

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

Division 25: Western Australia Police Force, \$1 390 768 000 —

Mr T.J. Healy, Chair.

Mrs M.H. Roberts, Minister for Police.

Mr C. Dawson, Commissioner of Police.

Mr I. Cameron, Acting Commissioner, Road Safety Commission.

Mr S. Brown, Deputy Commissioner, Specialist Services.

Mr J. Candeloro, Acting Chief Finance Officer.

Mr F. Pasquale, Acting Executive Director.

Mr P. Steel, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Operations.

Ms R. Lavell, Director, Human Resources.

Ms T. Milici, Chief Advisor, Specialist Advisory Directorate.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Good evening, members. 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, 1 June 2018. I caution members that if the 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 everyone else. Thank you for coming along. I refer to page 332 of budget paper No 2 and to police resources generally. What is the current number of sworn police officers employed by WA Police? What are the projections for the number of sworn police officers in each of the years of the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The authorised strength for 30 June 2018 is 6 273. That includes police liaison officers.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: What is the estimated strength for the next financial year and the financial years throughout the budget estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: For 30 June 2019, 30 June 2020, 30 June 2021 and 30 June 2022, the estimate is the same—6 350.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: At pages 336 and 337 of the budget papers, and specifically in relation to metropolitan policing services, regional remote policing services and specialist policing services, it indicates that between the estimated actual for the financial year that is currently finishing and the financial year that we are coming into, 2018–19, there will be a reduction in employees in each of those three services—about 47 in metropolitan policing, about 25 in regional and remote policing, and about 34 in specialist policing services. How does the minister explain that? Will that be due to a cut in police resources available to combat crime in our community?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, it is not. As the member would be aware, 150 severances are on offer. I am advised that those numbers reflect that reduction. The member will also be aware that we have said that we will backfill those positions and that the last of the 150 new recruits will be brought in by the end of next year, 2019. Therefore, at various points it is anticipated that fewer officers will be available. Having said that, those figures for those regions are indicative only. It is up to the Commissioner of Police to make decisions on an operational basis about where he backfills officers to and what areas are of need and get priority. As officers leave, there will be some numbers down in some areas, not necessarily—this I understand is just from an accounting point of view—that they have just spread out the 150 across a range of areas. In reality, though, the Commissioner of Police will

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determine on a month-by-month basis where to deploy police officers. I do not know whether the commissioner would like to add to that. Does the member want the Commissioner of Police to comment on it or does he want to ask a further question?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Yes, please.

Mr C. Dawson: My role as commissioner is to ensure that front-line service to the community is maintained. We will be carefully assessing each application for severance to ensure that that workload can be managed. It is my expectation that should an officer elect to take up a voluntary severance, if they are in a front-line role, I will seek to backfill that role to ensure our front-line capability is maintained. We still plan to be at full strength by the end of 2019.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The figures in the budget do not bear that out. I hear what the commissioner is saying, that he plans to be, but in the absence of further funding, the police will be short by the numbers that I quoted before, based on the budget figures. Where is the difference and where is the money coming from?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am explaining to the member that there are 150 severances and that those 150 positions will be backfilled. What I also said is that they have indicatively been taken from a variety of areas and that by the end of 2019, as the commissioner said, we will be back to full strength. It will be up to him to determine where to deploy those officers. I cannot say it any clearer than that. Again, I ask whether the commissioner wants to add anything.

Mr C. Dawson: In terms of the 150, clearly this is an opportunity to meet budget savings. We certainly intend, and have in fact already broadcast an invitation, for officers to nominate should they wish to elect to voluntarily sever their employment. That severance process has already commenced in terms of the applications. They do not close until Friday of this week. We will then make an assessment as to their rank, their positioning and all the circumstances attached to each individual officer. I expect we will do that in tranches of probably 25 officers. We would seek to complete that process by August this year. As we recruit against those and commence the 28-week training period for recruits, we will need to exercise some vacancy control over that period.

[7.10 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: How many police have already accepted these severance packages?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: At this point, no police have accepted a severance package. The Commissioner of Police just advised that he has put out for expressions of interest. I understand that those expressions of interest close this Friday, so at this stage nobody has yet been accepted for severance. The applications for severance will be due in by Friday and then it will be up to the Commissioner of Police to assess those requests and prioritise them. I can advise that at this stage there is strong interest. I can also say that the Commissioner of Police has asked for those expressions of interest from police up to and including the level of senior sergeant. The member may recall that some very senior officers have taken severance packages over the last five to 10 years, but the commissioner believes that this round of severances are best offered up to and including the level of senior sergeant.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The minister has indicated that there will be a recruitment process at some point to replace these officers. What changes has the minister made to procedures, particularly vetting procedures, for the recruitment of police in the light of the revelations that Mr Barry Urban provided, at the very least to Parliament, and possibly to the Western Australia Police Force as well—information that was proven to be incorrect?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think the member for Hillarys is drawing a long bow here in order to get up a question that is not really a budget estimates question, but in the interests of good spirit and moving on, I will ask the Commissioner of Police, for the member's elucidation, to talk in general terms about the checks that are made as part of the recruitment process when people make application —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Point of order, Mr Chair. On page 333 of budget paper No 2, the fourth dot point clearly refers to the recruitment, retention and development of a diverse workforce committed to a positive and inclusive culture with high ethical standards. I think that is what the member is relating to—that it is in the budget.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Yes, I could have made the correct reference.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The minister is answering the question and will refer it to the commissioner in a moment.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We all well know that the line items are about the numbers of people being recruited and so forth. I was outlining that I am more than happy for the Commissioner of Police to enlighten the house in general terms as to the checks the police undertake in respect of recruitment. The long bow the member for Hillarys drew was in making an analogy about the former member for Darling Range. All members are aware that there is currently a police investigation into the former member for Darling Range, and I do not think it is appropriate for us to pre-empt that investigation or any charges that may arise from it. I do however think it is appropriate for the

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Commissioner of Police to provide information to the house in respect of the probity checks police make when people make an application to join the Western Australia Police Force.

Mr C. Dawson: I can advise the house that on application by a prospective recruit, there is an initial integrity check that comprises what members would expect—a criminal record check or any holdings we may have by way of criminal intelligence. The process flows to a police entrance exam, which sets out some of the essential selection criteria. That also includes visual acuity assessments. We then ask applicants to go through a psychological assessment by a clinician. They are also required to undertake a physical performance process, followed by a panel interview to assess suitability for the role. That may include reference checks as well. The process then flows through to a review panel to review all the prior steps through the process. We then conduct a final integrity check. Other final assessments include health assessments, fingerprints, DNA and bankruptcy holdings et cetera. The process then flows through, if successful, to a selection pool. The process takes quite a few months and applicants are required to fill out forms and produce any other documentation required.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: With regard to police officers from countries overseas such as the UK, Ireland or wherever who are currently serving officers who want to come to Western Australia to join the Western Australia Police Force, is there a different vetting process?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There are two different categories. One is people who might apply from another jurisdiction, people who might be currently serving officers in Ireland or the UK, or they may be people who were formerly police officers who have come to live in Western Australia, perhaps for other employment, and then have determined that they want to return to a policing role. Clearly, those in the latter category are subject to the same process as any other Western Australian, and similar checks are made on those who apply directly from the UK, Ireland, New Zealand or wherever. I also know that in a recent recruit school there were applicants from other Australian jurisdictions. In order to fully satisfy the member, I will ask the commissioner to provide any further advice.

Mr C. Dawson: As the minister has outlined, the process varies slightly. If they are currently employed by a police force in another jurisdiction or another country, clearly we have an opportunity to go direct to the current employer, but the checks and balances remain the same. One difference is that if they are residents of another country, they have to fall within the criteria of a labour agreement that we have signed with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. They must meet the normal immigration requirements in addition to the other requirements. Of course, people who have already migrated to Australia do not have to jump through that particular hoop. With regard to integrity, yes, we check the bona fides of former or current police officers.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further to that question, what checks are undergone by currently serving police officers who transfer from places like the UK to come here to join the Western Australia Police Force? What is the difference between a currently serving police officer from overseas and someone who has never previously been a police officer anywhere but who lives in Western Australia? Are there different checks?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask Renae Lavell, director of human resources, to respond.

[7.20 pm]

Ms R. Lavell: The only additional check that the international applicants would have, as the commissioner has already explained, is that we check the professional standards areas of their existing jurisdiction. Otherwise, the internal Western Australian checks are very much the same—the same sorts of criminal and traffic infringement checks—but they also have visa requirements for the country and they would have had checks there as well. I suppose there is also the overseas requirement that any applicant from Australia or the United Kingdom would have in terms of their security clearance for entry into the WA Police Force. The main difference between the two is that there are holdings within their existing jurisdiction that we can access.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I might just add that, if anything, there is a higher level of checking, because police are able to access holdings from those overseas police forces.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can you explain what holdings are?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They are holdings in terms of their personnel files, so any record of misconduct, for example, in their former employment. Agreements are in place with other policing jurisdictions in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and other Australian state police forces, for example, under which they share their intelligence holdings or any information that they have on that employee. That needs to be in an agreement between all jurisdictions. Of course, WA police would provide the same information to the relevant police forces on someone from Western Australia who perhaps wants to be a police officer in New Zealand or New South Wales, because nobody wants to see “bad apples” go from police force to police force.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I think we have veered away from the intent of the question; it really is about ensuring that recruits have those high ethical standards that are spelt out on page 333 of budget paper No 2. If a potential

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recruit presents and makes a series of claims about academic or training qualifications, does the WA Police Force accept those claims at face value or does it in some way investigate, interrogate or require further and better particulars? What changes have been made to procedures in light of the recent public evidence around people potentially making claims about their academic qualifications and past that may not be true?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As I advised a moment ago, an investigation is currently underway with respect to what occurred with the recruitment of the member for Darling Range, but one would anticipate that as part of the general process that some authentication of things like degrees and whatever needs to be provided. It is not appropriate to comment on the specifics of the former member for Darling Range.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: We are not asking for specifics.

The CHAIR: Members!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If you wait until I finish my answer.

The CHAIR: Minister, I want to clarify something as well. This estimates committee hearing is a glorious exercise in parliamentary democracy. Please allow the minister to answer questions, and I will not allow anyone to interrupt when members ask their questions. The minister is currently answering the question. I am happy to take a follow-up question, but at the moment the minister will please continue her answer.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It would be fairly logical to assume that police would be just as concerned as the member or anyone else; no doubt, they would be more concerned that somebody with false qualifications could be recruited to the Western Australia Police Force. Clearly, the matter of how the former member for Darling Range became a member of the WA Police Force and what was or was not presented as part of that application is something that is currently under police investigation.

