

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Services 1 to 3, and 6, Premier and Cabinet, \$150 950 000 —

Ms K.E. Giddens, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Ms E. Roper, Director General.

Ms A. Pickrell, Deputy Director General, Intergovernmental Relations and COVID-19.

Ms S. Black, Deputy Director General, Infrastructure, Economy and State Services.

Ms F. Hunt, Deputy Director General, Aboriginal Engagement and Community Policy.

Ms P. Reid, Acting Director, People and Governance Services.

Mr A. Giaros, Chief Information Officer.

Mr G. Italiano, Government Chief Information Officer, Office of Digital Government.

[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 close of business on Friday, 1 October 2021. 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.

I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to the table "Spending Changes" on page 58 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. In the table there is a reference to the hotel quarantine review. Noting the government's response to the Weeramanthri review of Western Australia's hotel quarantine arrangements, which was dated April 2021, can the Premier advise whether all 16 recommendations from the review have been implemented?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the opposition leader for the question. As at May 2021, 10 of the 16 recommendations have been implemented, including onsite ventilation improvements, the changes to secondary employment for hotel quarantine workers, the employment of onsite managers and the establishment of the Quarantine Advisory Panel to provide strategic oversight of the hotel quarantine system. The remaining six recommendations are ongoing and relate to a continuous-improvement policy. The Leader of the Opposition might recall that after the outbreak back in April we removed, from memory, three or four hotels from the system. I do not think that was part of the review, but it was something we did because we wanted to reduce the risk to Western Australia. That obviously had an ongoing consequence, because it meant that fewer people could return home, but as it subsequently turned out after that period, every state basically reduced its numbers of people returning, and that has been an ongoing position, pending changes at higher vaccination levels.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: To recap, the Premier said that 10 of the 16 recommendations had been implemented and six of them were ongoing. Is there an end date or a requirement to finish them, or are they just recommendations that require ongoing management by government?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are six recommendations that are ongoing operational requirements that we are implementing over time. It was a very traumatic set of events. We have been through a lot of trauma over the course of the last two years. The whole thing was very traumatic and, clearly, lockdowns are something we want to avoid. The hotel quarantine inquiry—I remind the member that every state has been through it; we are not alone—was necessary to try to reduce the risk from hotel quarantine. We have not had an outbreak out of hotel quarantine since April. The last outbreak we had in June was the case of a person who had come back from Sydney with Delta, and we managed to eliminate that. We are very hopeful—touch wood—that we will go for a long period without an outbreak, but we never know what is around the corner, which is why we consistently tell people to get vaccinated.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I assume that one of the ongoing recommendations is the position referred to as the “one program, one culture” model of management. I note that the government’s response to the hotel quarantine review, which was published in April 2021, states —

As a first step, the Department of Health is developing core objectives to guide this model.

Could the Premier give me an understanding of how far along the path we are to transitioning to a “one program, one culture” model, having moved from the immediate emergency response of last year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Department of Health is running with that. Obviously, we have emergency management team meetings regularly, and I meet with the Department of Health regularly; I think I met with it yesterday. It is really the department’s responsibility. Out of interest, Professor Weeramanthri, who undertook the review, has been in western New South Wales working on the vaccination program and other things to assist the people and government of New South Wales. The “one culture” project is important in that across government we work cooperatively and have similar aims. That has been important. As I pointed out, we have not had an outbreak out of hotel quarantine since April this year, which is good news.

[2.10 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The hotel Quarantine Advisory Panel comes under the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; is that correct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is under the Department of Health.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Under the significant issues impacting the agency is the heading “COVID-19 Response and Recovery”. As I said, “Hotel Quarantine Review” is listed under spending changes. What is the current capacity of our hotel quarantine?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whereabouts in that column?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: “Hotel Quarantine Review” is under spending changes, and then the significant issues impacting the agency includes the COVID-19 response.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We currently have a capacity of 265 people in hotel quarantine across either five or six hotels. One hotel is specifically for air crew and people called “maritime offshoots” from the ships. The others are for returning Australians or returning Australian citizens. It is 265. That is a halving of what we put in place in April, which was a halving of what we had in place until April. The reason we are at that level is that we had two outbreaks out of hotel quarantine. It is very, very difficult to manage and very difficult to deal with, because we have to lock down in the context of the Delta strain, which is highly transmissible. We took it down. It is basically a quarter of what it was last year. Having said that, we have also taken in people from Afghanistan above the cap of 265, and on occasion we will bring in doctors or nursing staff above the cap whom we might need to keep our hospitals going with enough staff.

As I said earlier—the Leader of the Opposition may not have noticed—I noted that the press today said 38 000 Australians want to return home. That number does not seem to change. It does not change because the commonwealth keeps letting thousands of people leave who then want to return home. That is why the number does not change. I think people need to understand that. As I have said repeatedly, I do not think people should be going overseas to do basketball scholarships at this point in time. It will probably be okay at some point next year, but at this point, going overseas for a basketball scholarship and saying, “I want to come home now because I’m homesick”, should not be happening. That is what puts the pressure on our system; we have so many people returning who have been allowed to leave the country. I realise some people across Australia say they should be allowed to leave, but it puts huge pressure on our hotel quarantine system and prevents others coming home who might have a more longstanding and legitimate case. It means we run the risk of an outbreak.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just to clarify, are there 265 people currently in quarantine or 265 rooms?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The cap is 265 across five or six hotels. We have put in place a zipper model. Imagine a zipper. There is someone in one room, then the next room is diagonally across the corridor and so on. That is the way we are spacing people.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That was one of the recommendations.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The virus seems to have a habit of sneaking out the door and going down the corridor into someone else’s room. We are trying to stop that from occurring with the zipper model. Then above the cap, we have had people from Afghanistan. They have, remarkably, been very much COVID-free, which we are all surprised about. We all thought that they would be very heavily COVID-positive. Then we have allowed some doctors and nurses in from England and Ireland above the cap as well. Although the cap is 265, at this point in time additional people have been allowed. Then we have another hotel that is for Tongan and Vanuatuan farm workers, whom we do not

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

include in the cap because they are from COVID-free countries. In effect, although the cap is 265, we are taking significantly more people, particularly because we are helping the commonwealth with the Afghan situation.

Considering we are doing the commonwealth's job and we have assisted it with the Afghans coming in, the commentary from Acting Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce today makes me a little disappointed. He has attacked Western Australia. I do not think he, like many people in the commonwealth cabinet, really gets it. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition has seen the article. He has had another go at us. He basically attacked us for the rules we have had in place. I say to the commonwealth that I wish it would stop this constant undermining of everything we have done to keep our state safe. The idea that we should somehow bring down borders and allow the virus in is stupid and deadly, and Mr Joyce should not be captured by the Canberra disease, which seems to be that there should be one-size-fits-all for the entire country. They all seem to think that the New South Wales model is best, despite every single bit of empirical evidence to the contrary, and he is now saying that Western Australia is back to being a colony. What we, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland are trying to do is stop getting affected by the virus, keep our economies open, keep people in jobs and stop people dying. I think Mr Joyce is clearly a Canberra centralist who does not get that states have to exercise a bit of independence at times to suit the situation they are in. I urge Mr Joyce to get out of Canberra sometimes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am sure he is listening, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He probably is! I am sure he will be listening to your questions.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I very much doubt it, Premier!

Just to go back to the original questions around the capacity of our current hotel quarantine system, has there been any thought given to or investigation of increasing the availability or the cap? The Premier said that the state has accommodated people coming in outside the 265 cap, but I think when the India issue arose, the cap was halved again. Has any thought been given to increasing that number; and, if not, why not?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not at this point, because it is risk and the Delta strain is higher risk. At some point in the future that will happen, but certainly not now. I will be honest with the Leader of the Opposition. I just want to keep to our current condition for as long as we can while we get people vaccinated. Today we are at a rate of 62 per cent first dose vaccinated. When New South Wales had its outbreak that resulted in this terrible conflagration all over its state, it was at much, much lower levels of vaccination. The first dose vaccination rate was at 20-something per cent when it got its latest outbreak in June. But if we do get an outbreak, higher levels of vaccination will keep us safer and make sure that we do not have the terrible consequences that New South Wales has had. I think when it got its outbreak in June, it was at 13 per cent two-dose vaccinated and, from memory, 20-something per cent one dose. We are currently at 62 per cent for one dose and at 43 per cent for two doses. We are already far better off by multiples of what New South Wales was at in mid-June when it got its outbreak. That will keep us safer if we get an outbreak.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I might have missed it, but regarding the outstanding invoices from the hotel quarantine system, does the Premier have a breakdown of what is left outstanding and who owes what?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot give the member who owes what, because that would be revealing private information, but the payments are in arrears and we have a process to recover them through the Department of Communities, which runs it. We have recovered a lot of money out of it, but I advise the member that the hotel quarantine system is incredibly expensive. It is not recovering anywhere near the cost of the system. That is why the COVID spend in the budget is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, because these sorts of things are hugely expensive. We basically have to run hotels with full security 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year and there is all the transport and health systems, and the nurses, police officers and everyone else who is there. The cost-recovery system is only a fraction of the total cost.

[2.20 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand that it has been difficult, but I also understand that at one point in time there was a very high amount of unpaid invoices along with a delay of three to four months of invoices being sent out.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We do not have any figures here. We have recovered millions, but I do not have the exact answer. The Department of Communities should be able to give that advice, and I will make sure that it is aware so the member can ask that question when it is before us.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Premier, this is not a further question; this is a new question. On page 57, if we go to the appropriations, expenses and cash assets, there was an additional \$85 million in total appropriations for actual 2020–21 versus budget 2020–21.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sorry. What page?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Page 57.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whereabouts?

Dr D.J. HONEY: At the top. It is in the table. If you look at the appropriations table.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Did you say digital?

Dr D.J. HONEY: No; I said total appropriations. It is four-fifths of the way down the page. There is an \$85 million increase, and if I look at the spending changes, they do not account for the difference. Can the Premier explain the substantial difference? Perhaps, Premier, to save time, there is a substantial increase going across the forward estimates that is sustained. Could the Premier also explain the reason for that, please?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am not sure which line the member is looking at. I cannot see 85 anywhere.

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, it is an increase of \$85 million. If the Premier looks at total appropriations, in 2019–20, it was \$146 million. In the 2020–21 budget, it was \$163 million. The actual budget in 2020–21 was \$248 million, and in 2021–22, it is almost \$249 million. Then it goes to \$225 million, \$229 million, then \$232 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is it the \$146 million up to \$231 million?

Dr D.J. HONEY: So it went from \$146 million up to \$248 million estimated actual for 2020–21 from a budget of \$163 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The things that have been part of it are: the post-election termination payments for ministerial and parliamentary office staff severances, which is standard after an election, is \$5.8 million; COVID communications campaign, which is \$4.3 million; casino royal commission, which is \$3.6 million; further COVID communications funding, which is \$3.3 million; Wooroloo bushfire relief, which is \$2.5 million; cyclone Seroja Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund, which is \$2 million; telephone donation increase, which is \$4.5 million; and the south west settlement of which part is a range of Aboriginal payments for various projects and is \$12.4 million. Maybe we will come back to that question when we work out the answer a bit more carefully.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a further question. The substantive increase seems to be in the administered transactions item. As part of the response to COVID, has polling been undertaken under this cost area?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Under which one, sorry?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Under the total appropriations.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I understand that surveys have been done over time. I recall that there was one last year to work out whether our advertising messages at the time were working with people regarding social distancing, mask wearing and the two-square-metre rule that was in place and whether people were hearing the messages and how we should calibrate the advertising campaign messages. That is standard practice when we do major advertising campaigns. We work out whether messages are working. I understand that surveys were undertaken. This financial year, we are doing vaccine hesitancy research to try to understand why some people are hesitant. For instance, this morning, we launched a \$3.6 million advertising campaign, which is a big ad that will run during the football and on TV and social media and so forth. There will be research on hesitancy because as time goes by we need to get into communities where people are hesitant, have low levels of vaccination, are apathetic and might be listening to alternative messages such as those promoted by some fundamentalist Christian churches, and we need to make sure that our messages overcome that. It is very important. We have a big problem with vaccinating Aboriginal people because fundamentalist Christian churches are in their communities telling them not to get vaccinated. To be honest, I think that it is actually a national scandal. I am surprised that there has not been more attention on it. We have people actually going into these communities and/or sending messages online to Aboriginal people saying they should not get vaccinated because it is "evil medicine" or whatever it might be. It is a terrible thing.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think we all share that sentiment, Premier. In relation to polling, and in the Premier's answer, is there no routine polling being conducted through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: When we do an advertising campaign, we then do an evaluation. I think "polling" is the wrong word; I think it is sort of a survey of how did people hear it, what did they think of it, did it make them want to get vaccinated—that sort of thing. Then there is the research about vaccine hesitancy because, as I said, at the moment, we are at 62 per cent first dose of over 16s. Over time, it will become increasingly difficult to get to very high numbers because the last group of people that we will deal with are the hardest to get to, so we have to work out ways of getting to those people and getting them vaccinated. Therefore, I think that "polling" is the wrong word. I think it is about surveys and market research into getting vaccines into people's arms, and DPC runs that through our communications division.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Premier, I am on page 59 of the same budget papers. There is a heading "National Reforms and National Cabinet". Noting that the department leads the development of advice to support the Premier's participation in national cabinet meetings, can the Premier advise what modelling has been done by the state or has been engaged

externally to inform the Premier on the safe vaccination thresholds for WA to reach to enable border restrictions to be relaxed or for us to move through the national plan?

[2.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: “Modelling” is an overused word. I hear people asking all the time what modelling has been done on something or other. It is an overused word. Having said that, a bit has been done. National cabinet, or the commonwealth government more likely, engaged the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity out of Melbourne to do its research. I think its research has been interpreted by everyone to suit whatever position they want to adopt. That is the Doherty research. It basically has various worst-case and best-case scenarios. The worst-case scenarios have lots of people dying and the best-case scenarios have fewer people dying. The research was largely outdated after the massive COVID outbreak in New South Wales, which is now being replicated in Victoria. The Doherty modelling basically started by saying that very few cases are seeded, which is obviously with 70 per cent or 80 per cent of the population having a two-dose vaccination—whichever scenario we want. That has been superseded because New South Wales had a massive outbreak, as has Victoria and the ACT, and they have not been able to contain them. Therefore, the research is to be treated with caution, particularly for states that are COVID-free. What is not being recognised, as Mr Joyce rather clumsily said today, is that states are in different positions. Our state is in an extremely good position so why would we want to deliberately infect ourselves at this point in time? I think the research needs to be treated with caution.

