

**Division 48: Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, \$4 017 000 —**

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chairman.

Dr K.D. Hames, Minister for Health representing the Attorney General.

Ms A. Lucas, Acting Commissioner for Equal Opportunity.

[Witness introduced.]

**The CHAIRMAN:** I call the member for Maylands.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I refer to the bottom table on page 599 of the *Budget Statements*, and the line item on “Program Rationalisation”. I want some description of what constitutes the forward estimate of \$500 000 from 2014 onwards?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I defer to Ms Lucas.

**Ms A. Lucas:** The \$500 000 is directly related to the retirement of the substantive equality unit, which was set up in 2006.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** What was the decision-making process around the retirement, as Ms Lucas puts it, of what I would think was a fairly important part of government policy? Did a review show that it was not worthwhile? What was the process behind the axing of that unit?

**Ms A. Lucas:** My understanding is that the decision was made not through a review a review, but through the normal Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee budget process. The decision specifically related to the unit being absorbed into community education.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I have a further question relating to the same page reference. How many full-time equivalents were attached to the substantive equality unit?

**Ms A. Lucas:** There were four point something FTEs.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Can the minister explain exactly how the work of the substantive equality unit will be continued without the FTEs or the focus in the office?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** No, but I am sure Ms Lucas can.

**Ms A. Lucas:** The unit and I, as the acting commissioner, are currently looking at ways to get right across the whole commission in different areas to cover policy and the community workshops and education that have been conducted so far.

[3.30 pm]

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** From what has been said, it appears that the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee made the decision to cut the unit with no plans in place for how any of this vitally important work would be continued in government; is that correct?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am advised that it was cut by the EERC, but I do not know what information it used to make that decision. We do not know the reason, but, yes, it was cut by the EERC.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** My further question concerns program rationalisation and the retirement of the substantive equality unit. The substantive equality unit has produced a number of reports in the past few years and worked with a number of agencies, including the Office of the Auditor General, to produce a number of reports. Will the Equal Opportunity Commission continue to produce those reports on equitable outcomes for community and service delivery for the welfare of Western Australians?

**Ms A. Lucas:** It is the intention of the EOC to keep reporting on all of those discrimination matters, including systemic discrimination, which is virtually substantive equality policy. Connected to that, the 31 government agencies the EOC has been working with will also continue the work they have begun and will be reporting separately.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Will the minister direct me to the other programs operating across government that might fill the gap left by the substantive equality unit’s eradication?

**Ms A. Lucas:** From some of the meetings I have attended recently, I believe that some of the departments, including the Department of Transport, the Department of Corrective Services and others, certainly intend to continue to the point at which they have an actual program to continue with.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Does that mean there may be two government departments that have indicated they have the capacity to continue it or that they will definitely continue it?

**Ms A. Lucas:** I cannot answer for them. I do not know. I just know there has been an indication that they intend to.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** It is good that the department is working on that. Will the minister direct me to what partnerships with non-government organisations are being negotiated to ensure that racist and discriminatory policies and practices in government do not lead to unequal outcomes and treatment for people?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does the member have a page reference for that?

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** It is the same.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is the line item “Program Rationalisation” and the eradication or retirement of the substantive equality unit.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** This is about substantive equality. Should I ask the question again?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Ms Lucas.

**Ms A. Lucas:** Beyond substantive equality and also with substantive equality, some initial programs have been set up with private enterprises, universities et cetera. I would prefer to not talk about the details of those because some of them are sensitive. We are still working through those programs and will continue to do so because they have to be owned by those private organisations. The EOC can only broker things.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I have one final question on this. Given that the minister is on the record prior to the election when he was representing the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests at a forum on this subject reiterating the government’s commitment to substantive equality, would the minister explain to us why the unit is being abolished, apart from simply cost-saving, in advance of a review of the commission that we now hear will be done? Why is that being done now?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I presume the member is referring to a forum I attended in North Perth at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre when I represented the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests and put forward the views of the government. I have had no involvement in that because it is not my responsibility, so I cannot answer that question.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is another broken promise.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I do not recall promising anything.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Mirrabooka has another question, does she not?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I refer to the spending changes on page 599 and the reduction in funding for the full-time equivalent ceiling from \$143 000 in 2012–13 to nothing in 2013–14. How many staff were reduced because of that \$143 000 reduction in funding in the last financial year?

