

Chair; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Simon Millman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr David Michael

Division 25: Western Australia Police Force, \$1 493 516 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mrs M.H. Roberts, Minister for Police.

Mr C. Dawson, Commissioner of Police.

Mr C. Blanch, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Mr P. Steel, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Ms K. Whiteley, Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support.

Mr S. Grieve, Acting Commissioner, Road Safety Commission.

Mr I. Cameron, Chairman, Road Safety Council.

Ms S. Cardenia, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr F. Pasquale, Executive Director.

Mr K. Law, Assistant Director, Finance and Business Services, Road Safety Council.

[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 she 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, 31 May 2019. 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 member for Hillarys.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Good evening, minister, and good evening, everyone. Thank you for being here! I will start off with a question about resources and strength of numbers. I refer to the services and key efficiency indicators on page 358 of the *Budget Statements*. Could the minister indicate the current number of sworn police officers employed by the WA Police Force and what the authorised strength is for 30 June 2019?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the member asking about numbers to 30 June 2019? We are not at that yet.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Last year the minister provided me with an authorised strength number for 30 June 2018, but I am happy to have an authorised strength number for right now.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The authorised strength for June 2019 is 6 350.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: What is the number we actually have?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The number is 6 226.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Based on the figures the minister has provided, we are currently 124 police officers short of the authorised strength of the force. Is the minister able to provide an explanation of why we are 124 police officers short of the authorised strength?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. As the member would be aware, there was a voluntary redundancy program, and 150 officers were offered voluntary redundancy and took it. We have a program to replace those officers. We will have recruited to replace those 150 officers by the end of this year.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: When the minister says by the end of this year, does she mean the end of the current financial year, 30 June 2019, or does she mean 31 December 2019?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I mean December this year, so the end of this calendar year.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Between now and the end of December, will the minister be able to find another 124 police officers on top of the normal attrition?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, we will. I recently had a briefing from Assistant Commissioner Properjohn in which she outlined the recruitment process and the intake for various schools this year. I think there is a school intake in September and the final one will be in December—I think that will be the final 30 of the 150.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I am not sure that those numbers add up, but I will persist. I will just leave those numbers there. I have a further question on this issue of resourcing. The minister mentioned the voluntary separation scheme. There were 150 places. Has that scheme now been fully subscribed?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, people left quite some time ago. Just to clarify when the next police courses are, there will be intakes this year on Friday, 19 July; Friday, 13 September; and Thursday, 7 November. Sorry, I have given the graduation dates! When the member asked whether we will be able to make up the number by the end of the year, we have squads graduating in July, September and November, and we are also recruiting further. There is an intake school in December.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Further to this issue, I am just trying to make sure I do not use the wrong reference. I refer to page 363 —

The CHAIR: Member, is that a separate item to the one you have referred to?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: It is really further to the strength of police.

The CHAIR: All right, we are on page 363.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to page 363 and footnote (b) to the income statement. It indicates that the budgeted number of full-time equivalents employed across WA police, including sworn officers and non-sworn staff, for this current financial year, 2018–19, is lower than the estimated actual number, so we have seen a diminution in the number of both police officers and non-police staff over this current financial year. How is that explained?

[7.10 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I cannot understand what the member is saying, because he has referred me to page 363, item (b), which states —

The full-time equivalents for 2017–18 Actual, 2018–19 Estimated Actual and 2019-20 Budget Estimate ...

And so forth. That is a figure for all full-time equivalent positions.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Correct. Last year, 2017–18, the actual was 8 648. The current year that we are in, 2018–19, the estimated actual is 8 591. We have seen a reduction in those numbers between what we had at the end of the last year and what we anticipate to have at the end of this year. Have we seen a reduction in non-sworn staff as well as sworn staff over the past 12 months?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, that reflects a reduction in unsworn staff, not sworn staff.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Further question?

The CHAIR: Member, you have had five questions and other members want to ask questions—one more, and that is it.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Can the minister give me the number of actual non-sworn staff at the end of last year and the estimated actual at the end of this current financial year, please?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Police staff in 2017–18 were 1 878; in 2018–19 we budgeted for 1 782, and our estimated actual for 2018–19 is 1 865.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Can I have a further question?

The CHAIR: No, member. The member for North West Central has been waiting for some time. You can always come back to it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 354 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the line item “Government Regional Officer Housing”. I note the deferral of GROH rent increases announced by Ministers Johnston and Tinley today. Is this reflected in the budget papers and specifically the police budget appropriation, or is this a decision subsequent to the budget?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This matter has been raised with government, and certainly I have been raising the situation of police officers’ GROH within government for some time. The decision has been made since the budget process has been completed.

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given the decision was made subsequent to the completion of the budget, what will be the impact on the police budget of taking a decision not to increase rents, and will the additional appropriation be made by the police or will it be absorbed into the police budget?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not expect any impact on the police budget. If matters are resolved, Treasury will need to sort that out. If a decision is made post a budget process, for example, the next opportunity to address that matter would be the midyear review at the end of the year. When the midyear review comes down towards the end of December, assuming a decision is made on it sometime between midyear and December, I would expect that that will be reflected then. I certainly hope that there would be no impact on the budget.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The state budget was handed down less than two weeks ago, which finalised the budget for the police. Also in the budget was a rent increase for police officers who pay GROH rent. Now the minister is saying that today two ministers, the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Industrial Relations, announced that they are going to defer the increase in rents for police officers, and the Minister for Police is saying that that is the business of Treasury and it will not have an impact on the police budget. Is that what the minister is saying?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I would be more than happy to give the member a full answer on this. As the member would be aware, in December 2016, prior to the 2017 election, the Liberal–National government decided to put in place an additional impost on all government workers for their housing in regional areas, and that was to up their rent by \$30 a week each and every year into the future. That is what we inherited. As a member for the Pilbara region, the member might be interested in this. In that December 2016 pre-election budget, the previous government cut out the regional incentives for the Pilbara and other regional areas. The final act of the Liberal–National government was to hike up rents for all government workers—not just police, but nurses and other government workers—by \$30 a week for the foreseeable future. It also took away the regional incentives for police officers, and had those ceasing on 30 June 2018. That was put into the forward estimates. That is what the Liberal–National government went to with the forward estimates. My recollection is that we had to find about \$8 million to make up for the hole that was left by a government that the member was part of which took away those regional incentives from 30 June onwards that year. I am very pleased that my colleagues have made this decision today, because with the wage restraint that has been in place, it has been tough on those police officers who have had to pay an additional \$30 a week for some 785 properties in regional Western Australia. That does not mean that they are paying above-market rental or that government has somehow been gouging them, but it was a decision of the Liberal–National government to put those imposts in place. It left us with about \$40 billion worth of debt and a budget that was predicated on removing regional incentives completely and also hiking up rents by \$30 a week.

The member's point is that he cannot see how this does not come out of the police budget. Our government may well take a decision to leave this and not put those increases in place. One point I would make is that no-one pays more than market rent, and once market rents are achieved, there is no further increase. I note that in some country towns, rents are now very low. I expect that there will be some review of that too. There are obviously considerations across the public sector that my colleagues are taking into account. The government will come to a decision. That decision might be to completely remove the impost that was put in place by the last Liberal–National government. It might be something different from that. If it is something different from that, and a cost is attached, that will be dealt with, as is the normal practice of government, between the Western Australia Police Force and WA Treasury.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Was it the previous government that passed on the \$30 rent increase or was it the minister when she came to government? My recollection is that that \$30 was not passed on by the previous government; it was passed on while the minister was in government. I just wanted to make that point.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: But that is not right.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is saying to me that there are not going to be any cuts —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: You are just plain wrong on that, by the way.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am not.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Rent was increased the year before.

[7.20 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What is going to be cut out of the police budget to fill this hole? After the state budget was passed just a week and a half ago, the minister has now made an alteration to a major plank of her government, and that was to continue increasing GROH rents by \$30 a year; something that she actually put in. Can the minister tell me, in this police budget, what further cuts are going to be made to the police force with this decision that the two ministers have made today?

The CHAIR: Member, I think you have already asked that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think the member for Pilbara should be embarrassed about the position —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am the member for North West Central, just to get that clear.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for North West Central should be embarrassed about the situation that the former government left the state in. In 2017, we were heading towards \$30 billion debt and booked up towards \$40 billion worth of debt. In that, it was going to be gouging all public servants living in country areas.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: And you are taking it up to \$45 billion.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Their much-wanted incentives for police and other people in the Pilbara and other regions were being abolished. It had them being abolished on 30 June. If it were not for this government —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Tell us what you are going to cut! That was the question.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If it were not for our fiscal restraint, we would not have been able to pay out that money and keep those regional incentives going. The fact of the matter is I have already answered the question that the member for North West Central keeps repeating. There is no plan to cut anything out of the police budget. I expect that this is very much a status quo position, and I would fully expect that, for example, should government decide that there is no increase to the police budget, Treasury will top up the police budget. That is what happens. That is the way good government operates. The member's government was mean and hopeless at financial management and may have operated it a different way, but that is not the way that we operate. We are open; we are accountable. When the decision is made on whether or not to maintain rents at zero, an adjustment will be made. Adjustments are regularly made, whether it is the police force budget or other government budgets, in the course of the midyear review each year. The member is trying to beat up an issue that simply does not exist.

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

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The CHAIR: There have been 11 questions asked by the opposition.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is opposition time!

The CHAIR: That is 10 per cent.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 360 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the heading "Asset Investment Program". Towards the end of the table "Works in Progress" is the line item "Automatic Number Plate Recognition—Technology Refresh". Can the minister provide an update on the outcomes of the deployment of automatic numberplate recognition?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Automatic numberplate recognition is really valuable to our police. Interestingly, it is something that I think we introduced under the Gallop government when I was last Minister for Police, so I am really pleased now to see that we have money in the budget to refresh the automated numberplate recognition capability. That technology enables intelligence-led road safety and policing initiatives to be more targeted. It automatically identifies unlicensed drivers and unlicensed vehicles. One might ask how an unlicensed driver can be identified by a numberplate. It is because we know within the system which vehicles are regularly driven by unlicensed drivers. Those capabilities help police in terms of priority alert functions; vehicles of interest are added to their intel, immediately improving the chance of locating those vehicles.