On other modelling, the Department of Health is doing research, or modelling if you like, on health system capacity and the like. That would probably be a better question to ask when the Department of Health is here, but it is on the capacity of the health system. We have regular updates and briefings because we want to be as ready as we possibly can be if and when there is an outbreak. Obviously, our principal aim is to get as many people vaccinated as we possibly can prior to that time. I know other modelling is being done by universities and the like out there, but, if you ask me, all of it is pretty dire. I saw something today about it spreading to Aboriginal communities. It is all very dire. I just want to keep us in our current position for as long as we can.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I understand that the world may have moved on since the Doherty report. I am trying to understand whether the government has its own research or modelling that the Premier is relying on. When he says, “I just want to keep us as safe as possible for as long as possible”, is there modelling on vaccination thresholds informing him when those restrictions can be released? The Premier referenced some of the other work that has been done recently. I read an article reporting on research done by University of Western Australia Professor George Milne. It said that even if we reach a 90 per cent vaccination rate while COVID-free, there would still be requirements for extended lockdowns and limitations on our freedoms. In fact, he did not believe that a 90 per cent vaccination rate could be achieved. All this information is flying around in the community. We continually hear the Premier say that he wants to keep us as safe as possible for as long as possible. People understand that, but I think they want to know what the Premier is using to inform that and when there might be a relaxation or when we might start transitioning through the national plan or another plan.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is dependent on health advice. The health advice from the Chief Health Officer at the Department of Health is that we have to get to very high levels of vaccination before such time as we relax borders with New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT at this point. Obviously, if we have an outbreak because of a truck driver, flight crew, someone who sneaks in, someone on a ship, someone in hotel quarantine or something like that, the situation may change. The advice of the Chief Health Officer is to continue on our current course for as long as we can.

Last Friday at the national cabinet meeting, it was interesting that some of the advisers there are now increasingly recognising that states should stay COVID-free for as long as they can. Some of the professors and senior advisers are saying things like that, and that COVID-free states have the prospect of a soft landing. No-one in the world has really had a soft landing yet, but we have the prospect of a soft landing. A soft landing would be having very high levels of vaccination before we open up to other states from which we might get an infection. Bear in mind that all the modelling now suggests that if and when we get COVID cases, we will have to have social restrictions and some very enhanced TTIQ—or testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine. That is what the modelling says. What that is, we do not know at this point in time, but certainly the direction we are heading is to keep ourselves COVID-free for as long as we can, get vaccination rates up as much as we can, and put in place more categories of mandatory vaccination.

I saw the outrageous conduct in Melbourne—simply outrageous conduct. I was surprised by the restraint of the police with some of those people, to be honest. I get the feeling there is much more sense in the general public here than with some people over there. Perhaps that is a function of long periods of lockdown. People are going a bit nuts over there, whereas we have not had that. Perhaps here, people are a bit more appreciative of the environment and the world in which we are living so they want to preserve it for as long as possible. I saw some rally on the weekend

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

at Forrest Place with 2 000 people, but, fortunately, we have not had the violence they have had in Melbourne and Sydney.

To bring it back, there is a good, philosophical conversation to be had. The idea that we should all adhere to one set of rules, and we all follow it and merrily proceed along that course, irrespective of state differences and state differences in infection levels, is ludicrous. It is just ludicrous. Fortunately, the Prime Minister is now saying things like, “States start from different positions.” I think there is a recognition by the Prime Minister that states are in different positions and that perhaps that should be recognised. Mr Joyce does not seem to get that, but I think it might be filtering through to some people that states are in different positions and we should not just all go from one phase to the other at exactly the same time, irrespective of the conditions we are in. New South Wales is heading down the course of opening up with two-dose vaccination at 70 per cent. That is not the national plan. The national plan, agreed by everyone, was not a two-dose vaccination of one state—they had to wait until an average of the states hit two-dose vaccination before there was any relaxation. New South Wales is ignoring that. If New South Wales is able to ignore that and have the support of the commonwealth government, surely the commonwealth government should say that the states that are COVID-free can have some flexibility as well. Irrespective of what the commonwealth government says, we will do what is necessary to protect our citizens in any event. It would be good if the commonwealth recognised that the states that are COVID-free need to be able to use their good fortune and good management to continue in their current condition for as long as possible.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thanks, Premier. It sounds to me like the conversation at national cabinet is becoming more fractured and less reliant on what was agreed with the national plan. In that case, it begs the question—it is a fair question to ask—that if we are starting from different points, what modelling is the state using to reach its conclusions about when it will open up? How will it do that, and has there been any commissioning of COVID-19 outbreak modelling for reopening discussions, including taking into consideration what UWA Professor George Milne says, which is that he does not think we will get to a 90 per cent vaccination rate? If there is no answer on the modelling that we are relying on, are we falling back on the Doherty Institute modelling the Premier already said is outdated? What is filling the vacuum in Western Australia if we are no longer relying on the Doherty report? In his previous answer, the Premier mentioned more mandatory vaccination categories to try to manage that. I am interested to know what they will be as well.

[2.40 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Firstly, I will answer the question about national cabinet. It is quite a cordial body. If we think about a federation of eight states and territories and one commonwealth with nine political leaders of different persuasions, states and backgrounds sitting together, the fact that we have managed to hold it together and get the best outcome in the world, I think, irrespective of New South Wales, is a credit to that body. I have seen media commentary that national cabinet is all a failure et cetera. Would they rather we had the American model or the models in some countries that have resulted in mass deaths, destruction, mayhem, hopelessness and hospital systems collapsing? I do not get it. It is not perfect, but it is certainly better than anywhere else in the world, and that is probably a good endorsement of the system that was put in place by the commonwealth that I support and think should continue. People say that we should go to the Council of Australian Governments. COAG was moribund and hopeless. Frankly, at a personal level, I did not even want to go to COAG because it was of no value. No-one wanted to go. The only thing anyone wanted to do was to go to the dinner. That was it, because it was so unproductive. That is that point.

In terms of the Leader of the Opposition’s last question about mandating vaccination, thus far we have mandated vaccination for quarantine workers and aged-care workers. We have just announced a mandate for healthcare workers. We are going to mandate port workers, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services workers, freight workers and all those industries. The Minister for Health; State Development, Jobs and Trade is working with the mining industry on mandating vaccination in that industry. That would be a decision of the Chief Health Officer through a public health order, but I think that is wise. On the weekend, I saw images of nurses leading rallies against vaccination. I think it is just disgraceful that someone who has done a nursing degree can be opposed to medicine. It is incomprehensible to me that people would think that way, but it is also dangerous. Anyway, I am sure that Health will deal with people in that position. In any event, they will be required to get vaccinated, so they will have to make a choice themselves at some point in time.

