

Division 5: Anti-Corruption Commission, \$10 312 000 -

Ms Hodson-Thomas, Chairman.

Dr Gallop, Premier.

Mr G.D. Charlwood, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr M. Banaszczyk, Director Business Services.

Mrs EDWARDES: I refer to significant issues and trends on page 111 of the *Budget Statements*. There is no mention there, or anywhere else throughout the division, of new legislation. Last year the Premier said that he wanted to bring in new legislation to improve the mechanisms and the operations but it has not been mentioned. Is that no longer on the agenda?

Dr GALLOP: The difficulty we had with that issue was that once we called the Royal Commission Into Whether There Has Been Any Corrupt or Criminal Conduct by Western Australian Police Officers, the Cabinet was of the view that it would be better to wait than to bring in new legislation. We have a general commitment to improving the way that the Anti-Corruption Commission operates but until we know precisely what the royal commission recommends, it would not be an effective use of parliamentary time to initiate those reforms.

Ms QUIRK: Dot point four on page 114 refers to the implementation of full telecommunication interception capabilities. Will the Premier expand on that? How many warrants for telecommunications intercepts have been issued in the past 12 months?

[12 noon]

Dr GALLOP: I ask Mr Charlwood to respond to that.

Mr CHARLWOOD: The commission received its full telecommunications capability in September last year. I think that was finally gazetted by the federal Parliament on 28 September last year. Since that date, the commission has had issued to it 10 telecommunications interception warrants and has, in addition, executed four warrants on behalf of another agency.

Mr MCGOWAN: I refer to the last dot point on page 111, which indicates that the total number of complaints to the Anti-Corruption Commission is increasing but the proportion relating to police is starting to decline. Does the Premier have any information on the areas of the public sector in which complaints are increasing and by what magnitude, and why the number of complaints relating to police has decreased?

Dr GALLOP: I ask Mr Charlwood to respond.

Mr CHARLWOOD: The increase has been in the Department of Justice. The total number of complaints about conduct that emanated from that department rose from 37 in 2000-01 to 54 in 2001-02. I cannot give reasons for the increase in that number.

Mr MCGOWAN: Was the increase only in the Department of Justice?

Mr CHARLWOOD: That has been the area in which complaints received by the commission have primarily increased, yes.

Mr McRAE: I refer to the first dot point of major initiatives for 2002-03 on page 115. It states that the focus is on analysing investigation outcomes to develop approaches for addressing public sector-wide corruption issues and to produce results from that. Will the Premier advise us what that program will involve?

Dr GALLOP: I refer that to Mr Charlwood.

Mr CHARLWOOD: It means looking at what we have done in the past and improving the way in which we do things in the future. We are doing that. We are considering a more proactive approach to investigations across the wider public sector, particularly to enhance our intelligence-gathering capabilities to stretch our reach into the public sector in terms of the conduct that the commission investigates.

Mr McRAE: What does it mean to be more proactive?

Dr GALLOP: The point is that the Anti-Corruption Commission has been given two tasks under the legislation. One is to investigate complaints and the other is to improve the general approach of people in the public sector to ethical public administration. That is really what we are talking about. It means that the Government, through the ACC, on behalf of the Parliament and the people, will make sure that people understand the ethical requirements in the way they carry out their duties, and will do that in a proactive way, rather than waiting for a crisis to emerge or a malpractice to be revealed.

Mr McRAE: Would an information program be included in that?

Dr GALLOP: I suppose in this area the government bodies that have responsibility are the office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards and the Anti-Corruption Commission. The Ombudsman has a role in this area as well, as indeed does the Department of the Premier and Cabinet through the administration of the Public Sector Management Act.

Ms QUIRK: I refer to output 1 on page 113. Does the ACC employ a public relations consultant; and, if so, what is the cost of that public relations consultant? The information on the cost may have to be provided by way of supplementary information.

Mr CHARLWOOD: Yes, we do employ a public relations consultant on an as needs basis. I will have to take the question on notice to provide the precise costs of that.

Dr GALLOP: Does the member want that as supplementary information?

Ms QUIRK: Yes.

Dr GALLOP: I will find supplementary information on the costs of providing public relations support for the ACC.

[Supplementary Information No A59]

Ms QUIRK: I refer to the second dot point of major achievements for 2001-02 on page 114. In the course of implementing more effective and efficient investigation management procedures, is the commission currently examining its human resources procedures to determine a more appropriate means of ensuring that the staff are working efficiently and at optimal levels?

Mr CHARLWOOD: All the procedures in the commission are constantly under review. That includes our HR procedures. Yes, we are looking at that area, and will continue to do so.

Ms QUIRK: What sorts of matters is the commission looking at in that regard?

Mr CHARLWOOD: We have significantly reviewed our recruitment strategy. The work that the commission undertakes is particularly demanding and challenging. In the commission's view, a special sort of person is required to undertake that work. In the past the commission has recruited people from a diverse range of backgrounds. The commission has found some of those people to be well suited to undertake the work that it does, and others less so. Over time, the commission has revised its recruitment strategies to ensure that it recruits the right sorts of people to undertake the work it does, and it is continuing to do that.

The commission is also looking at its internal processes to ensure that they are efficient and effective, that the demands the commission places on its staff are well understood and that the standards of the commission are maintained. The commission takes the view that it cannot afford to operate on a principle of near enough being good enough. It must produce investigative outcomes of the highest order. That in itself places perhaps unusually high demands on staff, and the commission is conscious of that.

Ms QUIRK: Are there any special allocations in the budget for counselling of or stress management programs for staff? Again, those details may need to be provided by way of supplementary information.

Mr CHARLWOOD: I cannot direct the member to the precise part of the budget papers in which that information is contained; but, yes, the commission does provide employee assistance program services to all its staff. Those services can be accessed confidentially, at no cost to the employee.

Ms QUIRK: Has the level of overtime this year been as anticipated, or higher or lower?

Mr CHARLWOOD: Overtime this year compared with 2000-01 has reduced. I cannot at this point give the precise figures on that, but I am happy to provide them subsequently.

The appropriation was recommended.

[12.10 pm]