I would also add that in light of anything learnt as part of that process, of course, WA police will look to see whether its vetting processes could be improved. To be eligible to apply for a position as a police officer, people have to fulfil quite a number of prerequisites; for example, they have to be 18 years of age, an Australian or New Zealand citizen or permanent resident of Australia; and they have to hold a manual or C-class motor driver's licence or the equivalent and all their documents, with the exception of the Western Australian motor driver's licence, which must be certified by a person listed under the Statutory Declarations Regulations 1993. That is the kind of authentication that we are talking about.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: And they need to have high ethical standards.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, that is right. I would anticipate that the vast majority of the time police get it right. I think to comment further would be to potentially prejudice potential charges. I do not think the member would want to prejudice any potential criminal actions. That is something the member needs to think about. Although no charges have been laid at the present, there is potential for them to be laid in the future, and so the member might reflect on any further commentary.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Has there been any action, or is there any intention to take action, to audit claims made by currently serving Western Australian police officers about their academic or training qualifications, or other qualifications that may not necessarily be directly relevant to the job? The commissioner and I have recently had that chat in another forum. Qualifications in themselves may not be relevant to the job—if a person trains to be an astronaut at NASA, it may not help them to become a policeperson—however, it does go to a person's integrity and those high ethical standards. Is there any intention, based on information that is publicly available at the moment, to look at existing officers to see whether there are any other issues or anomalies that may arise?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think WA Police Force would generally consider that it has quite high vetting standards and the Commissioner of Police has outlined the process that potential recruits go through in order to be selected. It is generally regarded as being quite a rigorous process. It is also in line with the processes undertaken in other similar jurisdictions—be they interstate, New Zealand or the UK, which are comparable jurisdictions. Our standards in terms of vetting and the requirements for selection are very similar to those of other comparable jurisdictions. There may well be lessons learnt as a result of what has occurred with the former member for Darling Range. If there are, they will be acted upon. The only thing further I would add is that in terms of any retrospective checking, the Western Australia Police Force has been around for over 100 years and we have encountered very few issues in that recruitment process. I would like to think that this is a one-off, but I will ask the commissioner whether he would like to comment further about any processes that he has put in place to check on the background of any of our existing officers.

Mr C. Dawson: In respect of applications, clearly there is an opportunity for an applicant to provide any additional documentation of higher education degrees et cetera or, indeed, other vocational qualifications. Each and every document that is submitted is required to be attested by a justice of the peace or someone under the relevant legislation, such as the Statutory Declarations Regulations. In that sense, there is a validation by a justice of the

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peace or a similar notary authenticating the legitimacy of any document that is submitted. Obviously criminal penalties apply to either the person attesting or a person who utters something under that sort of legislation. It is not the case that police presently require every single document to be vetted by the issuing authority. I employ well over 8 000 employees and, in addition to that, contractors. We obviously have a number of integrity processes that take place outside of attested documents. There are other matters underway which, with respect, I would probably close my answer off with what I have just said.

[7.30 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So if a new police officer who is being recruited by the Western Australia Police Force has put forward their curriculum vitae with degrees from other parts of the world, are those qualifications being tested or checked now to see if they are legitimate? Unfortunately one person has put in question the integrity of the whole process. There are always one or two bad apples. Is there now any change to the regime in looking at new employees to say who they are, to ensure that they are the right person applying for the job? Has Western Australia Police Force changed its practices?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the commissioner just pointed out, if somebody puts down a false qualification, for example, or attests to have a degree that they do not have, the consequences or the penalties are significant for doing that. Generally, that should serve as an incredible deterrent. With the other processes that occur, such as the psychological testing and other background checks, if there is any cause for doubt, I expect those checks are currently done. As has also been advised by the Commissioner of Police, people need to provide statutory declarations. They have to be signed off saying it is a true and correct copy, or whatever, from a commissioner for declarations or a JP so that those checks and balances are there. There are criminal penalties for anybody who provides misleading information as part of that statutory declaration. For the vast majority of people, that is enough. I have already said that police are reviewing their processes in light of any lessons learnt from that recent issue. I have confidence in the Commissioner of Police to oversee any changes that he considers appropriate.

The CHAIR: Before I give the call to the member for North West Central to ask a further question, I observe that we have spent 32 minutes on this one question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister said that each piece of paper that is given to the police upon application to become a police officer for the Western Australia Police Force is signed off by a JP. Does the minister think it is fair and reasonable that JPs have the resources to check the documentation that is presented in front of them and to ring up the universities and ask whether that person actually has received a degree in whatever it may be? Given the fact that being a police officer is a very important role and we want to ensure that that person upholds the law themselves, or the fact that these days we have terrorist —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I just ask whether the member is asking for an opinion or not?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am finishing the question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member started his question with, “Do you think”.

The CHAIR: Member, can you finish your question so the minister can answer.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given the fact that terrorism is running rife, relying on a JP to certify a document, given how integral police officers are in this state, this country and around the world, does the minister think it is appropriate for that just to be the check and balance of a document for the police force?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: To suggest that we are just relying on a JP for authentication is misleading and it is not a statement that I accept. I would ask the Commissioner of Police whether he wants to give any further response to what is effectively the same question.

Mr C. Dawson: As I outlined earlier, there are quite a number of processes and checks and balances, including two integrity steps that we take to also include character references et cetera, in addition to criminal and criminal intelligence holdings. In regards to the actual production of documents—that is, applications—I actually suspended recruit applications from early this year until 30 June as we have sufficient applications on foot that are presently being assessed. No new recruits presently are being added to the queue, if I might characterise it that way, but clearly there is another matter on foot, and as the minister and I have responded, a review is underway.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 332 in volume 2 of budget paper No 2 and the line item “Regional Workers Incentive Allowance Payments”. I note that the estimated actual for 2017–18 is \$285 000 and that, after that, there are no more allocations for regional workers’ incentive allowance payments. Can the minister elaborate why that is the case?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The regional workers’ incentive allowance payment, otherwise known as the district allowance, is an additional payment made to government employees deployed in regional locations to cover higher

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cost-of-living expenses compared with those in the metropolitan area. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has allocated royalties for regions funds to WA Police Force to partially fund district allowance payments every year. The public sector labour relations—that is the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety—coordinates an annual census to monitor the district allowance usage and realigns to a limit set by the Australian Taxation Office. In 2017–18, WA Police Force was funded \$2.212 million in base funding. At the conclusion of the 2017–18 district allowance census, WA Police Force received additional funding of \$285 000. The government, via the royalties for regions fund, has committed \$2.212 million in the forward estimates to ensure that this valued program continues.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So it is still being received by police officers?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has the amount decreased over time or does it remain the same?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It remains the same.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to “Specialist Policing Services” on page 337 of budget paper No 2. The description states that it includes sex crime and the sex offender management squad. Could the minister or one of the officers tell me how many staff are currently within the sex offender management squad and what is the projection for the numbers over the years of the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask the Commissioner of Police to provide advice.

[7.40 pm]

Mr C. Dawson: The sex crime division within the crime specialist portfolio is basically split into a number of different areas. One area is the serious sex offender management squad, which looks after, monitors and investigates dangerous sex offenders. There is a separate area that is aligned within the same division that is responsible for the monitoring and policing of reportable sex offenders. Then there is also a child sex abuse squad. It obviously concentrates on the victims and the perpetrators alleged to have committed child sex offences. We also have an area that looks at adult sex crime matters. That is complemented by district detectives, both in the metropolitan and regional areas. I do not have a specific number of allocated staff, be they detectives, analysts or administrative support staff, but I would add they are always and often in a joint arrangement with other Western Australia Police Force members, and indeed we also have cooperation with the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Communities and child protection workers in a joint arrangement, so we have trained counsellors to assist. In addition to that, we have also co-located in Armadale at the George Jones Child Advocacy Centre, in an arrangement with non-government organisations to be a one-stop shop facility. I do not have the specific full-time equivalents for each of those specific areas with me tonight.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Is it possible to provide that information on notice or as supplementary information, and if possible broken down by those subsets that the commissioner described?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, I do not accept that as a supplementary question. The broad FTE numbers are listed in these budget papers. If the member wants information more specific than that, he can try to put the question on notice. I will have a look back at past practices to see what generally has or has not been provided to the Parliament.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Certainly past practice has been to have that provided. If the minister will not provide it, we will use other forums to get it. Just in the same area of monitoring sex offenders, we have seen some media publicity in the last few days about —

DR A.D. BUTI: I have a point of order. Is this a further question?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Yes, this is a further question on the resourcing of this area. We have seen media publicity in the last few days that in other states and the Northern Territory there have been some issues about monitoring dangerous sex offenders, not because of any failure of policing, but because of failure of technology. Have we had any evidence that such an occurrence has also happened in Western Australia? Are we certain that we can avoid the problems that they have in other states?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think that the member is getting away from the purpose of budget estimates. He is utilising a term under a broad heading to then ask very general questions that really are not of a budgetary nature. I question the practice and even question whether the opposition is getting full value out of the budget estimates process by doing that. It seems that the member is more interested in asking questions about —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Protecting our community.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: — trying to draw on some headline from another state or whatever he has heard in the paper about —

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Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Protecting our community.

The CHAIR: Member, the minister is answering a question. You are free to ask a follow-up question after this.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: He has read in the paper about an incident that has occurred in other states and issues with technology that they have had in another state. The advice I have received is that WA police have not had any issues with technology.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 339 of the *Budget Statements*.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: Good!

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think this is estimates, is it not? Yes, that is right. Under new works I refer to —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: You are better than this.

The CHAIR: Members! Can the member please ask the question again. Members, please be quiet whilst the member is asking the question.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to new works on page 339 of the *Budget Statements* and specifically the \$73.69 million funding for the Armadale courthouse and police complex for 2018–19 in the forward estimates.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thought the member might ask about that!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Can the minister please provide an update of the planning stage and the benefits for the Armadale community and surrounding suburbs?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I certainly can. I acknowledge the member for Armadale's very long campaign for a new police station as part of the justice complex in Armadale. I also acknowledge his very long campaign to have a 24-hour police station in Armadale, which effectively gives Armadale the same status as many other significant metropolitan regional centres such as Midland, Joondalup, Fremantle and the like. I think it was long overdue that Armadale was recognised in the area. We also know that in the south east metropolitan region Cannington has borne a very big load over time, and it has been the busiest of all of our metropolitan police districts over a very long time. I think having the two separated is going to be significant. It comes at a pretty ideal time for Armadale, as we deliver the new police and justice complex at a cost of \$73.69 million. That money is allocated, as the member can see from the budget papers, over 2018–19 through to 2021–22. That will replace the existing Armadale Police Station. It will be fit for purpose. It will have phenomenally enhanced functionality and capacity. We are building a facility to cater for up to 315 officers and staff, and I note that they currently have a complement of over 200. We expect that over 200 officers will be consolidated in that new site from pretty much day one that it is open, but there will be the capacity to house up to 315 officers there. A section of the courthouse will be two storeys, and there will be a redesign of the shared custody facility so we can improve flexibility for WA police and the Department of Justice. It will significantly reduce the distance that charged persons will need to travel between the police station and the justice complex. Construction on that new facility is planned to start in 2018–19. It will service the whole region. I know those areas in neighbouring electorates, not just the member for Armadale's electorate, will benefit from it, including suburbs such as Camillo and even Byford and so forth. They will have a regional police district complex nearer than they had when the nearest one used to be Cannington. This will be a very much enhanced service to the member for Armadale's local community. I also note that his community has benefited from the new metropolitan policing changes that have occurred, through which we now have eight metropolitan districts. The member effectively has his own district now in Armadale. I understand they will be effective from July this year. This signifies a really big step forward in policing in the whole Armadale region and the surrounding suburbs, where there is a whole confluence coming together of the new police station and justice complex, plus the 24/7 we have already put in place. In addition to that, there is the separation of Armadale as its own policing district. I am really looking forward to us being able to service not just the member for Armadale's electorate but also neighbouring electorates with this fantastic new facility.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is a very good announcement for the member for Armadale, but unfortunately, when it comes to the second line item, "Regional and Remote Policing Services", under the service summary heading on page 334 of the *Budget Statements*, I note the announcement of the closure of the Dampier water police recently. How much of a saving for the police force resulted from the decision to close down Dampier water police? How many full-time equivalents have been moved from the Dampier water police to other locations? Where is the closest water police that the north west of Western Australia has?

[7.50 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There are a number of questions there. I have already advised the member and his colleagues that five FTEs were located at the north west water police, and I think the member has asked me a question about that number previously in the house. With the closure of the north west water police, the Police Force has estimated savings of \$13.58 million. This is inclusive of \$2.53 million recurrent over the forward

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estimates that can be redirected to other demands, and \$11 million in capital potentially required to replace the PV *Delphinus*. In addition, sales revenue of between \$0.25 million and \$0.6 million is estimated from the sale of the PV *Delphinus*. As for the location of the nearest water police, members will know that the Western Australian water police are located in Fremantle.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given that the resources have now been taken away through cost savings for regional policing through the Dampier water police, who does the police force now rely on if there is an emergency or situation on the waterways in the north west?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask Commissioner Dawson to add to this in a moment, but it was determined that more effective measures were available to deal with issues that might arise in the north west, and that our air wing was potentially better able to provide appropriate service. The issue was that the PV *Delphinus* was spending more time in dry dock under repair than actually on active duty, and there is also the matter of federal responsibility for federal waters. It is not for Western Australia to effectively sponsor what the federal government should be doing to protect our coastline and federal waters. I will ask Commissioner Dawson to speak more to the specifics of how that area will be policed with the air wing and other resources.

Mr C. Dawson: In addition to the material that the minister has provided, the PV *Delphinus*, although it was operated out of the Dampier port, had limited capability. It could not rapidly respond. Personnel based at Dampier did not have the requisite boarding training, or indeed counterterrorism training, to the extent required. The state navigable waters are three nautical miles. As the member will be aware, some critical infrastructure is beyond state territorial waters. The key responsibility for that is primarily with the commonwealth. We have a healthy relationship with the Australian Border Force and the Australian Defence Force. Their assets retain primacy for areas outside state navigable waters, and our relationship with them is conducted through joint operations. By way of example, the recent record seizure of nearly 1.3 tonnes of crystal methamphetamine was a joint operation. As the minister has already alluded to, the PV *Delphinus* is an aged vessel, indeed an ex-customs vessel nearly 30 years old, and it was not fit for active service for counterterrorism, et cetera, but air assets are utilised by both Western Australia Police Force and by various commonwealth agencies. We have ongoing joint operations with the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Border Force, and they will continue. One of the areas is the joint organised crime task force, which is operating very well in this jurisdiction. We also have arrangements through the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee, of which Deputy Commissioner Brown is a representative. Given that he has responsibility, he may want to add further information.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Deputy Commissioner Brown, do you want to add something further?

Mr S. Brown: I think the commissioner has covered it off, but in addition to what he and the minister have said, local sea search and rescue right around the coast of Western Australia is predominantly undertaken, for the day-to-day safety of people using vessels, by volunteers, who have a vast amount of resources that we coordinate from a search and rescue perspective. The day-to-day safety, from this point onwards, of boating enthusiasts in the Dampier area will be managed in a similar way as it is in Broome, Carnarvon and other coastal ports around Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given that the government is taking away that asset for not only Dampier but also the north west, all the way down to Exmouth, will the government be relying more on volunteer sea rescue personnel and their equipment in a time of emergency—for example, the incident with the helicopter that unfortunately sank in the sea off the coast of Dampier? Will the government be relying more and more on volunteers to cover the ocean?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The fact of the matter is that police have done only limited operations and assistance with sea search and rescue utilising the PV *Delphinus*, and it has been less and less available in recent years. There are excellent sea search and rescue volunteers up and down our northern coast, especially in areas such as Exmouth, as I understand it, so they will continue to carry out their role. That will be complemented, where appropriate, with police air wing resources. Given the amount of actual activity undertaken by the *Delphinus* in recent years, keep in mind that it was slated to be discontinued about seven or eight years ago. Former Commissioner O'Callaghan announced that that was happening, and then after some lobbying there was a backflip on that and police continued with the *Delphinus*, knowing full well that it would provide some form of budget black hole into the future, and knowing that the same activities could be undertaken with a more effective use of resources. Given that, I suppose the point is that the former government did not actually plan to replace the *Delphinus*. It did not put any money in the budget to replace the *Delphinus*.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government has now taken it all away.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The previous government had been planning to take it away.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The present government has taken it away.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

p73a-95a

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

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The government kept limping it along from year to year without any money in the forward estimates for its replacement, knowing full well it was a second-hand boat when it was purchased, that it was nearing the end of its useful life —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why is the present government not replacing it?

The CHAIR: Member, please allow the minister to finish her answer.

[8.00 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It was being deployed less and less of the time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order. My question was: is this going to put pressure on the volunteer sea rescue personnel?

The CHAIR: Your point of order is that the minister is not answering the question. She is finishing her answer.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The context I am putting it in is that the *Delphinus* has not been the best use of resource for a considerable time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So now volunteers have to wear the burden.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The former government limped it along year in, year out without putting money on budget for its ultimate replacement.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: And now this government has taken it away.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the member knows, the former government not only racked up billions of dollars in state debt, but also did not put in the forward estimates any money for a replacement. There was no plan by the former government to replace it. I anticipate that it would have made exactly the same decision. When governments have to be financially responsible, they have to expend taxpayers' dollars in the most effective way possible. Governments are not able to justify purchasing a new boat, and the expenditure of that money, as the best use of the taxpayers' resource. The Commissioner of Police and I have explained that the *Delphinus* has been providing a very limited benefit in the region over recent years. Some of its work can be more effectively done by the police air wing. We have also advised that it plays a very limited role in supporting sea search and rescue. It is the lead agency. It is effectively a commonwealth responsibility in international waters. I can understand that the member, as the member for the region that he is the member for, does not like to see resources taken out of his region. The biggest resource that the member has had in the region is five serving police officers who will be redeployed to the front line. Some of them potentially can be redeployed to other parts of regional Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government's funding is reliant on the fact that there is a debt and it is taking away from the regions to pay that debt. It is taking away \$13.58 million from frontline policing in regional Western Australia. No? Has the minister increased the resources for the police air wing to take up the gap in frontline policing in the water police in the north west?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have just had a bit of a misrepresentation from the member. He said that we are taking away \$13.5 million. Of course that is nonsense. When I started to answer this question, I explained to the member that that is the potential savings across the police budget. If we were to continue with that north west base, we would have to buy a new boat, and we do not have \$11 million worth of capital to buy a new boat.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It was the government's own \$13.58 million in savings.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have not committed to spending \$11 million on a new boat and the former government did not commit to doing that even though —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It did not close it down.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: — the issues were pointed out to the former government year in, year out. The *Delphinus* has effectively been on the ropes for quite a number of years. There is no money in the forward estimates.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Answer my question about the police air wing. Has the minister increased the resources?

Dr A.D. BUTI: They spent the money on musical toilets.

The CHAIR: Member! Member for Armadale, thank you.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will give the member a comprehensive answer to his question.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

p73a-95a

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

There was no money in the forward estimates for a new boat; nor was there any money in the forward estimates for the —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is in government. This is her budget.

The CHAIR: Member! You can ask another follow-up question in a moment. The minister is answering your question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Nor was there any additional money for the police air wing on budget. There was no money for a new helicopter or new planes—none of that.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Because we had a boat.

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Clearly, it is not a viable option to keep the *Delphinus* limping along, as the former government did in recent years. The only solution is to either buy a new boat or close it down. The former government had no money on budget to buy a new boat; therefore, it was going to close it down. The member's question to me is: have we increased funding for the air wing as a result of this? Again, I am pointing out that the former coalition government put no extra money on budget for new planes or helicopters. What I do note, and I am happy to speak to, is that we have put money on budget for a new police helicopter.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: To be based in the north west?

The CHAIR: Member!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member continues to interject. He asked me whether or not we have put any additional money on budget for the air wing. I am advising him that we have. We have put \$26.9 million on budget towards the helicopter replacement in 2018–19.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Where is that based?

The CHAIR: Member, you can ask a follow-up question in a moment. She is answering the question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Just as the former government did with the *Delphinus*, it left us with a decrepit ageing helicopter, which it was asked to replace a couple of years ago. Again, it put no money in the forward estimates to replace that helicopter. I find it a little cute that the member is now complaining after it had eight and a half years to fund these things. It could have bought a new boat with royalties for regions money. Why did it not buy a new boat a year or two ago? Why did it not buy a new boat when it first came to government? The member has advised tonight that the *Delphinus* was first earmarked for discontinuance in 2007. I note that the former government was elected in September 2008. It had eight budgets in which it could have bought a brand-new boat. Had it spent that \$10 million or \$11 million five, six or seven years ago, when we arrived in government we would have had a boat that was viable and could have continued. It left a black hole, with no money in the forward estimates and no money to buy a new boat. It left the north west base in disarray. On top of that, it left us with a huge hole.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order. The minister has not answered the question. I asked specifically about the resources of the air wing.

The CHAIR: The point of order is that the minister is not answering the question. Minister, we do seek to have short and prompt answers. Please answer the question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Excellent. The member has asked me about the air wing. He specifically asked me whether or not we had any additional money for the air wing. It is hardly my fault if he does not ask the question that he wants to ask and then rephrases his question by way of interjection, which he has been asked by you, Mr Chair, not to do. What I would note about the air wing that is available to the north west is that the last time I was Minister for Police, I ordered two Pilatus aircraft —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order. The minister is wasting time and not answering the question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am answering the question.

The CHAIR: I think your point of order is that the minister is not answering the question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: One of those aircraft is based at Karratha. The member is asking me what resources are available to the north west. What is available in the north west is the Pilatus aircraft that the former Labor government purchased.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is now embarrassing herself. Just quickly wind it up.

The CHAIR: Member!

[8.10 pm]

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Mr David Michael; Mr Kyran O'Donnell

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Pilatus aircraft is based in Karratha and it is regularly deployed on search and rescue operations across the north west.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister stated in her media statement on the closure of the Dampier water police that the air wing was going to take over the role of the Dampier water police. I specifically asked the minister what extra resources have been put into the police air wing to cover what she said the Dampier water police has been doing. The minister also stated in her answer to my previous question that there is a new helicopter. Where is that new helicopter based? Is it based in Perth, Dampier or somewhere in the north west? Can the minister please enlighten me on the new resources that have been put in to cover the Dampier water police?

The CHAIR: I am conscious there were a couple of questions in that. Minister, if you can please respond but I am conscious of the time we have spent on this question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As I have outlined, I think now repetitively, there has been very little deployment of the PV *Delphinus*. It has done comparatively little operational work. In fact, the PV *Delphinus* has spent 78 per cent of its time in dry dock and maintenance.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am answering his question.

The CHAIR: Sorry, minister. The member has a point of order.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is clearly not answering the question. I have asked about the police air wing and the helicopter, not the *Delphinus*.

The CHAIR: Member, you have asked a question. The standing orders are very clear regarding estimates. The minister is providing a response. You may ask follow-up questions but the minister is providing a response.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: My point is simply that the *Delphinus* has spent 78 per cent of its time in dry dock and maintenance. It has spent a very small amount of its time on deployment. The Commissioner of Police and Western Australia Police Force advise that they are able to cover those operations with their air wing response. I have noted that we have a Pilatus aircraft based in Karratha, which is regularly deployed to do those duties, and they are capable.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What about the helicopter you referred to?

The CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member asked me whether we had any additional resources for the air wing. I am happy to tell him more about the helicopter but both the police helicopters and other parts of the police air wing are based at Jandakot.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to new works on page 339 of budget paper No 2. Under the road trauma trust account, some funding is allocated for a "Breath and Drug Bus Replacement." Can the minister outline how many breath and drug testing buses will be replaced under this program? Can the minister also indicate whether those buses will be able to test for both alcohol and drugs, or will separate buses test for alcohol and drugs?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Our existing fleet has four large mobile breath-testing buses with existing staffing. They are generally staffed with a sergeant, four senior constables and 10 probationary officers per bus. What is proposed for the future is that we will have three large mobile breath-testing buses with existing staffing and we will have two new buses, which the member is asking me about. They will be medium-sized mobile police facilities. They will be staffed with seven officers per bus: one sergeant, two senior constables and four probationary officers. As is normally the case, they will do both breath testing and drug testing. We will significantly increase the amount of both breath testing and drug testing.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: From the minister's answer, I understand that a bus is currently on the road that will no longer be on the road at some point once this program is implemented. Is there any possibility that that bus could remain on the road to ensure that we have even more resources out there to combat drug-driving and alcohol-impaired driving, or has the bus simply reach the term of its natural life?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have determined to go with the two new medium-sized buses because we think that they will give us greater flexibility and provide a better model moving forward. I will ask Deputy Commissioner Brown if he would like to respond any further regarding the retiring bus.

Mr S. Brown: The large bus the member referred to is reaching its end of life and, simply, into the next year or so, will not be roadworthy. The member can imagine that these buses get a lot of use with a large contingent of police officers upon them. The other advantage in moving to smaller buses is that they will give us greater penetration into regional Western Australia and across the metropolitan area. It is quite a logistical challenge, at times, to get a large bus all the way out to Kalgoorlie in a timely manner to be able to deploy it and then move on to the next town.

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Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I note there is no current funding, but is there any intention in the future to replace all the remaining large buses with these more nimble, medium-sized buses, or is it the intention that there will always be a mix of the large and smaller buses?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will get the member some further advice on that from Deputy Commissioner Brown in a moment but my understanding is that we are keen to try the new, smaller buses. We think they will be very effective. There may still be a need for the larger buses in some metropolitan locations. We certainly think it will be a good mix for the next few years. Regarding the longer term intentions, I will ask Deputy Commissioner Brown whether he has anything to add.

Mr S. Brown: At this point, we will test and then evaluate the new operating model of two large and two medium-sized buses. We think that will probably give us the best balance of large volumes, particularly in the metropolitan area, and being able to block off large sections of roadway and have an increased general deterrence effect on larger numbers of motorists, balanced against the agility and mobility we get from the mid-sized buses. We will evaluate that over time, but we do not have a firm view at this point of what the future operating model will look like.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Is the minister able to tell us the number of alcohol breath tests and drug tests that have been conducted in this financial year and the proposed numbers for each of the years in the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, I can provide some advice in that regard. I will start with the 2016–17 figures so the member has a point of comparison. For 2016–17, breath tests numbered 1 831 139, funded from the consolidated account. A further 342 718 breath tests were funded from the road trauma trust account, so the total number of breath tests for 2016–17 was 2 173 857. For the year to date to May for 2017–18, breath tests funded so far from the consolidated account number 1 676 079. The road trauma trust account funded a further 338 360, which takes the total number of breath tests year-to-date to 2 014 439. I think we set a target of at least 1.8 million breath tests because I am advised that good practice is to average one breath test a year per licensed driver. I understand we have just over 1.8 million licensed drivers in Western Australia, so year-to-date this year, we have already exceeded that number with 2 014 439 breath tests.

[8.20 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: My question was about the following year. The minister indicated there was an intention to increase. What are the figures for the 2018–19, 2019–20 years and following in the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We continue to aim for best practice, so we will continue to aim for more than 1.8 million tests. I note that we have already increased the number of tests. A few years ago it was significantly less than that.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: It is important, because there were more tests in 2016–17 than there will be in 2017–18. I understand that sometimes it simply cannot be predicted to the last number how many there will be at each stop on each day, and they are significant. Can the minister give me similar figures for drug testing as she gave for alcohol testing?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The number of licence holders in Western Australia will continue to increase, so to keep up with best practice as the number of licence holders increases, it is our intention to increase the target. With respect to the member's question about the roadside drug tests, I understand that in 2016–17 there were 34 523. In the year to date, I am told the figure is 31 253, and that the target for this year is 34 500.

I can further advise that because of additional funding we have put into this area, there has been an 18 per cent increase in funding for drug testing, so our target for drug tests for 2018–19 will be 40 000.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Are those year-to-date figures the minister gave for the current year to 31 May or to some other date?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We are not at 31 May yet. They are up to a date in May. They were the latest figures that were available to me today. I actually anticipated the member's question and I asked Mr Brown earlier today to make sure that I had that information.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Thank you. Further to that question, we started off with a breath and drug bus replacement, which is coming out of the road trauma trust account. Does the minister have, or can she at least take on notice, information relating to all the projects to be funded from the RTTA in 2018–19 and through the forward estimates? I appreciate that not all the funding is allocated through the forward estimates? Can the minister provide that list of projects?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have some information here. It may save time if I offer to provide to members a simple A4 page that lists the projects that have been funded this year. We have adopted a new practice of allocating some money over the forward estimates as well. I have also listed where money has been allocated in the forward estimates for particular programs.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

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Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I would appreciate that. Is that for the 2018–19 year?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I ask that that information be distributed. It is for the 2018–19 year.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Does the minister have similar figures for the 2017–18 year?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I provided them last year.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I would not mind looking at that. Perhaps we can go to another area of questioning and then come back to this matter.

The CHAIR: I have the member for Kalgoorlie next. We have an hour and a half to go through that.

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

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Greetings, member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I did not get a chance earlier, but I wish to say that my colleagues were entitled to ask questions about staff office recruitment. Trust me, the staff office works very hard and it will not let anyone fall through the cracks.

At the bottom of page 336, under “Explanation of Significant Movements”, increases in rents for Government Regional Officers’ Housing are forecast. At the moment, if I base my example on, say, Kalgoorlie–Boulder—I am not sure where the Kimberley is at the moment—police officers are paying \$472 a fortnight in rent. That will go up to \$552 a fortnight, so a \$30 a week increase or roughly \$1 500 a year. Police have received a \$1 000 pay rise and, less tax, that is about a \$500 increase. Now they are up for an increase in rent of \$1 500, so half the time they do not want a pay rise.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I cannot see where it says GROH on page 336. Did I get the page number right?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: It is right down the bottom.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have it.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Half the time it is not worth getting a pay rise if rents rise—it rubs each other out. My query is: what is the government doing to help country police officers regarding rental assistance? I remember when I was in GROH many years ago, it was a very good incentive; rents were very low. Would the government consider another system? I think that GROH has run its race because half the time rental subsidies are not worth it. Forget the rent and give them, for example, \$300 and let officers find a place to live so they can do what they want to do—pay it off a house, whatever.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for his informed comment about our staff recruitment area. I think he has very good knowledge of how professional those people are. I am sure they will be pleased to hear his comment.

As members would be aware, the former government built in a \$30 a year increase for GROH housing, not just for the police agency but generally for government officers, including teachers, nurses and others. The member asked me about incentives for police officers to go to the country. The quality of housing in country areas is very important for police officers, and so is the amount they have to pay for it. Over a long period of time different locations have had different arrangements. Some country centres do not have GROH housing; most other country centres do. We have looked at various ways of incentivising police to go to the country. Formerly, when I was Minister for Police, we introduced the 44-hour week into Kalgoorlie and at a range of other locations. That provided an additional financial incentive for people to go to those locations. It is also the case that there are quite a number of country and regional locations where officers pay no rent. I remember many years ago visiting Eucla. It was determined not to charge officers rent to live there because both the station and the houses were not in great condition and it is a very remote location.

We are very mindful of rental increases. I do not like rents going up each year. An anomaly of the \$30 a year increase put in place by the former government is that there are some places where people pay no rent. I think there are about 55 locations where police officers do not pay rent. I am not sure how far the member for Kalgoorlie’s electorate extends, but that probably includes places in his electorate.

[8.30 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is in the wheatbelt, I think.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It includes places such as Norseman and Laverton. Police officers do not pay rent in a range of places. It is not just the Agricultural Region; it goes right up to Wyndham. There are 55 locations where they do not pay rent. I understand that at those 55 locations, they also have not had the \$30 increase. That is something that needs to be taken into account because those who are paying rent have been hit with that additional

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\$30 a fortnight and those who do not pay rent have not had that same imposition. I am very aware of the various anomalies of country locations. The Commissioner of Police needs to take that into account. He obviously knows which locations are harder to fill than others and, where appropriate, we look at providing incentives by way of their accommodation cost.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: We know the economics. The Government Regional Officers' Housing rents are going up by \$1 500 a year and salaries are limited to an increase of \$1 000 a year. Police officers in these areas are already starting behind the eight ball without meeting their normal cost of living. What specific incentives are in place to, firstly, encourage those officers to stay in regional locations and, secondly, to encourage officers to look at these regional locations as an option?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As I have advised, lots of locations have free rent. There are also locations where police officers work a 44-hour week. It is unfortunate that the former government basically built this in over the four years of forward estimates prior to the last election. It applies to police officers as well as other government employees. We are certainly mindful of it. I note that it is still the case that police officers will certainly pay no more than market rent. I would imagine that in most instances, they are paying below market rent in the towns in which they are living. There is some incentive built in there. If a circumstance arose in which they considered they could get a better rental arrangement in the private market, that option is open to them.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I refer to the asset investment program on page 338 of budget paper No 2. One of the great concerns in my electorate of Mount Lawley is the scourge of methamphetamine. Tackling this scourge seems to be the key to keeping our communities safe. Can the minister please provide updates on the WA Police Force meth border force?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, I would be very pleased to do that. This is one of the areas that our government has targeted very strongly. We provided some \$83.553 million over the period 2017–18 through to 2020–21 to support police enforcement activities relating to methamphetamine. I acknowledge that the meth scourge problem is much broader than just WA police and that other agencies are involved as part of the government's overall methamphetamine action plan. Our part is the enforcement part and we have provided \$83.5 million to WA police for the meth border force.

The member asked whether I can update him on our meth border force. We committed to the recruitment, as he would be aware, of 100 additional police officers and 20 police staff. That recruitment is well underway. I understand that as of 26 March, 50 police officers and 17 police staff had been recruited as part of that meth border force commitment. WA Police Force retains its current commitment to the methamphetamine investigation teams, our meth transport teams, our meth money team and our meth investigative desk. As the member will be aware, we also purchased what we are colloquially calling a meth truck but, in reality, it is a truck or van that can be deployed to drug trafficking routes. It has X-ray-type equipment on board similar to what we would see at an airport, like an airport scanner. The police can take that to mail centres because some drugs are sent via the post or parcel delivery services. The equipment can quickly scan through a lot of product if it is taken to a mail centre. I went on an operation in the south of our state and watched that truck in use at a roadside stop set up on a major highway. It was very effective and it has been deployed very effectively there.

I might just add that we announced the recruitment of three new police dogs that will be general duties and narcotics dogs as well. They are the quickest at finding drugs. In fact, I think I commented that during the last month alone our police dogs had helped in the discovery of 1.4 kilograms of methamphetamine, 1.2 kilograms of cannabis, half a kilo of cocaine and over \$40 000 cash. They helped in the apprehension of at least 28 offenders. They do a great job. They are part of the effort to uncover drugs. They are taken out on deployment. As I saw when I went out to the stop on the major highway, if someone in a car is pulled over and there is some cause for concern, the dogs are taken around the vehicle and utilised to see if they can capture the scent of drugs, which they are trained to do.

The meth border force is well on track. We had the biggest seizure of drugs on record in Geraldton—1.2 tonnes. WA police have had some excellent results during the last year. I am very proud of the work that they are doing. The additional resources that have been allocated to target drugs, particularly methamphetamine, are already paying dividends. I might just ask Commissioner Dawson whether he has anything to add.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: Perhaps with the assistance of the commissioner, without descending to operational matters, can the minister advise us of any successes that she has had keeping these drugs off our streets and out of our neighbourhoods?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think I have spoken on the topic for long enough so I might hand over to Commissioner Dawson. I am sure he would be very pleased to tell the member about some of the collaborative wins that we have had in conjunction with commonwealth agencies.

[8.40 pm]

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Mr C. Dawson: In addition to what the minister has outlined, obviously the Australian record seizure of 1.296 tonnes is the most by way of volume. It is the highest amount of crystal methamphetamine, which is really the most illicit drug scourge. Our assessment is that 80 per cent of criminal offending involving burglary and theft is by persons who are addicted to this drug. It has a very high correlation with other crime types that impact on our community.

In addition to the joint operations that we conduct with the joint organised crime task force—which comprises the Western Australia Police Force, Australian Federal Police, Australian Border Force and Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—we are planning further cooperation particularly with the ACIC by co-locating 20 of our detectives, investigators and analysts with them in their Perth office. That is already resulting in very strong intelligence. By way of example, 31 kilograms of meth was seized at Dampier port in the Pilbara during a joint operation in March. The minister has already outlined the success of some 20 kilograms seized, which came by air from Sydney. We also have ongoing activity by persons importing the drug by way of the dark net orders and through our postal service. Again, we are working with Australia Post and other carriers. We cannot just concentrate on one form of entry.

Apart from the correlation with volume crime and other crime types, wastewater testing nationally continues to show that regional areas in Western Australia have the highest per capita use of meth, and Perth presently ranks second behind Adelaide in the capital cities. We know it is a profound problem but we are very pleased at the cooperative arrangement that has resulted in record seizures. Year to date, we have seized 1.407 tonnes of meth. That is very significant. We have also seized over \$7 million in cash and over 500 offenders have been charged; many on very serious offences that can only be dealt with by the superior courts. Today, I came back from some of our regional areas in the south west and great southern. We are also conscious that although these are high-volume seizures, the meth impact on small country towns, be it ounces or grams, is just as significant a problem as the tonnage that we may seize before it is distributed. The impact on those communities is very concerning. We will not just be concentrating on the high-end international drug dealers. The assessment by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is that 70 per cent of the most serious organised crime syndicates are Australians or affiliated Australians who are situated offshore, or they are connected with offshore syndicates. We must also reinforce the policing effort that is being done in small communities in regional WA. By way of example, in the last several months we executed approximately 30 search warrants in the town of Manjimup. We charged over 60 persons with drug-related matters. Those sorts of operations will continue. That is very important so that we do not concentrate on the international, but we also continue to police our suburbs in the city and the smaller towns.

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: I refer to the third dot point on page 333 in budget paper No 2, specifically the metropolitan operational reforms. Having doorknocked many Balcatta residents before and after the last state election who were frustrated with the former policing model, including several off-duty police officers in private, I am excited that these reforms are coming through. Could the minister please provide an update on the operational restructure?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The changes that have been made to the metropolitan district model really will change the way services are delivered in the metropolitan area. We are increasing the number of metropolitan districts from four—which they were decreased to under the former government—to eight smaller, more manageable metropolitan districts at Perth, Midland, Mirrabooka, Joondalup, Armadale, Cannington, Mandurah and Fremantle. As I highlighted earlier, for the first time Armadale—one of the busiest areas—will get its own policing district in the south east corridor. There are also significant advantages for the Peel area. In fact anywhere in that outer metropolitan area will be significantly advantaged by the new model. My electorate was traditionally in Midland or east metro at various times. We were combined with central when it went to a four-district model—so, with all of Perth. People in the hills and Ellenbrook were in the same policing district as people living not just in the city but in places like Wembley, for example. We think this will mean shorter response times.

There were also issues with the model in that it divided up the workforce between what were called LPTs—local policing teams—and the response teams. The feedback over the last couple of years was that those, as the member correctly identified, were under enormous pressure to respond. I am advised that the new structure will be in place by 1 July. Keeping in mind the government's priority is to deal with the issue of domestic assaults, as I refer to them, family and domestic violence response teams will be co-located in every one of those eight metropolitan districts. A sergeant and six constables will be assigned to each district to tackle the most serious family violence cases. That does not mean that other general duties officers will not respond to domestic assaults, but it does mean that we will have those specialist teams in each of the policing districts. Irrespective of what crime is occurring or is reported, police systems are able to identify where they get regular call-outs, for example, or numerous call-outs from the one premise for whatever reason and if domestic assault issues are occurring at a particular premise on numerous occasions, those teams located in each of the districts can pay additional attention to that. I think that is one of the real benefits of the new policing model.

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I also note in terms of the new policing model that we are establishing a central regional operations group. It is colloquially called ROG. In recent years, regional operations groups have been based just north and south of the city. The new central one is to be based in Warwick, probably not too far from the member for Balcatta's electorate. It gives the teams greater flexibility. By way of example, it is the ROG officers who respond to out-of-control parties. They come in over the top and supplement it.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I notice we are getting more interjections from the member for North West Central. He is very cruel.

Several members interjected.

The CHAIR: Members!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: To be quite clear, the number of ROG locations will be increased from two to three. There will still be a north metro and a south metro group, but now there will also be one based more centrally at Warwick.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Given that the minister is creating this new ROG unit, was it a mistake last year to close one of the ROG units when officers were redeployed from the ROG unit to go into police stations?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. Effectively what we have done is made a number of changes for the benefit of the community. These are changes that Commissioner Dawson has put in place as the new Commissioner of Police. I expect that people are aware that when the commissioner took up the job in September last year, the first thing he put in place was the complete review of Western Australia Police Force operations, and every aspect of policing was reviewed. As a conclusion to that review, the commissioner has put in place a range of changes that he thinks will be of benefit to the community. Essentially, the main task of the Western Australia Police Force, as I see it, is to respond as quickly as possible to crimes that occur, when people want assistance, and to assist in whatever way they can in preventing crime and driving crime rates down. I acknowledge clearly that that is not just a police responsibility but a whole-of-community responsibility—it is a multifaceted, multiagency thing to generally try to drive crime rates down. It is effectively the commissioner's call to have the eight new districts. It is his call, as a result of the review, to set up the regional operations groups, as he has chosen to do. I think they are great initiatives by the Commissioner of Police and I ask him whether he would like to add anything further about the new policing model and the matters he has implemented since doing his review.

[8.50 pm]

Mr C. Dawson: In addition to what the minister has outlined, the principle behind the eight smaller districts is to ensure a greater span of control by a dedicated district superintendent and three inspectors. As the minister has already outlined, each of the three will be complemented within the structure by combining the response and the local policing teams into one unified command. In that sense, I have an expectation that I have set out for each of those district superintendents, and overseen by the district commissioner, metropolitan, that the situation command will be driven through local policing knowledge, but coordinated through the police operations centre. As the minister has outlined, we are establishing a state operations command centre, which although it has statewide responsibilities, will provide a much higher situation command. That will involve having a higher level of intelligence and information sets, which would include social media, and reticulating closed-circuit television from both public and private providers, in which that command centre will have greater capacity to coordinate matters that run across districts. The expansion of the regional operations group has gone from 98 officers to 120, with 40 located at each of three locations, being Rockingham, Neerabup and Warwick. Those officers will have additional capability, as we are equipping them with AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifles.

That is to complement the existing capability of our tactical response group to support frontline police officers. I will talk to our assessment, both from my state and national experience, and I might invite Deputy Commissioner Brown to add to this, as he has just come back from overseas. The first responders, internationally and in Australia, have ordinarily been equipped with side-arms, so this is a very important increased capability. Although the Australian public terrorist threat alert is listed as probable, it is very important that aside from the normal policing that goes with our duty, we must also ensure that we have a full capability for any matters that might touch on active armed-shooter situations or indeed countering any terrorism. I am very confident that we have technically equipped the facility out at Maylands to complement what we have at Midland by way of command and control by redeploying officers and their management teams to eight smaller districts. In addition to that, we have eight radio channels, as opposed to four. That frees up congestion that had been drawn down on.

I might close my comment by saying that this is not exclusively drawn down from the review I caused to take effect. My own experience as a district superintendent some 20 years ago reinforced that. It was also reinforced with a very high survey response conducted by the Western Australia Police Union of Workers, which also cited

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a number of matters regarding metropolitan policing. I am sure Mr Brown will be able to add something with the minister's concurrence.

Mr S. Brown: Specifically to the issue of the allocation of AR-15s to the three ROG teams, it is very much proportionate with the maintenance of the threat level of a terrorist attack in Australia, including Western Australia, as being probable. As the commissioner has just alluded to, I have just returned from a series of international meetings with our Five Eyes partners, being Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. It is quite clear and apparent that the incidence of not only attacks across the Five Eyes countries, but also the number of disruptions that have been enabled by police to be undertaken, has really seen that we need to have a step change here in our tactical capability on the road. This arming is something the people of Western Australia will soon see on the streets. The training and procurement has already begun and in the coming months we will see the rollout of that with the expansion of the ROG teams.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Just on the arming of police officers with, I think, AR-15 assault rifles, how many assault rifles will WA police acquire, what is the cost of those assault rifles and where in the *Budget Statements* is the provisioning to purchase these rifles?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not believe we have that information with us tonight, but if the member puts that question on notice, I will make sure the information is provided to him.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: This is a question I had anyway, but it fits right in here. We talked about counterterrorism and I am just as pleased as anyone that Deputy Commissioner Brown, the police commissioner and everyone else are so focused on this area. However, I note that on page 341 of budget paper No 2, under "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies", there was some funding in the current financial year for countering violent extremism intervention programs. That funding has been discontinued for this coming year and into the forward estimates. Why was it determined to discontinue that program, and what other specific programs are in place, run either by police or another government agency, to help intervene in countering violent extremism?

The CHAIR: I will add that as a new question, because it is a stretch. It is a new question about page 341 of the *Budget Statements*.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think that falls under Deputy Commissioner Brown's portfolio and I hope he might be able to provide some information about that.

Mr S. Brown: I am advised that the program is being funded on a continual basis by recurrent funding from within the judicial services portfolio. It is a collaboration led by police, but across government. In the current financial year, the Western Australian police also received additional funding, which is likely to be ongoing, through the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee. Although that particular item does not appear in the forward estimates, it will be funded by recurrent budget and also from within the judicial services portfolio, and most likely by the ongoing commitment, as exists across the states and territories, funded by the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee.

[Ms L.L. Baker took the chair.]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Where is the funding from the ANZCTC—it is actually easier to say the title than the acronym in that case!—incorporated in the police budget and what is the amount we are getting in total grants for the upcoming year?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I might ask Mr Pasquale to provide the member with that line item.

Mr F. Pasquale: Could I have the reference or page number that the member is referring to?

[9.00 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I was following up the funding for countering violent extremism on page 341, and the answer from the deputy commissioner indicated —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think the answer from the deputy commissioner was that it comes out of the judicial services portfolio, generally, and also the other funding. We are just trying to —

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: From the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee, and I am asking what is the level of funding from the ANZCTC, and where is it incorporated in these income statements.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am going to ask Deputy Commissioner Brown to respond.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I am happy to have it taken on notice; I do not mind.

Mr S. Brown: The actual amount of funding changes from year to year, depending on the initiatives being rolled out in a consistent manner across the states and territories. Those initiatives run across 11 different capability sets,

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such as investigations, intelligence, bomb disposal, countering violent extremism, and a raft of other capabilities. It also procures specialist assets for us. For example, at the moment the agency, in the coming six to nine months, will be in receipt of a new armoured vehicle, which will be funded by the ANZCTC, as it will be funded for other jurisdictions as well. In simple terms, the amount fluctuates, depending upon the collective view of the membership of the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee, on which I am one of the two state representatives for Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the heading “Relationship to Government Goals” on page 334. I refer to an issue that the minister is well aware of, that of firearms being able to be carried by Australia Post, and the issue that is quite concerning to people in my electorate and in regional Western Australia, about the transportation of firearms. Can the minister elaborate on whether there has been a resolution on how firearms can be transported around Western Australia?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have made considerable progress. Deputy Commissioner Brown has been heading up a group that has been consulting about this. There is now quite a long list of approved carriers for firearms, and there are a number of firearms carriers for country regions. I understand that some firearms carriers are not taking on new clients, but I am also advised that some are. This has been a very long process, and has been going on since before we were elected. I am well aware of the issues. I have had a number of meetings with interested parties, particularly country firearms dealers, and I know that Deputy Commissioner Brown has been having ongoing meetings with those people, and there have been quite a number of advances as part of that, so I will ask Mr Brown to respond.

Mr S. Brown: I can confirm that, over the last six to seven months the number of approved carriers has increased now to 14. Through that same period we have been undertaking detailed negotiations and discussions with Australia Post. Those conversations are in their eleventh hour and appear very optimistic. I would hate to jeopardise a decision made by the corporate board of Australia Post at this last minute, but advice to me as recent as yesterday is that we are close to a solution that will likely see Australia Post step into the space to become an approved carrier in this state, which I think would go a long way towards adding to the gains we have seen over the past six months, and making it easier for firearms repairers, manufacturers and dealers in this state to safely transport firearms and firearm parts across the network without compromising the safety of people in this state or across Australia.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: That is very good news, and everyone appreciates that Australia Post is critical to this, because it gets to parts of our state that none of the other carriers get to. Well done, and good luck in finalising that agreement. Does the minister have any information about how many firearms or parts of firearms went missing through the Australia Post process before September last year, when Australia Post stopped carrying firearms because it was not an approved carrier? Without getting into who is at fault in all of that, is there any evidence from year to year over the past five or 10 years of how many firearms or parts of firearms went missing during their carriage by Australia Post?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think that that would be a very difficult question to answer, but if anyone has any idea, it would be Mr Brown, so I will ask him to provide a response.

Mr S. Brown: I do not have specific numbers, but the Western Australia Police Force, together with our partners across the country, have made enquiries about the number of firearms that have apparently been stolen from within the network of Australia Post. That is a very sensitive issue, of course, and I will preface anything else that I say by saying that those firearms, the number of which is not specific and not determined, would appear to have been taken by people across the country, not just in Western Australia, putting firearms or firearm parts into the Australia Post system without its knowledge, and without the requisite level of security. We are proposing here, and working with Australia Post on, a different regime that will see Australia Post become an approved carrier with pretty much absolute knowledge of when firearms are in its system or not. It would certainly not be Australia Post’s fault if somebody put something in a box and posted it across the country, and failed or decided not to declare that the item in the box was a dangerous good or item—as is Australia Post’s policy.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: With regard to what the minister has been saying about what has actually been put in the post, in the system of firearms, people who own firearms and dealers, do the police have a good handle on the inventory of licensed guns that are out there? Do the police have a good inventory of licensed firearms and who owns them? For instance, if a dealer has a list of guns, can the police audit that dealer and check to see whether those guns are there?

[9.10 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The police maintain a firearms registry. As we know, that comes under Deputy Commissioner Brown’s responsibility, so I will ask him to comment.

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Mr S. Brown: There are some 80 000 licensed firearms holders in the state whose firearms particulars are recorded on the licensing registry system. From time to time, the Western Australia Police Force conducts audits of firearms owners, dealers, repairers and manufacturers. In the past we have conducted, and into the future we will conduct, targeted operations to test and dip sample to see whether a percentage of the firearms community is adhering to the requirements under the Firearms Act. We do know that in recent years when there has been theft of firearms, even from licensed dealers, the record keeping of some of those firearms dealers has not been up to spec, and that has been disappointing to say the least.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the Western Australia Police Force believe that the police inventory of those 80 000 licensed firearms holders is correct? If the police went to a licensed dealer, would there be any difference between what the police have and what the licensed dealer has—if that makes sense?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will defer to Deputy Commissioner Brown.

Mr S. Brown: That is a difficult question to answer, as firearms are always in transit between owners, manufacturers and dealers. I would say that, generally speaking, we would have a fairly good handle on where the firearms are supposed to be, to whom they are supposed to be licensed and where they are supposed to be secured. Whether they are in fact at those locations, we come across them from time to time in the hands of criminals of course, and that is well known to the community. When they are stolen, they have been improperly secured or whatever the circumstances might have been. In our audits, we sometimes find that the security requirements are not up to spec, particularly when they are people who are above mere owners and are manufacturers, dealers or repairers with large numbers of firearms.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Given the traumatic event in recent weeks in Margaret River that involved a licensed firearm, is there any intention to review the Firearms Act or the Firearms Regulations based on any evidence that comes out of that tragedy, or is it too early to look into this area further? I am trying to be as sensitive as I can in asking the question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Clearly, there will be a coroner's report out of the incident that occurred at Margaret River. Any recommendations from the coroner's report will be taken very seriously by government. I expect that we would have bipartisan support in this chamber and in Parliament for any recommendations on firearms that come out of that coronial inquiry. As the member will be aware, Commissioner Dawson visited Margaret River immediately after that tragic event and he is aware of the circumstances, so I will ask him to provide further comment.

Mr C. Dawson: I will answer in broader terms before turning to the specificity of the Margaret River tragedy. In addition to the responses provided by Deputy Commissioner Brown about licensed firearms, the national assessment of the numbers of firearms in Australia also includes a number in the grey and black markets. That assessment by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is currently in the order of 250 000 long arms and some 10 000 considerable handguns that have never been licensed. That is primarily due to a number of other jurisdictions—not Western Australia—licensing only shooters or firearms owners, not the weapons themselves. When the 1996 buyback occurred, not all weapons were returned. The reconciliation that has taken place over quite a number of years is due to the knowledge that we have of the numbers of weapons that have been imported into Australia—for instance, from North America. We know that many of those were never returned, so they remain in the community.

The three long arms that police seized from the scene of that terrible tragedy in Margaret River were all licensed. None of them were high-powered weapons. They were licensed to a person connected to that property. As the minister has already said, this is subject to a very complex coronial and homicide investigation. I expect that we will not complete that file for several months, and then it will be provided to the State Coroner. I expect that the coroner will make a decision on an inquest. That is her jurisdiction. We obviously will respect it.

In closing, I do not have any information presently in front of me that gives rise for concern about the licensing arrangements in that particular matter. However, I would add that the Law Reform Commission has provided a report that makes a number of recommendations, and it is presently the subject of a working group consideration.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: This question follows up on the Law Reform Commission's report. Is there any intention to review the act and the regulations to enable the role-play game of airsoft to be legally conducted in Western Australia and to enable effectively the toys that are used to be brought into or even manufactured in Western Australia?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, that is a matter that is under review and there is a recommendation in the Law Reform Commission's report about airsoft. More specifically, though, Hon Aaron Stonehouse, a member of the upper house, is very keen to see airsoft legalised in Western Australia. He raised this issue with me last year and I organised for him to meet me and relevant people from the WA Police Force. I understand that he is progressing a private member's bill. I have advised him that I am very relaxed about him pursuing a private member's bill

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through the upper house. I have also said that I am more than happy for WA police to provide him with some guidance on that, because if he wants to bring before the Legislative Council a bill to legalise airsoft, I think it would be better if the WA police provided advice on it, and it would be more likely to be acceptable to the Legislative Council. Should it pass the Legislative Council, we would then have to consider it in the Assembly. Of course, once his bill has been drafted, our government would need to consider whether or not we would support it. But, generally, I can say that the Law Reform Commission is supportive of airsoft being regulated.

The member may not be aware that I was the minister who changed the Firearms Act to legalise paintballing in Western Australia. We knew at that time that lots of people were engaged in paintballing—hundreds, if not thousands, of people throughout Western Australia each week. It was a pretty popular sport. My view on these things generally is that it is better to permit them, regulate them and have some control over them than to have them occurring illegally and without regulation. My indication to Hon Aaron Stonehouse is that if he brings forward that legislation, I will look at it. From a government perspective, there are a number of other aspects of the Law Reform Commission's report that I would be keener to give priority to. Legalising airsoft probably is not at the top of the government's legislative agenda, but if a private member in the upper house such as Hon Aaron Stonehouse wants to progress it, I am more than happy to see him do that.

[9.20 pm]

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I refer to the significant issues impacting the agency on page 333 of budget paper No 2. I specifically refer to the Aboriginal employment policy, which includes the Aboriginal cadet program. As Western Australian jobs are the McGowan Labor government's number one priority, can the minister please provide updates on the Aboriginal cadet program?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As I think I commented earlier, the Western Australia Police Force is undergoing a period of reform with the recently launched strategic direction and command and intent themes introduced by the Commissioner of Police. It provides a platform to respond to a changing and complex crime environment in a period of challenging economic conditions. The Western Australia Police Force has commenced activities for a diversity and inclusion strategy as part of that reform. Those activities build upon recent work undertaken in reviewing gender equality and Aboriginal employment within the agency. The member may be aware that the Aboriginal cadet program was developed to create a more accessible pathway for young Aboriginal people who might wish to become police officers. Our ultimate objective is to increase the percentage of Aboriginal police officers within the Western Australia Police Force. The Aboriginal cadet program commenced in late 2016. Quite a number of cadets have already successfully completed the program. It has certainly been a priority area for the Commissioner of Police. He is very committed to seeing more Aboriginal people engaged as police officers and providing pathways for them. I think it is particularly important to engage Aboriginal people in the police force and in the community in regions such as the Pilbara and the Kimberley where a very high percentage of the overall population is Aboriginal, but also in other regions. As I have said, the Commissioner of Police is very passionate about this issue so I might give him the opportunity to make some further comments.

Mr C. Dawson: The minister's response reinforces the passion and commitment that I and the force have to increase the representation of Aboriginal employees, particularly sworn officers. Presently, we have 156 employees who identify themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Our intention is to continue to increase not only representation. Initially, 24 young Aboriginal men and women under the age of 24 entered the Aboriginal cadetship program. I am very pleased to advise that the first four of those cadets will graduate this Friday, 25 May. That will be wonderful. In addition, we have advertised for 37 additional Aboriginal persons to be recruited for cadet positions. They will be from not only the Perth metropolitan area, but we are also seeking to attract applicants from regional locations.

I returned just this morning from the great southern. I was very pleased to speak with and praise the work of one of our Aboriginal sergeants, Allan Mallard, who is the officer in charge of Tambellup Police Station. It is tremendous that we have a leader in that community. I am also pleased to advise that a police facility at Warakurna in the lands community is totally staffed by Aboriginal people. It is led by Sergeant Revis Ryder, who is assisted by Senior Constable Wendy Kelly. They are actively policing in Aboriginal communities. We want to extend this work because of the obvious benefits it brings having skilled Aboriginal officers deployed to assist in policing those communities. There is a big reason we need to do that: the over-representation of Aboriginal persons in the justice system, as both victims, and also, regrettably, those who enter the system as alleged offenders. This is being done in concert with a number of state government initiatives, including the Target 120 program and the strategy to reduce the number of Aboriginal persons who are presently incarcerated.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: Firstly, can I congratulate the cadets who will graduate on Friday. That is fantastic news. Anecdotally, does this emphasis on recruiting Aboriginal people to the police force enhance operational outcomes, further to the commissioner's final comments?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: To be very clear, these cadets are graduating from the blue and gold squads on Friday as fully-fledged police officers. That is great news and I am very pleased to see that happen. I will allow the commissioner to respond to the rest of the member's question.

Mr C. Dawson: For all police officers, we provide 28 weeks of training at recruitment level but, in addition, we provide local inductions that are overseen by district superintendents. These are very important to include local community elders who assist in the induction once they have been deployed to our respective districts. It is an ongoing learning process. The advantage operationally and in outcomes is that if we deploy Aboriginal people as fully sworn officers, community relations officers or police staff—public servants—they have a personal and community advantage by being Aboriginal people. That is why I want to expand it. I am not saying that non-Aboriginal persons cannot be successful in those positions; broadly, they are very successful in what they are doing, but this needs to be tied to strategies to improve justice and community outcomes. Hence, it is quite a complex process. I recently sent four of our Aboriginal officers to New Zealand, led by Inspector Mark Ninnett, and three other officers went with him. They have only just come back and briefed our corporate board. The New Zealand Police ran a very successful program to integrate police with the Maori people of New Zealand. They visited a number of iwi—tribal centres—and marae. They have come back armed with even better strategies and we seek to see whether they can be replicated. We can certainly learn some lessons from them. It is ongoing work.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I might end by saying that it is important for our police force to reflect the diversity of the community. So although we have these strategies in place to engage Aboriginal officers, strategies are also in place to include wider ethnic and gender diversity within WA police, which I regard as very important. That diversity, in my view, should reflect the community that officers are policing.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to the third line item, "Percentage of sworn police officer hours available for frontline policing duties" under the outcomes on page 335. We are looking at around the 75 per cent mark. That means one in four officers is not available. That shocked me; I never realised that. Would that be tied up with those who are injured on duty, and would discipline be the other part of it? I assume "out of qualification" would be included in that, because that can be rectified. Are we in a position to improve that to lower that number of one in four that are unavailable?

[9.30 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The number of those who are unavailable includes people who are not available for duty due to illness or injury. It also includes people on short-term, sick or personal leave. Also senior management, superintendents and people above are not included in that percentage and neither are police officers working in non-operational, non-frontline areas. A range of people are not available for so-called frontline policing duties. It includes our command team, for example. It is largely just a definitional thing that includes people not available for frontline duty—such as everyone at superintendent level or above—and, as the member would know well from his experience, those in specialist roles are not in frontline roles.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: So when I look at it, it is not as bad as I have perceived it?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Nothing like it; no.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the road trauma trust account on page 228 of budget paper No 3. How much did the road trauma trust account contribute to the acquisition of the new police helicopter?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The government's commitment to overall funding for the helicopter was \$26.9 million. Of that \$26.9 million, \$10.2 million was from the road trauma trust account.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How does using the road trauma trust account to fund \$10.2 million of the \$26.9 million police helicopter reduce deaths on roads?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The police helicopter spends up to 38 per cent of its time supporting vehicle events such as pursuit of vehicles. The member may not be aware, but a recent coronial report reviewed a number of police pursuits that had resulted in death. One of the senior police may comment on this in a moment, but, for example, when a vehicle is stolen or, alternatively, is being used in the commission of a serious offence—an armed hold-up or something of that nature—and it heads off at speed onto the road, there are a few options for pursuing the vehicle or the offenders who have done a serious crime. The most obvious option is that police cars chase them. There are inherent dangers in chasing them through congested residential areas, shopping precincts or whatever. Sometimes people who are trying to get away from police, apart from just travelling at high speed, engage in some incredibly stupid things. For example, at night they turn off their lights or drive on the wrong side of the road. There have even been instances where they have driven on the wrong side of major highways or freeways. The police helicopter, as commented upon in the coronial report, provides a very good option for monitoring these vehicles from the sky, very often in a way that is not detected by the offender who is absconding in the vehicle. People in

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the helicopter can then communicate with police officers in the vehicles on the ground, who can then intercept the vehicle safely at a later point in time, rather than having the lights and sirens of cars following them and having the kind of police chase with its inherent dangers not only to the police officers in the vehicles and the people who are trying to evade police, but also, as has occurred on numerous occasions over the years, other innocent parties, who have been doing the right thing, sitting at a set of traffic lights or driving down the road, becoming victims. It potentially prevents crashes of that nature by safely monitoring the location of those vehicles and providing an opportunity for police to safely intercept a vehicle at a more appropriate location. I am not sure whether anyone else wants to add anything more.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Did the minister ask the Road Safety Commissioner to contribute to the new helicopter prior to issuing a ministerial directive? Did he refuse; and, if so, what were the reasons for the refusal?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No. To be clear, in December 2017, the State Coroner released findings that recommended —

That the Police Airwing be allocated greater resources for the acquisition and operation of an additional helicopter and to this end, that consideration be given to allocating appropriate funding to the Western Australia Police Service.

That left us needing to find \$26.9 million to replace the ageing BK117 helicopter with a new twin-engine medium-class helicopter. We looked at funding options for that. It was determined that it would be appropriate to fund the percentage from what was used for operations for pursuits and so forth, because the origin of this came from that coroner's report, and that we seek information on what percentage of the police helicopter's time was spent between the relevant duties. The amount of 38 per cent that was being spent on these kinds of traffic duties, monitoring pursuits and the like, was provided to me. Consequently, \$10.2 million was sought from the road trauma trust account, with the remainder, \$16.1 million, being provided from the consolidated account.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why did the minister have to issue a ministerial directive to get something that, as she said, came out of the report to fund a new helicopter? Why did she have to issue a directive to the Road Safety Commissioner to get \$10.2 million? I think the minister originally asked for the whole lot to come out of the road trauma trust account.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It was done that way because that is what is required under the Road Safety Council Act. The Road Safety Council and the administration of the RTTA money is not the same as in other government agencies or departments. There are strict requirements in the act for what should occur. I note that those strict requirements were not complied with by the former government and it did not actually follow the letter of the law of the Road Safety Council Act. For example, the former police and road safety minister, the member for Scarborough, saw that a significant amount of money was allocated to prop up the Western Force rugby team. That was commented on in the recent Langoulant report. It never went to the Road Safety Council. Legally, it should have gone to the Road Safety Council. If the minister wanted to spend money on that, in my view, she should have issued a ministerial directive for that. That is the consistent advice that I have always received. It is about being open and transparent. That is why I issued the directive. We have been open and transparent about that.

[9.40 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There is \$41 million left in the account. There have already been 66 road deaths in WA this year, 39 of which were in regional WA. What is the government doing with the \$41 million that is left over in the road trauma trust account? This account was established to provide for road safety initiatives. Why is there \$41 million left in the account? Why is it not there to protect people's lives, particularly in regional Western Australia?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can understand why the member would raise that. I just note that when he was last in government, \$94 million was resting in the account in 2014–15, \$95 million was in the account in 2015–16, and \$56 million was left in the account in 2016–17. I also note that the former government did not make allocations for the out years, as we have into the future. There are a range of reasons more money has seemingly been left in the account. I suppose the first point I would make is that the account has a considerably smaller balance than it had under the previous government. We have deliberately attempted to make immediate use of money in the road trauma trust account. The second point I would make is that all money in the road trauma trust account is spent on road trauma in accordance with the requirements of the Road Safety Council Act. There is no potential for government to reallocate that money elsewhere. It is not sitting in the consolidated account or whatever. All that money will ultimately be spent. It does permit some flexibility later in the financial year. For example, the member would be aware that a particular issue arose on Indian Ocean Drive and additional money from the road trauma trust account was allocated to address that issue. I think it was money well spent. There are options to allocate that money. It remains available to the Road Safety Council to recommend how that money is spent. I might ask Mr Ian Cameron to respond further.

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Mr I. Cameron: Just to add to that, I think this discussion occurred in estimates last year when we were talking about \$37 million, cash at bank. The equivalent figure we are projecting at the moment is \$41 million, so it is only a difference of \$4 million. These are estimates. We need to cater for all the cash receipts and bills that are outstanding at the end of the year. It is any point in time, and that is an estimate at this point. The equivalent estimate last year was \$37 million; it is now \$41 million. We will likely experience revenue changes. We will have money for outstanding payments that need to be paid. Last year that figure was \$37 million. The figures that I gave in estimates at the time and that our chief finance officer also gave were in the order of about \$14 million to \$15 million after all bills and accounts have been paid. I do not have that at the moment because we are a lot earlier in the budget cycle. The difference is \$4 million at the moment, with some flexibility, as the minister said.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is the difference between us doing budget estimates at the usual time in May as opposed to us doing them in September, as we did last year. More of the accounts would be presented because this is effectively cash in bank. They are estimates.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Mr Cameron mentioned the income coming in and out of the road trauma trust account. If the minister wants a specific reference, it is the fourth line item under “Income” in the income statement on page 341 of budget paper No 2. It comes in and out at various times of the year. There was recent discussion that around 53 000 infringements from faulty speed cameras will be reviewed. Has any assessment been made of what sort of impact that will have on the income of the RTTA, either in the current financial year or the coming financial year?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Over 50 000 infringements were issued by the Jenoptik cameras. They were continuously reviewed. Of those, police identified 20 instances in which they believed an error had occurred. They were identified by looking at photos on a screen and two cars and so forth were seen. The Jenoptik providers advised that errors were highly unlikely because the numberplates would be blanked out if there were two cars visible across lanes of traffic at the same time. Police remained concerned. They effectively manually checked all 54 000 infringements. They identified 19 ones that could be an issue and those infringements were not issued. In one case, someone was issued with an infringement who should not have been. As a result, that person had their car impounded, which was most unfortunate. The best advice to me is that there is no issue with the other infringements that have been issued. Because of the error that occurred, we have taken those cameras out of operation for the time being and we have effectively redeployed the earlier cameras. I think that is Mr Brown’s area of operation, so I will ask him to provide some further detail.

Mr S. Brown: They are the figures that I have as well. I can advise that the Jenoptik cameras have been temporarily taken out of service whilst we undergo a software fix or update to make sure that we are absolutely 100 per cent sure that from this point onwards, we can re-implement operations without even one infringement, as occurred in this case, being inadvertently issued under incorrect circumstances. That should ensure public confidence in the camera safety network going forward.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: How many of these Jenoptik cameras have been taken out of service temporarily and is there any indication of when they may be able to be brought back into service?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: WA police purchased 11 Jenoptik S350 mobile speed cameras. They have been taken out of service. They will not be put back into service until the Western Australia Police Force is 100 per cent confident that they can be redeployed and effectively be 100 per cent accurate. The best advice that I have been provided with is that that could be a couple more months. I cannot necessarily guarantee that figure. That is the current estimate on how long they think it may take. They are saying a couple of months. It might be sooner; it might be a little later. That is the rough estimate that I was given when I asked.

[9.50 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to the heading “Asset Investment Program” on page 338 in budget paper No 2. One thing that is not in there is any mention of the provision of stab-proof vests for frontline officers. I know the minister or Command was undertaking a review. Does that indicate that frontline officers will not be issued with new stab-proof vests in this coming financial year or is there some other plan to fund those vests from other sources?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, it does not indicate that there will not be any rollout of stab-proof vests in this financial year. In fact the police force already has a significant number of stab-proof vests. I also note that when new recruits graduate, they are issued with vests. Deputy Commissioner Dreier was originally involved in this issue. In terms of any further advice, we have had ongoing discussions with the WA Police Union about it. The Commissioner of Police is probably best placed to comment.

Mr C. Dawson: I can advise that the WA Police Force is undertaking a body armour project. The identified outcome is improving officers’ safety and capability through the provision of fit-for-purpose body armour

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solutions. We issued an invitation to vendors to register their interest. That was released to the market to identify what technologies are currently available. Samples of body armour have been received and are presently undergoing assessment. The next stage is to transition to a tender phase. We are currently evaluating and trialling. That is occurring within our police academy at present through our operational safety and tactics training unit together with our assets portfolio. That project was established in August 2017. I would stress, as the minister has already said, an existing number of ballistic vests have been issued for quite some time across the state but we are evaluating a number of different options including some enhanced technology. Some of the old ballistic plates are quite heavy but the technology has rapidly evolved, using other types of materials and products. We are also doing this in concert and in engagement with the WA Police Union for its membership. It is participating in the current work we are doing. We are also, obviously, taking into account advice from our occupational safety experts as well as our tactical and technical experts. Once we complete the existing evaluation, we will proceed to a tender evaluation. I do not have a time frame around this presently, but I understand it is quite mature. We are looking forward to seeing the result of that.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Has there been any testing or any indication of trialling the use of lapel-based body cameras to be rolled out generally across frontline officers?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is an innovative jump from vests to cameras! Yes, there has been a trial. In the spirit of goodwill, I can advise that there has been a trial of body cameras. The issue with body cameras is not so much their cost. The member being a lawyer would appreciate that any footage gained from cameras needs to be properly stored. It can also be requested as part of discovery and so forth and so on. I am advised that the most expensive part of putting in place a regime for body cameras is ensuring the appropriate storage and retrieval mechanisms for any video that is collected from them. Protocols need to be put in place for how long the material that is filmed from those body cameras is stored. The Western Australia Police Force has been looking at what has occurred in other police jurisdictions. There was a small trial here in Western Australia. The Western Australia Police Force is evaluating the cameras. It is looking at where they would potentially be best deployed. It is particularly looking at experiences in other jurisdictions, including Victoria. One of the considerations is potentially which officers and/or units would most usefully wear body cameras; and, if so, for what duties they should be deployed and so forth. One area under consideration is those officers doing traffic duties. Those officers have a high level of interaction with the general public. It is inevitable that we will look to roll out body cameras once we have done all of the research on them. When that occurs, I think it is likely that they would be rolled out first to traffic duty officers so that we can get an assessment on how that works out. It clearly will be very cumbersome when people try to retrieve all of that data, and that data will need to be stored.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: On page 332 in budget paper No 2 there are some spending changes of just over \$4 million in this coming financial year to the safe speed enforcement program. What is that program and why is it only funded for one year rather than across the forward estimates?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The safe speed enforcement program is to reduce the number of road users killed or seriously injured as a result of speed and to ultimately increase the perceived risk of detection, altering the behaviour of road users in the longer term. An additional \$4.025 million for the expansion of the automatic traffic enforcement strategy will support the Western Australia Police Force for a variety of things, including salaried staff processing infringements, camera maintenance and support, information communication technology, and printing posting to support the increased volumes. As part of that program, there will be 13 mobile camera systems, three fixed camera sites and 15 red-light camera sites in 2018–19.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Have the three additional sites for the fixed point-to-point cameras been identified?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I might ask Mr Cameron.

Mr I. Cameron: They have not been finalised. That is being worked through now with the agency groups.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In terms of FTEs in frontline policing in regional Western Australia, are there any cuts? I will quickly refer the minister to “Regional and Remote Policing Services” on page 334 in budget paper No 2. Are there any cuts to actual equipment, such as cars being taken away from any of the regions? For example, Wongan Hills Police Station recently had one of its vehicles relocated away from the station. Are there any resourcing implications for frontline policing?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can advise that over the last three years there has been an additional 110 officers deployed to regional Western Australia. There is no intention to cut any numbers from regional Western Australia into the future.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I referred specifically to vehicles, such as at Wongan Hills Police Station.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am not aware of any intention to cut the number of vehicles either.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

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Mr David Michael; Mr Kyran O'Donnell

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
