

**Division 28: Western Australian Electoral Commission, \$8 478 000 —**

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chairman.

Mr C.J. Barnett, Premier representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs.

Mr D. Kerslake, Electoral Commissioner.

Mr. P. Shimmings, Director, Business Services.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Cannington has a question.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I refer to page 308 of budget paper No 2, under “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators”, the reference to percentage of eligible Western Australian electors on the state electoral roll. Firstly, what is the budget for electoral roll management? Secondly, given that a significant number of eligible people have either never enrolled or have not maintained the currency of their enrolment, what initiatives is the commission undertaking to address this? Have any costings or consideration been given to direct enrolment and continuous roll update? If yes, are these considerations with the minister?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** As members are aware, this is not my portfolio, so I do not know exactly what is in the Minister for Electoral Affairs’ mind. I have to rely on the commissioner. I do not know whether he can add any comment on that?

**Mr D. Kerslake:** Yes. As the committee is probably aware, there is a joint roll arrangement in place between Western Australia and the commonwealth. The Australian Electoral Commission for the most part manages the roll. There is a divergence in legislation between the commonwealth and the states. The commonwealth has legislation that enables the direct enrolment of electors when they turn age 18 years and the automatic update of their enrolment details when they move address. That legislation does not exist in Western Australia. Therefore, we are reliant upon electors taking action to get themselves on the roll. There is a historical reluctance for them to do so, and as a result, there is an increasing divergence between the commonwealth and state electoral rolls. Currently around 90 000 electors are enrolled for federal purposes, but not enrolled on the state roll. I do not have the figures at hand on exactly how much we spend on enrolment. Off the top of my head I think it is about \$1.2 million, but I would need to clarify that figure for the member for Cannington. In terms of initiatives, we do a lot of advertising. We had an advertising program when the distribution commenced to draw attention to the need for people to get themselves on the roll, and we will run another major enrolment program in the lead-up to the next state election. The bottom line, unfortunately, is that people are not that responsive to such advertising. The Australian Electoral Commission, for example, notifies all electors when they are on the federal roll but not the state roll, and sends them enrolment forms, but only around 20 per cent of them ever come back.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** If I can add for what it is worth, and I have not spoken to the minister, but my view is that given the integrity of the roll, we should have a consistent or common roll.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I agree with the Premier. The commissioner said that he was not aware of the exact figure, but he said \$1.2 million and I wonder whether we could get that specific figure as supplementary information.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I gather by that from the commissioner that that is available and we will agree to supply that.

[*Supplementary Information No A17.*]

**The CHAIRMAN:** Premier, can you outline for Hansard what it is that you are going to give as supplementary information?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** What are we going to give?

**Mr D. Kerslake:** We will provide the current figure that will be paid to the Australian Electoral Commission for updating the roll. We will also provide some figures on the number of staff and our staffing costs in our own enrolment area.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Premier, the commissioner is legally obliged to enrol citizens of Western Australia, and the commissioner is clearly aware that there are these 90 000-odd people who are not enrolled when they are legally obliged to be and he is legally obliged to have them enrolled. I wonder whether the government has had any discussions about providing additional resources to the commissioner to overcome this problem.

[5.50 pm]

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** It does not involve me but I certainly take the member’s point. I will raise that with the minister responsible. Like the member, I think anyone who can be on the roll should be on the roll.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I refer to the delivery of services on page 307. Will there be an extra allocation in the Electoral Commission budget for enrolment drives in regional and remote Western Australia in the lead-up to the next election?

**Mr D. Kerslake:** We do not have specific budgeting for enrolment in particular areas, but we focus on a range of target groups, including Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse electors. We try to tailor our enrolment programs accordingly. We work closely also with the Australian Electoral Commission, which employs Indigenous staff, who do a lot of enrolment work in remote areas.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Does the WA Electoral Commission have any Indigenous staff focused on enrolment?

**Mr D. Kerslake:** No.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I refer to the income statement for the entity on page 311. Under “Income from State Government”, it refers to resources received free of charge. Can the Premier outline what those are? I have my suspicion, but can he indicate why income will increase in the current financial year?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I do not even have a suspicion, but maybe the commissioner can tell us what that number refers to.

**Mr D. Kerslake:** We operate local government elections on a cost-recovery basis, so we recover funds from local government elections. We run also private elections. We have the power to run elections for private organisations and we charge for those events.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I understand that the commission charges for services, but this says “Resources received free of charge”. My suspicion was that it was perhaps services provided by other government agencies, so it might increase this year due to supporting the Electoral Distribution Commissioners in their work. I thought it might be something like Landgate providing additional services because it says “free of charge”; it is not “fee for service”.

**Mr D. Kerslake:** We receive assistance from Landgate with things such as distribution, but I do not want to mislead the committee. To be certain, I probably need to take that on notice and get back to the member.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** If the Premier is happy with that, I am happy with that.

**Mr D. Kerslake:** As supplementary information, I will check the source of that item in the budget and clarify it for the member.

*[Supplementary Information No A18.]*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** At the top of page 309, the first service and key efficiency indicator is “Provision of Independent, Impartial and Efficient Electoral Services to Electors for Parliament and other Electoral Clients”. Obviously, the commission is doing fee for service with unions and local governments. Have any elections been conducted by the commission for the current financial year, 2014–15, and how many are estimated for 2015–16?

**Mr D. Kerslake:** If we are referring to the private organisations, yes. I cannot tell the member the number, but numerous elections are held for a variety of company boards and universities. A wide range of organisations ask us. It is a question of our agreeing to do them and then we charge for those services. I anticipate that we will receive quite a few requests next year also. Often those requests come in only a short time before the event, so I cannot provide an exact number.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Is that number of fee-for-service elections recorded in the annual report of the agency?

**Mr D. Kerslake:** They normally are, but I can check how many elections we have conducted to date, if the member would like that number, and provide the number of elections we have run for private organisations from the beginning of the financial year to date, including the names of the organisations.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Not the names. I assumed that some would be commercially arranged. The names would be great but the number is the important part.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** If the names can be supplied, we will do that as well.

*[Supplementary Information No A19.]*

**The appropriation was recommended.**

*Meeting suspended from 5.55 to 7.00 pm*