

Division 34: Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, \$519 000 —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman, Chairman.

Mr C.C. Porter, Attorney General.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mindarie.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have one question, no, two.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I do not know whether the parliamentary inspector has ever attended estimates, but I am happy to answer any questions.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: He has, because I had lunch with him.

Mr C.C. PORTER: There we go.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I had lunch with the recently retired parliamentary inspector out in the courtyard; I remember. I have a couple of questions that I can wrap up in five minutes, easy. My first question is: has the Attorney General got a nominee for the parliamentary inspector?

Mr C.C. PORTER: I do not know precisely where that is procedurally.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is a very important position; we just do not know, with the retirement of the parliamentary inspector, how far the Attorney General is down the track to replacing him.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I do not have in my head where that process is at, but I will find out for the member.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the Attorney General provide that information by way of supplementary information or is he suggesting that —

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Secondly, the budget for the office is very modest.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Yes; it was effectively the inspector’s wage.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: And one staff member, was it?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Yes.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It was the inspector plus one staff member. But with an original organised crime function, it is appropriate, is it not, that there would have to be some increase in the budget to provide for increased capacity, because if we have the CCC doing original investigations, there has to be some recourse to somewhere for someone who is mistreated, ill-treated or unfairly treated by investigators. Normally a person goes to the CCC because the organised crime squad is doing the wrong thing. Where does someone go if it is the CCC doing the wrong thing? Will the government not have to resource the office of the inspector better?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Quite possibly. This answer applies equally to the issue of the parliamentary inspector and the issue of potential increases in resources down the track for the organised crime investigative function itself for the CCC or, indeed, if the CCC at any point in time previously had come to me as responsible minister and said the reason it has only been able to investigate two out of 381 cases is because of resources. It would only take a phone call, a meeting and a rational explanation about why extra funds were needed. Those reasons would be considered; they would go into the Expenditure Review Committee process, they would be considered by Treasury and they would be successful or unsuccessful in that process. Largely speaking, agency heads, if I can call it an agency, even down to an office as small as a parliamentary inspector’s, would come to me as responsible minister and indicate their need for extra resources. It happens from time to time, to be certain. There is a possibility of that, but again, I do not think that possibility would manifest until either the 2013–14 budget or the budget thereafter.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: But in attracting someone to the role, that person, as with the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, must have discussions with the Attorney General about the nature of the role before he comes on board. I think he actually said so; he is not on board yet, he is still having discussions about the nature of the role, given the government’s intentions in the future.

Mr C.C. PORTER: It is very important to attract the absolute highest quality candidates for those positions and I feel certain that in the case of Corruption and Crime Commissioner we have achieved that. That is not always an easy task.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Attorney General has done so with the CCC, but I just wonder with this parliamentary inspector role whether the Attorney General will have to indicate to someone that, in view of the organised crime function that will happen at the CCC, whoever is coming into the position can expect additional resources.

Mr C.C. PORTER: My door is open, as it was with potential candidates for the Corruption and Crime Commissioner's position, to discuss the organisation, the role of the organisation going forward and its funding, and obviously the people who come into the position would want some form of assurance that they could be given about those issues. Prior to the Corruption and Crime Commissioner taking up his position, we discussed the government's legislative direction, how that might impact on funding and how we would treat those issues procedurally, and I see no reason why I would not do that with a potential parliamentary inspector if a candidate so wished.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm