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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Wednesday, 24 May 2023

Legislative Assembly

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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

Division 24: Education — Early Childhood Education, \$13 460 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Ms S.E. Winton, Minister for Early Childhood Education.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General.

Mr J. Bell, Deputy Director General, Student Achievement.

Ms R. Lee, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy.

Mr R. Thomson, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms P. Beamish Burton, Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services.

Ms L. Criddle, Executive Director, Early Childhood.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly budget estimates committee. The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: Good morning, minister and advisers. I refer to page 502 in budget paper No 2, volume 2, regarding the Target 120 extension. I note there is a \$3 million reduction in 2022–23, with additional funding provided to 2024–25. Given that the government has consistently pointed to this program as one that has —

The CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt. Could you clarify that reference number, please?

Ms L. METTAM: Page 502.

Ms S.E. WINTON: It is the wrong section. We are doing Early Childhood.

Ms L. METTAM: Excuse me. Usually, the divisions would be broken up, but this is collectively presented.

The CHAIR: Minister, can I clarify whether that section is relevant?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No, it is not. My understanding is that we are doing the education division first, and that is why the Department of Education advisers are here. The Department of Communities staff are waiting once we have completed that division.

The CHAIR: Yes. It is division 24.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Can I ask a question while we sort this out?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Good morning. I refer to budget paper No 2, page 360, near the bottom of the page, under “Other School Facilities” and the line “Early Childhood Program”. Can the minister tell me the scope of this program, what it is delivering, and what it is likely to deliver this year?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, member, for the question. I am quite proud and privileged to be here, of course, as the McGowan government’s first ever Minister for Early Childhood Education, which clearly marks the priority this government is placing on early childhood.

I make these comments about the early childhood program: it is an important rolling program that delivers a broad variety of minor and major capital projects to continually enhance the early childhood learning facilities throughout our state and, importantly, provide a great learning environment for our young people. We know that having a great environment ensures that the early learning experiences will be the best for our children to develop the skills necessary for lifelong learning. Since 2017–18, the program has funded many much-needed projects. I am happy to list a few of them. It is certainly not an exhaustive list, but I want to highlight a few of them, particularly one in the member for Maylands' electorate: Hillcrest Primary School, which received \$123 000 in funding for refurbishments and additions to its early childhood learning classrooms. Other examples of works that have been delivered through this program are: Lancelin Primary School, \$36 000 for fencing around the early childhood play area; Paraburdoo Primary School, \$153 000 for shade structures; Illawarra Primary School, \$41 000 for two new pre-primary classroom blocks; Winterfold Primary School, \$26 000 for nature playgrounds, and we know the popular effect they have in our schools; South Hedland Primary School, nearly \$8 000 for shade structures over its kindergarten area; Kapinara Primary School—a great school where I taught for a tiny bit—\$285 000 for a new toilet block for its early childhood centre; Marble Bar Primary School, \$98 000 for shade structures; and Dawson Primary School, \$11 000 for drink fountains in the kindergarten area. I also want to highlight that this year and over the forward estimates, this program will continue to support the important work in our early childhood education centres attached to our schools.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 350, paragraph 2 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, which states that the department is committed to helping schools support student mental health and wellbeing. Can the minister provide, if any, the paediatric services offered through schools to catch issues early?
[9.10 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: The Department of Education collaborates with the Child and Adolescent Health Service metropolitan Child Development Service to facilitate assessment, early intervention and treatment services for children with development delays or difficulties that impact on their function or participation or the parent–child relationship. WA Country Health Service allied health practitioners such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists provide services to families attending child and parent centres in regional and remote WA. The Child and Adolescent Health Service allocates speech pathologist time to each of the 13 metro child and parent centres depending on their size and need.

Ms L. METTAM: How many speech pathologists are provided in the early childhood sector, and how many vacancies are there at the moment for those allocated positions?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I might ask the director general to elaborate.

Ms L. Rodgers: In terms of our provision of support for language development, the Department of Education provides language development centres. Speech pathologists are provided and provisioned through the Department of Health. There are five metropolitan-based language development centres that provide a full-time early childhood intervention program for students in the early years, kindy through to year 3, with a diagnosed language disorder. The centres also provide a statewide speech and language outreach service, which is available to all public schools and offers support to early years teachers who have students with speech and language difficulties. We have the number of students whom we work with, if that is helpful, too.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, it would be helpful to get the numbers, but also the numbers of speech pathologist positions and the vacancies.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that the information on the positions would need to be sought through the Department of Health.

Ms L. METTAM: Are speech pathologists not provided through early childhood?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that the Department of Education does not employ the speech pathologist; it comes through the Department of Health.

Ms L. METTAM: How many psychologists are provided in the early childhood education sector?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The school psychologist service contributes specialist support to enhance educational outcomes for students. I emphasise that that is for all school students in the public sector, which takes in early childhood as well. Therefore, my answer is broad. I am advised that there is no specific provision for psychologists for a particular year level; it is based on need. In that context, in 2021 the state government made a commitment of \$42.2 million to employ more than 100 FTE additional school psychologists over the next four years. For public schools, this funding will provide an additional 100 FTE as well as additional supervising and lead school psychologists. As of 30 April 2023, an average of 435.1 FTE school psychologists were employed across the public school system, which is an increase from 376.7 FTE in 2021. I am not sure whether I am able to specifically answer the question about school psychologists for early childhood students.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister provide how many vacancies there are for those positions? The minister said that there are 435 FTE school psychologists across the whole system. Are some of those positions vacant, or are they additional positions that have not been filled?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that we are on track to meet those targets that I highlighted before. There were four vacancies last week, but I want to highlight, too, that that is a rolling kind of system that will vary from week to week, month to month. But I would suggest that four vacancies in the overall cohort of school psychologists is a reasonable vacancy rate.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the wait time for a child in need to see one of the school psychologists?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to elaborate.

Ms L. Rodgers: We do not run a medical model with our psych service, so schools deal with whatever turns up on the day. If a child needs to see a psychologist, that is prioritised immediately within the school day. Similarly, that might be complementary with seeing the chaplain. That extends to overnight and indeed the weekend. If there is a trauma, or something happens in a community in a school, we will make sure that those psychologists are deployed out of hours to support that child and their family.

Ms L. METTAM: There have been reported cases of children in significant distress being on waitlists for a considerable period. Given that the school psychologist is available and can respond straight away, is the minister suggesting that school psychologists can provide support more urgently than the health system?

[9.20 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member's question about waitlists to see psychologists is really a question for the Department of Health. I re-emphasise the director general's comment that the psychologists who are allocated and available to schools are flexibly placed and able to see students who present to school in a timely manner.

Ms L. METTAM: Given that that is the case, there must be a communication issue because we hear about many cases across the state in which children are unable to get psychologist support.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Is the member talking about school psychologist support?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes—school psychologist support. If psychologists can provide urgent support, how is it that we hear about prominent cases of kids not receiving that support? Where are school psychologists based?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to respond.

Ms L. Rodgers: Thank you, minister. Psychologists are based in schools largely; most of our psychologists are school based. We have some flexibility at each regional office because each regional office has the ability to flexibly deploy additional psychologists. We also have some psychologists in the central department whom we can deploy immediately in the event of a trauma. I am not aware of any child who is waiting to access a school psychologist. If that were the case, we would like to know where that child is and we will make sure that they are seen by the school psychology service.

Ms L. METTAM: So every school has a school psychologist?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The answer is yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Are they based at schools?

Ms S.E. WINTON: My advice is yes, they are.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister said there is a school psych based at every school. I am from the wheatbelt and I am fairly sure that no school psych is based at Wyalkatchem District High School. I think a school psych is assigned to several schools. How often do students see a school psych face to face across an electorate that is 100 000 square kilometres?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to explain.

Ms L. Rodgers: Every school is allocated psych time based on the size and need of the school. Schools are also able to buy top-up psych time and, on top of that, the regions are able to flexibly deploy additional psychs based on need.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would a district high school in the wheatbelt be assigned a psychologist one day a week? How does it work?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to explain the process.

Ms L. Rodgers: We have a school psych allocation model, which is based on the size of the school and a range of factors, including key risk factors, if you like, in schools and the community. That school psych model can be provided if the minister is comfortable to do so.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Further to that, if the member has specific questions about a particular school and its allocation, I ask her to put that on notice because it varies from school to school.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you, minister.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister have a rough idea of the allocation and wait time for a school in Margaret River?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Just to repeat the director general's comments, it is not one size fits all; the allocation of psychologists is dependent on the specific needs and size of a school. I will not go into the details of specific allocations school by school. It is best that the member put that question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Can that information be provided by way of supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. It is appropriate that it be put on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: The minister stated that mental health is a priority and that school psychologists are available in every school and can be seen urgently. She has advisers here all willing to give her information but she cannot answer a simple question about the availability of school psychologists in regional towns where there have been a number of youth suicides. It is pretty important to have that question answered and it is extraordinary that the minister will not answer it here or by supplementary information.