**Ms A. Lucas:** So far, none because we managed to work through that by keeping some positions vacant.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I understand that no-one actually left their employment, but how many FTEs was that the equivalent of?

**Ms A. Lucas:** That could be anything from two to four, depending on the level and the number of hours. A full-time equivalent is usually calculated at around \$100 000 as a mean figure.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That is about 1.5 FTEs.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I have a further question on the FTEs and retirement of the substantive equality unit. Are there any other aspects that led to other FTEs being cut from the agencies other than the retirement of the substantive equality unit?

**Ms A. Lucas:** For this coming year, the EOC will have to consider more than just the substantive equality unit to meet its budget measures; hence, the EOC is holding the reviews, so we will see what that leads to.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Will the department be required to cut six FTEs from this budget without the review?

**Ms A. Lucas:** I would be looking at about that figure, yes.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** How many people does the agency currently employ?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I would need to clarify that. The figure of \$500 000 is for the program rationalisation that the member referred to earlier, which relates to four staff, and the \$200 000 relates to two staff, so that is two additional FTEs.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The \$200 000 is for the line item “Public Sector Workforce Reform”. Are they the additional two FTEs?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** We already knew about the four; we talked about that earlier. There are a further two, so it is not plus another six; it is plus another two.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is six in total out of how many people employed at the Equal Opportunity Commission?

**Ms A. Lucas:** It will be about 29.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The Office of Shared Services is being decommissioned. How many of those 29 FTEs will be made available to do human resources work because the Office of Shared Services will not be used for human resource delivery?

**Ms A. Lucas:** The EOC is in a cluster, so the EOC is not losing anything per se because of the decommissioning. The EOC is part of a smaller cluster of shared services that is part of the decommissioning. The EOC has been given an adjustment to allow it to be in that cluster, receiving main services through the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Will the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor deliver the EOC's HR and IT services that would have been delivered by the Office of Shared Services?

[3.40 pm]

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** What number of full-time equivalents would be needed to deliver those services to the agency? Does the commission have to pay liquor licensing for that?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** No. The answer is that we do not have to pay for that service. I think I understood the answer to be that funding is provided for that service that will be provided to the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity and to other areas, including racing.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Under the heading "Government Goal" on page 600 of the budget papers, it states —

Results-Based Service Delivery:

Greater focus on achieving results in key service delivery areas for the benefit of all Western Australians.

Can the minister give us some more detail about the timetable for the review that was announced last week? Can the minister put me on the right track so that we know what is happening?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am advised that we have no information about the timing of that review. I do not know whether the minister has decided that yet.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Has the commission been consulted about the review?

**Ms A. Lucas:** Very briefly through the Public Sector Commission, obviously. It has been talking about the type of review. I believe that Minister Mischin has announced that it would probably take six months, and there would be some stakeholder consultation.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I note that on 6 August, Hon Alanna Clohesy from the other place asked a question without notice of the Attorney General. The Attorney General's answer was —

The Public Sector Commissioner will be responsible for undertaking the review and a wide range of stakeholders will be consulted. The terms of reference are currently being finalised, ...

Basically, the Attorney General then said in his answer that the review would be completed in six months and that the cost of the review is not known at this time. From that, I ask three questions. The first is: have the terms of reference been released? The second is: is the Equal Opportunity Commission involved in the review and is the commission involved in the consultation with the wide range of stakeholders? The third is: will the cost of the review be borne by the Equal Opportunity Commission?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It is interesting that there was an opportunity to ask the minister responsible for these things. The minister was asked and provided some answers.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** They were not very sufficient answers, minister.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** And that was the appropriate place to ask.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** We have the budget before us and we are asking the minister.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Member!

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** He was being cheeky and I was being cheeky back!

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Anyway, the answer to the first question is no; the answer to the second question is yes; and the answer to the third question is it is unknown.

**The appropriation was recommended.**