Thousands of vehicles can pass through an automatic numberplate recognition system and be identified very quickly. The system identifies any numberplates of note. It is not just about road safety matters; it may be that the individual associated with the numberplate has an outstanding warrant, or something of that nature. The upgrade will assist in some hoon-related investigations. We have seen in the media recently that there have been problems with hoons. Although we cannot stop people hooning, we can certainly provide police with the tools to identify those hoons, to be able to apprehend them, seize their vehicles, and put them before the courts. With this upgrade there will be increased functionality to be able to identify the make, model and colour of vehicles, using artificial intelligence that learns over time. It will enable the processing of videostreaming from drones, and handheld devices and in-vehicle video. The upgrade will have other enhancements. It will mean that the information is accessible by all police officers, and hopefully it will mean that more people who should be prosecuted will be prosecuted for those offences. I suppose the hope we have is that if people have a real belief that they are likely to be caught, that might make some of them think twice about doing the wrong thing. I make the point that in times gone by, people who had lost their licence, for example, might think that they would not be picked up by a police officer if they were driving carefully, not speeding, and making sure that they were doing all the right things. These days, if an unlicensed driver passes an automatic numberplate recognition system, there is an immediate ping, and

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police can identify that vehicle, question the driver and ask to see their licence. That is how a lot of people who are driving without a driver's licence are picked up. It is really important to equip the police with the tools that they need in this day and age.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Greetings, minister.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Greetings.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 360 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, under the heading "Asset Investment Program", the table "Works in Progress", and the line item at line 25, "Breath and Drug Bus Replacement". In last year's estimates, the minister informed the committee that one of the breath and drug buses was no longer viable for operation, and that two medium-sized buses will replace the large mobile police facility, making it easily deployable into regional Western Australia. Have the medium-sized breath and drug buses been purchased and assigned to WA police?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes. I have good news in that regard. Our police fleet includes four large mobile breath and drug-testing buses. One of the buses, as the member is aware, has reached the end of its operational life. We are in the process of replacing that oldest bus with two medium-sized buses. The belief there is that whilst these new buses will be able to conduct drug and breath testing in a similar way to the existing buses, they will have greater flexibility to be able to operate in regional areas, as the member has suggested, and they will be able to access areas that were not previously covered by the larger buses. Being a former police officer, the member will be aware that those large buses need a fairly big place to park, so that limits the locations they can be placed. This will mean it is more versatile. I understand that tenders for the supply of the two smaller buses have been released to market, and they closed in March. We are anticipating that the tender will be awarded by 1 June this year, so that is good news. Those buses will no doubt need to be fitted out, made ready and so forth. I understand that the anticipated rollout and trial of them will be in March 2020, so a little under a year away before we have those two new buses up and running.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, I refer to page 356, budget paper No 2, volume 2, the service summary expenses table, at line item 2, "Regional and Remote Policing Services".

Now that the Assistant Commissioner for Professional Standards, Murray Smalpage, yesterday tweeted that it was his last day in the role of Assistant Commissioner Regional WA, who will replace him, as the rumour is that he will not be replaced?

[7.30 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: He has been replaced. The member has probably met Commander Jo McCabe. She has also been based in regional Western Australia. She is currently acting in the position, so the position has not been abolished. The position has been advertised within Western Australia Police Force and it will be filled.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: As assistant commissioner?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, that is right.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to page 363, specifically "Cost of Services". The first line item under "Expenses" is "Employee Benefits". I note that between the estimated actual cost of employee benefits—salaries and other allowances paid to employees—for the financial year that is about to end and the budgeted estimate for this forthcoming 2019–20 year, the total cost of employee benefits is being reduced by almost \$60 million. How will we employ more police officers but pay them less?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think that the member has failed to understand what that is about. That is largely about Government Regional Officers' Housing and a change in accounting standards. To explain that to the member, I will ask our executive director, Mr Frank Pasquale, to provide some information on that.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: There is not \$1 billion of Government Regional Officers' Housing.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Perhaps the member could listen to a sensible explanation.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I appreciate that, yes. I am willing to listen to that.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I ask Mr Frank Pasquale to comment, please.

Mr F. Pasquale: There is a new accounting standard, as the minister referred to, that can be a little confusing because it affects various parts of the financial statements that are published this evening. Maybe before I get into salaries and wages, I will explain the change in the accounting standard. It relates to the way that agencies have to report leases. Previously, organisations had a choice on the way they accounted for leases, whether they classified a lease as an operating lease or as a finance lease. Depending on which classification it was given, it affected the financial statements in different ways. The Western Australia Police Force has historically classified its leases as

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operating leases, which means that they were on the income statement. The organisation has many types of leases. In relation to salaries and wages, the obvious lease is around Government Regional Officers' Housing, where they are actual leases. As a result of the accounting standard, we now have to change the way we account for that. As a result, there is about a \$40 million reduction in the salaries expense line item to reflect the transfer of that accounting treatment, which now sits on the balance sheet as opposed to the income statement. It distorts the figures, unfortunately, but that is the situation.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a further question on employee benefits. Overall, I accept that explanation in part, but I want to examine all employee benefits, rather than just that component that relates to leases on Government Regional Officers' Housing. Obviously, in the forward estimates, there is a slight increase in employee benefits. What wage increase for police officers is factored into that slight increase in employee benefits over the forthcoming financial year and then the three years of the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I expect it is the same for all public servants and all government employees. I believe that all agencies' budgets are predicated on the \$1 000 increase per annum. That is the government policy, so that is what is put into the various budgets. I do not believe Police is any different in that regard.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I have a further question on the accounting standard to which Mr Pasquale referred. My understanding, Mr Pasquale, through the minister, is that that accounting standard is AASB 16; is that correct?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: There has been some discussion around whether employees may move from a 40-hour week to a 38-hour week. Is there any estimate of the cost to the police budget if in any future industrial agreement there was a move from a 40-hour week to a 38-hour week for police officers?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not believe that question is in order. We are not proposing to change police officers' weeks from 40 hours to 38 hours, and the matter is not before us in this budget paper. The member for Hillarys appears to be speculating on what may or may not happen in an enterprise bargaining agreement and the WA Police Union's position on the EBA. That is not something that is for the police budget estimates.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the government's election commitments, and the budget has the Carnarvon police and community youth centre —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: What page?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is page 353. The budget has \$500 000 in 2019–20 and another \$550 000 in 2020–21. Was this the government's commitment in the lead-up to the 2017 election for the Carnarvon PCYC?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for North West Central. Notably, no-one, including the member for North West Central, raised it with me as a question in budget estimates last year, but when we reviewed our election commitments, we uncovered a commitment that had been made by a local Labor candidate to provide funds for the Carnarvon Police and Community Youth Centre. That candidate had promised \$3 million. We have had discussions with the PCYC group and sought advice on what would be needed to significantly upgrade the PCYC. We have provided over \$1 million for the Carnarvon PCYC, some in this financial year and some in next. I am told that that will be magnificent for the Carnarvon PCYC. I very strongly support PCYCs and I certainly made the case for not only Carnarvon to be funded, but also for PCYCs to be provided sustainable funding into the future. Sadly, the former government effectively encumbered PCYCs with about a \$4 million recurrent gap every year by taking out full-time equivalent positions and not adequately funding PCYCs. Not only have we moved to improve the funding situation for PCYC, but we have provided \$1.05 million for the Carnarvon PCYC.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is saying that the candidate at the time, Shane Hill, a former staffer of the minister and a former member of this place —

The CHAIR: Member, keep to the budget.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: — committed to the community, and everybody believed it was an opposition commitment at the time, \$3 million to the PCYC in Carnarvon. The minister is saying that, because it was a candidate commitment, the government will not fulfil the obligation, when everyone rightly assumes that if someone makes a \$3 million commitment, that \$3 million commitment will be fulfilled. Clearly \$1 million is welcome, but it is not enough for the police and community youth centre, because it is an integral part of the community. More importantly, the government has short-changed the people of Carnarvon by \$2 million. The minister is saying that she cannot believe a Labor candidate's pledge during election time, because she is not honouring that pledge of \$3 million.

[7.40 pm]

The CHAIR: Member, that is not what the minister said, but she can look after herself, I know.

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Let me explain very clearly what I am saying. I am saying that the member cared so little about the Carnarvon PCYC that he made no pledge at all. He was the local member, and he did not even promise one dollar.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is not true.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The government that the member was part of ran the Federation of Western Australian Police and Community Youth Centres into the ground, and put it in a situation where it would have been bankrupt by June this year if our government did not prop it up.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister should get her facts right. She is misleading Parliament now.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have had to prop up PCYC because of the hole that the previous government left it in. I know the member is a member of the National Party, but unlike him, we spend money responsibly, and the responsible thing to do here is to spend \$1 million in Carnarvon. That is what is required to fix that PCYC and provide for the community of Carnarvon. The previous government left a \$4 million a year hole in PCYC. That is the fact of the matter—the previous government ran PCYC into the ground. It did not give a jot about it, and the member did not give a jot about the Carnarvon PCYC because he has never given it a dollar—no upgrade, it was in shocking condition. Shane Hill recognised that it needed an upgrade, but the local member did nothing at all, and now he has the gall to come in here and complain that the government is only giving it \$1 million, when he would not give it one dollar.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have a further question on PCYCs. In the table of spending changes on page 354 of the *Budget Statements*, I notice that \$7 million has been allocated to police and community youth centres. Can the minister elaborate on the role that PCYCs have in the community?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question and for his support of PCYCs. Police and community youth centres, previously known as police and citizens' youth clubs, do a magnificent job in the community, and police have been the biggest part of that for so long. We used to have police in the centres as managers, but it is very important that police are part of PCYCs. They have a 77-year history. They evolved after the Second World War when the view was that young people were creating trouble and getting up to mischief, lacking a father figure in their life, because maybe dad had lost his life in the war or had come back significantly injured. They fulfilled that role then. They used to do more sports and boxing, and they still do those things, but they do a lot of other things now as well. They have computer labs, drop-in centres on Friday nights and all kinds of programs. I saw one recently at Gosnells called the wheels for life program, in which people are repairing bicycles and providing them to the community. They do a simply brilliant job.

We as a government are very keen to see PCYCs thrive, and not go backwards as had been happening. The Federation of Western Australian Police and Community Youth Centres came to the government and said that, because of decisions taken by the former government, it was going under to the tune of \$4 million a year. As a result, we have reviewed that, and the government has looked at PCYC's financial situation, what it offered to the community and what it could offer into the future. We are providing grants totalling \$7 million over the next two years to enable the organisation to maintain its current programs and services. That prop-up had to go in there because of decisions taken by the previous government. PCYC will be targeting youth at risk, which is a very important thing to do.

As I have mentioned, we are committing \$1 million to Carnarvon. We are also committing money, for the first time ever, to expand PCYC into Kununurra. It is a real community partnership that makes a real difference. Having police as part of that ensures that, for a lot of young people, the first time they come into contact with police is a really positive experience. I also commend the PCYCs operating in country towns, where they are a real feature of towns such as Collie, Albany, Broome and Geraldton. They do a magnificent job. People often complain that positive things should be offered for young people to engage in, and PCYC is at the forefront of doing it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 363, where funding for PCYCs is detailed. Why is it only worth \$7 million in the budget, compared with the minister's media release, which shows \$11.3 million? Which one is correct—the budget, which states \$7 million, or the media release that says \$11.3 million?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If the member for North West Central was actually listening when I was responding to the member for Armadale, he would have heard that the \$7 million is for ongoing programs, and the other \$4 million is a specific sum for capital works grants, such as the \$1 million to Carnarvon, and over \$1 million for Kununurra. Basically, there is a total of \$4 million for those capital grants.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So that is \$2 million that the minister just said, on top of the \$7 million. Where is the other \$2 million going?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If the member will bear with me a moment, I will get out the full list.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The sums are not adding up, that is all.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is a shame that the member prefaces his question by suggesting that my media statement was not correct.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given what has happened with the Labor candidate saying \$3 million, when we only received \$1 million, I question anything that the minister has put out.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Our government is providing \$11.3 million in funding for the 2019–20 state budget to ensure the ongoing operation and sustainability of PCYC, and to expand its services across the state. As part of this funding, the Western Australia Police Force will provide grants totalling \$7 million to PCYC over two years, to allow the organisation to maintain current programs and services targeted at at-risk youth in Western Australia. Continued delivery of PCYC early intervention and diversion services to at-risk youth aligns with the Premier's priorities of a safer community and Aboriginal wellbeing. The funding is \$2 million for Kununurra, not \$1 million. It is \$1 million for Carnarvon and \$1.3 million for Broome.

[7.50 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Where is the other \$2 million?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is \$1.3 million, \$1 million, and \$2 million. That is \$4.3 million.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is \$1 million for Carnarvon —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is \$2 million for Kununurra and \$1.3 million for Broome.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On page 363 under “Carnarvon and Kununurra PCYCs”, there is \$1.198 million, then \$1.169 million. That is \$2.3 million. There is another \$633 000, but that still does not reach \$11.3 million.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Let us look at this very closely. For the line item “Carnarvon and Kununurra PCYCs”, there is \$1.198 million, \$1.169 million, and \$633 000. For the line item “Sustainability Funding for PCYC”, there is \$4 million and \$3 million. To find the money for Broome, look at the line item “Indigenous Advancement Strategy—West Kimberley Youth and Resilience Hub Project”. That is for the PCYC as well. There is \$50 000 and \$1.286 million, which is why I said that was \$1.3 million.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 354 and the line item “Sustainability Funding for PCYC”. Why are there only two years of funding, yet it is for sustainability? There is nothing for the last two years of the forward estimates.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Under the previous forward estimates, there was no money there, and there was no money in the former government's forward estimates. It was thought that none would be required. However, PCYC explained to us the dire situation that it was in. It explained to us that because of the former government's policy, it had had to sell property to sustain itself. The PCYC has a new president and CEO and there have been significant changes to the board. The new leaders believe that they will be able to attract significant private donations and support. Police and community youth centres have a very good reputation in the community so they are hopeful of better managing the organisation in the future. They are also quite hopeful of being able to attract significant private sponsorship. Our government is very supportive of PCYC, but we are also very keen to properly manage the budget and would like to see PCYC perform better financially. I think we can expect better fiscal management under the new leadership. It, I think quite rightly, believes it can attract private sponsorship in the future. Of course, we will have to monitor how that goes. We wanted to make sure that it could sustain itself and operate over the next couple of years without having to sell more property, cut programs or cut costs. We want it to be sustainable into the future. When we consider the budget for next year and the year after, our government will look at its needs in years 3 and 4. At this point, we do not know that. We are hopeful that it will get itself onto a stronger financial footing and will attract private interest and private sponsorship. That is what we have done. We have come in with some rescue money for it. It is not just for one year, because that would be pretty hopeless; we have put the money on the table for two years. We will see how it manages with that funding and how it goes with private sponsorship. Then we will need to no doubt meet with it again.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to paragraph 1.1, “Digital Policing—Mobility” under the asset investment program on page 360. According to the spending changes on page 353, \$8.4 million has been allocated to this project. When will these mobile devices be allocated to frontline officers; will they be made available statewide or district by district; and will training to use these devices be provided?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Our government is providing \$34.6 million for the rollout of 3 500 mobile smart devices to police officers. I think this is very much overdue. I understand that similar devices have been rolled out to police officers in other states to good effect. The digital policing program provides an interconnected, scalable, flexible, digital capacity at lower costs and better outcomes than standalone technological projects. Equipping our police officers with mobile technology will improve community and officer safety. It will provide frontline officers with mobile devices that have a suite of applications, which will ensure access to crucial policing functions in the field.

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Importantly, the devices will reduce the need for officers to return to the station to complete administrative tasks. Hopefully, that will allow officers more time to police the streets and the community. Officer safety will also be improved through GPS tracking. It will also increase access to data and information in the field. To give the member some examples, if police turn out somewhere, they will be able to check in to the database to find out whether someone has a gun licence or whether there has been a history of turnouts to that address. It will also mean that police officers will be able to take statements in the field and will not have to go back to the station to retype them. Police are currently doing a lot of work twice because they are doing it once in the field and going back to the station and keying it in.

The member asked about country officers. I guess that is because he is the member for Kalgoorlie. It is anticipated that the devices will be rolled out to country officers where there is a 4G network. The commissioner can add to that.

[8.00 pm]

Mr C. Dawson: For country officers, it is akin to being on an aircraft. When coming back into contact with the terrestrial network, the officers who may be employed who are out of range of the normal telco services simply get updated as they come back into range. As with any mobile network, most of it can be achieved through arterial highways and roads, and certainly through the south west where about 80 per cent of the population live. For instance, if someone is out of range—in the member's area, out of Kalgoorlie, for instance—as they come back into range, whatever they are inputting or receiving will be updated. At all times we would have the voice management system that already exists.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Does the cost include lost devices, damaged devices and stolen devices; and, if so, how much? When police officers jump out of a car, they do not tend to pack things away. There have been times when vehicles have been left unlocked. I am inquiring about that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is a reasonable question. Obviously, the member would be aware that officers currently carry their own private phones. Maybe they will need to put some robust cases on them. Normal wear will be regarded as normal wear and tear, and redundancy arrangements are available for their replacement. They have not been rolled out yet but I am sure that appropriate measures will be taken. We are keen to see officers continue to be able to operate one.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a further question about digital policing mobility. Could the minister indicate the anticipated time frame in which every officer who is deemed to need one of these devices will have one?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I understand that the mobile devices will be rolled out progressively from 2020 to 2021. I might ask Deputy Commissioner Blanch to give some more information.

Mr C. Blanch: That is right. We will commence rolling them out from early next year. We hope to have them out as soon as we can but we will be working through the entire year to get them out to all frontline officers across the state.

Just to add to that, New Zealand, which has been doing this mobility rollout for some seven years, is partnering with us to give us the best understanding of how to do it the right way, whether it has been a robust device and how those apps should operate, to give us the best opportunity to succeed as early as possible.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 354, and the second paragraph under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency", which states —

As part of the Government's Meth Action Plan, the Western Australia Police Force has established a Meth Border Force to disrupt the supply chain and alleviate the harm caused by illicit drugs.

Where will the officers under the methamphetamine action plan be based and will it have a marine component to it?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have already recruited the 100 officers for the meth border force and the 20 unsworn officers who have other professional capacities. They will predominantly be based in the metropolitan area but they will travel to country regions routinely. The member for Kalgoorlie would be aware that officers have been to Kalgoorlie a couple of times quite recently. They are very mobile in country areas. We have had some significant meth seizures in both Kalgoorlie and Bunbury recently. They spend time on the road out in country regions.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Out of the 100 methamphetamine police officers, there are no permanently based meth police officers in regional WA. Is there a marine component? Will a police boat be based in the north west, say, to assist in these operations?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will make a few remarks about the government's policy and then I will ask the commissioner to provide some further information.

Over the period 2017–18 through to 2023, the McGowan government has allocated \$125.9 million to the WA Police Force as part of its methamphetamine action plan. That is a huge amount of money. A significant part of that is for the 120 additional personnel who will form that task force. It is a statewide task force. The meth action plan is focused

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on three key areas—to reduce demand, harm and supply. The WA Police Force methamphetamine enforcement task force is mobile. It targets drug transit routes, known as methamphetamine distribution points, to disrupt and stop the supply of meth into Western Australia. We have had some huge seizures. This financial year alone, up to 30 April this year, our police have seized nearly 300 kilograms of meth. That includes 28 offenders being charged with money laundering-related offences, with \$13.9 million in cash and \$16.3 million in other assets being frozen.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Madam Chair, I asked a specific question. Will any of these police officers be based in regional WA?

The CHAIR: The minister foreshadowed that the commissioner would add specific details to the minister's answer to your question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The point I am making is that to be able to seize drugs and do the job in regional Western Australia, the ideal way of doing it is not necessarily basing people in country towns. Our police force has had immense success. It makes use of officers in local regions where appropriate. I remind people that back in 2017, we had the biggest methamphetamine seizure ever when nearly 1.3 tonnes was seized in Geraldton. We have had huge seizures of drugs in other locations. In March 2018, for example, 31 kilos of meth was seized in Dampier. The smart thing is not to put two or three people in Dampier and say, "See how you go finding some drugs there." The smart thing to do is to use intelligence. This is a serious business. I understand that the member is based in the regions. I will pass over to the police commissioner to talk about their methodology. The underlying question is: should we be basing some of these officers in regional Western Australia or should most of them be based in the metropolitan area? That is the point that we are addressing. I will pass on to the Commissioner of Police.

Mr C. Dawson: With respect to the approach that WA Police is taking to interdict methamphetamine, which is the main primary illicit substance of harm in WA, it is essentially intelligence based. In my former role as head of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—in fact, Deputy Commissioner Blanch was my national manager there for both international and national drug trafficking operations—we were well aware of the assets that the commonwealth has. We work very closely with our international partners—agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration, which is the largest law enforcement agency specifically dedicated to illicit drugs in the world, the National Crime Agency in the UK, the FBI and other such agencies, including in New Zealand.

With respect to intelligence, we obviously work with our international partners because we know that by weight and volume, the primary importation of methamphetamine is from international waters so we are working very closely with the Australian Defence Force, Australian Border Force and other agencies that have primary responsibility for border control operations. The state waters are only limited in policing to three nautical miles off our coast. We do not have any water assets based up in the north west. We have water police deployed, as indeed are our watercraft or tactical response group. Two years ago, in a big operation, which we termed Shenze, a Chinese vessel offloaded to two small tenders. We deployed our tactical response group that went out way beyond state waters, but the offenders were apprehended. The operation was in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police and Australian Defence Force. That is an example of where we operate. We also have aircraft, WA Police Force assets, deployed in the north west that we complement as well. But this will not work by WA Police working alone, so essentially we are working with international and national partners. Primarily, our emphasis is on ensuring that our intelligence systems are upgraded. Although the majority of police officers are deployed from Perth, they are routinely and regularly deployed throughout the state and right to our borders. That deployment has been complemented by funding to provide TruNarc-type devices that can identify illicit substances through glass and any packaging, wrapping, plastic et cetera. There is a very big library on the dataset. As the minister has already outlined, we have five mobile operation caravans spread around the state from Kalgoorlie to Kununurra, one is being delivered to Albany very shortly and there is a further one on deployment to Geraldton, so local police can work with our organised crime squads and meth task force.

[8.10 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Have you seen a decrease in meth in towns in regional Western Australia from this action using police officers based in Perth?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have seen some very large seizures of methamphetamine in Western Australia. I referred the member to the huge seizure in Geraldton and others such as the seizure of 31 kilograms in Dampier. I will give an example of why it is important to have our key people and to utilise intelligence, and how that delivers dividends. In June last year, two people travelling in car from Sydney with 25 kilos drugs were apprehended in Northam. If we had had meth task force people based in Northam, that would not have helped to get hold of that 25 kilos and stopping it from going into Northam or elsewhere in the state. The kinds of intelligence operations that the Commissioner of Police just referred mean that police have that information and can follow the drug syndicates and the connections, and get intelligence from those national organisations. Utilising that intelligence, police can go out and apprehend people. In addition to that, as the commissioner was saying, we have based these meth caravans, which were

purpose made in Western Australia, in towns such as Kalgoorlie so that they can be used there. We have a “meth truck”, as we refer to it, that has equipment on board like one might see at an airport that effectively x-rays packages, suitcases and bags. That truck is also taken to mail distribution centres, because we know that is another way that drugs get into the community. This is an all-out assault on people trying to get meth into this state and we have given police, as I have said, significant extra resources; they are also getting results.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I thank the minister for that answer. I commend the minister, the commissioner and everyone in the WA Police Force for the seizures of meth that we have had in the time that the government has been in office. I think the minister mentioned that when it comes to controlling meth it is not only about reducing supply, but also about reducing harm. I refer to page 354 of budget paper No 2 and significant issues impacting the agency, specifically the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, which includes the expansion of the mental health co-response. Can the minister please provide us with an update on the mental health co-response?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, I can. The mental health co-response has been incredibly successful. It is a partnership between the WA Police Force and the Mental Health Commission and the Department of Health. It started with a two-year trial between 2016 and 2018. At that stage, there were two trial sites at Warwick and Cannington Police Stations. Following that successful trial, in February 2019, we expanded the program to Midland and Cockburn.

It is a sad fact that many mental health callouts involve methamphetamine. Recently, I was able to talk with one of the teams in Midland. Effectively, what happens is that two police officers go out together in a vehicle with someone from mental health on board. When they get a callout, the mental health worker who is riding with the police officers can interrogate the health database, which I think is incredibly valuable. Whilst police interrogate the police database to find out the potential criminal history of that person or other callouts to the address, the mental health worker can look into the system from their point of view. Sometimes they can identify where that person is receiving treatment and whether they have been going to a particular clinic or so forth, and they can make appropriate calls. Sometimes a local GP or someone else is registered and they can make the appropriate calls. Rather than taking the person to the hospital emergency department, for example, they will ring the clinic or the centre that has been helping the person over a time and ask them whether they can attend or help and so forth. It is better for the individual because they get that holistic response and it often means that police time is not taken up transporting someone to a hospital emergency department, which is not good for them. It is also not good for the hospital or the people at the emergency department to have someone else present at the hospital emergency department. This program has been very successful. It is part of the meth action plan initiative, which is a \$42.5 million overall plan. This budget includes \$200 000 to plan for the expansion of that co-response to regional areas. It would be brilliant if we could do that, but at this stage there is \$200 000 in the budget to make some plans to hopefully roll it out into regional Western Australia.

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: I refer to the table “Spending Changes” that continues on page 354 and the heading “Ongoing Initiatives”, specifically the line item “Proceeds of Crime” with an allocation of a little over \$4.6 million over three years. Given some of that expenditure is current, can the minister outline some of the recent achievements of this initiative?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Balcatta for his question. Utilising the Criminal Property Confiscation Act, the proceeds of crime squad has targeted established criminal networks and suspect individuals by confiscating crime-used, crime-derived and drug-trafficker related property. Under this legislation, assets can include real estate, motor vehicles and shares, and cash can be frozen or seized and subsequently confiscated. Utilising this legislation, assets to the value of \$26.9 million were frozen up to May 2018–19 and some \$30.3 million was frozen in 2017–18. Not only are our police seizing a lot of drugs, they are also front and centre when dealing with proceeds of crime and utilising the Criminal Property Confiscation Act, so I commend them for that. Since its inception in March 2016, the proceeds of crime squad meth money team has seized in excess of \$12 million connected to the distribution and sale of methamphetamine. In 2017–18, those investigations by the proceeds of crime squad meth money team resulted in 14 people being charged and cash to the value of \$5 million seized. In 2018–19, 18 persons have been charged and there have been cash seizures to \$5.7 million. I note that cash seized represents only the money seized by the proceeds of crime squad meth money team, so when I talk about those amounts of money, it does not represent all the money seized.

[8.20 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to the new initiatives listed on pages 353 and 354 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. I ask the minister about the commitment she made on 13 April this year to fund \$15.4 million towards the rollout of personal-issue multi-threat body armour to frontline police officers. It is a commitment I support and I commend the government for that; I always do when it does good work. Where is that \$15.4 million, because it is not listed under the new initiatives? Can the minister provide a year-by-year breakdown on how that \$15.4 million will be applied over the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The \$15.4 million provision has been included over 2019–20 to 2021–22 for the anticipated expenditure on body armour vests for frontline police officers. Those vests are to provide protection from edged weapons and also ballistic threats. As people here are aware, law enforcement operates in a rapidly changing environment. There is increased threat to our officers and therefore increased need for protection. All jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand, with the exception of South Australia and Queensland, have personal-issue body armour for police officers. Queensland is currently in the tender process for personal-issue body armour. At the moment the police force is conducting field tests for body armour, which is being evaluated so we can select the most effective body armour. The new personal-issue body armour will expand the range of certified protection from handgun rounds to some rifle rounds to include edged weapons. Subject to the results of the trial and endorsement by the State Tender Review Committee, it is anticipated that the tender will be awarded in late July 2019. The fitting out and rollout of body armour will commence in August 2019. It will take an estimated two years to complete. The member needs to look to budget paper No 3, page 137, if he has it handy.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Yes, I will get there.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: At the bottom of page 137 it says —

Western Australia Police Force — Body Armour

A \$15.4 million provision has been included over 2019–20 to 2021–22 for anticipated expenditure on body armour vests for frontline police officers, to provide protection ...

That is what I mentioned before. That is the allocation. The actual total value of the project and total cost will not be known until the tender process is complete, so that is why it is sitting there in budget paper No 3.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: How many vests is it anticipated will be funded through this program? Can the minister give us a breakdown on the rollout over the three years of the funding that has been provided in budget paper No 3?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is anticipated that 6 200 vests will be purchased. I note that we currently own over 1 500 ballistic vests, but they are not these modern kind of vests and they are not personal issue. This money has been put on budget to provide for 6 200 personal-issue vests. As I think I have already outlined, we expect to know the results of the tender process towards the end of July and we will proceed from there once we have the final figures.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: On the same issue of the new initiatives, on 23 March 2019, when the minister announced the body-worn cameras, she said —

The rollout is backed by the McGowan Government's \$1.4 billion Community Safety Commitment to give the WA Police Force the resources they need to help keep the community of Western Australia safe.

How much additional money has been provided out of that \$1.4 billion and where is that in either the new initiatives or somewhere else in the budget?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There has been no requirement for additional money for that. The five-year cost is anticipated to be \$17.8 million.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Given that no additional money has been provided, was \$17.8 million sitting around in the police budget unspent that could be applied to this; or what else has had to be cut in order to fund these body cameras without additional funding from the project?

The CHAIR: There are two questions there, member, but I am sure the minister can handle it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No cuts have been required to fund this.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I repeat my question; I did not get an answer. Was this money just sitting around there; was it unused?

The CHAIR: Member, that was because you asked two questions.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Do you want me to repeat it, Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes, please.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The minister said there were no cuts; therefore —

The CHAIR: That was not the question that was not answered, member.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: — was the \$17.8 million that could be applied to this just sitting in the police budget unspent; and, if so, where was it?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Police have been able to look to their budget. This happened even more so under the previous government—at the end of a financial year, for example, money was given back. Dividends were given back fairly routinely by the former government's police minister and the police force —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

p70c-93a

Chair; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Simon Millman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr David Michael

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Where? Point that out.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister should not worry about us; this government has been in for two years now.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, you will get your go.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The minister is just making a claim; she is just making it up.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No. The member can say that, but the fact of the matter is —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I know, I can, because it is true.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: People are getting tired of this.

The CHAIR: Members!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The faux indignation is almost amusing, given that we will have some of the last police officers in Australia equipped with body-worn cameras, after that lot, the member for Hillary and his team, had eight and a half years in government.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: That is member for Hillarys.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Hillarys—yes, Hillarys Boat Harbour!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I get offended when the minister calls me Hillary!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I hope the member is enjoying the view from his office.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The minister is welcome to visit if she likes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: She might see the water police too!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: If the government had any based there, which it does not.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Opposition members should be embarrassed. As I pointed out, every other policing jurisdiction in Australia, except South Australia and Queensland, and New Zealand already has this in place. They have already done it. There was no provision whatsoever. The previous government left us with \$40 billion worth of debt and no provision to provide a whole range of things for police. It left police in the dark ages of technology; it did not equip them with vests or body-worn cameras, things that were being rolled out in 2014, 2015 and 2016 by other policing jurisdictions.

Several members interjected.

The CHAIR: Members, you will get bumped off the list.

[8.30 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We came to government in 2017 and was there a dollar on budget for any of these things? Digital policing? No. Vests? No. Body-worn cameras? No. The fact of the matter is that through responsible management and through the appropriation given to WA Police by the McGowan government, it has been able to fund this.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Less police. That is what it means, less police.

The CHAIR: Fewer, actually, member.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member may well be embarrassed about his government's lack of action, lack of planning, not funding it, not putting any money on budget and not having any plan to fund any of these things. Across the agency, of course there are amounts of money, for example for the digital component. Police have had the ability to look at putting together the money to fund this. They do not do it without the approval of government; it is not some mystery. They come to government and say, "We think we can fund this internally."

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: You told them to find the money.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: It is on the record.

The CHAIR: Member, you can ask a further question at some stage.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They have managed to do it. Instead of sitting there and saying, "Well done. You're delivering something that our government could have never done", members of the opposition are sitting there still whining, carping and moaning, instead of saying, "Well done, you have managed the budget well and you have been able to fund these."

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: There are less police—less cops on the street.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, there are not fewer cops on the street—and the word is fewer, not less. There are not fewer cops on the street.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Look at the numbers.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The numbers have gone up since you were in government. They have gone up. You had no plan to increase the numbers.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: They have not.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They have gone up since you were in government.

The CHAIR: Members.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: They have not; they have gone backwards.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What is the life of the police body armour that the government is purchasing? How often does it have to be replaced and is it something that needs to be budgeted for into the future?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is not something that can be answered either now or on notice. That can only be answered once the tender process is complete and the particular item of body armour is selected. Like the member, I hope that we would have something that is durable, will last well and is personal issue. Obviously, that will be a factor. As new recruits come in, we will need new body armour for them because it is personal issue. All those factors have to be taken into account, but until we select the armour we will not know. At this stage, we cannot give the member the total final cost. We have an estimate, but until we select it, we do not know how long it will last.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What is the time frame on it then?

The CHAIR: If you had listened to the answer, member.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think I have answered that, but I will go back over it. Subject to the results of the trial and endorsement by the State Tender Review Committee, it is anticipated that a contract will be awarded in late July 2019. The fitting and rollout of body armour will commence in August 2019, I expect later in August 2019, and will take an estimated two years to complete.

The CHAIR: Member for Mount Lawley, you had a further question on this.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: It was back on body cameras, not on body armour.

The CHAIR: That is fine.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: We have heard a fair bit in the conversation this evening about the cost of the body cameras, Can the minister talk to us about the benefits of the body cameras both in terms of efficacy for our criminal justice system and safety for our officers on the front line?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Mount Lawley. The devices are about capturing real-time audio and video evidence at the scene of an incident and will hopefully improve transparency and accountability in all police interactions with the public. It should enhance case quality through increased evidence of offenders and will support police legitimacy. We are hopeful that it will improve officers' safety, because if people know that they are going to be videoed, they are, hopefully, less likely to assault an officer in any way. We also expect, therefore, that it will reduce the use of force. If people know that they are on camera, they are less likely to move towards assaulting an officer or potentially resisting arrest or something of that nature. If they do not resist arrest, force will not need to be used in the arresting of a person. The cameras will obviously strengthen police transparency, they might improve community behaviour, they might hopefully diffuse some situations and provide contextual evidence around crimes, particularly domestic violence. They will enhance evidence gathering and accountability. I might just note that the cameras will not be rolling all the time. It will require a police officer to put them on and to press a button to deploy them, but the camera will capture 30 seconds prior to being turned on. Say an incident evolves pretty quickly, and the officer thinks to put the body camera on; it will have captured the previous 30 seconds. The other point I will make is that when an officer draws a firearm, it comes on automatically, so we will have a full recording of that. One of the other things I might just add is that at the moment everyone has mobile phones. They are videoing interactions of police and then potentially uploading them to social media and providing them to news stations or whatever else. Sometimes they are providing a small segment of time. Police officers say to me that what has been provided is not the whole incident. People perhaps do not see that individual's provocative behaviour beforehand and what they have done to result in a police officer taking certain action, for example. This will mean that it will not just be those selective vignettes; it will be the whole episode. I think it will be much better for police. I remember when all police stations did not have video in their interview rooms and there was some resistance by police at first. They were a bit concerned about it, but, by and large, having the video evidence in interview rooms at police stations has actually been more for the protection and benefit of police officers than anyone else. I think, hopefully, this will work out the same. It will be very good for police officers.

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Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I want to talk about alcohol breath testing. I refer to the sixth point on page 355 on the detection of alcohol. The minister has recently stated in an answer to a question on notice that the regional enforcement unit currently does not have a target number of breath tests. I want to seek some clarity on this. Will there be target numbers for the regional enforcement unit in the future for breath testing? If not, and if that is the responsibility of the police districts in the regions, can the minister provide us with the targets for each of those police districts over, perhaps, this financial year and the next two financial years?

[8.40 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The regional enforcement unit does not have targets. I might ask the Commissioner of Police to comment on what the member for Hillarys has just said.

Mr C. Dawson: Thank you. The implementation of the regional enforcement unit has been achieved in terms of the 25 officers.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I am sorry; how many officers?

Mr C. Dawson: There are 25 officers, and that reached full strength in February this year. The funding enabled the recruitment of dedicated officers who are deployed on the major arterial roads within 400 kilometres of Perth. The reason it has been put there in a targeted way is that the long-term analysis shows that persons using the roads within a 400-kilometre radius of the Perth metropolitan area dominate the stats for those who have been killed or seriously injured. Deaths and serious injuries are proportionately far more prevalent on regional country roads than they are in the Perth metropolitan area. The REU provides a road traffic patrol seven days a week on those regional roads. They are deployed beyond the 400-kilometre zone. Although that can be addressed with either a three or a 14-day deployment, since its establishment, they have completed 1 817 patrols. They have conducted 62 617 vehicle stops; interestingly, they have preliminary breath tested almost exactly the same number. The takeaway from that is that of the 62 617 vehicle stops, 62 584 drivers have been subject to preliminary breath tests, so basically they do a breath test every time they stop a vehicle.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: There is a financial year target of 1.8 million breath tests across the state. Is the minister able to provide the target for each police district—it does not have to be provided tonight; the minister can provide it as supplementary information if she does not have it—or are targets not set by police district?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There is no target for each district. Targets are not set, and to the best of my knowledge, they have never been set.

The CHAIR: We will have a short comfort break.

Meeting suspended from 8.42 to 8.50 pm

The CHAIR: I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 366 of budget paper No 2, volume 2 and the net appropriation determination table. Under regulatory fees and fines is the line item “Licences”. Has the government received fees for licences for paintball guns from pastoralists in the past?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I might see if somebody here knows the answer to that. Does the member for North West Central think he knows the answer?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The answer is yes; the government has been receiving a licence fee from people who have paintball guns. Just for a bit of knowledge here in the chamber, paintball guns were introduced to mark cows' calves so they can keep them together while they are mustering, so that there is no separation. A lot of people know that paintball guns are used for a game, but originally they were intended for the pastoral industry.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think paintball people like to call them “markers” rather than “guns”.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: They are markers. They were being licensed by the firearms licensing department until a couple of weeks ago. Pastoralists who have licences are now being told to hand them back, because they are to be used only for paintballing. I want to know the minister's thoughts on the licensing department now saying that it is illegal to use these vital tools of industry for other than the prescribed purpose, which is paintballing.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will just clarify part of the question, and then I will answer the question. Is the member saying that this is something that pastoralists have done for decades?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, I am.

[8.50 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member is calling them paintball guns. I think other people—certainly those involved in paintball as a fun leisure activity—call them paintball markers. I know a bit about them because I was the minister who legalised them in Western Australia under the Carpenter government, and I had plenty of

representations about them made to me. I thought that whether they are a firearm was a bit curious. The police position at the time was, and it still is, that yes, they are a firearm because a projectile is shot from them. I asked whether we could say that those little pellets or balls are ammunition. I get that it is arguably a firearm, but I do not get that something that is a bit like a little bubble bath gel thing —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: They do hurt.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Has the member been hit by one?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Yes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I asked how this thing that looks like a little bath gel met the definition of ammunition, and it was a bit of a chicken-and-egg argument. It was ammunition because it was fired from a gun. We knew people were using them at different venues without any regulation. My general view is that it is better off being regulated, if people are going to be doing it anyway. It was not only gangsters doing it; it was people doing it for corporate days—lawyers and accountants and all sorts of people doing—Madam Chair is shaking her head. Did you ever do it as a lawyer?

The CHAIR: Yes, and I was smart enough just to hide so I never got hit.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think we have a few victims around the chamber here. I can add my husband to the list; he was shot at point-blank range, after having put his hands up, by Malcolm Bradshaw at Tim Fraser's bucks party. Then after I legalised it, my daughter had her fourteenth birthday at a paintballing place in the Swan Valley. They can be fun. Having digressed a bit, it seems to be a bit of an anomaly. It is a tool for marking calves, as the member said, and it has been used for decades. I would have thought that commonsense would prevail. Unless someone else would like to make a comment, I will certainly discuss it with senior police and they will no doubt, in turn, talk to people at the firearms branch about any change in policy and why it has come about.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, it is obviously a way of interpreting legislation, which states that paintball guns must be used only at a paintballing venue. It is a bit of a grey area. Until two or three weeks ago, it was okay for pastoralists to use these types of markers, but there has been a sudden change, which is having an impact. My understanding is that the licensing department has written to everyone who has a paintballing marker or gun to say that they are no longer licensed and they should not have them and they need to hand them in. Could the minister address that as a matter of urgency? People are mustering at the moment and that is how people found out; they were trying to upgrade their markers because there are new ones that shoot further and more accurately to make sure that the calves are not separated from their mothers.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: My general view on these things is that commonsense should prevail. I will see whether that can occur within the existing legislative framework. If for some reason it cannot, I will be more than happy to work with the member on an appropriate amendment to the legislation.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: My question is on the electorate of Mount Lawley. I refer the minister to page 358 of budget paper No 2 and metropolitan policing services provided by districts within the metropolitan region. Can the minister please provide us with some of the achievements for the Mount Lawley electorate and what initiatives the minister has planned for 2019–20?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes. I thank the member for Mount Lawley for giving me some notice of that question so that I can —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Then we wonder why the public has such a dim view of all of us.