Ms S.E. WINTON: We take the mental health of students very seriously. As I outlined previously, the government has made a significant record investment in school psychologist services throughout the state. That is something we should all be proud of. It is having a significant impact on our schools. As we have outlined before, the actual details of specific allocations to schools vary greatly. I appreciate that the member might be particularly interested in the resourcing of specific schools, but I ask her to put that on notice. I also note that this division is Education and I am happy to take questions everywhere, but I also look forward to some questions on the new portfolio of early childhood education. We did have the division on the Department of Education yesterday during which the member could have explored this issue.

[9.30 am]

Ms M. BEARD: My question relates to what we have just been talking about and is around early childhood. Obviously, my electorate covers 800 000 square kilometres and has a lot of remote children and a lot of very needy children. Is there provision for those kids in early childhood to have regular contact with a psychologist? Is there a roving psychologist who goes from Meekatharra through to Mt Magnet, Carnarvon and up north?

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: Point of order, chair. I think this question has been answered in relation to how the allocation of school psychologists works. It is a repetitious question.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry; I thought that one was different.

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

Ms M. BEARD: I guess what I am asking is: how do regional schools that are very remote access the psychs who are allocated, given the distance and remoteness? Is a program in place to ensure that those kids are seen regularly, especially the young ones?

Ms S.E. WINTON: As we attempted to explain previously, the school psychology service also travels throughout the regions. The school psychology service is for all school students from kindergarten to year 12. As I indicated before, it is not possible for me to isolate which part of the total resource for school psychologists goes specifically to early childhood, in the same way that I imagine it would be very difficult to suggest how many year 11 students access school psych services. I reinforce that the school psych service has a provision for school psychologists for all schools, whether they be in the metro area or regional or remote towns.

The CHAIR: I think the minister has answered this question. Can we please move on.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a new question. I refer to page 350 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the third item under the "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" about supporting early childhood students with a disability and complex behaviour. Has Burbridge School received any additional school health nurses following the earlier reduction in staffing?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I might seek the chair's guidance a little bit on this. I appreciate the question and the importance of it, but we did have the Education division yesterday. My understanding is that questions should relate specifically to the early childhood education area. I appreciate that school nurses have a component for early childhood education students, but, similar to the question around school psychologists, it is very difficult for me to speak in specifics about a particular cohort for programs that take in the entire school system.

The CHAIR: I have been advised that it is up to the minister which sections relate specifically to early childhood. I ask the Leader of the Liberal Party to direct her questions specifically to this division on early childhood.

Ms L. METTAM: We will move on to another portfolio.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry, I have one more question. On page 360 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, there is a line item for the early childhood program. Estimated expenditure for 2022–23 is \$7 755 000, the estimated figure for 2022–23 was \$4 905 000, for 2023–24 it is \$2 million, and then it will drop down again. Can the minister give a high-level indication of what those programs might be?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I spoke about that line item in answering a previous question from the member for Maylands. I will get Rob Thomson to explain the line item in terms of the fluctuations and then I will again summarise some of the investments that have been made in the early childhood program.

Mr R. Thomson: The figures in the budget papers aggregate previous or historical expenditure and forward expenditure, so there is an aggregate amount that reflects both past and future expenditure. The amounts in the forward estimates are the amounts that will be allocated to those projects in future years—the amount of \$1.5 million is ongoing.

Ms S.E. WINTON: To reinforce what I said earlier, this is a really good program for schools to tap into what are sometimes minor works and minor aspirations for a broad range of things. They can be quite small in nature but have a huge impact for an early childhood setting. The funding will go to things ranging from shade sails to toilet blocks, drink fountains and playgrounds. It is a good program.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 350 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the sixth item under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. With regard to workforce shortages, has the department been able to ensure that an early childhood teacher is in front of every classroom at the beginning of each term?

[9.40 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: My advice is yes.

Ms L. METTAM: How has the minister been able to address the challenges of attracting early childhood teachers in the regions?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I know that considerable work has been done, as there always is, in attracting and retaining teachers in our system. I am doing my little bit, too. I am trying to get my daughter to go into early childhood education. It is a work in progress, but I will get there. One daughter in the family who is a teacher would be nice.

Workforce challenges exist in all agencies, and certainly in all areas in all industries. The department’s specific emphasis, which has been quite considerable, is that it is offering attractive employment opportunities to secondary trained teachers from the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Canada and South Africa to work in regional schools. That includes funded relocation, funded visa sponsorships, salary recognition and a sponsored pathway to permanent residency. The department has also retrained existing primary and other teachers to teach in high-demand settings. The department continues to invest in the successful Teach for Australia employment-based pathway program, which attracts high-performing graduates from other disciplines to teach, and also teach while they are completing their teacher qualification and receiving support. The department also continues to support schools in meeting demand for teacher relief through the increased promotion and use of the casual staff teacher pool and by offering final year pre-service teachers the opportunity to build on their experience by undertaking relief teaching, which has been really successful.

The government continues to deliver attraction strategies to promote careers in public education and encourage teachers to work in regional areas and remote communities, including through the Remote Teaching Service induction, the Remote Connection program and the Teach in WA program. Additionally, \$12.4 million in attraction and retention incentives has been introduced for the 2023–24 school year for teachers and school administrators across the 48 regional and remote schools experiencing attraction and recruitment challenges. Payments vary from \$5 000 to \$17 000, which is paid in two instalments, depending on the location. I know that Minister Buti spoke about this yesterday in estimates. An education and support and attraction centre was introduced for the 2022 school year to address teacher supply issues and education support schools’ incentives. New teachers, existing teachers and administrators with a teaching load working at 59 education support centres and schools will receive a \$5 000 additional payment in 2023.

Ms L. METTAM: How many vacancies currently exist amongst the early childhood teacher cohort?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that the vacancy level changes from day to day, given that we have a workforce of some 25 000 teachers. I will reinforce that there is a teacher in front of every classroom every single day.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister have an idea? She talked at length about the efforts the government is making to attract teachers. Does the minister have an idea of what the average vacancy rate is?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to comment.

Ms L. Rodgers: Thank you, minister. We have a workforce of around about 60 000 people and pay roughly 60 000 people in any given fortnight. Of those, there are 25 000 teachers. In terms of our total workforce, there are about 2 000 vacancies in any given term. It is always rolling, so those vacancies will be responding to things like long service leave and maternity leave, and some resignations and retirements. There is a whole range of reasons why there might be vacancies. It is, on average, about 2 000 vacancies in our total workforce in a term.

Ms L. METTAM: Is that trending upwards? I imagine that the vacancy rate has been a big enough issue to have to seek additional funding for attracting teachers, so we must have seen an overall increase in the vacancy rate that has triggered that response.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think the vacancy rate is consistent, notwithstanding that the member would appreciate there are variations depending on particular school sites and whether they are regional and remote, but it varies. I emphasise—this is coming from the experience of having been in the classroom for 27 years—that when I say there is a classroom teacher in front of every class, I do not mean it flippantly. What I mean is that there is a qualified teacher in front of every single class who is capable and qualified to meet the needs of the students in that class.

Ms L. METTAM: I certainly was not questioning the qualification of the teachers or their ability. Can the minister confirm whether that is at the beginning of every term or is the minister saying that every day there is a qualified teacher in front of every classroom? Is the minister saying that is at the beginning of each term or that the minister can guarantee that it is every day?

Ms S.E. WINTON: My advice is yes, and that they have to be not only qualified, but also registered to teach in front of students.

Ms M. BEARD: I have a final question. I refer to the first significant issues impacting the agency on page 350, which states that a key priority is the success of Aboriginal learners. If we look at the NAPLAN results for years 3 to 5 for Aboriginal children and how they are comparing, are we seeing a significant improvement in that key priority?

[9.50 am]

The CHAIR: Just to clarify, it is only early childhood that we are dealing with.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Are we talking about year 3? That is a bit of a stretch beyond early childhood education.

Ms M. BEARD: It probably is. I guess I want to know whether there is any way that we can measure the outcomes of the early childhood programs put in place over the last few years with those children who are coming through now? Has there been a change?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I do not think the question is relevant.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: Early childhood is a priority area for me as a former primary school teacher. I am really interested in what the minister might be able to tell us about the other works in progress found on page 360 of budget paper No 2. Brabham Primary School is an offsite early childhood centre. How is the government supporting the provision of early childhood education in Western Australia; and, are there other state-of-the-art facilities like Brabham Primary School being funded or planned?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Bateman for the question. It is nice to have her here. There are quite a few of us former school teachers in the Parliament now, and that has got to be a good thing, does it not, everyone? It makes for good governance and, more importantly, for prioritising the school system in our state. As the member knows, our government continues to invest in infrastructure projects in schools not only for all schools, but also specifically around enhancing early childhood facilities and infrastructure. In the last couple of years, a couple of schools in my electorate have received fantastic upgrades to their early childhood facilities.