In terms of further mandating, I think we need to look across the board at whether there are other workforces or places people need to or want to go to, like the football, flights on aircraft or concerts, and put in place categories. People will need to be mandatorily vaccinated in order to do that. Once we do that, we will get very, very high levels of vaccination. Imagine if people are able to fly east or overseas; we will get very high levels of vaccination out of that measure. Mandatory measures work. I know some of the nutcases who were screaming and yelling in Melbourne yesterday would oppose that, but it will be their choice; if they do not want to fly on an aircraft, they do not have to.

Back to the Leader of the Opposition's question about all the modelling. As I said, the Doherty modelling is continually updated. Basically, Doherty's health research and the research institutes all say the same thing: unless we get to extremely high levels of vaccination, we have to put in place all sorts of other measures—social health measures, contact tracing and the like—to try to manage an outbreak. In any event, even if we do have high levels of vaccination, there will be some requirement for measures to be put in place. That is what all the advice says. I am very reluctant about that because stepping backwards is not something I think many Western Australians want to do, but if we get cases here and have to manage it, we will have to listen to the health advice.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Victoria has put out a plan. Is there any thought of doing the same thing in Western Australia? The criticism has been that if the government does not have a date for reopening, it adds to people's vaccine hesitancy. We have it too good, so essentially people do not feel motivated to get vaccinated. If additional categories are to be mandated, that requires some preparation as well. I think people in the business community and the community at large would like to know what that map looks like. When can we, or can we, expect a map of that nature?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a very good question and a very reasonable point. What I would say about all that is what Victoria and especially New South Wales are going to do and how they are going to run this will allow us to see what happens. The COVID-free states can watch how New South Wales progresses and what happens to its hospitals, infection rates, death rates and all that before such time as we have to put out a date or anything else. Before we put in place a so-called plan, I think it is very important that we watch the real world Australian example of what is happening in New South Wales. As I keep saying, when we get to between 80 and 90 per cent vaccination, we will look to set a date.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that across the whole state, Premier? I am sorry to interrupt.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It would be across the whole state.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can somebody explain that to me? How does the government measure that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It will be across the whole state. We cannot have Armadale at 50 per cent while Cottesloe is at 100 per cent. We have to get all communities up. Regional WA is probably in a worse position, despite all our efforts to get clinics and vaccines out there. It will be across the whole state, but we will have to look at how individual communities are tracking as well and put in special emphasis. Commissioner Dawson is currently making that happen.

In terms of vaccine hesitancy, the argument goes that because we, as the Leader of the Opposition said, have it so good, there is hesitancy. There is probably a bit of truth in that, but what is the alternative? Do we introduce the virus to get people to get vaccinated? I have actually heard Sydney commentators argue that that would somehow be a good thing. That is so crazy; it is ridiculous.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: They have some crazy commentators; that is for sure.

Mr M. McGOWAN: They do—and they have this mad desire to defend New South Wales to the death. Everything that New South Wales does is right and everything the rest of us do is wrong.

Hesitancy is there for a range of reasons. My personal view is that, for some people, it is more apathy than hostility. There is probably about five per cent of the population that is actually hostile, but for the others it is apathy, rather than hostility, and a bit of the old Australian, "She'll be right, mate!" That is why we have to have specific programs to get to those people. If New South Wales has mass hospitalisations and an increase in its death rate when it opens up, I suspect that will encourage lots of people. Certainly, when we get to high levels of vaccination and we set a date, it will be a great incentive for those people who have been apathetic or who have not had the right priorities to take the opportunity to get themselves vaccinated.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That was a very good question about a plan from the Leader of the Opposition. At one time, the Premier said that it looked like we would work towards Christmas, but then all of a sudden, a few weeks ago, we heard it would be April next year. The Western Australian public has plans for next year and the like and is very keen to understand whether there is a plan out there. Will people be waiting for the government's plan during the first four months of next year? Can the Premier give us information on that?

[2.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: My experience over the last two years is that if we lay down a plan with certain dates, that will not work because circumstances change. I think it is entirely reasonable to watch the real-world example of New South Wales and probably Victoria to see what happens before we decide on anything regarding exact dates and the like, because it will give us a really good, strong read on what could happen in the Australian context.

I think the member might be misreading what I said. I said that we expect to get over 80 per cent of people vaccinated with two doses by sometime in December. When we get to somewhere between 80 and 90 per cent, we will set a date. As I said, that would probably be two months into the future when we would consider removing the border with

New South Wales and Victoria. That would incentivise everyone to get both doses in the interim period, assuming that we have enough supply, but until now we have not had enough supply. We are getting a lot of attacks over this: we did not have enough supply, we did not get the extra supply that the other states had, and we do not have the virus spreading in WA and therefore we do not have an incentive for people to get vaccinated. There are a lot of nuances in Western Australia that are different from New South Wales and Victoria, but I can guarantee the member one thing, and that is that everyone in New South Wales and Victoria wishes the situation was reversed and that they were in our position and we were in their position. I will tell the member one other thing that I am absolutely convinced is true: if we were the heavily infected state, they would all have closed borders to Western Australia. They would not all be saying, “Let the Western Australians in.” They would not be saying that. They would be saying, “Let’s have a border to keep our major cities free of COVID.” That is what they would all be doing.

Dr D.J. HONEY: On the cost of COVID-19 and the ongoing expenditure for it, the budget seems to assume that 2021–22 will be the end of the additional expenditure. In light of the fact that commentators have said that the COVID crisis will continue for decades rather than years, I wonder whether it would not be prudent to have an allowance going past 2021–22.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is this on page 58?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is in any of the tables, but on page 58 is the expenditure for the COVID-19 response.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I see. We budget for COVID on a yearly basis because we do not know what will happen in the following year. This is only our second budget in a COVID environment. Our last budget in a COVID environment was in October last year and now there is this one. Obviously, we will make a decision in the lead-up to the next budget about what else we will need to do. The situation is so volatile and indeterminate that it is difficult to budget for it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Premier indicated that there is modelling going on at the moment. Does the Premier know whether the modelling—maybe this is a question for Health—looks at the continued impact of COVID, even in a vaccinated environment?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The modelling by Health is based upon the susceptible-exposed-infected-recovered model. This is the same methodology that Doherty has been using but is more detailed and more specific to WA and is adjusted for the Delta variant. The modelling is reviewed by the Chief Health Officer, who makes a final decision on the advice that he provides to government. Most of it is about where we are at now, not what might happen in two years. As I have said over the course of the last two months, this controversy has been raging all over Australia about the non-infected states and how we are letting the country down, apparently. Let us deal with the issue that exists now and worry about when we are COVID-free next year. Let us deal with New South Wales and make sure that its hospital system can cope. Let us deal with helping people out in Wilcannia, Cobar, Waroona and Broken Hill. I think that is what the focus should be.

I know there is mass outrage, but what some of the commentators on the east coast do not get is that everyone in Sydney and on the Central Coast such as Wollongong are not sitting in lockdown outraged that they cannot fly to Perth. That is not what they are worried about. They are in lockdown and worried that they or their family might die. They are worried that they cannot work, that their economy is in freefall and their health system is melting down. That is what they are worried about, but for some reason there seems to be a focus by some in the national press on some of the other states like us and somehow they seem to indicate that we are letting the side down. All we are doing is keeping our economy open, funding their massive bailouts and helping pay off the extraordinary debt that has been racked up to support them.

Dr D.J. HONEY: A little while ago, the Premier discussed the vaccine hesitancy survey that has been done. Is there a result from that survey about what is causing the hesitancy to get the vaccine?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Apparently, the surveys have shown a range of things. People were surveyed on their preferred option to get vaccinated—either at a state clinic or a general practitioner. Most people said that they wanted to get vaccinated at their local GP. Western Australia’s vaccination rate is around half-half, or maybe slightly in favour of GPs. Of the people that we get vaccinated each day, about half have gone through the state clinics and the other half have gone through the primary care network, I think it is called, which is GPs and others. I hope that with pharmacists coming on board shortly, the vaccination rate will dramatically increase, because a lot of people trust their pharmacists. That will be a great opportunity and I urge everyone to do it. I urge pharmacists to get out and look to use their networks beyond the pharmacy and get people vaccinated with the Moderna vaccine.

The vaccination surveys have also shown that there is hesitancy among the over 60s about the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is unsurprising considering some of the media reporting it got. I have repeatedly requested people to take the AstraZeneca vaccine, like I have, and the member for Cottesloe probably has as well. One of the reasons that we had to move to over 60s getting the Pfizer vaccine is that we had such a low take-up rate of the AstraZeneca vaccine among the over 60s. Other states have not done that because the people over 60 are taking the AstraZeneca vaccine

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

because they are infected with COVID, so they are keen to get any vaccine, whereas perhaps there is more complacency here simply because we do not have the virus.

The surveys have also shown a broader uncertainty among some people around safety. Apparently, some people think that. Every piece of medical advice is that the vaccines are completely safe and that the far greater danger, as we have seen in America and other places, is people catching COVID. We strive through our advertising campaigns, messages, leaflets, Facebook posts and everything else to emphasise that the vaccines are safe and for people to not be complacent and get vaccinated.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: In the same vein, the Premier talked about modelling previously. What does the modelling show about the capacity of WA's health system to cope with a COVID outbreak?

[3.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: At national cabinet, we regularly provide input into tables that show ICU capacity, hospital bed capacity, ventilator bed capacity and all those types of things. Different states are in different positions, but our position is quite strong. Our ICU capacity and ventilator capacity is quite strong. The numbers are higher, certainly proportionately, than some other states that are bigger than us. We are doing everything we can to expand capacity and work out how we can add extra beds if we need to, but a lot of it will come down to unwinding elective surgery and taking up capacity in private hospitals if needed, which is exactly the same as has been done in Victoria and New South Wales. That is what we did in April and May last year; we did not actually need to, but we did. That would be part of what we would have to do, which would be very unfortunate. But what we found last year—this might be partly responsible for the current pressure on our emergency departments—is that when a COVID outbreak hits, demand on our EDs declines. When we had the outbreak in March, April and May last year, the EDs had I think a halving in demand; it might have been more. The pressure on the overall hospital system for other illnesses went down; therefore, the bed capacity automatically went up. If we have an outbreak, that is what will occur. Some of the problems are related to workforce supply and internationally closed borders. As the member might have noticed, there are lots of staff in the hospitals and health system from India, Ireland and Britain, and obviously varied constraints apply to those people at this point in time.

[Ms R.S. Stephens took the chair.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have to go to the other chamber, but on page 57, under the appropriations, expenses and cash assets, item 6 is the administered transactions, which we discussed before a little bit. Can that information be provided to me as supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will read out the information now. The appropriation increase to \$248.681 million from \$163.203 million is an \$85.478 million increase. This is the result of additional appropriations for the following activities: \$58.29 million for the south west settlement Noongar Boodja Trust and a reduction in administered funds for the Yamatji Nation alternative settlement agreement, so the net of those two things is an additional \$58.29 million spend; COVID-19 communications and coordination, \$4.98 million; the COVID-19 construction and manufacturing workforce campaign, \$4.1 million; ministerial officers and oversight of parliamentary electorate officers, \$3.4 million; Perth City Deal—Aboriginal cultural centre planning, \$2 million; and the Perth Casino Royal Commission, \$5 million. The capital appropriation is \$3 million for parliamentary electorate office fit-outs—after an election, there is always more—and there is \$480 000 for an upgrade to the outdated King Air jet avionics system. There is the south west native title settlement coordination and special projects, \$1.57 million; Telethon donation increase, \$1 million; Closing the Gap agreement, \$889 000; Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill implementation funding, \$795 000; and south west native title settlement implementation costs, \$770 000. That totals \$85.4 million.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 58 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, the Perth City Deal. I refer to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet annual report detailing the Perth City Deal as delivering for the community. When will the Perth City Deal implementation plan be published?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Perth City Deal implementation plan is close to being finalised. The WA government remains committed to the Perth City Deal, including the WACA ground redevelopment project to build an aquatic facility. The Perth city council decision on 31 August 2021 is noted. The Edith Cowan University CBD campus is on track to open its doors to students in 2025. The Murdoch and Curtin Universities proposals estimate project completion for 2024. The specifics of each project will be confirmed once each university has settled on its preferred option and the state receives business cases. When the plan is signed and finished, it will be published. The WACA has not been finalised.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the Premier clarify whether the delay in the report is pursuant to the situation with WACA or with the Perth city council?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Perth city council not adhering to the agreement has led to a delay. We are working through to resolve those issues, as the member knows, with “Tuck” Waldron and Christina Matthews. As soon as we work through those issues and get the whole thing signed, the intention is to publish.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The Premier clarified the reasons for those delays and the fact that the Perth city council is not cooperating. Is the state government going to cover the cost of operating the WACA pool once it has been installed, as the City of Perth has said that it is not going to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are looking at various options. We have not resolved exactly how it will happen at this point in time, but the minister is working through various options with the WACA.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It appears to me that the Perth city council has made it very clear that it is not going to; the WACA is about running cricket—it does not run swimming pools—so that leaves only the state government.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are lots of ideas around on how to achieve this outcome, but we are very keen to get there, and I am sure that the member will be very pleased with the outcome.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am looking forward to it!

Ms C.M. COLLINS: My question relates to page 58 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, the second dot point under “Significant Issues Affecting the Agency” relating to COVID-19 communications, and the line, “The Department continues to lead the delivery of significant campaigns relating to COVID-19.” I note that today the latest vaccination advertising campaign was launched. Is the Premier able to provide an update on that, as well as how the Roll Up for WA campaign has been going, and what has been the response to this?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for Hillarys for the question. It is an outstanding first question in parliamentary estimates. Should her career last another 30 years in this place, I have no doubt that she will remember this moment.

Today we launched the next stage of our Roll Up for WA campaign. The first stage of the campaign was launched in April this year when vaccinations first started. The ad we launched today will air during the AFL grand final on the big screen, so it will be very exciting. It is a very emotive campaign. It is a 60-second nostalgic television commercial that was shot and directed in short-film style by emerging WA film director Melle Branson, who, incidentally, is from Rockingham. The soundtrack features renowned WA artist Stella Donnelly and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, with their rendition of Louis Armstrong’s classic song *What a Wonderful World*. It is a \$3.6 million wide-reaching campaign that will feature on digital radio, television, print, out-of-home and social media advertising channels across all of WA. Earlier this year, we also launched a series of educational videos featuring Dr Karl—I assume that is Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, not Dr Karl O’Callaghan—who will address common questions and dispel myths.

