

4.3.4 ATTORNEY GENERAL, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR FAIR TRADING

OVERVIEW

Agency	Forecast 1997-98	Estimate 1998-99	Variation	
	\$m	\$m		%
Attorney General's Department				
Total Expenses	432.6	429.2	(-)	0.8
Asset Acquisitions	27.3	26.4	(-)	3.3
Judicial Commission				
Total Expenses	3.1	2.7	(-)	14.9
Asset Acquisitions	0.1	0.2		181.7
Legal Aid Commission				
Total Expenses	87.7	84.8	(-)	3.3
Asset Acquisitions	1.1	1.5		30.0
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions				
Total Expenses	49.9	52.9		5.9
Asset Acquisitions	0.5	0.9		78.6
Department of Industrial Relations				
Total Expenses	19.5	20.6		5.7
Asset Acquisitions	1.0	0.5	(-)	44.3
Building and Construction Industry Long Service Leave Payments Corporation				
Total Expenses	45.5	39.3	(-)	13.6
Asset Acquisitions	0.6	0.1	(-)	80.0
Motor Accidents Authority				
Total Expenses	16.3	19.6		20.2
Asset Acquisitions	0.6	0.9		29.0
Public Trust Office – Administration Account				
Total Expenses	22.2	23.2		4.5
Asset Acquisitions	2.2	3.1		36.4
Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages				
Total Expenses	9.0	10.2		13.3
Asset Acquisitions	1.0	3.0		200.0
WorkCover NSW				
Total Expenses	157.6	167.1		6.0
Asset Acquisitions	5.3	7.6		43.4
Department of Fair Trading				
Total Expenses	110.0	111.7		1.5
Asset Acquisitions	9.8	5.4	(-)	44.8
Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Council				
Total Expenses	2.2	2.3		4.5
Asset Acquisitions	0.1	0.1		...
Rental Bond Board				
Total Expenses	17.7	48.6		175.0
Asset Acquisitions	1.0
Total, Attorney General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Fair Trading				
Total Expenses	974.2	1,012.1		4.0
Asset Acquisitions	50.0	49.0	(-)	2.0

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

The purpose of the Department is to provide a just and equitable legal system for the people of New South Wales.

The Attorney General's Department provides the legal and administrative framework to facilitate the conduct of the Attorney General's role as the first Law Officer of the Crown, as well as providing the services to support the Attorney's legislative and advisory responsibilities to Parliament and Cabinet. The Department is also responsible for courts administration and the operation of the Community Justice Centre Scheme.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The Attorney General's Department has continued to concentrate on providing quality services to its clients, while at the same time focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of these services.

Over the past year the Attorney General's Department has continued to concentrate on improving the community's access to justice by successfully reducing court delays. This has been achieved by improving case management, the appointment of acting judicial officers and alternate dispute resolution programs.

Acting Judges were appointed to the Supreme and District Courts, resulting in reduced backlogs in the Common Law Division and pre-1996 civil cases respectively. Funding was allocated to transfer over 2,600 personal injury matters from the Supreme Court to the District Court and to provide additional District Court sitting days to absorb these matters.

Legislation has been enacted to facilitate greater community access to justice, including -

- the Evidence (Children) Act 1997 allows children to give evidence by electronically recorded interview;
- the Young Offenders Act 1997 establishes a scheme of alternatives to formal court proceedings for children and in particular introduces youth justice conferencing;
- the District Court Amendment Act 1997 significantly increased the jurisdiction of the District Court. Matters can be dealt with more expeditiously in the District Court and costs to litigants are lower than those in the Supreme Court; and
- the Fine Enforcement Act 1996 resulted in the establishment of the State Debt Recovery Office and resumption of the fine enforcement process.

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages now operates on a commercial basis and is returning a dividend to Government each year. The Crown Solicitor's Office is now fully commercial and charges competitive professional fees to provide legal services to Government agencies.

Significant information technology projects include -

- the continued rollout of information technology infrastructure (personal computers, networks and communications) to court houses;
- the continued migration of existing COURTNET applications from Prime to Unix;
- the installation of a new Human Resource Management system;
- completion of an electronic data exchange project between Police and Courts for the transfer of Apprehended Violence Orders;
- completion of the State Debt Recovery Office Implementation Planning Study and Stage 1 of the Project;
- development of a new database for the management of Community Justice Centres;
- completion of a new database for the management of the Department's motor vehicle fleet; and
- development of a new database for the management of transcripts.

In February 1998 an additional District Court Judge was appointed to reduce delays in child sexual assault cases following recommendations made by the Royal Commission's Paedophile report.

The Department completed and published its Capital Investment Strategic Plan and commenced a number of significant asset improvement projects. Major refurbishment work has been undertaken at a number of court houses including Balmain, Casino, Central, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Nowra, Penrith, Westmead Coroner's Court, Wollongong and Wyong.

An additional 24 court houses were equipped with closed circuit television during the second year of this program. This will allow vulnerable child witnesses to give evidence in a secure, non-threatening environment. There has also been an ongoing process of upgrading security and lighting in various court houses throughout the State and replacing and installing air conditioning.

Work has commenced at Campbelltown to refurbish the historic court house and to construct a new Children's Court.

Strategic Directions

The role of the Attorney General's Department as a quality service provider has been enhanced by being assigned lead responsibility for a number of strategic programs involving whole of Government action. Examples of that role include -

- the Crime Prevention Division is the Government's key agency for providing advice on crime prevention policy and programs in New South Wales;

- the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit has been established to provide support and assistance to 17 Regional Violence Prevention specialists and program coordination;
- the State Debt Recovery Office offers a debt management service to all government agencies;
- the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee is being re-established to provide ongoing and consistent monitoring of compliance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody;
- the Victims Services Bureau provides advice and referrals to victims of crime;
- the Standing Interagency Advisory Committee on Court Security (SIAACS) has been established as a peak inter agency co-ordinating body for court security issues; and
- the establishment of a Capital Works Co-ordination Committee between the Criminal Justice System agencies provides a framework for better operational and service standards through improved asset planning and management.

The quality program continued to be a major Departmental focus. Training in accordance with the Quality Action Plan has been conducted over the past year with 29 workplace quality teams established and 213 staff members trained in the concepts, tools and techniques required for continuous improvement to the services provided by the Department. The process demonstrates the Department's commitment to delivering quality services and creating a dynamic work environment for staff. Examples of processes reviewed in the last year are -

- obtaining and examination of police reports required for dealing with applications for victims compensation;
- the preparation and distribution of Supreme Court judgments;
- filing of documents at the civil counter of the District Court; and
- the jury management process.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

The Department continues to concentrate on initiatives to improve access to justice. In addition to its case management improvements the Department has developed a Disability Strategic Plan which outlines the resources required for the Department to comply with current legislation. Implementation of the Plan will involve training in disability awareness and modification of some existing buildings to provide improved services which are accessible to all.

The Industrial Court and the Industrial Commission (formerly part of the Department of Industrial Relations) have now been merged to form the Industrial Relations Commission within the Attorney General's Department.

Additional funding of \$3 million is being provided for the establishment of a Case Management Fund to provide a more strategic and flexible approach to funding sustainable reductions in court backlogs and delays. This will allow the managed early replacement of Judges and the continued use of Acting Judicial Officers in appropriate circumstances. Caseloads will be transferred and diverted and litigant funded alternate dispute resolution will be implemented.

Asset Acquisitions

The Attorney General's Department capital program provides for the construction of new court houses, expansion/modification of existing court houses, development of major computing facilities, and the purchase/replacement of plant and equipment.

The major components of the 1998-99 capital program of \$26.4 million are -

- continued implementation of the recommendations of the Department's Court Security Review (\$2.0 million) providing increased security presence in courts, improved facilities in respect of public waiting areas, victim support, interview and jury rooms; the installation of alarm and surveillance systems; perimeter security and improved signage;
- courtroom technology pilot, to trial the application of proven information management technologies such as document imaging and video-conferencing (\$0.7 million);
- implementation of the Courts Administration System (\$3.0 million) to provide a new generation of computer applications to support the Local, District and Supreme Courts. The system will assist in improving court registry operations and the services offered by the courts to the community;
- continued implementation of the Information Technology Infrastructure project (\$2.0 million) providing standard office automation facilities across the Department and progressive statewide access to key applications such as the Courts Administration System and the Financial Management System;
- completion of a new Children's Court at Campbelltown (\$2.0 million);
- construction of a new Court House at Toronto (\$3.2 million);
- undertake backlog maintenance of court premises (\$1.5 million);
- refurbishment of Orange Court House (\$2.8 million) and Bega Court House (\$1.2 million); and
- under the Department's principal asset strategy of improving existing court accommodation, a significant program of office refurbishment, equipment replacement, installation of computers, improvement of communication networks, structural changes and improvements is being continued (\$7.7 million).

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

The Commission is principally concerned with the provision of assistance to the courts in order to achieve consistency in imposing sentences, the organisation and supervision of an appropriate scheme of continuing education and training of judicial officers, and the examination of complaints concerning the ability or behaviour of judicial officers.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

During 1997-98 the Commission continued to concentrate on its delivery of services to the judiciary through improvements to the computerised Judicial Information Research System (JIRS). Enhancements to JIRS include additional information in electronic form, including all NSW and Commonwealth legislation, Commission publications, an Evidence Manual, specialised databases on occupational health and safety and the new Equity Jurisdiction of the District Court.

In 1998-99 the Commission will continue its educative program, conducting induction and orientation programs for judges and magistrates, seminars for members of all courts, and annual conferences for each court. A publishing program will be run to complement conferences and seminars. Additionally, the Commission will continue its ongoing program of visits to Aboriginal communities as part of its Aboriginal cultural awareness initiative.

Strategic Directions

To ensure the most efficient use of judicial resources, the Commission will continue to expand and enhance the services provided to judicial officers and the courts through the provision of information and support services, continuing education, and computer training. The Commission will continue to examine complaints made against judicial officers and where appropriate refer these matters to the Conduct Division.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

The Commission will spend a total of \$2.7 million in 1998-99 to cover its staffing and operational costs.

Asset Acquisitions

An amount of \$150,000 has been provided to the Commission to replace obsolete personal computers used by magistrates to access the Judicial Information Research System and \$50,000 has been provided for the ongoing plant and equipment needs of the Commission.

LEGAL AID COMMISSION

The Legal Aid Commission assists financially and socially disadvantaged people to understand, protect and enforce their legal rights and interests by promoting access to the legal system and encouraging the use of appropriate alternative dispute resolution.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

From 1 July 1997, the Legal Aid Commission became an independent State funded body providing legal assistance in matters arising under NSW law. The Commission operates under an agency agreement with the Commonwealth to provide legal assistance in matters arising under Commonwealth law in line with priorities and guidelines set by the Commonwealth.

Activity levels during 1997-98 have exceeded the funding available for Commonwealth matters. An adjustment to the guidelines for the remaining two years of the agreement will be necessary in order to contain expenditure.

Strategic Directions

The State has re-opened negotiations with the Commonwealth in order to clarify certain aspects of the agency agreement and to address the anticipated expenditure overruns in Commonwealth matters for 1997-98.

To minimise inequities associated with reduced legal aid funding, the Commission has developed a strategy including -

- improvements in internal processes, particularly in the longer term through an investment in technology;
- improvements in cost effectiveness of service delivery through the introduction of competitive processes and the exploration of changes in the justice system as a whole; and
- policy responses, including introducing or tightening caps on the level of aid provided in particular classes of matters.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Expenses of the Commission are projected to be \$84.8 million in 1998-99.

In 1998-99 the State will maintain an increase in funding of \$2 million provided in 1997-98 to finance State matters. A similar grant will also be provided by the Trustees of the Solicitors Trust Account Fund in 1998-99. The Commonwealth will provide base funding to the extent of \$31.1 million in 1998-99 in accordance with the agency agreement. Expenditure on Commonwealth matters will be reduced in 1998-99 compared to the levels recorded in 1997-98 to address the overrun occurring in Commonwealth matters.

Support has been given in 1998-99 to expand the Commission's Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program to new locations throughout New South Wales. This is an important initiative which ensures that domestic violence is treated as a serious criminal offence.

Asset Acquisitions

An allocation of \$1.283 million will be made available to the Commission during 1998-99 to complete an upgrade of the information systems and replacement of computer hardware. A further \$200,000 has been provided for minor works including the upgrade of accommodation and security in a number of the Commission's regional offices.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is responsible for the prosecution of all indictable and certain criminal matters and the conduct of appeals in the Local, District, Supreme and High Courts.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The Office expanded the Witness Assistance Service to all its regional offices during 1997-98. Positions were also established to develop policies for improved services to victims of domestic violence and to increase the level of Aboriginal employment and the understanding of Aboriginal issues in the Office.

New strategies have been introduced as a result of changes to legislation affecting the conduct of committal proceedings. The changes are intended to reduce the time taken in bringing accused persons to trial and to assist victims and witnesses by reducing the number of court appearances needed in the prosecution process.

The Office continues to place importance on co-operation with other criminal justice agencies to improve performance of the system as a whole.

Strategic Directions

The Office will continue to monitor performance to ensure time standards for preparing and disposing of matters are met. It is also hoped to focus on obtaining more accurate information on the cost of prosecuting a matter. This information will be used to set targets for improved performance and for benchmarking with counterparts in other States and Territories and the Commonwealth.

There will be a continued emphasis on services to victims and witnesses. In 1998-99 a further survey will be conducted to assist in identifying the most appropriate services for the future.

The Office has had outstanding success with the Witness Assistance Service following its expansion to each regional office.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

In 1998-99 total expenses will amount to \$52.8 million, an increase of 5.9 per cent over the projected 1997-98 expenditure.

The Office will pursue its objective to provide the people of New South Wales with an independent, fair and just prosecution service.

In 1998-99 the Office will give high priority to increased co-operation with other criminal justice agencies to improve the performance of the criminal justice system as a whole and to the provision of services to victims and witnesses.

An amount of \$2.7 million will be allocated towards cost reimbursements to witnesses.

Asset Acquisitions

An allocation of \$0.9 million will be provided in 1998-99 for ongoing plant and equipment replacement (including the continued acquisition of litigation support hardware and software) and the fitout of accommodation.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The Department of Industrial Relations works with employers, employees and their representatives to facilitate equitable, innovative and productive workplace relations. The Department has a leadership role in influencing industrial relations issues, and is committed to ensuring that a maximum number of employers and employees are informed of their rights and obligations under NSW industrial laws.

The Department also administers the Workers' Compensation Resolution Service (WCRS), which is directed at resolving disputed workers' compensation claims, and the Government and Related Employees Appeals Tribunal, which deals with appeals against promotion and disciplinary decisions in the public sector.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

During 1997-98 the Department was able to consolidate a number of important projects. These included the finalising of six new Departmental contact centres in strategic metropolitan and regional locations, providing support to the newly established WCRS and the establishment of in-house corporate services.

Strategic Directions

A range of significant activities have been undertaken by the Department across the full range of its key result areas. These include -

- ensuring compliance with industrial law through targeted industry campaigns for the clothing, taxis, restaurants and security industries;
- promoting workplace reform through the creation of a set of publications, which for the first time brings together a comprehensive outline of industrial laws for employers in New South Wales;

- the provision of a cost effective mechanism for the resolution of disputed workers' compensation claims. Results to date suggest that the use of conciliation through the WCRS will achieve substantial savings over the more expensive court process; and
- promoting workplace equity through applications before the NSW Industrial Relations Commission including the 1997 State Wage Case and the Part Time Work Agreements Test Case, providing resource assistance and policy advice to the Government's submission to the Ministerial Reference into Pay Equity and presenting the NSW Government's position in the Federal Allowable Matters Case.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Expenses of the Department of Industrial Relations are projected to be \$20.6 million in 1998-99. The Department will continue to maintain its commitment to developing a fair and just framework for industrial relations and workplace regulation in New South Wales. This will be achieved by monitoring the operation of the NSW legislation, contributing to significant reviews and test cases, consulting with industrial bodies and promoting workplace equity including equal remuneration for men and women doing work of equal or comparable value, and non-discriminatory practices.

In 1998-99 the Department will further prioritise education and preventative measures to reduce the incidence of non-compliance with NSW industrial laws. Such activities will continue to be underpinned by industry targeted campaigns, with special emphasis to ensure that the Department maintains a high profile in regional NSW.

Asset Acquisitions

The Department's estimated asset acquisitions will amount to \$530,000 in 1998-99 including \$400,000 toward the upgrade of the computer network, which will enable the Department to replace very dated personal computers.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY LONG SERVICE LEAVE PAYMENTS CORPORATION

The Corporation administers the Building and Construction Industry Long Service Payments Act 1986. The Act provides workers in the building and construction industry an industry-based, portable long service benefit scheme. Funds are obtained from a levy on all building work in NSW and from investment earnings.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The Corporation administers long service benefits that are required to be readily available when members decide to claim them. There is no 'control' over the number of claims that are made and therefore cash flows may vary significantly from year to year. Over recent years, the amounts paid have been gradually rising and substantial funds are held which are immediately available to claimants.

The levy on building and construction work was suspended during the period 29 March 1993 to 30 June 1997 due to the sufficiency of funds to meet long service payments. Following payment of two dividends to the Government in 1996 and 1997, the levy has been re-introduced to meet future long term financial commitments at a rate of 0.2 per cent on the cost of construction work.

Strategic Directions

The Corporation has initiated strategic plans to remain competitive, as there are a number of private organisations that provide similar services to the building and construction industry. These plans include the provision of customer focused services which are timely and of high quality, and ensuring that its overall operations are both effective and efficient. In order to meet these objectives the Corporation is heavily dependent on, and aims to improve, its information technology systems.

The Corporation has also recently entered into arrangements with a majority of local governments to act as levy collection agents.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Total expenses are estimated at \$39.3 million, a decrease of 13.6 per cent. The decrease is mainly attributable to decreases in long service payments made to eligible members of the scheme.

The income generated by the levy is an estimate as this will be the first full year of the levy's operation.

Asset Acquisitions

An amount of \$0.14 million has been provided for the replacement of the core business computer facility.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS AUTHORITY

The Motor Accidents Authority of New South Wales (MAA) is a statutory corporation established by the Parliament of New South Wales under the Motor Accidents Act 1988.

The MAA monitors and manages the Motor Accidents Scheme under which competing licensed insurers sell Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance (known as "Green Slips") to the public in New South Wales. The MAA services the community in the following manner -

- reviews and monitors premiums, handles claims enquires and complaints, manages the Nominal Defendant Scheme, collects and analyses statistics, monitors solvency and financial performance of insurers;
- educates and advises key groups, identifies special needs, supports and funds awareness and prevention, injury management and research projects;
- develops and implements public education about the Green Slip and road safety initiatives; and

- monitors and reviews legislation and legal developments as well as developing and coordinating policy.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

Recent developments regarding the MAA include the development of their own website, which, amongst other information, compares the cost of obtaining a Green Slip between insurers. It has also embarked on a significant road safety program, with the aim being to reduce road accidents.

Strategic directions

The MAA has developed programs and strategies to implement its objectives, and these have been grouped under -

- competitive insurance and fair compensation;
- injury prevention and management; and
- resource management.

The Authority aims to administer the programs in an effective, efficient and economical manner, ensuring compliance with all relevant statutory requirements at the same time.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Total expenses for 1998-99 are estimated at \$19.6 million.

The MAA's income is derived primarily from the levy on gross CTP insurance premiums collected by the licensed insurers. The rate of levy has been gradually reduced from 1.8 per cent to 0.5 per cent. This was primarily facilitated by the use of cash reserves held by the MAA. This strategy was followed in order to pass the benefits of accumulated reserves to the motorists.

Asset Acquisitions

MAA's acquisition program relates solely to office related assets such as computers and furniture.

PUBLIC TRUST OFFICE – ADMINISTRATION ACCOUNT

The Public Trust Office operates under the Public Trustee Act 1913. It is financially independent of the Consolidated Fund. All expenditure and capital works are funded through revenue generated from clients and other corporate income. The Public Trust Office cannot refuse an estate because of its low value.

The Public Trust Office -

- administers estates, trusts and agency related matters;
- prepares wills; and
- manages client funds through the operation of a Common Fund.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

Expenditure is maintained as far as possible in line with inflationary trends, with a high proportion being salary and related expenses.

The prime source of revenue is the Commission and Fees levied against clients for the administration of estates and trusts. These are fixed by regulation. The ability to generate this revenue is being eroded by changes in society with more common joint holdings of assets; greater inclination of banks and financial institutions to release estate assets without a grant of administration; and superannuation passing directly to nominated beneficiaries. Increased competition in the market will also affect revenue.

Strategic Directions

The Government's June 1995 Financial Statement listed the Public Trust Office as a candidate for corporatisation under the State Owned Corporatisations Act. The corporatisation process is under way, and is anticipated to be completed during 1998-99.

A key result of corporatisation is the creation of a level playing field between the operation of the Public Trust Office and other trustee companies. This includes the payment of tax equivalent and dividends. The corporatisation of the Public Trust Office requires that costs of activities be more clearly identified so that pricing, though still regulated, can more closely reflect the costs.

The Trustee Act has been recently changed by the repeal of sections relating to prescribing of authorised investments, and their replacement with Prudent Person principles. The effect on the Public Trustee will be a requirement to develop financial plans for each client (in excess of 10,000), and to provide additional investment vehicles for client funds. This will have a major impact on the way clients are managed.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

The 1998-99 Budget includes expenditure totalling \$23.2 million, an increase of 4.5 per cent. Salaries and related items account for approximately 74 percent of total expenditure, while working expenses (26 percent) play an important role in maintaining branch and agency structures, as well as plant and equipment items. These expenses are maintained as far as possible in line with general inflationary trends.

Asset Acquisitions

The 1998-99 Budget also includes additional capital expenditure of \$3 million, an increase of 36.4 per cent, for the replacement of the core business computer facilities.

REGISTRY OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (The Registry) records in perpetuity all births, deaths and marriages occurring in NSW and provides documentation on these events to individuals to help establish a range of legal entitlements. The Registry also collects statistical data for Government and other organisations, performs civil marriages and undertakes searches of the records. The Registry generates sufficient revenue from its commercial activities to fund both its regulatory and commercial activities.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The Registry has been operating commercially as a Government Trading Enterprise since 1992 and returns dividends to Government. The Registry ceased to receive Community Services Obligation funding for the registration function in 1997 and now funds this function from retained earnings.

The Registry has focused on expanding its services and products over the past five years and has developed successful products such as genealogical indexes and commemorative certificates. Further initiatives are being undertaken to develop new business products and develop partnerships with other agencies to support the establishment of a retail outlet.

Strategic Directions

The Registry has strategic priorities to ensure its commercial viability and overall performance. These include development of information technology systems to support management and staff, and human resource strategies to enhance skills and flexibility. Measures have also been introduced to re-engineer processes with the object of achieving quality-driven operational efficiencies.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Total expenses are estimated at \$10.2 million, an increase of 13.3 per cent. The Registry's major items of expenditure are production costs and employee related expenses and the increase is due to business consultancies and staff training.

Asset Acquisitions

The Registry is undertaking a major data conversion project to convert its paper records to a digitised format. This project will reduce production costs and improve service delivery to the Registry's clients. Total projected expenditure is \$3.4 million, with \$2 million to be expended this year.

An amount of \$0.61 million will be spent to continue the Registry's program of computer upgrades and systems development and \$0.22 million has been provided to effect leasehold improvements. All capital expenditure is internally funded from the Registry's retained earnings.

WORKCOVER NSW

WorkCover NSW's statutory responsibilities are to -

- promote the prevention of injuries and diseases at the workplace and the development of healthy and safe work places;
- ensure the efficient, effective and equitable rehabilitation and compensation of persons injured at work;
- ensure the financial viability and efficient operation of the workers' compensation insurance arrangements; and
- ensure co-ordination of the administration of occupational health and safety, rehabilitation and workers' compensation arrangements.

Only the operations of WorkCover itself are included in the State Budget coverage. The Budget does not include the underwriting and investment activities of the WorkCover Scheme Statutory Funds which are managed by licensed insurers on behalf of WorkCover

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

During 1998-99 it is expected that the Government will implement major reforms to the NSW workers' compensation scheme. WorkCover NSW is the regulator of workers' compensation arrangements in New South Wales.

Key elements in the reform process include -

- an expanded role for stakeholders;
- transfer of the underwriting function to a limited number of licensed insurers;
- implementation of a benefit structure that provides greater incentives for workers, employers and insurers to actively manage injuries with a focus on return to work;
- implementation of a multi-tiered dispute resolution process; and
- drafting of new, plain English legislation and regulations.

Strategic Directions

Consistent with its statutory responsibilities, WorkCover NSW's corporate objectives are to -

- promote the prevention of injuries and diseases at the workplace and the development of healthy and safe work places;
- establish and maintain a workers' compensation insurance and injury management framework which provides efficient, reliable and equitable insurance and injury management services to the system's clients, employers and workers; and
- achieve organisational excellence by coordinating the administration of occupational health and safety rehabilitation and workers' compensation and by facilitating excellence in WorkCover staff, management, operations and systems.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Total expenses for 1998-99 are estimated at \$167 million, including -

- \$49.8 million to promote the prevention of injuries and diseases at workplaces;
- \$14.1 million to maintain a workers' compensation insurance and injury management service to employers and workers;
- \$28 million for resolution of workers' compensation disputes including funding of the Compensation Court of New South Wales; and
- \$7 million for the occupational health and safety social awareness and education program.

Asset Acquisitions

The WorkCover NSW's capital program of \$7.6 million in 1998-99 provides a series of platforms for technology applications and data upon which to build the necessary information systems able to support the business of WorkCover. It also supports WorkCover's occupational health and safety testing objectives by upgrading a range of safety related scientific and engineering equipment.

The year 1998-99 will be the first full year of the implementation of the revised information technology strategic plan, the contents of which are consistent with the Government's blueprint on information management and technology.

DEPARTMENT OF FAIR TRADING

The Department provides a wide range of services to consumers and traders. These services cover business name registrations and licensing information, advice on home building and strata scheme matters, and advice and information on general consumer matters through the Fair Trading Centres.

Other services provided by the Fair Trading Centres include information on the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants, and on encumbrances on motor vehicles and boats.

The Department also administers the formation and regulation of co-operatives, and provides trade measurement and technical services. The portfolio incorporates three tribunals – the Commercial Tribunal, the Residential Tenancies Tribunal and the Consumer Claims/Building Disputes Tribunal.

Strategic Directions

The strategic intent of the Department of Fair Trading is for New South Wales to be recognised for value and fairness in the marketplace. This is being achieved by -

- delivering services that foster fairness and ethical trading in the marketplace;
- developing conditions which create equity and balance the relationship between traders and consumers; and
- leading in the development and implementation of fair trading policy throughout Australia which creates a vigorous and competitive market.

1998-99 Budget

Total Expenses

Total expenses for 1998-99 are estimated at \$112.5 million. Significant allocations include -

- continued funding of approximately \$14.8 million for Fair Trading Centres in metropolitan and country areas, and the establishment of the Penrith “Call” Centre, where 20 staff, at a cost of \$1.2 million p.a., will provide regional communities with access to the full range of departmental services;
- funding of approximately \$12.6 million for the operation of the registration of business names, co-operatives and associations, and the licensing of builders, real estate agents, valuers, conveyancers and private employment agents;
- continued funding of about \$11.9 million to assist in the resolution of disputes through the Consumer Claims, Building Disputes, Residential Tenancies and Commercial Tribunals; and
- approximately \$10.6 million to deter unfair trading practices through the investigation of illegal conduct, industry consultation and prosecution.

Asset Acquisitions

The Department's asset acquisition program of \$5.3 million provides for -

- the finalisation of the fitout program in both regional and metropolitan offices (\$1.5 million);
- the completion of the development of new computer systems in line with the wider range of services provided by the Department (\$2.3 million); and
- replacement of minor plant and equipment (\$1.5 million).

MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIR INDUSTRY COUNCIL

The Council's major ongoing responsibilities are the licensing of motor vehicle repair businesses and the certification of motor vehicle tradespeople; enforcement of the legislation in respect to these functions and the dispute resolution process of the Motor Vehicle Repair Disputes Committee.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

There has been very little movement in total expenses over the last five years, apart from movement generated by increases in operating costs, primarily those that are salary related. There have not been any significant changes in functions, responsibilities or the operating environment. There have not been any major asset acquisitions.

1998-99 Budget

Total expenses by the Council in 1998-99 are budgeted at \$2.3 million. The majority of these expenses are employee related. The Council expects to collect \$2.1 million in fees in 1998-99 to make up its total retained revenue of \$2.2 million.

RENTAL BOND BOARD

The Rental Bond Board is a statutory corporation, established under the Landlord and Tenant (Rental Bonds) Act 1977, and is the custodian of rental bonds taken on private residential tenancies in New South Wales. It comprises five members, one of whom is the Director General of the Department of Fair Trading.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The Board is a self funding body, and derives the majority of its income from interest earnings on rental bond deposits and accumulated funds. In 1998-99, rental bond deposits are estimated to be \$390 million, and should generate approximately \$35 million of revenue.

The Board funds half the costs of the operations of the Residential Tenancies Tribunal and the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program. The Board funds all the operating costs of the Strata Schemes Office and Tenancy Services.

1998-99 Budget

Total expenses are estimated at \$47.4 million and include provision for -

- a total of \$30 million in grants for housing projects including long term leasing initiatives, innovative community housing projects and affordable housing initiatives;
- a \$3.4 million contribution towards the Residential Tenancies Tribunal;
- a \$2.4 million contribution towards the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program; and
- \$1.1 million to meet operating costs of the Strata Schemes Office.