The member referred to Brabham Primary School that was part of a budget announcement and will receive a \$15 million investment, including \$11.6 million to construct an offsite early learning facility. That facility will include classrooms, a kitchen, a storage facility, external storage and an undercover sandpit. It was really nice to be at the school recently with the Minister for Education and also the Minister for Transport, who is the local member for that school.

The department's asset investment program in 2023–24 includes significant investment of over \$100 million in new early childhood infrastructure. It includes Ballajura Primary School, which will receive \$2.5 million to provide two early childhood education classrooms. Camboon Primary School will receive \$3 million for three classrooms. Dianella Primary College will receive \$1.5 million for new kindy facilities. Harrisdale Primary School will receive a \$25 million investment for upgrades that will also include a new early childhood education block. Hillarys Primary School will receive an investment of \$24 million—I know the member for Hillarys is really happy about this—that will include a new early childhood education block. Kyilla Primary School will receive \$6.7 million to build a new early childhood education block. Lesmurdie Primary School will receive \$18.1 million for new early childhood education facilities. Roleystone Community College will receive \$9.7 million for facilities that will also include a new early childhood education block. Baynton West Primary School in the Pilbara will receive \$7.2 million that will include an investment into new early childhood facilities. Wickham Primary School in the Pilbara will receive \$3.5 million for a new early childhood education block—in fact, I am told it is under construction now. The South Bunbury Education Support Centre will receive \$3.4 million for an early childhood education block, and I have already mentioned Brabham Primary School. That list of infrastructure investments clearly indicates not only the overall investment in this year's budget of some \$600 million into important infrastructure upgrades to schools, but also the specific investments into upgrades and new builds around early childhood education centres.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 9.55 to 9.58 am

Division 35: Communities — Services 1 to 6, Early Childhood Education, Child Protection, Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Community Services, \$1 154 930 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Ms S.E. Winton, Minister for Early Childhood Education.

Mr M. Rowe, Director General.

Ms M. Samuels, Deputy Director General, Community Services.

Ms C. Irwin, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Partnerships.

Mr W. Millen, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr P. Payne, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality.

Dr N. Leggett, Director, Office of Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Just a reminder that we are on only services 1 to 6 in division 35. I give the call to the Leader of the Liberal Party.

[10.00 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I will return to where I started. I refer to page 502 in budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the extension of Target 120. I note that there is a reduction of \$3 million in 2022–23, with additional funding being provided to 2024–25. Given the government has consistently pointed to this program as one that has reduced youth issues, can the minister explain why it is funded only to 2024–25?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for the opportunity to talk about Target 120, as I have done on numerous occasions in this place, and the importance of this program and the impact it is having on young people's lives. As the member is aware, we have now invested more than \$43 million in this early intervention program, which shows the government's commitment to tackling what are longstanding and complex issues for some of our young people. As we know, the heart of this program is trying to intervene in young people's lives, particularly young people who are at risk of offending, and trying to turn them away from the justice system.

I have had the opportunity to travel throughout the state to meet with the various service providers that are rolling out the program—from Kununurra to Newman and Derby, where we recently announced the local service provider. Local people's enthusiasm for and commitment to this program is quite extraordinary. We know that if trusted people work with young people locally, we have more chance of making a difference in their lives. Some of the anecdotal stories that I have heard about the program's successes with individual young people around the state have been quite incredible.

The member would also know that, through the budget process, we have announced an additional \$11.1 million to ensure that all sites will be funded until 30 June 2025. That has been welcomed throughout the state by the service providers that are doing this extraordinary work. Referring to the line item, I can say that the negative \$3 million reflects the 2022–23 estimated underspend, which has been carried over to 2024–25. This brings the total funding to \$10.9 million for the 2024–25 year.

Ms L. METTAM: If the program is so good, why does the funding stop after 2024–25?

Ms S.E. WINTON: All the Target 120 sites had different start times. The first 11 sites were originally rolled out in 2019 or something, and then we made a commitment for a further nine sites. The funding varies depending on how long the programs have been running in particular locations, but I can tell the member that the announcement of some \$11 million to provide certainty for the Target 120 program to continue until June 2025 has been really welcomed throughout the state.

Ms L. METTAM: Is that really certainty if it is just until 2025?

Ms S.E. WINTON: That is a great deal of certainty. Some of these Target 120 sites have been operating since 2019, and so to back them and to continue the funding until the end of June 2025 absolutely does that.

Ms L. METTAM: Is Target 120 now operational in Derby? The announcement has been made, but is it actually in operation?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes. I not only went up to Derby recently to announce that, but also had the great opportunity to speak with Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation, the local Aboriginal-controlled organisation that is running the program now. It is up and running, and I am confident it will have great results. I think ENAC is a good example of the kind of Aboriginal-controlled organisation that is best placed to do really good work with Target 120. It is already doing extraordinary work in a range of areas with at-risk youth, so I am looking forward to the outcomes that it will be able to produce with young people in Derby.

Ms L. METTAM: How many children are currently engaged with the Target 120 program in Derby?

Ms S.E. WINTON: As of April 2023, a total of 259 participants across all the sites in Western Australia have taken part in the program.

Ms L. METTAM: Of those 259, how many are involved in Derby?

Ms S.E. WINTON: It varies from site to site at any given point in time. Each Target 120 site works with up to 10 young people at any given point in time. I also want to emphasise something that has been highlighted to me repeatedly when I go to talk with people who are delivering the program: it is not just the 10 individual young people. Each individual young person has family members, which affects the case load for the people involved. They might be looking after 10 young people, but each of those young people could have 5 to 10 family members who are also indirectly engaged. When I talk about family members, of course, I talk about siblings, because these young people do not live in isolation. Although the primary target, so to speak, of the case load and the work being done with Target 120 is that young person, success very much depends on that secondary but really important work with the whole family.

[10.10 am]

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm that at least 10 children are involved in the Target 120 program in Derby?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. I can confirm that each Target 120 site will work with up to 10 people at any given point in time. That varies from site to site on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis as young people transition out of the program. It varies depending on whether young people disengage from the program. The number of people they work with at any one point in time varies from site to site across the state and from week to week.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm that at least five people are involved? The minister has made an announcement. I just want to get an idea or some confirmation that at least five children are engaged in the program in Derby.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Is the member specifically asking about Derby?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The announcement has been made that Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation is going to be engaged in delivering Target 120 in Derby. I am advised that it has recruited two caseworkers who will do the work. As part of that process, the client selection—I hate the word “client”—or the young person selection endorsement is happening right now through that local interagency working group. The selection of the young people to participate in the program is a complex process involving various agencies that come together to prioritise and highlight young people who would be suitable for Target 120. Of course, a very important and complex piece of work then has to happen in reaching out to those young people and families, because it is a voluntary system whereby they have to come on board. I am told that the engagement process with young people is commencing, but the specific work with those young people will commence in June.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to clarify, the announcement has been made, the department has employed and recruited —

Ms S.E. WINTON: Not we; we have not recruited. ENAC has the responsibility of recruiting the caseworkers who will deliver the program. They are employed by the corporation.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister anticipate that there will be, on average, 10 children, but they are yet to be part of the program? Does she anticipate that will happen sometime in June?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes. As I said before, some of those young people have already been identified as part of the lead interagency process, but the specific work of putting together a plan and engaging specifically and regularly with those young people will commence once those officers have been employed by the service provider.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I also ask about some of the other sites? What is the situation in Fitzroy Crossing? Is Fitzroy Crossing supporting, on average, 10 children through the Target 120 program?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Of the 20 sites, I can confirm that we do not have a service provider in place in Fitzroy Crossing yet. We have been working very hard with the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre and potentially some other service providers on getting them to become involved with Target 120. What has been made very clear to

me as I travel around the regions is that not just government agencies or private businesses, but also many of our not-for-profits and local service providers are facing challenges with recruitment for their programs. That is creating difficulties.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I also ask the same question about the Carnarvon, Newman and Mandurah sites? Is it the same situation there as it is in Fitzroy Crossing?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. Fitzroy Crossing is not up and running yet. Sorry—what were the other ones?

Ms L. METTAM: Carnarvon, Newman and Mandurah.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Aside from Fitzroy Crossing, the ones that the member mentioned are up and running and I can give her specifics about them in a moment. I also point out that although the Department of Communities is finding it difficult to procure a local service provider to do it, it does not mean that Target 120 is not able to get up and running. We have some examples, such as Kalgoorlie. I was in Kalgoorlie to hear about how Target 120 is going. That is led by a community youth officer through the Department of Communities, which is rolling out Target 120. It may well be that if Fitzroy Crossing continues to be a challenge, that is what will happen—the Department of Communities will lead it at those sites where it cannot get local service providers, which are facing similar issues with workforce challenges, as we all are. I will go through them. Carnarvon is being led by Ngala community services and it is up and running. Which other ones did the member mention?

Ms L. METTAM: Newman and Mandurah.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I was in Newman for the announcement of that one. Again, I think that is a site where we are going to see some great results, because it is run by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa. A very strong local Aboriginal-controlled organisation has taken on the Target 120 program there. And?

Ms L. METTAM: Mandurah and Karratha, which I did not say before.

Ms S.E. WINTON: In Mandurah, it is led by the Department of Communities through a community youth officer. In Karratha, it is being run by the Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation, which I also met with. I think it is also going to do good work because it is strong in the community.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you for the response, minister. Can I confirm that Carnarvon, Newman, Mandurah and Karratha are supporting, on average, 10 children a week, or are they like Derby, which has been announced and has the staff but is not supporting children until later?

Ms S.E. WINTON: What I can confirm is a repeat of what I said before. The Target 120 model at each site has the capacity for each of the organisations to support up to 10 young people at a time. That will vary from site to site, from week to week and from month to month depending on the individual circumstances of the young people they are engaging with.

Ms L. METTAM: As we teased out with Derby, children are currently being supported. Currently in Carnarvon, are five or 10 children, on average, being supported, or are we waiting until June?

[10.20 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will repeat what I said before: I am not going to give the member specifics about how many young people are in the program at any one point in time for any of the sites around the state because I think it does not paint the full picture. As I explained to the member, it varies from time to time depending on the circumstances that are happening in that young person's life. I can tell the member that the state government has made a significant commitment to this program of over some \$40 million. In this budget we have indicated our ongoing prioritisation of this program, because we know that it works, by given certainty of funding to June 2025. At all sites in all the locations, including the ones that the member has mentioned, the service providers have been given the capacity to do that work.

Ms L. METTAM: It does not seem there is much certainty. The funding is there but I am seeking a simple assurance that at least five or 10 children are being supported in Carnarvon, Newman, Mandurah and Karratha. We know that Fitzroy Crossing is not happening at the moment and Derby has been announced, but no kids are being supported. Is the minister able to provide any assurance that at least five or 10 children are being supported at those sites of high need in Carnarvon, Newman and Mandurah?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think the member is trying to lead me to say something that I cannot guarantee at any given point in time. I have seen many examples, and been briefed on data, when at one point in time a particular site in the state is supporting 10 people and a month later that is down to three people. It varies from time to time. I am not going to give the member that assurance for any particular site that there are X amount of young people being supported. I cannot do that, and I am not in control of the complex variables that are taken into account that result in those sorts of differences in numbers. I can reassure the member—I am particularly proud of this—that the Target 120 program, which has seen significant funding by this government over a long period and has been extended to those 20 sites, is a focus for this government. The service providers have been resourced accordingly and are continually supported through the Department of Communities and the process of that interagency support as part of this model.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question on this. I know we have been through it, but can the minister confirm that the Target 120 program is currently supporting children in Karratha?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I can confirm that the Target 120 program in Karratha is up and running and that young people in Karratha are being supported through this program.

Ms M. BEARD: The minister mentioned that Target 120 is voluntary. I want to clarify whether it is the youth who volunteer or the youth and their parents or family who volunteer for the program?

Ms S.E. WINTON: It is both because, as the member can imagine, if a young person volunteers to participate but is not getting any support from their parents, it is not going to work very well in addressing some of those underlying issues that cause young people to not stay on the right path. It is important that we remember that it is a partnership that works best on a voluntary basis whereby a young person and their family step up because they want support to turn that young person's life around.

Ms M. BEARD: I understand that. If there is a situation with youth who would be happy to see change, but if they do not have that support, could they still join the program, or would they need their parents to?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I know what the member is saying because I can appreciate that if a young person wants to change their life and their family might not be supportive, we would never want to turn that young person away. I know that a lot of work goes on with families to support that young person to get the family to also participate. We would be fairly confident that people who run these programs out in communities, including in Carnarvon, where I think Ngala run the program, are very connected into the community in many instances. The whole point of this model is that the organisations that are running these programs have a certain degree of knowledge, trust and experience within those communities, and have the best outcomes in terms of getting families to participate in the program too.

Ms M. BEARD: In the case that someone disengages or there is a youth who wants help, what program do they get steered to if the Target 120 program cannot help them?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Of course, I appreciate the emphasis on Target 120 and that is good, but it is not the only thing that government does. It is not the only thing that the Department of Communities does to support young people. There is a range of programs including many specifically in Carnarvon that focus on working with young people who may or may not be able to qualify or be part of the Target 120 program or, likewise, are part of the Target 120 program but for whatever reason self-select to not be part of the program.

Ms M. BEARD: Can the minister give me some examples of those programs and what they might be?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I can speak more globally about some of the services and programs that we have for at-risk young people. I can localise it for the member. Target 120 is only one part of that work on some of the longstanding and complex issues in Carnarvon. Some of the other investments in Carnarvon include the intensive family support team, which works intensively with families; HelpingMinds family and carer support; Ngala community services parenting service; the Gascoyne Women's Refuge; the Carnarvon Youth Outreach Services; the Aboriginal Community Connectors program; Cadets WA and Bush Rangers WA; and of course support services through other agencies, including the WA Country Health Service, for alcohol and other drug counselling and mental health supports. There is a broad range of services that can connect with at-risk young people who either are not eligible for the Target 120 program or, for a variety of reasons, choose to leave the program.

[10.30 am]

Ms L. METTAM: By way of supplementary information, can the minister provide the number of children who were currently engaged at the beginning of this month in the Target 120 program in Carnarvon, Newman, Mandurah and Karratha? I understand that Fitzroy Crossing has not yet been successful in attaining staff and Derby has announced that no children are currently being supported.

Ms S.E. WINTON: It is my understanding that questions relating specifically to Target 120 have previously been put on notice, and I would encourage the member to do the same.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: My question is about the enhanced family and domestic violence response teams and I refer to page 502, budget paper No 2. I know from my experience when my husband was a police officer that it is difficult to talk about family and domestic violence without talking about alcohol as well. Therefore, measures like the banned drinkers register in Carnarvon and Gascoyne will certainly help to reduce the rates of family and domestic violence. I digress a little bit. I understand that the enhanced family and domestic violence response teams involve the police. Can the minister tell me more about these FDV response teams? How many are there? How are the FDV response teams being enhanced?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, member for Bateman. Family and domestic violence response teams co-locate with the police, child protection staff and family and domestic violence advocates employed by the community services sector coordinated response service. After a police call-out to an incident, the FDVR teams assess the incident and follow up with support. Like the hubs, which are a really innovative approach, the family and domestic violence response teams represent a joined-up response to family and domestic violence, and there are 17 of these teams right across the state.

During COVID, in July 2020, the government boosted the coordinated response service staff. In the midyear review, we announced over \$11 million over four years for 34 family safety coordinator positions to be added to the existing teams. Those new positions will be phased in, with the first phase commencing from July. Two staff will be added to three regional and four metro FDVRTs, working up to two extra FTEs in every location. Importantly, the new staff will be focused on the families at greatest risk of family and domestic violence, and will give those families more intensive support.

This initiative is very important in two critical ways. One way is to actually respond to crisis call-out incidents. The other way is the amount of work that is happening beyond that critical incident to support victim-survivors and to de-escalate and stop further violence from happening, which should not be underestimated.

Ms L. METTAM: I note there has been a significant increase—over 30 per cent—in FDV cases since 2016–17. Why is this response team program being implemented for only a year? Why is there only one year of funding?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to elaborate.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you very much for the question. I think the matter that the member is referring to is the coordinated response service, which has some additional funding in 2023–24 to maintain the current resourcing level. The one-year extension of that additional funding will enable further work with service providers to ensure that the new family safety coordinator positions are distinct yet complementary, with no gaps or duplications. We will see how the intersection of these two programs goes before making subsequent decisions about the extension or otherwise of the coordinated response service.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I am really interested to hear about the family and domestic violence responses around the Pets in Crisis program and the like. It is clear that all the bodies of evidence we now have show that there is an unequivocal link between family and domestic violence and the most vulnerable members of the family in that it stops the victims of violence from leaving the home because of attacks or threats to the nonhuman members of the family—their companion animals. Can the minister give me some more information about the Pets in Crisis program? How is it going? How is the expansion to that program going? The other program that is also linked is the BARK program. Sorry, I am being a bit quick because I have to leave shortly, but I would really like to hear about both programs. What is the minister's take on how effectively those programs are helping potential and actual victims of family and domestic violence to extricate themselves and their fur family members from violence? I refer to page 521, budget paper No 2, under election commitments and the Pets in Crisis expansion.

The CHAIR: Thank you, and can I just reiterate that questions and answers should be short and concise, please.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you to the member for Maylands for pointing out the budget line item right at the end and not at the beginning!

Ms L.L. BAKER: I just wanted to give you some extra work, minister.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member for Maylands' strong advocacy in this area over a long period is well noted. The member will be very happy about the work that we are doing in this field. It was originally a first-term election commitment to the RSPCA in the metropolitan area, and then we had the second-term election commitment to expand it to Bunbury, Busselton and Albany. Pets are often a reason people may delay seeking help, with one study reporting that one-third of women delayed seeking refuge due to concerns about what would happen to their pets if they escaped to a refuge.

The Pets in Crisis program places pets with volunteer animal carers who temporarily and lovingly look after those pets until it is safe for them to be reunited with their owners. The statistics are interesting in that from 2017 to December 2022, this program has helped over 260 pets—not just cats and dogs, but chooks, guinea pigs, rabbits and parrots. More than \$1.34 million has been invested in this much-needed and very important program as part of our overall response to the prevention of family and domestic violence.

[10.40 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 513, care arrangements and support services for children in the CEO's care. What is the total number of children currently in the CEO's care?

Ms S.E. WINTON: As of today, there are 5 122 children in care.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the department account for all those children?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for the question. As we know, young people, particularly teenagers, sometimes make decisions outside of what we might like those decisions to be. Of the 5 122 children in care, we need to acknowledge that in many instances, those children have suffered trauma in their lives and in some instances, they have complex issues. The majority of kids in care are in safe, supported placements and in that regard, I cannot speak highly enough of foster carers and others who do this important work of supporting our young people. Unfortunately, sometimes a very small percentage of young people choose to leave their placements. I can reassure the member that Communities and the Western Australia Police Force work closely together to continue to support those young people. I might ask the director general to provide more detailed advice.

Mr M. Rowe: As the minister highlighted, from time to time young children will make their own choices and leave approved placements. In many instances in which that occurs—I am talking about a very small number of children at any one time—our case workers remain in contact with those young people even if they do not know exactly where they are. Often they connect with them through the joys of social media—that is a good way of engaging with young people—and their extended family. The way we understand that situation within the department is that there are effectively two types of situations in which a young person leaves their care. In one instance, we describe that as “unknown, but in contact with them” so we are able to remain in contact with that young person. In instances in which we genuinely do not know where those young people are and they are effectively missing, we work very closely with the WA police to look for them. I want to give some assurance to the member and others that, as the minister said, the department works very hard when children go missing. We actively go to the sites where we think they might be and contact their extended family and talk to them about where they might be. The good news is that so far, all those young people have returned. Our experience has been that when we go looking for them, we eventually find them. It is not great when these young people go missing but we take it very seriously when they do and we work closely with the police. The member would be aware that from time to time we put out notices about young children in care who are missing. That is done very carefully because we do not want to necessarily exacerbate the situation or risk to the young person; sometimes it is harder to find them when they know that people are looking for them. We have to be sensitive about that. We also understand that there are restrictions in the legislation about identifying young people, so, again, when we publish photographs or put out media statements, we are cautious and careful about so doing. But as the minister said, at any given moment a tiny proportion of our 5 122 children are genuinely missing and we do everything we can to find them as quickly as possible and reunite them with their placements.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand the challenge of this issue. I take from the director general’s comments that no children are missing at this point in time and the department is aware of the whereabouts of all the children.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am not sure that the director general said that no children are missing at this moment in time. The point he was trying to make was that at any given time, it is a very small number of the total cohort of 5 122 young people for whom that is the case, as the director general described.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister advise how many children are missing at this point in time?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I note that the member in the upper house quite often receives statistics on this. I am advised that as of 23 May, four children are recorded as “unknown, but in contact” and three children are recorded as missing. As the member can appreciate, that would have been different last week and it may be different next week. It emphasises the point I was trying to make that of the 5 122 children in care, the vast majority are in stable and safe care arrangements and getting the supports they need.

Ms L. METTAM: How many children under the care of the CEO of Communities are currently in Banksia Hill Detention Centre?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The number of children in care who are in Banksia Hill Detention Centre is dynamic and changes regularly, similar to the way the numbers change in terms of the question that the member previously asked. Every effort is made to support children in care and, importantly, deter them from involvement in the criminal justice system. Generally, the number of children in care represents a small proportion of the total population at Banksia Hill and a very small proportion of the overall number of children in care, as was previously stated. Those children continue to be supported and there is ongoing planning for their reintegration into the community. Since February 2019, the government has funded a full-time co-located senior child protection worker at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. This worker is responsible for supporting young people in or at risk of entering care, ensuring that the best interests of children in care are met whilst they are in Banksia Hill.

[10.50 am]

Ms L. METTAM: We know that four children under the Department of Communities’ care are missing at the moment. Is the minister able to say how many children are at Banksia Hill at this point in time?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I suggest that if the member wants that information, she put the question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Why is the minister unable to answer? It is a very simple question about the Department of Communities. The minister must have an idea of how many children are at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. We know that four children under the department’s purview are missing. How many children are at Banksia Hill?

The CHAIR: The minister has answered the question.

Ms S.E. WINTON: As with missing children, the number of children in care at Banksia Hill varies from time to time. I have a concern around providing specific information about children in care at Banksia Hill. It is a small number at any point in time. I am loath to do that as it would potentially identify those young people. I would prefer, and I think it would be more appropriate, that the member put the question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Has the minister been gagged as well?

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: That is not relevant.

Ms L. METTAM: It is pretty relevant.

The CHAIR: I will not allow that.

Ms C.M. ROWE: I refer to page 521 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the details of controlled grants and subsidies, under which is the boost to primary prevention in family and domestic violence services. I understand that these grants were announced by Minister McGurk late last year. As a former financial planner, I was really pleased to see that one of these grants was for the financial toolkit of the Women at Risk Trust. Could the minister please tell me a little bit more about this grant and how it will work for victims of family and domestic violence?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Belmont for her question. I know that as a former financial planner, she is particularly supportive of and keen on the work that we are doing to support people who experience family and domestic violence. In terms of the financial toolkit, a \$99 000 primary prevention grant was announced in December 2022. Funding has been given to 17 organisations under that \$3 million election commitment that is all about focusing and placing a priority on primary prevention—that is, stopping violence before it starts. Of course, family and domestic violence takes many forms. One of the forms experienced by many women is financial abuse that restricts women’s independence. Many victims do not recognise that that is a form of family and domestic violence. Two-thirds of people do not know that there is help out there or where to go to get help, so it is important that this toolkit provides that access. It is an online resource that provides advice on different stages of an abusive relationship. That is really important, because that is where the preventive aspect comes in. If more women understand early on some of the things that are happening in their lives, we can hope to stop the escalation of that abuse. The toolkit provides tips on prevention at home, work and in the community, and much-needed information on financial literacy, budgeting, saving, credit, debt and super. Many people in relationships do not have a shared responsibility for financial management. This can be highlighted at those times when an abusive relationship gets worse and women struggle with financial management. It is really interesting to note that the toolkit has a thousand users weekly, which is quite incredible.

Ms C.M. ROWE: Was that a thousand?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am told that it is a thousand users weekly. Importantly, the toolkit is translated into some 10 languages. That is an important aspect as well, because, as we know, family and domestic violence reaches everywhere in our community, including our Aboriginal and multicultural communities. I think this is a great program.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 504 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and paragraph 15 under significant issues impacting the agency. I note that between 2020–21 and 2021–22, the total number of children in care reduced by 2.8 per cent. Can the minister advise whether this is a reduction in the number of children entering care or the result of more children leaving care or an issue around the capacity to provide support?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to answer.

Mr M. Rowe: It is a reduction in the number of children entering care.

Ms L. METTAM: Are any children in care staying with reportable offenders? Can the minister confirm that that is not the case?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will let the director general answer.

Mr M. Rowe: I thank the member for the question. It is obviously really important that we make sure that children are safe when they come into care, regardless of their placement type. One way we can achieve that is by making sure that the carers of children have a working with children check. That makes sure that we do not allow people who have that history to be in the same environment as those children.

Ms L. METTAM: The reason I ask is that issues were raised previously by the Commissioner for Children and Young People about children in care being in the same group home or facility as reportable offenders. I am just seeking some confirmation that that is currently not happening. I am referring to residential care homes where there might be another child with a history of sexual assaults. The Commissioner for Children and Young People has previously said that that is not a unique event.

