

Chairman; Ms Margaret Quirk; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr
Brendon Grylls; Mr Bill Johnston

Division 54: Local Government and Communities — Service 5, Promotion and Support of Multiculturalism, \$6 302 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chairman.

Dr M.D. Nahan, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.

Ms R. Ball, Executive Director, Office of Multicultural Interests.

Ms L. Di Paolo, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr B. Graham, Principal Policy Adviser.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

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

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

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Girrawheen.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the heading "Relationship to Government Goals" on page 625 of the *Budget Statements*. Western Australia was recognised as a vibrant and effective multicultural society in the service of the promotion and support of multiculturalism. I note that in the Office of Multicultural Interests strategic plan for 2014–18, the aims include promoting workforce diversity and improving the cultural competency of staff. How is it intended that this be achieved?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I accept all those points. We have a range of policies that facilitate that, and have had for some time, including a process within the public sector to communicate how to interact and participate with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, but I will allow Rebecca to elucidate on OMI's various policies on these things.

Ms R. Ball: Thank you for the question. One of the key lines of our business is the diverse WA cultural competency training package, which is an online cultural competency training tool designed for the public sector to build its cross-cultural competency in frontline service delivery. That has been in place since 2010–11. We have been growing the registration for that year on year and we expect to reach around 9 000 subscribers to that program by the end of June, which is an increase of more than 3 000 since this time last year. The uptake is strong. The use of the tool is well recognised. It has also been extended beyond the public sector to not-for-profit agencies and has attracted interest from other jurisdictions in other states, including the Family Court of Australia, the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Tasmania, ACT Health and the Townsville City Council in Queensland. The higher users of that tool are the frontline services that deal mostly with very diverse populations, particularly health, education, justice, policing, and child protection and family support services.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The other part of my question was about promoting workforce diversity. Is there any oversight of agencies in terms of the proportion of CALD staff?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Ms Ball.

Ms R. Ball: The language services policy that we administer on behalf of the state, which was updated in March this year, requires that all departments consider diversity within their organisations and provide language and translating support in their service delivery. Although we work with other departments to advocate for diversity within their organisations, there is not a formal enforceable data collection of diversity statistics in the way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diversity statistics within an organisation might be captured. It is a challenge in comparable data collection across public sector agencies, but we try to capture that through the Public Sector Commission data collection processes.

To increase diversity within organisations, we have recently developed a tool around diversifying the proportion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds on public boards and committees. It was discovered at last years' estimates that less than one per cent of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were on public sector boards, so we have taken that on board to see if we can increase that proportion by developing a training package to increase public sector board representation. This package will be launched next Monday, 15 June, in partnership with Western Australian Council of Social Service to help with the delivery, as well as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia. That is a two-part program. The actual diversifying boards toolkit is a self-assessment tool, which has been adapted from the Department of Local Government and Communities' women on boards project to increase gender diversity on boards. It is also being delivered with a day-long training program with WACOSS.

[12 noon]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: We heard evidence yesterday from WA Police, for example, that it has a target of only 5.5 per cent of police officers coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by 2020. Does the minister think that is good enough, or does the department perhaps need to be a bit more assertive in increasing those levels?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We have had a number of meetings with the police on a range of issues, including this. They have indicated that they were way behind the game on it for a variety of reasons—representation, assisting their links with the CALD community, and its diversity. I think Police have an intention to accelerate it. Once you are way behind, it takes time to catch up, and also I think the estimates have to be realistic and achieved, so if you come up with a flowery number of 20 per cent in an unrealistic time, that is a furphy. I am confident, with my discussions with the commissioner and other senior police officers that they are committed to it and are progressing it. I have been to a couple of the graduations and there is quite a bit of diversity there. It is improving at the margins. A large percentage of the people are migrants, maybe from traditional countries such as Ireland, Britain and South Africa, but they are varied. The last time I went to a graduation, two or three of the graduates were of Indian descent—south Asian descent. It is increasing from a very low base. My understanding is that it is a historical problem with police officers around the world. They are getting there, but I want it to be higher and they need it to be higher to interact with the community. As the member well knows, we have had a burgeoning number of new migrants to this state over the last 10 years—about a 30 per cent increase—and most of those have not come from the traditional countries of Britain and South Africa. Many of the people who have come from Britain are actually of a CALD background. The ethnic base of the state has transformed and therefore our service providers, whether it be health, education or police, have to adjust.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to page 629 of budget paper No 2 under the heading “Explanation of Significant Movements”. This refers to the expansion of the community languages program. What changes is the minister bringing in and how does he see that benefiting the multicultural community?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: As the member knows, language is an important part of culture. We cannot often understand a culture unless we understand the language. As a state, we need to be more in tune with languages other than English. About seven other languages are taught in our schools, but that is all. There is a whole range of other languages, like Hindi, which has been identified as a major language for Australia going forward. I understand Hindi is taught in only one school—Beckenham Primary School—and the only other place where people can learn Hindi is in an after-school program. So what we did is we transferred the community language program from the Department of Education. We continued it as is for a year, and we undertook an independent review from Erebus into the community languages program. It has been there in various guises for many decades. It has about \$1 million in the kitty. There was a great deal of uncertainty about where the money came from and how it was used and whatnot; it was not a well-managed program, let us put it that way. We found out that a very small percentage was going to community language after-school and non-profit programs and 70-plus per cent was going to a single insertion program. We have started the process of phasing out the insertion program and putting the money into community languages—open to all languages, no discrimination. Also, this year we started, in liaison with the community language community, a training and professional development program. There has been essentially no training or professional development in the community language program to do with such simple but important things as student safety—first aid, dealing with peanut allergies and other things—and also criteria for what schools will come in and what kind of professional development. We are putting a substantial amount of money into professional development, linking with the interstate organisations that deal with the community language program. Rebecca might be able to elucidate a bit more on the professional development. However, this is what was needed and what the community language program had been asking for for some time but was not being delivered, as well as funding. We also increased the pool of money into the program and increased the payment for community languages from \$65 per student to \$100 per student. We are now liaising with a whole new range of schools to expand the number of schools in the program for 2016.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Does that include regional schools?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Of course.

Ms R. Ball: Yes.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Again, one of the problems is that if we take a specific language—Bahasa—we would have to have a minimum quorum. I think Katanning has a number of them.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is the point; there is a huge number in Katanning.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, it is very diverse.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to page 626 again and the promotion and support of multiculturalism. My question is about the multicultural advisory committee. I am interested in the process of membership. Were nominations sought through an advertising process? How long are the terms of appointment for each member?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is an informal process. No per diems are paid; it is voluntary. Their membership is coming up soon —

Ms R. Ball: September.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: In September.

Mr B.S. WYATT: So does everyone expire in September?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes. I do not know the history of it, but that is what we have decided when I have been on board. We will go out and look to refresh the groups. We try to get people as broad-based as possible. We have some weaknesses in it; youth is an area of weakness. We have most of the groups covered but we can always do better. We meet regularly and it includes people who have been very active in the community for a long time—Bob Cronin from *The West Australian* is one; Dr Eric Tan, who is very active in the community, is a former member; and people who represent major groups, such as Dr Anh from the Vietnamese community. We are looking at it. We do not want it to get too large.

Mr B.S. WYATT: How many members are there?

Ms R. Ball: There are about 12 people on the advisory committee and we usually have a quorum of around seven to eight at any meeting, which is every two months.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Does the minister have a list of those 12 members?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, we can provide those people.

Ms R. Ball: We can provide those.

Mr B.S. WYATT: By way of supplementary will be fine.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the minister state exactly what he will provide?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I will provide a list of the members of the multicultural advisory committee.

[*Supplementary Information No B36.*]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to page 625 in budget paper No 2. The fourth dot point states that the Western Australian community is experiencing a “super diversity”, so we are talking about multiculturalism, obviously. I wonder what the minister is doing to address specific issues faced by older people from CALD communities. Sometimes we need to focus on the older people a bit.

[12.10 pm]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The member knows about this because when he is not in his electorate, he lives in the very multicultural suburb of Willetton. There was a huge growth of new migrants to the state with the mining boom. Many skilled migrants came from all over the world. For instance, some primary schools in Willetton have students from 50 to 60 different cultural backgrounds, and in the high schools that number is even larger. A characteristic of many migrant communities is that they take care of their parents. Many migrants bring their parents with them so they can take care of them, and the parents take care of the grandkids and whatnot. An example that brings it home in Willetton is that one sees large numbers of older migrants in the community.

There are a couple of characteristics of these communities. Firstly, English is often rudimentary. Secondly, they are sometimes isolated in the suburbs with no interaction because their children are sometimes away for 24 hours working fly in, fly out, and they do not know how access the various services we have. The peak Chinese group Chung Wah Association has had programs for elderly people—not just Chinese people—in the community since the 1980s. The Indian Society of WA—ISWA—has access to the Willetton Sports Club and puts on specific-needs programs to target elderly community members. The Australian Asian Association of WA also has

programs to cater for the needs of the elderly culturally and linguistically diverse community. We focus on providing infrastructure, developing policy and linking with the Multicultural Aged Care Service and other service providers to enable elderly migrants to access various facilities. We are also linking with some mainstream groups that provide these services to the wider community to bring elderly new migrants into the mainstream community. Groups such as Anglicare WA and the Red Cross that provide these services to the wider community can make them for the elderly community.

There are some real challenges to ageing. Sometimes elderly people with dementia go back to their native language. I know a case of a person whose mother speaks only Czech. How do you get translators for those people? I hear that when people get older they get fussy about food and entertainment, and catering to that is a very big issue.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: In some places in regional Western Australia it is harder to do that because they do not have the population, but I understand that some pretty good stuff is happening in Katanning. Are there any other examples of where good things are happening? How does the Treasurer see the situation in regional WA improving, because older people with CALD backgrounds can become quite isolated?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is not just Katanning; Bunbury and Geraldton are also very culturally diverse. I think for the first time the CALD community has really spread throughout the region. There is a vibrant Filipino community in Geraldton and Katanning is very culturally diverse.

Ms R. Ball: I will focus on what we are doing in this space. Within the grants program that delivers \$500 000 for community grants to projects focusing on seniors we have given around \$122 000 this financial year, which is around 21 per cent of that budget. Around 18 per cent of Western Australia's seniors have non-English speaking backgrounds. That is a fairly good proportionate contribution. Seniors and ageing in Western Australia is a key part of our overall strategic plan and we are on the reinstated ageing across WA senior officers group, which was a recommendation of a joint standing committee. Through the senior officers group we are advocating to other line agencies on the challenges specifically facing people from CALD backgrounds so each of those departments, whether health or transport for example, take those considerations on board.

The minister mentioned ISWA and the Chung Wah Association. We have also been working with the Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre in Mirrabooka and Umbrella Multicultural Community Care Services in the northern suburbs. Umbrella has quite a wide reach and a lot of the learnings in their delivery are shared with the Independent Living Centre Multicultural Services Centre based at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. The centre has satellite services, so we can work with regional areas if there is a gap in services. Work from the national body the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia was shared with the senior officers group and we are looking to do some additional analysis of needs in metro and rural areas that we can then program for.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to page 626 and the outcome —

... Western Australia was recognised as a vibrant and effective multicultural society:

I want to raise the issue of Islamophobia and draw attention to the Australian Defence League and Q Society that are calling for 30 June to be national kill Muslims day. Can the Treasurer refer me to a press release from the Premier or himself defending the Islamic community on this issue? Is the government funding de-radicalisation processes in Western Australia? Is the government providing funding to support the community to understand that the Muslim community is part of our community and shares the same values as other Australians?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This is one of the top challenges of our community. Last week, the Premier, Michael Mischin and I met many leaders of the Islamic community to discuss this. We met in September last year and we will meet again on a regular basis. We had a discussion and policy initiatives will flow from that. As the member knows, given his electorate, this is a very vexed issue and there are many dimensions to it. The Premier and I have responded to those groups the member mentioned in a number of ways. We made it quite clear that the expressions and perspectives of those two groups—there might be more—are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It is a challenge because, due to international tensions and local issues, largely in the eastern states, the broader community has been frightened. People can be easily misled on this issue, so we will come up with a number of initiatives to bring the Islamic community closer to the mainstream and vice versa. I will leave funding initiatives and our responses to violent extremism to Ms Ball.

[12.20 pm]

Ms R. Ball: It is a very big part of our work and only operates to address social cohesion more broadly. I guess we need to be mindful to make a distinction, as we have with our departmental colleagues, about what is social cohesion and the work done to ensure communities live together harmoniously and support one another in countering violent extremism programs that are largely in the realm of policing and remediation at the very

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Wednesday, 10 June 2015]

p342b-350a

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pointy end. There is cross-jurisdiction with both federal and state governments on countering violent extremism which is led in Western Australia by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Western Australia Police. I am involved in that on the fringes. We initiated a social cohesion strategy group across government at both federal and state level, which also involves local government because local government is very important when we are dealing with on-the-ground delivery and information gathering. This group was initiated in October last year in direct response to requests from the community for greater coordination across agencies. That group meets every two months. We are meeting this Friday. We hear and share and work on the programs that we are each working on on the ground and make sure that we are working in partnership where we can and that the information is shared with the communities it needs to be shared with.

In recognition of specific issues in this current year, we are funding five programs to support social cohesion activities that also indirectly work to ensure that both representatives from the Muslim community are advocated for and involved alongside non-Muslim community member counterparts. We funded a program with the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre earlier this year, which was more of a theatre piece on cross culture between Aboriginals and new arrivals from other countries. We have just started to fund a Red Cross program called In Search of Safety, which is a community education program working to demystify some of the many stereotypes associated with asylum seekers and refugees in schools. This is a successful program that was delivered in primary schools. We are taking it into senior schools to help educate and raise awareness around where people are coming from and what is important to them and also asking lots of questions so there is a much greater awareness.

We are funding another school program called The Strongest Among You, which is an educational program for high school students. It is really about peer-to-peer support and helps students seek support from their counsellors and teachers if one of their peers is in trouble. It is really a peer-to-peer program. We are getting indications from the community that they would like more support to enable teenagers and young people to help one another.

Mr B.S. WYATT: How many schools are involved in that program?

Ms R. Ball: We have just approved the funding in the March round so it is yet to be delivered but we know that over 20 schools will be involved. It will be a pilot program in targeted areas and then expanded on review.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It would also include expression of interest from the schools.

Ms R. Ball: That is correct. It is based on the communication between the delivery body and the schools that want to take part so it has the most impact.

Mr B.S. WYATT: How long is the pilot for? Is it a 12-month pilot?

Ms R. Ball: It is a 12-month pilot. Two other projects that we are funding specifically are in the sports base. We are extending funding to Netball WA to increase the participation of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in mainstream sport. That is going out to more communities. We are also supporting the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Western Australia. It is part of a national group that has a program to build leadership in young people, bringing around 50 people from diverse backgrounds together to share information and understanding about their issues that they can then address to leaders.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What is the principal way that the Office of Multicultural Interests is explaining to the community more broadly, not the migrant community, that Muslim people share the values that other Australians share? For example, could the Treasurer direct me to a media release from the Premier or perhaps from himself? Is there some statement on the Premier's website that he could help me with? What is the government doing to make it clear? I look forward to these future activities but the principal issue seems to be that the Treasurer is talking to other public servants, which is obviously quite important but not essential. What is the government doing to make its position clear about the fact that Muslim Australians are part of our community and share our values?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Both the Premier and I have made statements. We have met with leaders of the Islamic community on a formal basis. We have listened to them and started implementing some of the things that Ms Ball has discussed. We have responded vigorously and immediately to the claims the member mentioned within those groups. We have funded various groups such as the Australian Arab Association to hold functions to which it invites the wider community. I think they are held regularly in Gosnells. We fund two of the Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Adha groups. They have many different meetings. Eid was identified as a primary festival for the state to fund. We fund them quite extensively and we encourage them to bring the wider community together. We have speaking engagements. A range of functions organised by other groups that include Islamic organisations are held. They promote the message of not only the need for social cohesion and the recognition of ethnic diversity, but also specifically recognise the need for understanding and tolerance, and that Islam is a

religion of tolerance. It has obviously been a top priority for us. We have focused on the issue for quite some time and will continue. It will accelerate as a priority.

Ms R. Ball: I might just add that with regard to counter-messaging, which is also what we are talking about with public information, we are working with the University of Western Australia's Centre for Muslim States and Societies and the Equal Opportunity Commission on a public education campaign. It is in the developmental stages but it is underway.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Australians are rightly concerned about terrorist extremism and radicalisation of youth. We all saw what happened at the Lindt Cafe in Sydney and looked with anguish at those issues. Is the government putting as much effort into the radical and, I would say, terrorist behaviour of groups such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Q Society of Australia? I have not heard of a raid on the house of anybody associated with the Q Society. I have not heard about any arrests of members of the ADL. I have not heard about any of these things. Where is government at in dealing with these other terrorists?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Office of Multicultural Interests does not undertake raids or participate in them. It is largely the responsibility of the Australian Federal Police, Western Australia Police and other agencies. I am not privy to their activities in detail but I can guarantee the member that they are looking, watching and monitoring those groups.

Mr B.J. GRYLLES: I refer to page 629 of budget paper No 2. Can the minister explain what is happening within the agency to support the staff of the community language schools?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I will pass over to Ms Ball for further elucidation and explanation of that tremendous program.

[12.30 pm]

Ms R. Ball: Over the past 10 years or so there has not been an awful lot of professional learning support to staff of community languages schools in this state. On our review of the program, we found that on average other states attribute between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of their annual budget for the community languages program to professional learning and development of their teachers and staff. So, this year in the redevelopment and transition of the community languages program we will allocate around 20 per cent of our \$1.158 million budget to a professional learning program as an initial up-front investment to catch up with the other states. We anticipate that will reduce from around 20 per cent to around 10 per cent to be more in line with the other states this coming year and through the forward years. That \$230 000 will be stretched a very long way for both training programs for teachers and administrators of schools to help improve both the robust compliance and governance of schools, as well as some baseline training, as the minister mentioned earlier, in areas such as first aid, helping them with insurance coverage and helping them with understanding the basics of teaching languages other than English by way of baseline methodology. This will assist us in developing a formal accreditation system for the community languages program, which is not currently in place. We need to make that initial investment because without an accreditation program we cannot actually create a more sophisticated way of assessing grant applications so that we ensure that our funding for the schools in regard to grants, as opposed to professional learning, is equitably distributed in the right place. So, we have engaged external providers to assist us with the delivery of that professional learning program, and that is being done through the usual scrutiny and process of engaging service providers and it has been advised through consultations over the past six months with over 36 different community language groups on what they are looking for from a professional learning program. It was launched on 28 May and our first program kicks off on 14 June—this week—and it will run for the next 12 months. That \$230 000 will therefore run over a 12-month program and we already have a number of the courses fairly well subscribed.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the table on page 625 and the heading "Desired Outcomes". The minister is aware that the federal government is currently consulting on mooted changes to citizenship laws. I wonder whether the Western Australian government intends to make a submission.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am not sure about how it is consulting on that issue. I think I have read that there are some debates in federal cabinet on that matter. It is very much a commonwealth matter. However, if the federal government were to have a formal or even an informal process of consulting, I would participate in that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I note in answer to my previous question that there was some discussion about different funding arrangements for different organisations. I note that Western Australia is the only state that does not fund its Ethnic Communities Council. I wonder whether we are going to stop playing politics and move into line with every other state, because the problem is —

Mr B.J. GRYLLES interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, I am talking about ethnic politics, comrade!

As the minister knows, the problem is that because we do not fund the Ethnic Communities Council of WA, there is no Western Australian representation on the national body. The federal government relies on the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia for advice but there is no Western Australian voice on that council. Western Australia's ethnic communities are therefore disadvantaged because WA is not part of the systemic processes of ethnic representation. I therefore wonder when we are going to end this limitation and provide a unifying voice to the ethnic communities of Western Australia.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, it would be very healthy, but no politics were played. I am not aware that ECCWA in its various guises over the year has been partisan; we simply have not been. The issue with ECCWA is that although it played a major role for many years, institutionally the various groups descended into bickering and complaining. It did not have good leadership. My predecessor put in a great deal of resources in an attempt to build up its governance system and to make sure it was broadly representative. ECCWA claims to represent a broad group, and that is what we want it to do. In fact, it did not represent a broad group in terms of its enunciations, policies and priorities; indeed, for a while it quit the national system. There was a fight. I am not sure of the details. The members resigned from the national system, although I think they rejoined afterwards. Over the past two years at least we have put additional resources into ECCWA to get a strategic plan, to get a constitution and to have a governance system to ensure that it not only has a broad membership base but represents those groups. A large number of the major groups—peak bodies and individual bodies—resigned from it in frustration. Indeed, its membership has shrunk. It has had a very high turnover of presidents. I am not sure who the president is now, as I think there was a turnover late last year. We have put resources into ECCWA to get its act into gear so that it can be an institution that represents ethnic communities across the board. That institution and the people who led it have failed. The question is: where do we go from now? I am more than willing to work with a group of people to resuscitate ECCWA, but it should do what it claims to do—that is, broadly represent the ethnic communities in Western Australia, have them as members and give those members the right to set its policies and to represent a broad view. It has not done that.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we go to further questions, I remind members that we still have divisions 52, 53 and 46 to go. The member for Cannington has a further question.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Before the last election, Kim Hames, the minister's predecessor as Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, promised that there would be funding for ECCWA. I am wondering whether that is still intended.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We had given it some discussion. We had a discussion with it about governance, membership and representation. It did not meet those standards. We did not give it \$100 000. That is a scarce amount of money for ethnic communities, and we used it elsewhere. We also gave a different committee from the current one money to help resuscitate ECCWA, work on the governance and work on expanding its membership. Indeed, as a result of the squabbles on that committee, it lost a great deal of its membership. It is not a cost issue. I do not think the membership is significant.

Ms R. Ball: If I may just add, ECCWA is eligible to apply for all funding programs. We have been working with it to see what it might apply for and to assist it with preparing an application, where we can, through our grants advisers. So, ECCWA has not been excluded. If it continues, it needs to be contestable.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Based on what has been said by the director, the minister is not intending to have a single peak organisation recognised in Western Australia. The director said that all the funding is contestable. However, the whole idea of a peak body, such as the Western Australian Council of Social Service, which is funded extensively by the state government, is that it represents everybody. I understand what the minister is saying about having everybody participate.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: They do not.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am asking whether it is the government's policy intention, as happens with WACOSS in the social services area, to have a single representative peak body that the government can then deal with.