The initial campaign evaluation of the Roll Up for WA campaign has found it has been very successful. Seven out of 10 Western Australians are familiar with the campaign. We are undertaking research on vaccination hesitancy. These results will be used to inform the campaign moving forward.

[3.10 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to the same page. In the spending changes listed on page 58 of budget paper No 2, under the heading “COVID-19 Response”, there is a line item for the COVID-19 communications and coordination directorates. How many staff are in these directorates and could the Premier provide a breakdown of the numbers and the roles and responsibilities of each person in the directorates?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is \$11.288 million to support COVID communications activities, including funding for campaigns, consultancy services and staffing for the COVID-19 communications and coordination directorates. The \$6.3 million allocated in the 2020–21 financial year supported resourcing for management and response activities—that was obviously last financial year. I will advise the member of exactly what the funding is for. The \$11.3 million includes \$6.76 million for important COVID-19 emergency and vaccine campaign communications; \$3 million for 26 finite staff within the COVID-19 communications directorate to do all the Facebook and social media, the bookings and the broader communications; \$1.3 million for eight finite staff within the COVID-19 coordination directorate to support staffing and consultancy; and \$250 000 for consultancy services to support activities within the COVID-19 coordination directorate. The totality of staff is therefore 34.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Premier said \$11.28 million. Can he provide a breakdown of the communication campaigns—that is, whether the campaign was on radio, TV or online, what it was for and how much it cost?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think it is for all of those, but I will get the member a breakdown. It is for all of those, including what we announced today.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the campaign that was announced today within the \$11.3 million?

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, it is. Today's campaign, the *What a Wonderful World* ad and everything associated with it, is within that, but that is only part of what we are doing with this program.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am happy to take the breakdown as supplementary information if it is not available.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Here it is for this year. The total for campaigns is \$6.758 million, which includes a contingency of \$850 000 to deal with a specific area in case we have an outbreak; \$1.3 million for campaigns when the commonwealth reopens the international border, which I assume will be about "getting yourself vaccinated"; living with COVID-19 hygiene content, which is about the use of the SafeWA app; \$2 million for vaccine communications; \$318 000 for digital messaging; and \$120 000 for stakeholder engagement. My mistake; the campaign we launched today is in addition to this, because it is part funded by the Department of Health.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: What does "stakeholder engagement" mean?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The \$120 000 funds outreach to the community, some of the community surveys and the measuring of hesitancy in the community. For instance, I think we need to do some very specific activity in multicultural and Aboriginal communities to find out where the hesitancy is and why there is hesitancy. We hear a lot of stuff anecdotally, particularly around Aboriginal communities. I hear a lot of anecdotes that some fundamentalist church has been telling the members of a specific community that they should not get vaccinated. We need to work out where that is, why that is and what campaigns would work to overcome that. We are going to have to put in place rules around remote communities, but, more broadly, if there is a low rate of vaccination amongst Aboriginal people, they are very, very vulnerable. Some of that money is also for the translation of messages for multicultural communities.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Premier said that \$120 000 was for stakeholder engagement. That has been allocated for community surveys and measuring hesitancy. Is that with a consultancy?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general answer.

Ms E. Roper: I will refer it to Amanda Pickrell.

Ms A. Pickrell: The allocation of funding for this year has not necessarily been spent at this point.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: In the line item, there is an allocation only for 2021–22. Presumably, that will have to continue. The Premier might have touched on it earlier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I did; I answered a question from the member for Roe.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Does the department not allocate because it does not know?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We do not know. We do not know where we will be and how much we will need. That is why it is difficult to plan. For next year's budget, which we expect will be in May, we will be able to make a decision at that time. It is too hard to predict. We do not know where we will be, how the state will be tracking or whether everything will be over, if you like. I suspect not. Therefore, we will make a decision in the lead-up to next year's budget. Obviously, money will need to be allocated for it next year.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have seen contingency funds applied in other areas of the budget. Was there no thought to doing that for this, given that ongoing communications and the changing nature of the virus and how we deal with it are obviously going to be part of the business of the department and the government for some time to come?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general answer.

Ms E. Roper: At the time that the budget was set, things were far more optimistic in terms of vaccine supply and where we might be with the vaccination program. As the Premier said, there is a lot of uncertainty around COVID and what is required. Even budgeting for the communication spend for this financial year is difficult because it is all contingency, in effect. Other than knowing that we will have to do vaccination campaigns and some lockdown campaigns, it is difficult to predict far in advance, so it is just a yearly spend and it will be reviewed each year.

Ms C.M. TONKIN: I refer to page 62 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2 and the significant issues and the WA recovery plan. The third service is "Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government". My question is about the Collie delivery unit. I understand that it oversaw the Wellington Dam mural, which is incredible. Is the Premier able to provide a further update on the work of the delivery unit and what is being delivered?

[3.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for Churchlands for the question and congratulate her on her first question as a member of Parliament in the estimates committee.

The Wellington Dam mural is the centrepiece of the \$1.5 million Collie Mural Trail, which was completed in February this year. The Collie Mural Trail is a significant investment in Collie's tourism economy. I was telling members earlier that I was in Waroona a few months ago and the people at the local tourism bureau complained

to me that all the tourists wanted to go to Collie. I said to them that we need to work out a mural trail at all the dams throughout the south west so that we have the biggest dam mural trail in all the world! Anyway, we can work on that project. The Wellington Dam mural was created by a fantastic artist, Guido van Helten. It is extraordinary. Honestly, I reckon it is the most amazing thing, and people come from all over to see it now. It has become this to-do thing on the tourism map. I notice that the South Australian government has copied it. It has obviously seen the mural and will do one on some dam over there—which is obviously not as good as our dam as it is much smaller, but South Australia is copying our mural on one of its dams. We then selected 15 Western Australian artists to paint other murals around the town of Collie. It is all part of the diversification project. The other project being delivered by the Collie delivery unit is \$5.2 million for the Lake Kepwari project, which was completed in December. I am incredibly happy we did that. The member would not have known Hon Mick Murray, but I am so glad I was able to complete that before he left the Parliament and avoid his wrath!

There is the \$4.4 million Collie tourism readiness project to ensure that the town is ready for visitors to come and take advantage of the new attraction. There is the upgrade to the Throssell Street facade. There is \$13.4 million for the emergency services management facility, which is due to be operational next year. There is \$2.5 million for the Collie emergency services vehicle–manufacturing facility, which is due to be completed next month. I think I am due to open that. It will basically be making fire trucks in Collie, which is fantastic. There is \$300 000 for the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety licensing centre, so the call centre, that has gone to Collie, which is wonderful. It is just diversifying the local economy. Through the \$20 million Collie Futures fund, there is the WesTrac autonomous training facility, which is remarkable as well, with \$2.7 million funding. There is \$2 million going towards the graphite processing plant in Collie, which the Minister for Regional Development tells me has created 20 or so jobs. There is \$2 million towards the establishment of a medicinal cannabis processing facility near Collie. There is \$500 000 to support the expansion of the Holista Colltech facility to produce collagen for medical application, which apparently is going to Collie. There we go; it is a pharmaceutical community as well.

These are great investments to diversify an economy that has had a singular focus for a long time. I honestly think that what has happened in Collie should be looked at around the nation for how to diversify a coal town and give it other industries and opportunities for local people to go into to keep their town economy stronger for a longer time. It is well worth other towns in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland looking at all this diversification to see what can be done. I realise that most of them have probably never even heard of Collie, but if they do look at it, they will see an amazing transformation going on.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the line item “Perth Casino Royal Commission” on page 58. I note the Premier’s recent announcement that another \$5 million has been allocated to it. Can the Premier give me a breakdown of expenses relating to the royal commission?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The budget for 2020–21 is \$3.68 million and for 2021–22 it is \$5 million. Obviously, if there is a royal commission, appropriate resourcing must be ensured. That money is to be spent on the remuneration of commissioners, staff and hired labour costs, contracts for services for legal counsel from various law firms, and supplies and services, which I assume is stationery, computing and all those sorts of things. That is where all the money is due to go. The member may have seen on television the number of lawyers and support staff who are there. Obviously, these things cost money. I have seen other royal commissions that cost hundreds of millions of dollars, so by comparison this is much more affordable, but commissions have costs. There may well need to be more money put towards it, because it has been extended until next year, but we will make a decision on that in the midyear review.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the Premier explain why the Attorney General was taking helicopter flights with witnesses of the royal commission?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a very unnecessary and personal question.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the Premier feel that it meets his Ministerial Code of Conduct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: People have private lives. They go to functions and they go to dinner parties. I saw the member for Roe the other night at the Brownlow Medal event. That is his private life. If he wants to go to a birthday party, I am not going to question him about that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I feel that it is a concern under the Ministerial Code of Conduct, especially in relation to the Attorney General and the royal commission.

Mr M. McGOWAN: People go to functions and birthday parties. I do not know how people get there. I do not know how the member got to the Brownlow Medal event the other night. I do not know whether he got a lift with someone. People in public life have private lives. We go to functions and events with friends. I went to a dinner party on Saturday night with some of the parents of kids from my daughter’s school. That is what we do. We do not work 24/7 and we are not members of Parliament or ministers every minute of the day. People have private lives. I do not think

that is a relevant question for a minister. I am not going to ask the member questions about where he goes and what he does in his private time. I do not think it is a fair or relevant line of questioning here.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I turn to the Premier's super departments. Given the evidence Duncan Ord gave about the fact that he did not have any training or experience in the relevant field, is the Premier concerned for the ongoing future regulation of the department?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The royal commission will bring down a report on who needs to be trained and what positions need additional resourcing or what have you. We will await the outcome of the royal commission on that. Operational staff deal directly with the administration and management of the casino and then there are people who run the department. I am sure that the royal commission will examine all those issues. Inevitably, government departments have a range of functions within them, as in all states. We still have the most government departments of any state in Australia, even with our 40 per cent reduction in number. As I have most probably said to the member before, Victoria has seven or eight, but we have 25, so we still have a more diverse array of government departments than other states. Inevitably, anyone running a government department will have a range of functions under them and they will have specialist staff in each area, and specialist staff will deal with some of the operational activities in that department.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As part of the budget and with the ongoing expenses the Premier said may come into it next year, I imagine that this training, which has been identified in the interim royal commission report, will be a key element for that department and a key focus of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

[3.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The \$5 million in funding is for the operation of the royal commission, from which we will receive a report in due course. I think we have the Public Sector Commission coming up shortly. It deals with the sorts of matters that the member just raised.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 60 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Under "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators" is the outcome "Executive Government and members of Parliament receive appropriate support", and the indicators below that. The annual report of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet outlined the provision of training around bullying and harassment. How many complaints about bullying and harassment were made to the department by staff working in electorate offices over the past year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The answer is none.

Mr R.S. LOVE: There have been none?

Mr M. McGOWAN: In terms of how many matters relating to the misconduct of DPC or ministerial staff are currently being investigated, the answer is none.

Mr R.S. LOVE: How many have been investigated over the last year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which line item are we dealing with here?

Mr R.S. LOVE: We are dealing with services for members of Parliament at page 60.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is the member's exact question?

Mr R.S. LOVE: How many complaints about bullying and harassment were made to the department by staff working in electorate offices over the last year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There has been a range of varied complaints, if you like. Some of them are in process; the same ones have been in the newspapers. The ones that have been in the newspapers—the advice I have is there are two—are both being dealt with in accordance with normal processes. I am not going to air internal complaints publicly. They are currently being dealt with in accordance with proper processes.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Of those complaints made, how many were made against members of Parliament?

Mr M. McGOWAN: They were in relation to electorate offices, and, as I said, the member has read about them in the newspapers. They are in the process of being dealt with internally by the systems that are set up for these purposes, as they were during the last government.

Mr R.S. LOVE: How many complaints emanating from ministerial offices were made in that same period?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Zero.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Have any of the complaints that the Premier spoke about been resolved yet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Two are currently being dealt with according to normal processes.

Mr R.S. LOVE: And the Premier cannot confirm whether that is with regard to a complaint against or by an MP?

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

Mr M. McGOWAN: Two are currently being dealt with in relation to electorate offices, but I cannot go into detail because they are currently in a legal process.

Mr R.S. LOVE: How many were made that were dismissed?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Over the course of the last financial year? Is the question about a complaint that was dismissed or an employee who was dismissed?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Complaints that were dismissed.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Zero.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The Premier referenced the newspaper reports. There have been reports about a ministerial office, and the member for Kalamunda has been in one of those reports as well. In both those cases, is the Premier saying that the complaints are still being considered?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Over the course of the last financial year, a settlement was reached in May 2021, which was published, about a matter that occurred sometime before that. That issue was published sometime before that. That matter was settled. It is public knowledge; it was published in the paper. I do not want to make people's lives more difficult by naming the case, but the member can read the newspaper and see it. Two involving electorate offices are currently going through the processes.

Mr R.S. LOVE: When people have come forward and blown the whistle on a work situation like that, does the Premier think more should be done to ensure that the employee feels supported, or does he think the system is weighted too heavily in favour of the MP in a dispute in an office situation at the moment? In other words, what is the Premier doing to ensure there is procedural fairness for electorate officers in a situation like that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: These matters are referred to the Public Sector Commission. It is probably better that we deal with it in that environment.

Mr R.S. LOVE: They are referred to the Public Sector Commission?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand it over to the director general to explain the process.

Ms E. Roper: I will ask Philippa Reid to respond.

Ms P. Reid: If a complaint is made by an electorate officer against a member of Parliament, it is investigated by the department.

Mr R.S. LOVE: By the department itself?

Ms P. Reid: Yes, because the electorate officers are employed by the Speaker and we do the administrative side of that. It is spoken about by the Speaker of the Assembly and the department, and it is investigated and looked into from there.

Mr R.S. LOVE: How regularly reviewed are the processes of weighing up or dealing with a complaint of that nature? How regularly does the department review those processes, and does the Premier feel that they meet contemporary standards?

[3.40 pm]

Ms P. Reid: Okay. It is —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Hold on. No; that question is to me. It always has to come through me.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Sorry; through the Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sorry; can the member repeat the question?

Mr R.S. LOVE: The question was: are the processes by which the complaints are handled when they come into the department about an MP or an electorate staffer regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet contemporary standards of accountability and procedural fairness; and, if so, when was the last time they were reviewed?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand the question to Ms Reid.

Ms P. Reid: The Speaker is the employer of members of Parliament. If a complaint is made, a process is gone through in conjunction with the Speaker because the Speaker is the actual employer, not the department. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council have signed a code of conduct for parliamentary electorate officers, which sets out the exact employment expectations and what employees can expect in their employment within a parliamentary electorate office. Later this year, we will host a parliamentary electorate office conference, which will deal with matters such as bullying, harassment and all those kinds of things. We will provide some training around those matters and will assist electorate staff in how to deal with those sorts of things. I am sure all those questions will be raised at that conference.

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will add something to that. Complaints about MPs are first considered by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. If there is suspected serious misconduct, it is referred to the Corruption and Crime Commission. My impression of the processes inside the department is that they are very fair and very rigorous. As the member will be aware, because he has had some of these issues within his own party, there are regular personality conflicts and the like and they are managed by staff that specifically deal with personnel issues within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr R.S. LOVE: So far we have progressed from the point at which, first of all, we thought it was the Public Sector Commissioner who can deal with it, then the department, then the Speaker, and now the Premier is saying that it goes to the CCC.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No. If there is a complaint about an MP, it is dealt with by the people within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet who deal with personnel matters. There are people inside the agency, as there were when the Leader of the Opposition was a minister, who deal with electorate office staffing matters. Across the state, there are 200 or so electorate officers in all parties, and department personnel deal their issues, whether they are complaints, transitions to other roles, leaving, redundancy or whatever it might be. Certain staff within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet deal with that. If a complaint about an MP is serious misconduct under the definition in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act, that is referred to the CCC.

The CHAIR: Members, I will bring to your attention that we are still at division 3 and we have quite a few more to go if you would like to move on. We have only 20 minutes left in this. Actually, we have an hour and a half.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We finish at 5.00 pm.

The CHAIR: Would you like to keep going on division 3?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes. We still have an hour and a bit.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. We are nearly done. I have one more.

Premier, I refer to volume 1 of the *Budget statements*, page 58, and cyber security. Can the Premier tell me how many instances of cyber attacks there have been on Department of the Premier and Cabinet in the last financial year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The answer is zero because they do not penetrate the perimeter security. My understanding is that there are attempts in the thousands but they are warded off by our systems. How they do that, I do not know. Somehow they do.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the Premier saying that there have not been any cyber attacks that have actually succeeded?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Correct.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: In how many instances were the source of those attacks identified? Is the Premier able to provide information on where those attacks were from?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Italiano answer the member's question.

Mr G. Italiano: It is the case that the number of attempts made to penetrate security at departments, including the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, is large—in the thousands. We do not count those because no meaningful statistics would arise from it. In fact, those attempts are increasing because many of the attacks these days are automatically generated through various products that are available on the market, so it becomes a meaningless number. The primary concern to us is whether any of those attacks result in any kind of incident that requires a department to respond.

At the state level, we do not make attribution. From time to time, the commonwealth has made announcements regarding attribution. We do not. We do not see that as our role, but the commonwealth, obviously, has various security organisations that have the capabilities to make those attributions, but whether the commonwealth makes that public is a matter for the commonwealth.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there a policy decision to not attribute any of the attacks?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the answer was: we do not know. Some of the attackers can get software. It could be two guys in their back shed eating pizza or it could be a foreign government. We do not know. I think the commonwealth knows the answer to that, but I will let Mr Italiano expand.

Mr G. Italiano: What most likely happens in terms of the commonwealth's advice to us is it will issue us with what it would call indicators of compromise, which is a sophisticated way of saying, "This is how you should search your systems to see whether this particular attack is underway in your jurisdiction." But it is very rarely the case that the commonwealth will issue that information to us along with attribution information; that is, the attack is coming from X or Y. The commonwealth has made it pretty clear over the course of the last year that it is concerned about nation state actors, but, again, all attribution is for the commonwealth, not us.

Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Shane Love; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie

Ms E.J. KELSBIE: I refer to volume 1 of the *Budget statements*, page 58, under spending changes, the line item “Perth City Deal—Aboriginal Cultural Centre Planning”. I see that \$2 million is allocated for the planning of the Aboriginal cultural centre. Can the Premier please give an update on how that is going?

[3.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you to the member for Warren—Blackwood for the question. Thank you for your first question in parliamentary estimates. You will come to love this process!

The Aboriginal cultural centre project is in its very early, preliminary, planning stage at this point. The \$2 million will be used to progress the government’s commitment to building a world-class centre on the Derbarl Yerrigan. The funding provides for Aboriginal-led engagement and collaboration with the state’s very diverse Aboriginal communities. The Whadjuk Noongar nation, the traditional owners of the land and waters of the CBD area, will be engaged in all stages of the centre’s scope, design and functions. The Western Australian government is committed to recognising and celebrating the state’s unique Aboriginal culture and heritage, and the ongoing role that culture can play in improving the lives of Aboriginal people and communities. So far, the state government has announced \$50 million in total for planning, design works and seed capital for the Aboriginal cultural centre in Perth. While \$2 million is allocated to Department of the Premier and Cabinet for the planning, the balance is with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, which is in volume 2 of budget paper No 2. We put \$50 million into this project. It has been talked about for a long time. Obviously, we need to consult on a site. It makes sense that the site is near the river, and there are various sites along the river.

We will consult the Aboriginal community on what is appropriate. My view is that it should be relatively close to transport links, or within walking distance, and with opportunities for the maximum number of people to experience and enjoy it. Those are the sorts of things that I think would be important. We can work through all those details with the broader community and the Aboriginal community in particular. We put in \$50 million. It is termed seed capital. We would like contributions from the commonwealth and from industry. Certainly, companies like Rio Tinto have expressed an interest. Large contributions from various industries towards a project of this nature would be good for the state and good for them, and allow us to showcase the extraordinary and timeless culture that has occupied this land for tens of thousands of years. I think it would also be good to be the national centre. I know there is talk about that being in various locations, but not everything has to be in Sydney or Canberra. Having it here would make a lot of sense and would be a fitting recognition of Western Australia’s role.

We will continue to talk to the commonwealth about it providing money and we will continue to talk to industry about it providing money. Obviously, with the federal election coming up, there is an opportunity for both sides of politics to commit to it. Our seed funding is important, and if the commonwealth can put in some money, that would be great.

The bicentenary of European settlement is coming up. Depending on where people are from, settlement was in 1826 or 1829. Obviously, 1829 was the Swan River Colony and 1826 was the Albany settlement of Major Lockyer. I think the cultural centre project could be an important bicentenary project of the Swan River settlement, which took place in June 1829, I think, or maybe a bit later. That is a bit of a bridge between both cultures, on the banks of the Swan River, and it would be a lovely thing. That is a great bicentennial project for Western Australia.

The appropriation was recommended.