correspondence, it might be that we will seek to go and talk again with Transcript. But we have been actively trying to encourage competition in this marketplace.

This is a fairly broad issue. If the committee would like to explore this issue, there are some matters that are taking place between the various state governments and the commonwealth which I am quite happy to share with the committee, but they are quite sensitive: they involve other governments. I would be quite happy to talk about how this is being managed, but I would not like that information to be publicly available.

56 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: We will leave that matter and come back to it later. Suffice to say that you are doing everything that is humanly possible within the resources at your disposal to ensure that there is competition between prospective suppliers for the bits and pieces that hang off the architecture of the system?

MR FOWLER: Most definitely.

57 MS THOMPSON: I remind you that the provisions of the act require the minister to report to the parliament on those recommendations within three months. So, we are a little bit in arrears with respect to that report—which seems quite favourable, from what you have said to us. Another issue about competition was the ability of local suppliers to compete in various areas, particularly the construction of the towers. Mr Fowler, I think you recall that that matter was raised when we were here last—there was some concern from local contractors that they would not get a chance. You told us at the time that part of the contract with Telstra is for promotion of local industry and, indeed, I note that in this year's budget papers this project is described as a communications and industry development project. Can you tell us what has happened there?

MR FOWLER: Certainly. The industry development sites of the project are managed by the Department of Industry and Trade and the Information Economy Policy Office. The reports that we have received from both those places and the formal reports that Telstra has given us have shown us that they have met all their contractual obligations in terms of that matter. There are a lot of figures in those reports. I would be quite happy to provide those figures on notice, if the committee wishes.

58 MS THOMPSON: Yes, please.

MR FOWLER: But I can say that Telstra has met those obligations, both in terms of its general industry development commitments and, in particular, its commitments to use local industry. Mr Patterson can probably speak in terms of what he has physically observed as to who has been involved. In terms of the installation of terminal equipment, etc., we have run an expression of interest process that has resulted in a number of firms being approved by Telstra as installation providers for the equipment. We are now in the process of formalising those arrangements between the state and those providers, and that will provide a significant amount of work to the local radio installation community here in South Australia.

MR PATTERSON: Telstra has used a range of local operators in construction—constructing firms ranging from surveyors to riggers (the people who go up and attach equipment to the tops of towers). It uses different types of towers, depending on the terrain, the location and so on, and also different organisations. It has used different types of equipment—huts and shelters—from local firms, where the equipment goes in, and electrical contractors. Basically, with respect to the construction, Telstra has been using various local firms in terms of the range of organisations and people with those particular skills. I think that, as the network is rolled out into country regions, they will be used more and more within those country regions for the construction of that network. As Mr Fowler said, on the terminal equipment side, a range of organisations has come forward and they have been approved to undertake the installation work of the equipment into the vehicles and all that sort of thing. I

believe that the use of local contractors and local firms by Telstra has been pretty good.

59 MS THOMPSON: Are you able to provide the committee with a list of the contractors that have been used?

MR PATTERSON: One report mentioned by Mr Fowler demonstrates the value of the work that has been provided to South Australian industry. We can provide the committee with the figures and names of the firms that have been used by Telstra on a subcontract basis to provide those services.

60 MS THOMPSON: That would be useful because one of the committee's concerns was that interstate firms were being used in preference to local firms and it would be nice to be able to put that issue to rest. We saw this morning some examples of what is happening with training. Again, that was quite a critical issue which was raised at the initial hearing; and we know that that was some of what went wrong, supposedly, in New South Wales. Do you wish to get some of that information on the record?

MR PATTERSON: As mentioned this morning, training is quite critical to the success of the full implementation of the South Australian Government Radio Network. To that end we have looked at the requirements of each agency to ensure that their people are trained. Some agencies have the support of not only employees but also volunteers and the training of those volunteers is important. We train not only state employees but people employed by other organisations who work for our state's emergency services and the CFS. Again, it is important to train those people in their locations—where they live and work—outside normal business hours.

Weekend and after hours training has been incorporated into the training design program. The state's Training Advisory Group and Telstra's training people, in conjunction with the agencies, are ensuring that appropriate training is provided, not just for today but for the duration of the contract, which is the next seven years. Turn over of people, whether they be volunteers or employees, will happen. One lesson we have learnt, not only from the New South Wales experience but from other areas, is the importance of training. Most perceived problems basically relate to a lack of training.

We must ensure that people are trained before they utilise the SAGRN. That policy has been put in place and disseminated. Telstra, as the coordinator of the training, would consult with an agency to determine the best method of providing that training, whether it be the train the trainer approach, the classroom approach or by video. A whole raft of various modules is available to provide that training over the seven years. To date that training has been undertaken by police, state emergency services, CFS, forestry and the Department of Environment and Heritage. A number of people within those organisations are now authorised and accredited as an SAGRN instructors.

