

Division 25: School Curriculum and Standards Authority, \$35 294 000 —

Mr I.M. Britza, Chairman.

Mr J.H.D. Day, Minister for Planning representing the Minister for Education.

Mr A. Blagaich, Chief Executive Officer.

Mrs J. Nairn, Director, Corporate Services.

Ms J. Healy, Director, Policy and Planning.

The CHAIRMAN: 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. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 19 June 2015. 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 with the Clerk's office.

I now ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: I give the call to the member for Armadale.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Looking at the time, just to let the Chair and the minister know, we will not be asking any questions about the next division, the Country High School Hostels Authority, even though it is incredibly important and we have country members here.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will relay the disappointment of the director general of the Department of Education, who is also the CEO of that body. The member has now given her approval to leave, so I thank Sharyn for attending.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to the line item "Workforce Renewal Policy" on page 281 of the *Budget Statements*. How is the minister intending to meet that target and what operational changes will be made to meet the cuts that have to be complied with?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The amount, as indicated in the *Budget Statements* for 2014–15, is \$411 000. I could provide the information that is written there or I could get the CEO to answer. I will do that. It may be more helpful.

Mr A. Blagaich: The timing for us has worked out pretty well. We are currently preparing syllabuses for the Australian curriculum in the K–10 space and developing the year 11 and 12 WACE program. At the conclusion of this work, we will look at a restructure and we will work out what the new work is. It will be less focused on syllabus development. We will be able to make some decisions around that. We have had some voluntary redundancies this year. We have also encouraged staff to declare leave and to take reduced work time during the week, so some staff have dropped down to 0.8. We have looked at how that is working. At the moment it is holding pretty well and we do not think that this next financial year will be a problem for us. I might ask Mrs Nairn whether anything further needs to be added.

Mrs J. Nairn: Yes, I agree with Mr Blagaich. We have already found the \$411 000 for this financial year without having to cut the FTE of staff. I can confirm that into the forward estimates we will be looking at a restructure based on the work that we will need to do. That is likely to take place towards the end of 2016 and moving forward from there.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Can the adviser itemise how those cuts have been made to meet the target for this financial year?

Mrs J. Nairn: Yes, certainly. We have been working very closely with our staff on this. We have kept them informed at every step of the way, which has been important as a small authority. We asked for suggestions from staff on how we might be able to meet these cuts and they have been forthcoming with a number of very good strategies. People have come to us voluntarily requesting reduction of FTE from, say, one FTE to 0.9, which means they get one day off a fortnight. That is working well for them and for the authority. People are taking what we call self-funded leave. I am not sure whether members are familiar with that concept. People can

purchase up to 10 weeks' additional leave. It reduces our salary costs to the authority. A number of people have taken up that option as well. That is really about all we have had to do so far. We have had a couple of people leave voluntarily—resignations and retirements that were quite timely—and we were able to restructure the work that they do within the authority to ensure that we are not reducing our services to any of our stakeholders.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The adviser mentioned that the authority has been able to make these changes and people are taking voluntary redundancy or going to 0.8. Does that mean that there was a lot of fat in the system? The adviser said that no services have been compromised. How have no services been compromised when there is a reduction in staff or the hours being performed by staff?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Just about any agency can always become more efficient. The world changes. Needs and demands change and so on. That is a general comment. I will ask for some additional information.

Mrs J. Nairn: We have also been working very hard in the last 12 months or so in looking at the way we do things and the way we provide our services. I will give an example. We are moving from a manual system—that is, a paper-based model—to working more electronically. Since 2013 we have reduced our paper-based materials by well over 50 per cent. It is probably closer to 60 per cent or more.

The appropriation was recommended.