[9.00 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry; the member for Mount Lawley is asking about his own electorate. He is not the first person at estimates hearings to do that—not at these estimates hearings and not at any other estimates hearings. It is a very appropriate thing for a member to do. He also gave me notice that he would ask some questions about his electorate and how things are tracking. I am going to give him an answer. The member's electorate encompasses a number of suburbs: Yokine, Menora, Coolbinia, Dianella and Inglewood, as well as Mt Lawley. Yokine recorded a significant decrease in home burglary offences, a decrease in domestic violence assaults and non-domestic assaults, and a nominal reduction in commercial burglaries and stealing offences. Menora recorded a reduction in commercial burglaries. Stealing from dwellings has nominally decreased. Menora has had no reported domestic violence assaults or breaches of violence restraining orders so far this financial year. Mt Lawley has had a reduction in reported offences in non-domestic assaults, which normally occur in entertainment precincts such as Beaufort Street, Mt Lawley and on the Perth to Midland train line, which passes through part of that suburb. Coolbinia has seen no change in home burglaries for the financial year to date. However, there has been a slight reduction trend. There has been a reduction in commercial burglaries and non-domestic assaults over the five-year trend. Coolbinia has had no reported breaches of violence restraining orders so far this financial year. Dianella

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recorded a decrease in home burglary offences and commercial burglaries this financial year. Inglewood has had reductions in reported domestic assaults, burglaries and general stealing offences.

The second part of the member's question was what was intended for the next financial year. There will be targeted patrols of known offender addresses by utilising community profiles and intelligence material provided by the Mirrabooka district intelligence unit, as well as intelligence that is developed by staff at the various police stations. Overt and covert patrols will identify hotspots or high harm areas due to the rates of reported offences, and there will be proactive patrols of all licensed premises, restaurants and entertainment outlets. Police will continue to conduct operations such as the summer crime strategy, Operation Celsius; Operation Anglesmith, which was commenced in March 2019, and aimed at reducing the number of reported stealing offences from licensed premises and liquor stores located in the Mount Lawley electorate; Operation Oystercatcher, in high harm locations such as Tuart Hill, targeting high-volume offenders; and Operation Swipe, which has been targeting tap and go offences. That is just to name a few of the kinds of operations that police in the member's electorate have been undertaking.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 355 of the *Budget Statements*, and paragraph 5 under significant issues impacting the agency, which reads —

The Western Australia Police Force ... has established an Aboriginal Affairs Division and will continue to engage with Aboriginal communities to build better relationships and work together to achieve these outcomes.

With the establishment of this division, how many officers is it envisaged will be assigned to this unit, and how many are expected to be of Aboriginal descent?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for his question, and for his interest in Aboriginal people. Aboriginal prisoners represent about 38 per cent of the Western Australian adult prison population, despite Aboriginal people accounting for only 3.1 per cent of the Western Australian population. Our Aboriginal affairs division was created in August 2018 by Commissioner Dawson to better engage with Aboriginal people and communities. The commissioner is very keen to enhance the work and to increase the number of Aboriginal people working within WA police. He has ensured that the intake for our cadet program solely comprises Aboriginal people. I will ask Commissioner Dawson to comment further on some of the initiatives he has taken, and to more fully answer the member's question.

Mr C. Dawson: In respect of the Aboriginal affairs division, I am pleased to advise the chamber that we have just secured the first three Aboriginal commissioned officers. Through utilising the equal opportunity legislation and special measures, the positions of a superintendent and two inspectors have only just been filled through the Executive Council and the Governor's commission. I am pleased to announce that Superintendent Brian Wilkinson will head up the Aboriginal affairs division. Without being too overt about this, I would describe Brian Wilkinson as one of the most eminent Aboriginal senior officers I have ever encountered. He comes from a long line of policing. His father, his two uncles and his twin brother have all been police officers. I think the member may know of him. He was a former officer at Kalgoorlie, as the member may recall, and he has also been officer in charge of country police stations, including Katanning and Busselton, and he has worked in Broome as well. More latterly, over the last half-dozen years, he has worked as the chief operating officer for the Aboriginal affairs coordinating committee, and he has just vacated a role as a national manager under the Department of Human Services for the commonwealth. I am very pleased to secure him; and, in fact, he started only yesterday. Two other commissioned officers, both Aboriginal—Inspector Sue Palmer and Inspector Geoff Reagan—have also been appointed. We have some non-Aboriginal officers within the Aboriginal affairs division, complemented by our very experienced officers, who will not simply be in a central location, but will complement the 125 Aboriginal officers that we have spread across the state.

As the minister has already indicated, I have offered 60 traineeships, under the police cadet scheme, exclusively to Aboriginal people. The reason is that we want to encourage more young Aboriginal men and women in particular to join. We have recently graduated about six of those through the police academy programs and they are making a big difference, because they have a much more advanced cultural opportunity to bridge the difficult situations that are often associated with relations between police and Aboriginal persons. I see this as being complemented next week with a reconciliation action plan, which was endorsed by the police corporate board in March this year. We have also received endorsement from Reconciliation Australia and the WA Reconciliation Action. As I say to my staff, this is not just about having a reconciliation action plan; the middle term is action, so it has been realised through proactive recruitment and deployment, and I also have an Aboriginal advisory forum, which comprises eminent senior Aboriginal people from around the state. Mr Donaldson, from the member's hometown, is one such representative. That way we are also not just policing to the communities, but the communities are working with us at a senior elder level. I could answer this question more fulsomely, but it would take a lot of time. It is a very comprehensive program.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: The commissioner has answered a few of my additional questions. I think he stated a figure of 125, but I will go back to my question. Last year the commissioner stated that there were currently

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156 employees identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the Western Australia Police Force, and the number would likely increase. What is the current number of employees identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders within the agency, and how many are frontline, sworn police officers?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I might allow the commissioner to answer that.

Mr C. Dawson: I do not have the actual numbers in front of me. My estimate is that about 125 are sworn officers. We still have approximately six Aboriginal police liaison officers, and we have a number of community liaison officers as well, who are public servants. We also have a number of Aboriginal advisers and, indeed, Aboriginal public servants—that is, people who identify as being either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. At this time I do not think the number has gone over 200. It would be between that and the number that I answered last year, but I would have to take that on notice to give the member an actual number if he is seeking that.

[9.10 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Does the Chair want to allocate that a number?

The CHAIR: Commissioner, did you say that you were providing something on notice?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No. Only the minister can do that.

The CHAIR: Minister, did you want to?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the need for Aboriginal liaison officers, Carnarvon and the Gascoyne district does not have an Aboriginal liaison officer at all, which has a severe impact on a lot of the issues that we are currently experiencing. When does the minister think it is likely we will get an Aboriginal liaison officer in the Carnarvon Police Station or for the greater Gascoyne area?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Having Aboriginal police officers in areas with significant Aboriginal populations is really important, so we are keen to see police officers operating in regions such as the Pilbara, the Kimberley and the goldfields. I acknowledge that the Gascoyne and the Carnarvon region has a significant number of Aboriginal people. The commissioner has already outlined that we will be getting more Aboriginal police officers on board through the cadet program. Ideally, we need not only community relations officers, but also fully sworn Indigenous police officers. Both would be ideal in Carnarvon. I will ask the commissioner to respond further about Carnarvon.

Mr C. Dawson: The newly appointed officers heading up the Aboriginal affairs division are going to visit 35 regional towns over the next three months. I note that in the midwest and Gascoyne district, that will include forums conducted in Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Mullewa and Mt Magnet in the member's electorate. They will also visit towns in the Pilbara, south west, Kimberley, great southern and goldfields regions. Over the next three months we want to make an assessment about which points we consider it to be a priority to deploy officers to. I omitted to mention that we also employ Aboriginal persons as auxiliary officers. We recently deployed an Aboriginal woman to Geraldton to work as a custody auxiliary officer. That is very important, because proportionally a number of detainees are of Aboriginal descent and having an Aboriginal person handling the custodial episodes also complements the move we want to continue with. I cannot tell the member that a person will definitely be dedicated to Carnarvon. That will be the process over the next three months—that is, to identify those areas and opportunities to deploy those who are graduating.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The Carnarvon police are doing a fantastic job. They are under-resourced; they often have only one car available at night. I think the commissioner has a very good hierarchy there at the moment, which will, hopefully, make a difference. I compliment the commissioner on who he has put there. However, there are, obviously, issues with being able to patrol and make a real difference with the resources available to them. That is more of a statement.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for the compliment that he has given the commissioner.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to the Road Safety Commission on page 359 of budget paper No 2. The Road Safety Commission is now part of the Western Australia Police Force, so it does not get a separate session. I want to focus on the number of employees, which has gone up by seven from the number budgeted for this financial year to the estimated actual. Despite the increase in employees, we still do not have a permanent Road Safety Commissioner. Since June 2017, three different people have acted in the position of Road Safety Commissioner. All three of them are wonderful and capable people—two of whom are here tonight. Unfortunately, there is still no permanently appointed Road Safety Commissioner. Why has it taken so long, and when are we likely to see a permanent Road Safety Commissioner appointed?

The CHAIR: Again, there are two questions there. I am sure that the minister can answer them but —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: It is one question in two parts—A and B.

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As I understood it, the first question that the member for Hillarys asked is about what appears to be an increase in staff at the Road Safety Commission.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: That was actually a statement, but the minister can answer it if she wants.

The CHAIR: The question was: why is it taking so long?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Perhaps I will just correct the member. There has not been an increase in staff as such. The member's government chose to hire people on contracts. Those people have been converted to FTEs. It is a different way of employing people, so it is not an overall increase in FTEs.

On the member's question about the Road Safety Commissioner, as he is aware, the acting Road Safety Commissioner that we appointed was Mr Iain Cameron. We continued the member's government's practice of having the Road Safety Commissioner also chair the Road Safety Council. I signalled that I do not think that is necessarily desirable in the longer term, because I would rather have two people for those positions. In effect, that is how we are currently operating with the appointment of Mr Simon Grieve as the acting Road Safety Commissioner. I note that the member complimented the capacity of everybody who has been involved, but there is no-one with more capacity or commitment than Mr Iain Cameron, who is renowned nationally and internationally for his expertise on road safety. Mr Cameron was offered the opportunity to work at a very senior level in the Department of Transport in an area that has what I would describe as significant overlap with road safety interests. I supported Mr Cameron in making his decision to take up the opportunity that was afforded to him. That is not a permanent opportunity at this point. It may be made permanent in the future, but that is beyond both my and his control. I am very keen to continue to enjoy Mr Cameron's expertise in this area. It would be a huge loss to the area if we lost him. I asked him to carry on in his role as Road Safety Commissioner and I sought the support of the Minister for Transport. The support of the director general of the Department of Transport was also sought for Mr Cameron to continue in his role as chair of the Road Safety Council, because I think it is important to maintain his expertise and have that continuity. Because of Mr Cameron's continued involvement as chair of the Road Safety Council, there has been a lot of continuity with no disruption or any particular issue. Mr Simon Grieve is currently acting in that role. He has come from another position at the Department of Transport and he is performing very well in that role, so I have no issue there. The final part of the member's question was: when can we expect someone to be permanently appointed? I expect to be in a better position to make a determination on that sometime in the next few months.

[9.20 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I take it from the minister's answer that she still does not have a current timetable of when the position of a permanent Road Safety Commissioner will be advertised, let alone appointed. On that basis, does the minister think that it is appropriate, at a time when the state is reviewing its road safety strategy for the next 10 years, and given that Towards Zero is coming to an end, for the state to be undertaking that process, despite the great capacity of the individuals who are involved, without having a permanent Road Safety Commissioner in place?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The person who has been Road Safety Commissioner and, indeed, headed up the Office of Road Safety, as it was known before that—he has phenomenal experience, like decades, effectively carrying out the role—is now chairing the Road Safety Council. The Road Safety Council and the chair of the Road Safety Council are taking the lead in developing the next strategy. I want the next strategy to, hopefully, be a bipartisan one that all sides of politics can support and that the whole community can get behind. I think the best way of doing that is by having the Road Safety Council carry out that community consultation and prepare a new strategy for government. Mr Cameron is heading that up. He was the former chief executive of the Office of Road Safety for a considerable period. He is renowned throughout Australia. Just about any other state government would love to get hold of him, together with probably several countries around the world. I am not in any doubt that we have someone who is totally eminent heading up our road safety strategy. Nationally, if the commonwealth government was looking to a new road safety strategy, it could not get anyone better than Mr Cameron to head up the process, do the consultation and be part of all that. Mr Grieve, on the other hand, is an excellent public servant who is doing an excellent job. I am not in the least concerned.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I note that the income of the commission has reduced during this current financial year. There is a note on page 359 indicating that the decrease in income reflects lower-than-anticipated traffic infringement revenue from red-light and speed cameras. On that basis, can the minister confirm that some of the red-light and speed cameras were out of commission for some period this financial year?

The CHAIR: It is probably not a further question. You have got onto another topic. I am sure the minister will indulge you.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is an entirely different topic. If the member wants to give someone else a go, it is not related to the first question. The first question was about personnel.

The CHAIR: That is why I pulled the member up.

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Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I said it was about the Road Safety Commission.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The next question was supposed to be asked by the member for North West Central. He has had about three.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Does the minister not want to answer it? What is she hiding?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am keen to answer it.

The CHAIR: Minister, if you would indulge the member, but I make the point that it is a completely different area.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: What does the member want to ask?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I will repeat my question. There is a note under the Road Safety Commission indicating —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Where is the note?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: On page 359. Under “Explanation of Significant Movements” for the Road Safety Commission, note 3 states —

The decrease in income between the 2018–19 Budget and the 2018–19 Estimated Actual reflects lower than anticipated traffic infringement revenue from red light ... cameras.

We are all aware that for some period during this financial year, the red-light and speed cameras, or some of them, were withdrawn from operation due to technical reasons. Can the minister inform us how long that period was and whether they are all operational or some of them are still not operating due to those technical or other reasons?

The CHAIR: Again, that was two questions, but I am sure the minister can answer them.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, I think it was widely publicised and certainly commented on by me, Scott Higgins and others that some of the Jenoptik cameras were out of commission for a period. At one point, 11 out of 28 mobile speed cameras were removed from service. The WA Police Force advises me that it was able to maintain full operational capability. When I asked questions about that, I was advised that some other older cameras could be put into the field. Four of 39 red-light speed cameras were removed from operation for six months. The other 35 red-light cameras were the old Redflex system. Two of 10 fixed-site speed cameras were removed from operation for between one and four months. The average speed camera safety system, commonly known as point to point, was removed from full enforcement for four months and operated without spot speed for 10 months, I am told. That is the situation. That may have led to some diminution of revenue but a lot of factors go into diminution of revenue—things as varied as economic circumstances. Sometimes if people are more fearful of having to pay a fine, they will drive more slowly. Red-light speed cameras are fully operational. The size of the Jenoptik fleet has now expanded to 11 red-light speed cameras, taking the agency’s whole fleet to 46 red-light speed cameras, including the old Redflex cameras. The radar-based Jenoptik speed camera in Wundowie is in full enforcement. However, the laser-based Jenoptik speed camera in Gabbadah is not expected to be returned to enforcement until October 2019. This takes the agency’s entire fixed site fleet to nine cameras, including the old Vitronic cameras. If I have not made it clear, the average speed safety camera—the point to point—returned to service on 2 April.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Further to that, the minister was explaining the reasons that income from speeding fines might reduce. I hope one of the major reasons is because driver behaviour is changing for the better.

Apart from that one fixed camera that the minister indicated will not come onstream until October 2019, are all other cameras that were taken out of service during this year now back and operational?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, that is what I am advised.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to one of the first questions relating to page 354 and the line item, “Government Regional Officer Housing”. The minister said that there will be a midterm review. Is it the minister’s tactical ploy with the police negotiations that are occurring on pay and so forth to threaten the police union to increase rents if it does not agree to an enterprise bargaining agreement, which the government puts forward?

The CHAIR: How is this contained in the budget, member?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is under regional housing.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not have any tactical ploys.

[9.30 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question. The minister in her answer to me —

The CHAIR: It should be in order, member. You received an answer from the minister earlier today that future enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations were not incorporated into the budget. Try to ask a further question.

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question. The minister stated in one of her answers that regional incentives for police in the Pilbara were cut. Can the minister elaborate what has been cut given it is my understanding that there were no cuts to any regional incentives, particularly in the Pilbara, by the former government and it increased the district allowance when it came to government?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: To clarify that, as I said, in the last *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*, or the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement* put out in December 2016, ahead of the March 2017 election, no funding was provided for those allowances—the regional incentives—from 30 June 2017. It was a big budget hole. The forward estimates are supposed to be for four years, but no money was provided in the former government's pre-election budget beyond 30 June 2017. The former government had this huge budget blowout and there was no money in the police budget for regional incentives —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So it was not a cut. There was no cut.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The former government had cut it out for the next four years; there was no money in the budget. The funding had been in the budget every year up until then, but sneakily, in December 2016, the government cut it from 30 June 2017. The allowance was going to end on 30 June 2017; there was no money at all.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So, it was not a cut.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, it was a cut.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It was not a cut.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The former government cut the money out of the budget as plain as day; it is a fact. The member might be embarrassed about what his government did and why the Nationals let the Liberal Party do it.

The CHAIR: Member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Our government increased the district allowance from \$2 000 to \$10 000 in the Pilbara to attract and retain police officers

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Nationals were just the puppy dogs of the Liberal Party. It took the Nationals' money from them and the member was not even aware of it.

The CHAIR: Okay, member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: You get to bring back some civility.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The member for Kalgoorlie is known for civility.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 357 and the outcome "Contribute to community safety and security" under "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators", specifically the first two line items that refer to the rate of offences against the person and against property, excluding family violence-related offences. Why are family violence-related offences excluded from these statistics?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Offences against the person include homicide, assault, sexual offences, threatening behaviour, deprivation of liberty and robbery. Family violence-related offences against the person, as the member pointed out, are excluded. I understand that that is the way things have been reported for some time. As for why that is, I am not sure whether anyone here can explain. Acting Deputy Commissioner Paul Steel can respond to that question.

Mr P. Steel: One of the reasons that family violence is specifically excluded from those statistics is that the aim is to encourage reporting of family violence incidents. There is a perverse influence if we say that an increase in family violence should be something that, for reporting, we should be targeting down. We actually want to target family violence in a separate manner. We want to encourage reporting of family violence offences. Family violence offences and assaults are actually reported separately, but the general rate of offences against the person are maintained as something that we can measure against previous periods of time as an accurate measure. As confidence in police increases and victims of domestic and family violence are more willing to come forward, we actually hope to see an increase in the reporting of family violence, so it is something that we can tackle separately, and, in essence, for the actual amount of the offence that there is.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I can understand that the police are trying to separate the offence and encourage people to come forward, but my personal opinion is that those offences should be included in those statistics—do you know what I mean? People have no idea that that figure is for the offences merged together. They can be kept

separate, but I would think that the rate of offences against the person should include family violence-related offences so we would have all of those offences. A person will not report family violence if they are worried that they will add to and be a figure in the budget papers. I am not being disrespectful.

The CHAIR: I think that is the point that the Acting Deputy Commissioner was making. I think you have it in one, member.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think that the Acting Deputy Commissioner made the point that that is exactly why he wants to keep that data separate. I would not want the member for Kalgoorlie to think that those offences are not recorded and reported on. I might just ask the Commissioner of Police to talk a little about the reporting of family and domestic violence-related offences because, as the member would be aware, we have a very strong view, as the Acting Deputy Commissioner said, on encouraging mainly women, but any victims—sometimes they are men or children—to come forward. I might ask the commissioner to comment on the reporting of those offences.

Mr C. Dawson: Although the member's initial question turned on the key efficiency indicators, the actual number of offences is publicly available on our website and publicly reported every quarter. The most recent period, January to March 2019, in the total selected offences against the person, threatening behaviour involving family violence decreased by 7.2 per cent over the comparable quarter for the previous year, but the number of assaults recorded involving family members increased by 2.3 per cent. Referring to Mr Steel's earlier comment, they are publicly available figures, but they are not measured per se in the budget papers as an overall key performance indicator for the reasons that Mr Steel previously outlined.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 354 and the table "Spending Changes", specifically the line item "PathWest Relocation". Can the minister provide an update on the achievements of increased DNA hits on historical exhibits?

[9.40 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Armadale for this really good question. I am pleased to be also the minister who introduced the taking of DNA in about 2001 or 2002. We are moving PathWest—I was shown a picture of me opening the facility at Bentley way back when—to what was previously the Telethon Kids Institute. It will be a huge boon for PathWest.

Interestingly, we took decisions to take more DNA and have a lower threshold, which Dr Gavin Turbett, the head of forensic biology at PathWest, told me has made a huge difference. He said that Western Australia contributes a much greater percentage per population to the national DNA database than other states by quite some way. That is because rather than introduce a threshold for the taking of DNA from a person charged with an offence or being charged with an offence with a sentence of five years, we introduced a one-year threshold. People who are found not guilty or their charges are not proceeded with have to apply to the Commissioner of Police to have their DNA taken off the database, which means that DNA legitimately stays on the database. That was recommended to me by people in the UK where DNA had mistakenly been left in the database and had some matches with some really significant crimes. The good news now is that WA police, as the member says, have been doing quite a number of cold case reviews. The taking of DNA and what can be done scientifically now is so much more advanced. Police have in storage exhibits from crimes going back decades and compared with the area of material that DNA or fingerprints or whatever could be taken off perhaps a decade ago, now it can be taken from a much smaller area. Talking about secure lab areas, just the act of someone standing and breathing in the space has them potentially leaving DNA. DNA can now be obtained from the tiniest, most minute samples and work has been done with WA police to solve a lot of old crimes. In 2018, investigators in our special crime division relating to cold case homicide and serious crime investigations sent 485 requests for analysis and swabs of physical material items. A total of 475 were received, either with unknown victim profiles, offender profiles, mixed profiles or no DNA detected. In 2019 to date, 140 requests for analysis of swabs of physical material items have been forwarded for investigation, and 114 of those have been received to date. The commissioner has advised me that they are now solving on average about one serious cold case a week. I am told that there are some quite surprised victims of a crime, maybe of a sexual or a serious assault from 15 or 18 years ago, getting a knock on the door from police and being told that someone has been charged with the offence. The response is that they thought the case had been shut and shelved. It is really proving very useful in solving what would have been some shocking crimes.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I would like to focus for a moment on the significant issues impacting the agency listed on page 355. Issue 8 states that cybercrime is a prevalent threat to the Western Australian community. I think we all agree that is the case, and we are getting reports through our offices that that is the case. There is discussion that police face significant challenges around both enforcement of laws and their complexity. It indicates that the Western Australia Police Force is building capability to address the increasing threat of cybercrime to the community. My question is really about how that capacity is being built. What sort of resources are being sought and does that include an increase in forensics accounting resources in order to track flows of funds? I ask that question specifically because a number of the concerns related to me are that around that intersection of cybercrime

and financial fraud there appears to be an under-resourcing of the forensic accounting capacity to get to that level before any applicable laws are even tried to be enforced. What additional resources are being provided in that space, both around cybercrime generally and forensic accounting, to enable the proper investigation of cybercrime?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can give the member a part answer to that question and I will ask Deputy Commissioner Blanch in a moment to give him a full answer. The member asked about what resources are required and so forth. Although I am not fully aware of every resource needed to fight cybercrime, I am aware that WA police have 52 mobile phone downloading devices. They have been deployed across the state. I am told that over 800 officers have been trained in the use of those mobile phone downloading devices, but that is the kind of technology needed, and people need to be trained and skilled to fight cybercrime. Police are provided with resources to fight this. The member is right; it is a growing area. I know that at various police ministerial councils over the years there has been quite a focus on cybercrime and also things like identity theft. I will pass on to Deputy Commissioner Blanch for a fuller answer.

Mr C. Blanch: I will talk about two types of cybercrime, the first being malware actors or offenders who primarily hack into systems to get money. They do not really sit within any borders. They often operate from international locations, so for us to combat those types of offenders, we have to engage the services of the Australian Cyber Security Centre, our commonwealth partners and our international partners. Certainly, as the member mentioned, following the money is a critical part or step in doing that, so we also engage the services of the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre. We also employ our own specialist financial investigators. We try to use them across the board in a range of offences, but more recently we have focused on a number of cybercrime investigations. That is the first type, and we leverage off many partner agencies in that aspect.

The second type is cyber-enabled crime, and that is eBay frauds, scams and things like that. We also reach in to our partners, but we can treat them more like a fraud against offenders in WA. Again, what were once bank cheques and paper-type frauds have now become cybercrime or cyber-enabled frauds, so it is more about shifting our skill sets within our own people to understand how to conduct investigations into cyber-enabled fraud. We have been doing that. We have a technical crime services area, a cybercrime area, that focuses specifically on how to uncover the evidence required to prosecute those offenders. It is not so much about increasing the number of people doing that; it is about changing their skills, because it becomes far more prevalent. The crime of eBay fraud is a great example of doing that.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I thank the assistant commissioner for his answer.

The CHAIR: Deputy commissioner, I think you will find.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Deputy commissioner, sorry.

The CHAIR: You have just demoted him!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I note the deputy commissioner mentioned the financial experts—I think the term used was “financial investigators”. I doubt this information is available on hand, but if it is, I would be happy to have it. I would like to request from the minister as supplementary information the actual number of financial investigators who are employed within the police force, perhaps over the last three years, and an indication also, if it is acceptable to the minister, of how many of those staff are sworn officers and how many are non-sworn officers.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I advise the member for Hillarys that the technology crime services unit comprises four business focuses: covert online operations, digital evidence operations, cybercrime investigations and strategic support development. It is staffed by 55 full-time equivalents and the administrative and leadership resources of the technology crime services unit consists of one inspector, one senior sergeant and an administrative assistant.

I would suggest the member put the question about the number of people investigating financial crimes on notice.

[9.50 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a further question on significant issues impacting the agency, unless the Chair thinks it might not be the same question.

The CHAIR: Just proceed, member.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The seventh item is around the national terrorism threat for Australia remaining at probable. Both the minister and the other people at the table know that I have a significant interest in this. We are all absolutely united in providing the best possible capacity to meet any of the challenges that terrorism threats may pose to the Western Australian public. I note the last sentence under that significant issue states —

The agency will strengthen community engagement and improve our capability and capacity to respond to threats and incidents, especially within crowded places and mass gatherings, to ensure the safety and security of the Western Australian community.

Chair; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Simon Millman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr David Michael

What specific initiatives and resources will be applied to strengthening the areas that are outlined?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is a very broad question because the WA Police Force has myriad units and groups dealing with this. I might just go through a bit of it and then ask the commissioner if he wants to add something. There is a capability development unit within the counterterrorism and emergency response command. There is a state security investigation group, which has responsibility for Western Australian security investigations. There is a joint counterterrorism team in Perth, consisting of members of the WA Police Force, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Border Force and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission that investigate terrorism-related activity in WA. A partnership approach to intelligence and investigations are maintained through multi-agency daily intelligence briefings and monthly intelligence review group meetings. There is also the WA Police Force intelligence and command portfolio that partners with a number of internal units and external agencies. Obviously, the WA Police Force is engaged with the ACIC and we also continue to enhance our police force's relations with the community. In fact, very recently, the commissioner had a morning tea with the Muslim community. I will ask the commissioner if he wants to add to that answer.

Mr C. Dawson: As the minister already outlined, it is quite a broad field. I would add, aside from the specialist services portfolio that have dedicated people and assets for the broad capabilities such as the minister outlined, all police officers are also trained in undertaking critical skills, including active shooter training, to enhance and complement their normal critical skills on an annual basis. Together with that we have extended our capability, as the member would be aware, by rolling out 140 of our regional operations group, who are now equipped with the AR-15 tactical assault weapon to complement the other side-arms that we have. A whole range of capabilities extend to active patrolling of critical infrastructure, including the CBD, and of course we have our tactical response group on that.

In response to the question that the member asked regarding community engagement, I recently reformed our community engagement division to come under Assistant Commissioner Craig Ward. As the minister outlined, we have had an enduring and building relationship with various diverse community groups and both in different language groups, religious and ethnic-based groups. It is not exclusively with the Muslim population, but it will extend broadly to groups that represent the African community, various other diverse communities, the Jewish community et cetera. The engagement in dealing with both a tactical response and a broad capability is then also complemented by a community engagement division to strengthen the existing relationships. I am pleased to say that we have been complimented very broadly by the president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, who happens to be one of the local imams within Western Australia. He cites quite openly, and it is quite humbling to hear him say it, that Western Australian police lead the nation in our approach to community engagement. They are his words, not mine. I take that on board, because he has said that a number of times, and not in a patronising way.

With the tragedy that occurred in Christchurch, we obviously are very vigilant to look not just at radicalised terrorist groups from certain other quarters, but also at the far right. Active operations take place with our state security investigations group. That is very proactive and we do it in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, other national parties, and indeed international partners. I might just close off my response. Obviously, as the member chairs the particular committee on crowded places, we continue to work with various venue operators and others continuing to work through a number of the recommendations that his committee provided. We will provide a response via our minister about that.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I am looking forward to that response. I did not want my question to verge into that, but in relation to community engagement—I think the commissioner described it as a unit—I think they do great work with the culturally and linguistically diverse communities in particular, and they will be commended. Is that unit or any other unit tasked with directly liaising with owners and operators of crowded places? Does the minister have any expectation that the nature of engagement may change into the future?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask the commissioner to respond, but I think we are talking about two separate units.

Mr C. Dawson: The specialist services portfolio, which reports to Deputy Commissioner Colin Blanch, has more of the response capabilities as opposed to the proactive side, although it does do some elements of it. The community engagement division is primarily responsible for coordinating with all its police districts throughout the state. Yes, it has involvement with operators of crowded places, but that specific responsibility lies within our dedicated specialist services command.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 354, under the title "Other", and the line item "Government Regional Officer Housing". Last year the minister made a comment that most officers should be paying below market rent—I will condense the comment. Is the minister able to define quickly "below market rent"? And then I have one quick question.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

p70c-93a

Chair; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Simon Millman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr David Michael

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Most police officers are paying below market rent. Market rent is determined by another minister and another agency. The Minister for Housing has GROH under him. The former government's \$30 a week increase was about moving government employee housing up to market rent. If police officers were paying market rent, there would simply be no issue, but they are not. Most in country areas are paying below market rent, that is why our government has said that we are not going to increase it on 1 July and we will review the former government's plan.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Since 2017, when the minister came to government, has GROH sent any letters to owners of rental properties leased to GROH, asking it to reduce or consider reducing the rent?

The CHAIR: Member, do you realise that that is broader than the Minister for Police?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: GROH sending or receiving letters is a matter for the Minister for Housing, not me. But I note that in a number of country locations police officers do not pay any rent and indeed we increased that number when I was last in government. We made some provisions especially when housing was pretty unsuitable and in hard-to-fill locations to give free rent at quite a number of locations.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