61 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: What is it costing per person?

MR PATTERSON: The figure, obviously, will change over time. At the moment we can identify that probably between 40 000 to 45 000 people may use the SAGRN over the seven years. In terms of the budget allocation over that seven-year period we are looking at approximately \$1.9 million. More people may need to be trained as new volunteers are attracted and others leave.

62 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: I was wondering whether the approach you are taking could be creatively examined from the point of view of writing manuals and then offering people the opportunity to pass a test. If they wish to sit a test they must pay \$10 to meet the cost of providing the examiner and, upon passing the test, they are paid \$30, in which case you do not have any worries: you sell them the manual and let them go for it. They can earn themselves \$20 by becoming accredited and the cost to the budget bottom line is less rather than setting up the bureaucracy of trainers and educators to organise classes and groups, and one-on-one where ever and whatever is appropriate, instance by instance.

I know that there may be variations. I am trying to be helpful in making a suggestion as to how you can get greater incentive into the system for the person who is seeking to be, as it were, qualified and competent to use the equipment and do it in a way that minimises the total cost to taxpayers, so that everyone feels that they are getting a jolly good deal out of it. You are paid \$20 for putting in some spare time, studying and getting a competency certificate to operate GRN handsets for whatever organisations. Otherwise, I fear, we will end up with the kind of mess we had in TAFE 15 or 20 years ago, where we had a lot of people trained to teach courses and subject matter for which, whilst the best intentions in estimating market demand were made, there was no market when the day came.

MR FOWLER: In terms of some of the products, giving people a self-guided manual and their working through it is one approach we are adopting. In terms of other types of equipment, and particularly for members who are working in the emergency services area, this training will be embodied in their general induction training; so that when a person attends their training at Fort Largs as a police officer, communications is part of the curriculum today and the GRN part of it will be incorporated into the curriculum tomorrow. The same will apply to officers within the ambulance service and to CFS fire fighters. We are trying to institutionalise the training into the general training regime for the operatives.

63 THE PRESIDING MEMBER: I hear what you tell me. I am suggesting deinstitutionalising it with some carrots for the professionals using it, be they police officers or volunteers. I can see a way in which volunteer organisations, for instance, can then raise money. But looking back at the police force, ambulance, or whatever else, I can see a way by which you can provide a real incentive for quick up-take of the skills in that the first 1 000

people qualified will receive \$27 and the next 1 000 will receive \$22. You want to get on to it. If you are in the third tranche you will be down again and you will not get a job thereafter if you do not have the skills.

That is the way of the world. Reality dictates that if you want to drive an ambulance you must have a driver's licence and it is your pigeon to go and get it. If you want to drive a communications system, go and get yourself a competency certificate. It is not up to mother government to meet the open-ended costs that might otherwise blow out. I am not telling you what to do: it is just an idea.

64 MS THOMPSON: With regard to the matter of sites, one of the pluses about the scheme is that we can hopefully reduce the number of sites required from about 1 200 to approximately 160. However, one of the concerns at that time was that there was no identification of who would bear the cost of remediation of the 1 000 sites no longer required, and there was a real danger of our having derelict sites on the tops of beautiful hills. Can you tell us what is happening with that?

MR FOWLER: We are required by cabinet direction to produce a plan in relation to the decommissioning of the sites. That is necessary until we identify what sites can be used and what sites we can relinquish. A policy has been approved by the steering committee that deals with decommissioning. The bulk of the sites are probably not on hilltops, but there certainly would be some of those. One of changes will be that some of the very large towers that you see out the backs of fire stations and ambulance stations, and so forth, will no longer be required. What we have there is high power transmitting services coming out of the backs of those buildings. In future what will be required is something that gives access to the network.

So a lot of the decommissioning will be around whether or not a particular tower is required at the back of a fire station in the future. Some of the high point sites will be no longer required. In terms of management of the cost, that will be an issue between the individual agencies and Treasury in terms of their baseline adjustment in relation to the GRN. If you think also that those sites and towers at present should incur maintenance costs for facilities fees such as electricity, and phone line connections and so on, those things need to be balanced off between that and the cost of actually decommissioning the site.

What has been put as a requirement on these is just to ensure that there is a plan to do that so that we do not see the abandonment of sites which would clearly not be in the best interests of anybody in the longer term. At present we are not at the stage where we can say, 'This is the plan.' We would have a much better idea about this at the end of the next 12 month period, we would be starting to push to agencies to ask, 'Which sites do you no longer require, because there could be other sharees on these sites as well?' There would be lease arrangements with other organisations, and so on, that may have to be considered. Some

of the sites may be owned by parties other than the government. So this whole area of sites is a quite complex issue, and it will be a focus of my group in about 12 months to put together that plan.

IN CAMERA SECTION EXCLUDED FROM TRANSCRIPT

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW