

Division 31: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, \$3 554 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr F.M. Logan, Minister for Corrective Services.

Mr A. Harvey, Acting Inspector of Custodial Services.

Mr D. Summers, Manager, Corporate Governance.

Mr T. Palmer, Chief of Staff, Minister for Corrective Services.

Mr B. Winmar, Principal Policy Adviser.

Ms R. Marton, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 1 June 2018. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

The member for Dawesville has the call.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 401 of the *Budget Statements* and the appropriations for the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services to deliver services. From 2018–19 to 2019–20, it seems there will a reduction in total appropriations. I am keen to understand the reduction and how it came about.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Is the member asking about total appropriations in the forward estimates?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is from the 2018 budget estimate to the 2019–20 forward estimate.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I understand the column the member is looking at, but is the member asking about the delivery of services or the total appropriations?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Total appropriations.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is from \$3.554 million to \$3.539 million. Mr Summers will add a few points about that.

Mr D. Summers: Certainly. The office has had to make some efficiency cuts and what have you. The intention of those cuts has been to do less with less, and so far we have been able to find efficiencies. This is an example of the decline in our budget. Added to that, the cuts resulting from the voluntary targeted separation scheme will reduce it even further. I can advise that we will be fine cash flow-wise in the coming financial year, but we have sung the same chorus over the last five years and the 2019–20 financial year will be a crunch year for us. If we can no longer find efficiencies, we will have to reduce our outputs in some way.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: On the same line and matter, Mr Summers said, "We do less with less". I am keen to understand what that means. Does that mean fewer inspections?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It could be fewer inspections, but I doubt it. It could be less overall work done in the office. Mr Harvey?

Mr A. Harvey: Yes. One of the things we have been looking at is stopping our hard copy publications and relying on online releases of information. That will cover one full-time equivalent, but the consequence will be that prisoners will no longer be able to read what we have said about our prisons because we cannot provide electronic information to them.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: To clarify, does the minister expect there to be an overall reduction in the amount of announced and unannounced inspections of prisons?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I do not think that will happen. The timetable for inspections has already been set for the rest of this year and into next year. I expect those inspections to be done.

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Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: So there will be no overall net reduction?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: There will be no reduction —

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Great. Thank you very much, minister.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: — because the timetable for the inspections is set out.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Great. Thank you.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer the minister to page 346.

The CHAIR: I think that might be another division.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry.

The CHAIR: It is a different division.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Am I in the wrong division?

The CHAIR: We are dealing with division 31.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Division 31 first—Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will come back that then.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 403 and note the FTEs there stated. I see there has been a reduction —

The CHAIR: Member, can you indicate where on the page you are referring to?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The bottom third of the page and the line item in the table “Employees (Full Time Equivalents)” for 2017–18 and 2018–19. I see there is an overall net reduction of one. Can the minister explain what that is and whether it will have an impact on the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is all part of the normal process of trying to get our budget back into order. Those budgetary requirements apply to every single agency across government, including the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. It is expected to comply with the directions from Treasury to find efficiencies. In this case it was one particular body. I will pass over to Mr Harvey to find which position that was.

Mr A. Harvey: That was part of the voluntary targeted separation scheme. The coordinator of the independent visitor scheme has accepted a package, and we are looking at either amalgamating that with another position or holding it separate but at a reduced FTE.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate the minister’s preamble at the beginning of that answer on the efficiencies that have to be found in all agencies. Just on that in the same table, can the minister explain why the costs per visit continue to increase if this optimisation or efficiency is such a requirement? I see that the costs on the efficiency indicators on that table continue to increase. I do not understand why that is given, as the minister said, they have to come down.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I will pass that question over to Mr Summers.

Mr D. Summers: It is just an estimate at this stage. We do not know how the removal of the independent visitor coordinator—a level 4 officer—will impact the rest of the team.

I genuinely suspect that level 6 officers will have to pick up work that would otherwise be done by level 4 officers. I suspect that by getting rid of an FTE, although we can absorb it, we are just shifting the load onto senior officers. Paying senior officers to do level 4 duties when they are being paid level 6 salaries is inefficient.

[7.10 pm]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: My apologies for my hearing, did Mr Summers say that the agency would not be able to absorb the loss? Did I hear that correctly?

Mr D. Summers: We can absorb it. We are going to be fine for the next 12 months—not a problem—but the workload needs to be done. Our coordinator is coordinating 40 visitors. That work, whether it is interviewing, recruiting and all that, will be picked up by level 6 senior officers, whose role it is to do inspections and not to coordinate. Therefore, there is an inefficiency at that level, which at this stage I can only anticipate reflects on the efficiency indicator.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Mr Harvey would like to add to that.

Mr A. Harvey: We cannot confirm what the final consequences will be. There is a commitment to restoring a level 2 position, which we have been temporarily holding vacant while a person has been acting in another

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position. There will be a review of the structure. I agree with Mr Summers that there may be some consequences in the costing of the level 6s, but it may also go the other way with a level 2.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 403, under the heading “Inspection and Review of Custodial Services”, the first line, total cost of service, three-quarters of the way down the page. Can the minister provide a rate of return of detention for juveniles in regional Western Australia on a region-by-region breakdown?

The CHAIR: I am not sure this is the right division in which to ask that question.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is not for this division.

The CHAIR: We are dealing with the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. I think that question relates to other areas of the minister’s portfolio.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member can ask that same question under the Corrective Services portfolio.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the minister feel it is more related to that?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes.

The CHAIR: It is not related at all to the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is about juvenile detention centres, so that is why I felt it was related to this division.

The CHAIR: Look at note 1 on page 403.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is fine. I am happy to refer to that.

The CHAIR: Try again.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to note 1. Will the minister provide a completion rate of community-based orders for juveniles in regional Western Australia?

The CHAIR: Member, I am sorry. I have to stop you there.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the Chair still feel my question is not relevant?

The CHAIR: This division deals with inspections. The member needs to wait another until division. Member for Kalgoorlie?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Again, I refer to the average cost per liaison visit under services and key efficiency indicators on page 403. The budget is \$10 000. What does a liaison visit entail to cost \$10 000?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Mr Harvey will explain.

Mr A. Harvey: We inspect roughly six prisons or detention centres each year. In addition, we undertake a number of liaison visits. We try to aim for between four and six visits—four for the regionals, six for the major metropolitan prisons. Each of those liaison visits, which is a continuous form of inspection, results in a report being provided to the inspector. As part of our indicators, that is the number of reports. We are aiming for about 100.

Mr D. Summers: The target is 90, but we achieve about 100.

Mr A. Harvey: That is what those reports are.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: My last question; I appreciate the minister’s indulgence: I refer to the significant issues impacting the agency on page 402. I note that the first dot point, as Mr Summer alluded to, certainly in the previous budgets paper I have read—indeed of the past government’s budgets—it is almost a replication of what has been stated previously. Given the significant issues impacting the agency and the projected record prison estate, I am keen to understand any concerns the minister might have given the overall reduction in FTE in the agency, which is the smallest budget that I have seen for this agency going back many, many years. In light of those issues, does that give the minister any cause for concern about the resources and the ability of the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services to do its job? I note that it does a good job with the resources it has, but does that present any concerns for the minister and the government?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No, it does not. Obviously, we would not be in this position had it not been for the previous government, who put us in this position in terms of the budget. As I indicated, every agency is facing this problem. The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services is no different. If we are talking about job losses and about people taking voluntary retirement or voluntary redundancy packages, we are talking about one person in the office. On top of savings from the VTSS, which was done on a pro rata basis across all agencies—it is not as though this agency was singled out—the agency has been able to achieve streamlining of corporate services by abolishing and incorporating the business services officer position; streamlining its administrative processes; outsourcing its telephony services; decentralising its travel and accommodation bookings and guest pick-ups to staff; self-service of stationery orders, urgent mail and equipment, loan and logging—I am surprised the member did not ask

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a question on notice about that—and processing duties placed on other administrative team items. Along with that, I point out that when the member looks at the increase in the net cost of service on page 403 when compared with the 2018 target compared to the 2017–18 budget, I refer the member to the fact that the appropriation and total cost of service is going down by \$15 000 between the coming financial year and the out year. But the office has been able to achieve those savings through the means I have just outlined to the member without a reduction in the number of inspections.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate the minister's response. Should we anticipate a 5.2 per cent reduction in FTE across the other agencies that we will deal with tonight? This may be only one person, but it represents a significant impact on the workforce.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I told the member once before that it was done on a pro rata basis and not on a percentage basis in the way the member has outlined.

The appropriation was recommended.

[7.20 pm]