[12.40 pm]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Ms Ball was highlighting that there are two issues. One is that the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia used to get about \$100 000 of special money set aside for the peak body. At the same time it is eligible to apply for grants elsewhere. The latter remains, but it is a competitive process. We would very much like a true peak body that is independent of government. Government will not go in itself and set up that body. Government wants it to be independent of government to express its views. Repeatedly over the last five years the department has worked with ECCWA to do that. It is not going to give ECCWA \$100 000, or

any peak body, funding unless it has the governance and representation necessary to represent ethnic communities. The Western Australian Council of Social Service does it well. It has a broad membership base. The membership has a very good chief executive officer, and has repeatedly had good CEOs over the time. It is representative —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Absolutely; the member for Maylands was one.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am fully aware of that; and the current one. WACOSS represents the full dimensions of the social service sector. If it shrunk to only a soapbox for the CEO and did not have representation, I do not think the government would fund it much. This has been a real frustration. The institution is important, but we are not going to give it \$100 000 or something like that just because we think the institution is important. We want the institution to function as it needs to and be broadly representative. When a whole raft of major ethnic communities are quitting ECCWA and expressing frustration about its lack of linkage with the community, we know something is seriously wrong.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Again I refer to page 625. The minister is aware there have been numerous attacks on places of worship such as temples and mosques. Given that I understand the minister is rejecting the private member's bill that I introduced, what alternative measures does he intend to take?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I met with a raft of leaders from religious groups, including Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity of various types, along with the Minister for Police and the Attorney General. We discussed this issue with them. I am not sure that all religions suffer from these things, but there have been repeated attacks, often undeclared in the media, on various places of worship—Sikhs, both north and south, and Islam in mosques of various types. Much of it is not in the media; some of it has been. There is an issue. We discussed how to resolve this issue. Of course it is a policing issue. None of them—I cannot remember a single one supporting the member for Girrawheen's bill —

Ms M.M. QUIRK: What is the basis of the minister's objection?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am saying that none of the religious leaders —

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am asking the minister —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: None supported the bill. Increasing the term of imprisonment from 10 to 14 years is not the solution. The solution they see is —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister is speaking on their behalf!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I talk with them very extensively and it was quite clear. They did not see this as a solution.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I do, too, and they say the exact opposite.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister has the floor.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is a serious issue. It requires more than a token gesture to solve the issue. It largely lies with policing and enforcing, reporting, and also in communicating with the public. The government does not support increasing imprisonment from 10 to 14 years.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister would be aware if the same criminal conduct occurs on a synagogue it would attract a 14-year penalty, but if it is on a mosque, it attracts a penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. Surely there is some justification for equalising the penalties. Secondly, is it not the case that at that meeting the Minister for Police said increasing penalties is ineffectual?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: As the member well knows, and it is in the private member's bill, there is a penalty of 14 years' imprisonment for racial vilification. Two religions are defined as racial—Judaism and Sikhism. If the member has ever been to Israel, that is a very odd description of Judaism as a race, because it is not. The rabbi found it strange too. He was advised, during the formulation of that bill, that it went back to periods in the 1980s when there was particularly strong discrimination against Chinese people. That is where it originated as a gesture. We will be looking at the issue. Defining Sikhism as a race is very strange. It is not a race.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: They all come from the same area, yes.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: So the law in terms of defining, mixture of religion and race, is not precise. The issue, particularly with Sikh temples and mosques, is something we need to address seriously. We do not support a gesture of increasing the penalty from 10 to 14 years' imprisonment. It probably will not even apply. We could not find any evidence that even 10 years is applied. We will address it in a much more practical and effective way.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Wednesday, 10 June 2015]

p342b-350a

Chairman; Ms Margaret Quirk; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr
Brendon Grylls; Mr Bill Johnston

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I believe it was mentioned at the meeting that the minister referred to that the government intended to introduce a bill modelled on one in Victoria. I would be grateful to know which bill the minister was referring to.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The member is referring to a meeting that she did not attend. When we introduce bills, we will let the opposition know.

The appropriation was recommended.