[11.00 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse defined “harmful sexual behaviours” as a term that covers a broad continuum of behaviours from those that are developmentally inappropriate to criminal behaviours such as sexual assault. The continuum of harmful sexual behaviours and the diversity of children’s experiences and circumstances means that no one response or intervention is suitable for all children with harmful sexual behaviours. The Department of Communities is progressing a range of reforms to contemporise and safeguard out-of-home care, including by improving the identification and assessment of and response to harmful sexual behaviours in response to the royal commission’s recommendations and those made in the Commissioner for Children and Young People’s independent review. Communities has provided grant funding of \$2.4 million over three years to the Australian Centre for Child Protection WA to deliver a work plan to improve responses to children with harmful sexual behaviours. I might ask the director general to elaborate on the reportable offences.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you for the question. As the minister pointed out, we are obviously doing a lot of work in relation to harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings. As the minister said, that behaviour can be on the spectrum from age-inappropriate behaviour all the way through to potentially harmful behaviour. We make sure there is an adequate safety plan around those children regardless of their care setting and for the children who they might be resident with. However, I can confirm that there are no children who are reportable offenders who are in residence with other children. That was one of the issues that the commission's report raised. The matter of harmful sexual behaviour is complex, and that is why we, along with other jurisdictions, are looking at what more we can do to manage those behaviours when they express themselves in the behaviour of children and young people.

Ms L. METTAM: How many complaints has the department received in the last 12 months about children in care who may have been exposed to others who have exhibited harmful sexual behaviours?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can I just ask what budget paper reference that question is about?

The CHAIR: Leader of the Liberal Party, if you can allocate that to a line item in the budget, that would be great.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the fifteenth significant issue affecting the agency and the reduction in the number of children entering care.

The CHAIR: Is that on page 504?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am trying to work out the relevance to the question that the member is asking.

The CHAIR: Could you make your question a little clearer, please?

Ms L. METTAM: I am trying to establish whether the reduction in the number of children in care is a result of more children leaving care because they are exposed to people with harmful sexual behaviours.

The CHAIR: Minister, if you choose not to add anything, that is perfectly okay. You can pass.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am not accepting that.

The CHAIR: Moving on to a new question.

Ms L. METTAM: To clarify one of the questions I asked, are there currently any children in care residing with others who have exhibited harmful sexual behaviours?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thought we had already answered that.

The CHAIR: Does the Leader of the Liberal Party have a new question?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. I refer to the sixteenth significant issue on page 504, which is the Aboriginal child placement principle. I note that the key effectiveness indicator table on page 508 states that only 65 per cent of Aboriginal children in the CEO's care are placed in accordance with this principle. What action is the department undertaking to address this issue, which has been ongoing for many years?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to answer that in the first instance.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you very much for the question. We are working really hard as a department to try to find additional care places for children, especially Aboriginal children in care. The member might recall that amendments were made recently to our enabling legislation that reinforced our commitment to the Aboriginal children placement principles. That requires us to try, whenever possible, to locate Aboriginal children in care with Aboriginal carers from their own country in the first instance and then we work through a hierarchy if those people cannot be found. It is a challenging target to achieve, but we unashamedly do not walk back from that because it is something that we want to get better at doing as an organisation, and we are doing a lot to try to achieve that.

One of the other reforms that has been put in place is to consult with Aboriginal representative organisations. That is also a requirement under the new legislation. That will require us to consult with local Aboriginal people when we make choices about placing Aboriginal children when they come into care, or even before they come into care. That consultation also gives us an opportunity for local Aboriginal people to recommend to us who might be prepared to care for children in their communities. That is coupled with a strong emphasis on earlier intervention and working more closely with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations through things like Aboriginal family-led decision-making. We are trying very hard to support both the spirit and intent of the legislation, which is around encouraging Aboriginal people and families to be more in control of their children's futures.

A whole range of factors play into our capacity to find Aboriginal carers. We are working very hard to do that, including through additional resourcing, as I said, through the Aboriginal representative organisations, which is being piloted at two sites. As I said, it is a challenge, but we do not step back from it. We fully appreciate that we need to continue to work on it because we know that Aboriginal children thrive best when they are with Aboriginal people and close to culture and country and are connected to their people.

Ms L. METTAM: Where are the 19 new properties going to be located, and how will they provide culturally appropriate care?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Which line item is that?

Ms L. METTAM: It is the last sentence at the same paragraph, which refers to acquiring 19 additional properties.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to answer.

Mr M. Rowe: We are acquiring properties for two different reasons. The member might be aware that we currently have a few more than 20 residential care facilities that the department operates across the state. There are around 100 children in those facilities across Western Australia at the moment. As part of our program to deal with occupational violence and aggression, we are trying to make sure that we buy sufficient homes so that there are no more than four children in any one of those homes at any time because that allows for a much more therapeutic care setting for those children in the department's residential care. The member might also be referring to the out-of-home care reform program, which the government is supporting. Through that, we have been funded to purchase an additional 19 properties across the state. There will be one in each of our districts, so they will genuinely be across the state. Through the Out of Home Care reform program, we are designing some new forms of care for both temporary and emergency accommodation such that if children come into our care urgently, which sometimes happens, we have the capacity for our partners in service delivery to put those children into a temporary care arrangement over a weekend or for however long it might take until we find them a substantive placement. The 19 properties that I think the member referred to will amount to a total investment of \$13.5 million. They will be located in each of our districts across the state to provide some additional care options that we currently do not have.

Ms L. METTAM: I would like to have that spelled out, I guess. When the director general says "in each of the districts across the state", I assume he means in the regional areas as well, given the nature of what we are talking about here.

Mr M. Rowe: That is correct. We have 17 child protection districts across the state in both metropolitan and regional areas.

The CHAIR: The committee will now take a short break and we will recommence at 11.20 am.

Meeting suspended from 11.11 to 11.20 am

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

Ms M. BEARD: I want to seek more clarity around the 19 houses and the regional jurisdictions. Where might those properties be located across the regional areas?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to provide more detail.

Mr M. Rowe: I am sorry. I do not have that detail with me today about exactly where the properties that have been purchased are located. We have already purchased, I think, eight of the 19—it may even be more than that. But as I said, we have a firm commitment to find those properties in all our child protection districts across the state. I do not have the specifics about their locations with me today.

Ms M. BEARD: The director general said "child protection districts". Can he elaborate on what that means?

The CHAIR: Sorry, through the minister.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, director general.

Mr M. Rowe: I may refer that question to the deputy director general for community services who is a very longstanding and experienced child protection person. She will be able to explain a bit more about how the child protection districts are structured across the state.

Ms M. Samuels: There are 17 districts. Does the member want me to go through just the regional ones?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, thank you.

Ms M. Samuels: There is one in Broome, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Port Hedland, Karratha, Newman and—this is a real test—Kalgoorlie.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am sure that information is readily available.

Ms M. Samuels: We can provide the member with that information. They are all in the regions.

Ms M. BEARD: I will explain why I asked about the transitional housing and the jurisdictions. I assume that there is a property in Geraldton—there would be. Let us say there is a need in Mt Magnet, Meekatharra or Carnarvon for emergency housing. It is a long way for those youths to go to Geraldton to get the urgent care that the director general mentioned and temporary housing while they find more permanent housing arrangements. Are there plans to decentralise this housing and locate it outside the main regional centres?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think we have been able to provide the member with the best answer we can for the location of those that have been purchased. I would imagine that the decisions about any additional ones we purchase will be based on the needs in the regions specifically. Those decisions will be made around that.

Ms M. BEARD: Where are the eight that have been purchased? Are they in the metro area? Are there any in the regions?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that it is a combination of both, and we do not have that information today.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the minister able to provide that by a supplementary? I imagine it is not a difficult list to provide; there are only eight of them.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think it would be better if that question were put on notice.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We will add it to the list.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 505, paragraph 26, and significant issues affecting the workforce. What impacts are skills shortages having on the Department of Communities' ability to provide child protection services?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I begin by wanting to acknowledge child protection workers. In the last six months since I became the minister, the opportunity to meet with hundreds of child protection workers throughout the state has been quite a privilege. The work they do each and every day is quite extraordinary. It is challenging and very often unhappy work, but they are extraordinary people who want to get up every day to make a difference in children's and families' lives. I cannot speak highly enough of the work they do.

There have been some challenges in the child protection portfolio workforce, not unlike with teachers, nurses, police and others in private enterprise. Small businesses around the state are feeling the challenges, too. As I also highlighted, the not-for-profit sector and the community services sector are facing similar challenges in being able to attract and retain workforce.

The Department of Communities is undertaking initiatives. It launched the 2023 Frontline Talent Register campaign to address some of the frontline vacancies, and that includes a recruitment campaign for child protection roles that targets state, interstate and international candidates and applies regional recruitment solutions to employ more locally based candidates. The Department of Communities is also considering suitable sponsorship packages to support candidates in their immigration. It is undertaking a number of programs domestically to build the capability and improve the culture to enhance employee experience and retention, and these include an employee recognition program and an employee experience model program. Also, of course, the department utilises a statewide relieving team to respond to any vacancies throughout the regions on a daily or weekly basis as vacancies become an issue at any location.

I might ask the director general to talk more specifically about the FTE.

[11.30 am]

Mr M. Rowe: As the minister said, we are very conscious of trying to do the best by our staff in both retaining the staff that we have and attracting new employees where we need to. The minister highlighted a number of the initiatives that we are already undertaking. I can confirm that *Commissioner's instruction 39: Interim arrangements to fill public sector vacancies*, which members may have heard about, is a whole-of-public-sector response to the challenges the public sector is facing. It allows agencies some additional flexibility in recruitment processes and is something our department has been enthusiastically taking up. I thank the Public Sector Commissioner for allowing us to do so. For example, we have used that instruction to permanently fill 25 child protection worker and seven field worker vacancies.

The minister also commented on the international recruitment campaigns that we have been operating. That has been quite successful in filling a variety of vacancies. Since the campaign has been operating, we have had three major pool recruitment talent campaigns that employed an additional 127 child protection workers, of which 74 are permanent and 54 are on fixed-term contracts. We are trying to not only find more workers to come in, but also support the ones whom we have. One of the things that keeps people in an organisation in which they feel valued is supporting their career aspirations. We are always on the lookout for Aboriginal people in particular, given the people whom we serve. One of the more recent things we have done is partner with Curtin University to explore opportunities for existing Aboriginal employees to gain social work qualifications. Certainly one of the very clear messages that we have heard from our Aboriginal staff is that they want us to better support them in their career aspirations within the department.

In summary, like every other public sector agency, we are challenged. We have an incredible workforce. They are really resilient, passionate people who show up every day to make a difference for our most vulnerable Western Australians. The department is doing everything it can to support its staff and to fill the vacancies as quickly as we possibly can. As the minister has already indicated, we use the statewide relieving service when we have vacancies in particular locations. Effectively, that means we will place staff centrally into those typically regional locations when there is a need to do so on a temporary basis.

Ms L. METTAM: How many FTE positions are currently unfilled within the department's child protection directorate?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Vacancy rates in a workforce of some two and a half thousand people fluctuate daily and weekly, and is also dependent upon location and other circumstances. I am happy for questions around that to be put on notice, but I want to emphasise the McGowan government's investment in child protection since being elected in 2017 has been significant. Since 2017, we have seen some 250 extra FTE positions. That is an uptake of about 35 per cent in the child protection workforce, which is not insignificant.

Ms L. METTAM: The minister said an additional 250 FTE have joined the department of child protection since 2017. How many have left the department over that period?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I ask the director general to answer that question.

Mr M. Rowe: I thank the member for the question. For clarity, when talking about FTE, the minister was referring to the number of new positions that have been funded by the government since 2017. That is actually in the order of about 286.5 additional FTEs—the minister mentioned 250 or thereabouts. That is an increase in our child protection workforce of about 33 per cent. That is the number of positions created.

Ms L. METTAM: Are these positions that are funded but not necessarily filled?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The additional 280 positions are extra FTE positions that were not in place prior to us coming to government. They are additional positions. Notwithstanding that, at any point in time in a workforce, there is a number of vacancies in the total positions available, which is quite a separate thing.

Ms L. METTAM: I am seeking to get an idea of how many FTE positions are currently unfilled in the department's child protection directorate.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think I have answered that before, but I will repeat my response. Vacancies in an organisation as large as the child protection workforce vary from day to day, week to week and month to month, and are dependent upon location and a variety of circumstances. I am happy for the member to put that on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Can we receive that via supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I have answered the question.

The CHAIR: The answer will be put on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: There seems to be a lot of smoke and mirrors. There are positions funded but not filled. There are Target 120 sites that have positions but are not accepting children.

The CHAIR: Leader of the Liberal Party, we just need a question.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister not see that there is a major issue here?

The CHAIR: Just a question, please, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms L. METTAM: To what extent is the minister delivering in this portfolio? The funds are there, but it seems that there is not the staff to fulfil those roles, or the children are not being supported.

Ms C.M. ROWE: Point of order. What is the line item?

Ms L. METTAM: The line item is the —

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy to respond.

The CHAIR: Members, the minister is happy to respond.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think the member is drawing a lot of conclusions based on information that she has not received.

Ms L. METTAM: Information? There is no information. The minister is not providing it.

The CHAIR: The minister is giving an answer, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member is just drawing conclusions. I am happy to provide the information. I ask the member to put it on notice. I do not see that as being anything but fully transparent.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: My question goes to working with children checks, which can be found on page 508 in budget paper No 2. I have already referred to my former experience working as a primary school teacher, so I know firsthand—as I know the minister does from her own experience as well—how important it is to make sure that the right people are keeping our children safe and supported. How are the working with children checks contributing to keeping WA children safe? I know there have been some changes since I left the teaching profession around responses to institutional child sex abuse.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Bateman for the question. She is right; the safety of our children is of the utmost importance, and the McGowan government is absolutely demonstrating the importance of child safety in a variety of areas—none more important than the working with children checks, which are an important screening tool to protect children from risk of harm. To a certain extent, I think the member would agree they have almost become normalised now. They are not an unusual thing. I think the numbers are quite extraordinary. It is just a normal part of engaging with young people in our community and that is a really good thing.

Of course, we have seen an increase in the number of applications for a working with children check. When those assessments are done by the screening unit, the interests of the children are fundamental. We want them to be safe in the community and also safe in community-based activities. The member will know that last year we passed legislation to further strengthen those protections for children, and it received royal assent on 7 December 2022. These changes have resulted in a wide range of criminal offences now being captured during the screening process, triggering an automatic negative notice, which means that those people cannot work with children.

Implementing the working with children check reforms delivers on our commitment to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. An amount of \$4.23 million in new funding over 2022–23 and 2023–24 was allocated in the last budget to prepare for the implementation of these reforms. I receive internal briefings, and the amount of work being done by the department in readiness for these important legislative changes is quite extraordinary and significant, including community education about the changes, appropriate customer support for individuals, business regulation under the act and information technology upgrades. I might just ask Mr Payne to very briefly elaborate on some of the numbers that we are talking about and the significance of the reform.

[11.40 am]

Mr P. Payne: Currently, as at 31 March, a total of 421 314 cards are in existence. This year we are on track for another record number of applications coming through—in the order of about 140 000 to 150 000 applications. Generally, about 80 to 85 per cent of applications come from people without criminal records and about 15 to 20 per cent of applications come from those with criminal records. On average, it takes about four days to complete checks of people with no criminal records and, on average, 20 days to complete checks of people with criminal records. The amendments that the minister referred to will enable the strengthening and quickening of our capacity to process applications and issue negative notices and, more importantly, interim negative notices on applications when we receive them.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 508 and the heading “Closing the Gap”. I note from the government’s *Closing the gap* annual report that an Aboriginal outcomes division has been created within the department. Can the minister tell me a little more about that—how many people have been recruited to the department, how many FTEs it has and where they are located?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The coordinating minister for that question is Minister Carey, but I am happy for the director general to provide some information to the member.

Mr M. Rowe: The Aboriginal outcomes division is a relatively new division in the department. It is headed by a senior Aboriginal woman, Cheryl Smith. It has, from memory—I do not have the numbers in front of me—in the order of 55 FTEs or thereabouts.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that 55?

Mr M. Rowe: Or thereabouts. I do not know the exact number. Its role is really to be an informal change agent to make sure that the whole of our agency—all 6 500 staff or thereabouts—are more culturally aware in the work they do. It also plays an important role in coordinating the Closing the Gap function for our department in its intersection with other state agencies—primarily the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which is the lead agency for Closing the Gap in Western Australia. Its two main functions are to drive reform in our organisation to make us a place that really supports our 400 or so Aboriginal staff and to increase the number of Aboriginal people who want to work for our organisation, as well as improve our cultural competency as an agency and coordinate our responsibilities in relation to the Closing the Gap initiative.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are the 55 FTEs new or are they FTEs who have been assigned roles within the department? Are there FTEs within the minister’s area of responsibility? I am sorry; we had conversations in the estimates hearing last year with the then Minister for Community Services about the challenges that the department has been facing, if the minister recalls. I assume that this would be directly related to the business that she is in charge of.

Ms S.E. WINTON: My understanding is that, last year, Minister McGurk was the coordinating minister. That has changed and Minister Carey is the coordinating minister, so he is the one to ask those questions of.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the service summary on page 507 and service 6, “Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care”. The funding for this increased from \$508 million in the 2022–23 budget to an estimated actual of \$545 million. Given the decrease in the number of children in care between 2020–21 and 2021–22, which we referred to earlier, does this increase in funding indicate that the number of children in care has grown again?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The answer is no. The additional costs are mainly due to the consumer price index, indexation and demand increases in providing child protection services as part of the annual cost and demand model review.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm that the number of children currently in care is 5 122?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm how many children were in care each year from 2017–18?

Ms S.E. WINTON: We do not have that information here today, but I am a happy for that to be taken on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm that four children are currently unaccounted for? Also, are any children in care living in the same neighbourhood or dwelling as an accused perpetrator?

[11.50 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: Sorry; there is a bunch of questions in there. Can we do them one by one? I appreciate that the member is revisiting questions from before and I am happy to entertain them again, but can we be more systematic about it?

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm whether there are any children in care located or living in the same neighbourhood as an accused perpetrator?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can I just confirm the question that the member is asking? Is she now asking whether kids in care are living in a neighbourhood where there might be people living in the neighbourhood who are —

Ms L. METTAM: In the area—an accused perpetrator in close proximity. Is that information that the department has?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think that is police data. The Department of Communities certainly does not have data about who is living in the neighbourhood. I am a bit confused about the question. The Department of Communities' emphasis is on keeping the care place safe. Obviously, we are all concerned about keeping neighbourhoods safe, but I do not think the Department of Communities' remit extends to knowing who lives in a neighbourhood. That would be a police question, I imagine.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand that. Does the Department of Communities have any sight over where perpetrators might be in relation to a child who is in care? We are talking about individuals who have been accused of expressing harmful behaviours towards child sexual assault victims. I would imagine the Department of Communities would be aware of that in its efforts to protect children in its care.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for the director general to answer.

Mr M. Rowe: In general terms, when a child comes into care, we need to do planning that is specific to that child's circumstances. The member can imagine that they are many and various depending on the reasons the child has come into care in the first place, where they are from and where their care placement might be. As part of a safety plan for a child, if we are aware that there is a particular individual who has interfaced with a child through their life, it would be appropriate to obviously be mindful of that circumstance, and we would put in place steps with the care placement arrangements to ensure that that child was safe in the circumstances. It is a very specific set of circumstances that are unique to each child, which is why we need to do a safety plan specific to their own circumstances.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 511 and "Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services". Paragraph 2 states that the increase in FTEs is due to the increase in demand; however, footnote (a) states that the number of cases for 2021–22 was 12 283, and for 2023–24 the forecast is 12 284. Can the minister explain the increase in FTE and costs when the demand is forecast to remain steady?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The McGowan government's investment in early intervention in the child protection space is quite significant. We often talk about Target 120, but what is not so well known to many people is that other significant early intervention programs that are in place are referred to in the area of the budget that the member is talking to. It is worthwhile highlighting, too, because we know that this is the right way to go. We know that keeping young people with family is ultimately what we want to achieve. Removing children from care is a last resort. The programs that are run as part of the early intervention family support strategy—the Aboriginal in-home support service, the intensive family support service and family support network—are critical in supporting families to support their children to keep them safe and keep families together, and that is what we want. It plays to some of the earlier questions about meeting national targets. We can only do that if we support families to provide safe and nurturing environments for their kids. Regarding specifically the movement within the budget, I will ask Mr Rowe to explain.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you, minister. As the member pointed out, the employee FTE has changed over various years for a variety of reasons. The footnote refers to child protection services. We have a thing called a cost-and-demand model within the department that has been operational since financial year 2008–09. For many years, there has been a cost-and-demand model in the organisation that allows us, through a budgetary process managed by the Department of Treasury, to have a conversation about the level of resources that are necessary for our work. However, it is always worth noting that for all the services within the agency, every single dollar, every FTE that we are funded for has to find a home in one of these services. The FTE numbers are a combination of frontline workers who are working in this space as well as the corporate overhead that might exist, but that is a proportion of the corporate overhead that would exist across the agencies. It gets quite difficult to apportion the distinction between corporate overhead that needs to be spread across all the 12 services within the department, and then those specific FTE that are unique to this particular service. In some cases, the explanation for an FTE increase can be to do with additional new programs that are being funded through the government or it can be as a result of the apportionment of a corporate overhead as well.

Although the FTE numbers are useful to observe, they also have to be interpreted with a bit of caution because we have to find a home, as I said, for every dollar that is allocated to the organisation and every FTE that we have been funded for has to be spread across these services. We try to make them fit as best we can, but in some cases they are

not a unique fit. As the minister said, most of this service is about the variety of services that we do to prevent families coming to crisis in the first case. We know it is a good use of taxpayer money to work with families early. That reflects the larger numbers the member referred to as well. Footnote (a) is the total number of people and families who we would be working with, not necessarily just those children who are currently in care. That is why the number is larger, because we are working with a whole range of families through different services across the state.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I would like to emphasise, too, that early intervention is where the government will continue to go, because we know it is the right way. It is resource intensive, it is not easy, but it is the right thing to do and we have some really encouraging results. I am informed that 86 per cent of children referred to the Aboriginal in-home support service are staying safely at home. We can imagine what might have happened without this government's investment in early intervention. Similarly, the intensive family support service is working well, whereby 85 per cent of the children referred are staying safely at home, and that is what we want. We want children at home being nurtured and supported in their families on country.

[12 noon]

Ms L. METTAM: I am not sure whether this is covered in this division, but I am sure that the minister will let me know. I refer to page 517 and the asset investment program. Paragraph 1.1 states —

more than 923.2 million of capital investment from 2023–24 to 2026–27 to increase and renew public housing, homelessness, and crisis accommodation ...

What is the expected net change in public housing stock numbers in 2023–24? I do not think this is the minister's area.

Ms S.E. WINTON: No.

Ms L. METTAM: That is okay. I have another one.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Save it for Thursday.

Ms L. METTAM: I will save it for then.

I refer to page 522, controlled grants and subsidies, prevention of family and domestic violence, and the line item "Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes". Can the minister explain why there is no funding from 2023–24 onwards?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes is an early intervention and prevention initiative that includes several strategies to support women and children experiencing family and domestic violence to stay safely in their homes when it is appropriate for them to do so. This initiative provides funding to the following providers: Pat Thomas House, the Patricia Giles Centre for Non-Violence, the Pilbara Community Legal Service, Starick, the Lucy Saw Centre Association and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. In May 2022, the Department of Social Services offered a deed of variation to continue funding this program with an additional sum of \$500 000 to provide a 12-month extension from 1 July to 20 June 2023. From 2023–24 onwards, all service providers will be contracted via a service agreement and paid from the funding for services expense category. Thus, the out years budgets do not appear in the grants and subsidies table; they will appear somewhere else. I will ask Dr Leggett to elaborate for me.

Dr N. Leggett: I will give a little bit of context. The Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes program was originally a commonwealth-funded initiative. We first received the funding in 2018–19, and it was disseminated to those organisations that the minister presented. In the 2021–22 budget, the state government secured the funding for those programs to continue, which is why we are transitioning them to service agreements. They are not listed in the controlled grants section of the budget as having grants funding into the future because their grants will end and their service agreements will commence, which will continue their funding into the future.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister provide the number of women who have benefited from this program since its inception in 2021–22? How many women are engaged in the program this year?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy to provide that information. If the member will ask that as a question on notice, we will get that information.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm that the minister is unable to provide it by supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. That is what I said.

Ms C.M. ROWE: I refer to page 522, budget paper No 2, the heading "Prevention of FDV" and the line item "Culturally Appropriate Services to FDV Victims". This is an issue that is close to home because my electorate of Belmont is richly diverse, which is great, and is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Many people do not speak English or speak it as a second language. Obviously, this poses a significant barrier for people seeking assistance for family and domestic violence matters. What measures are in the budget to improve cultural security for family and domestic violence victims?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Belmont for the question. I want to put on the record the member's extraordinary advocacy that she does for her constituents, particularly for the multicultural communities that she represents in Belmont.

Family and domestic violence is everywhere and it happens to everyone, but, sadly, we know that Aboriginal women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are over-represented as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, and that is why programs like these are very important. There is annual funding of \$445 000 for the Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre and the Langford Aboriginal Association for the next four years. Ishar also delivers the Free from FDV program, which encourages two-way learning and cultural competence training for FDV services and CALD organisations. There was \$300 000 provided to Ishar to deliver counselling services for CALD women and children impacted by family and domestic violence, using the national partnership funding. Sadly, CALD and Aboriginal women are over-represented as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. Last year, there was a women's grant to the Women's Law Centre for a CALD poster project debunking common family and domestic violence myths in different languages. I take this opportunity to acknowledge some of the great work being done by other services, including the Women and Newborn Health Service, which translates its family and domestic violence antenatal screening tools into different languages.

It is a timely reminder that preventing and dealing with family and domestic violence is a whole-of-community responsibility. It is everyone's responsibility, and this government has a long record, over the last six years, of prioritising this area through the first ever Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Our investment in this area of some \$200 million over six years has been significant. I have had great feedback from the sector that supports victim-survivors that this budget continues that investment to the tune of \$50 million, which is a clear indication that we mean to continue prioritising this area. Of course, we know that supporting victim-survivors at the time of crisis is critical. We need to hold perpetrators to account. Importantly, we need to do primary prevention in lots of different ways, including through the initiative I have spoken about, to make sure that family and domestic violence does not happen in the first place.

[12.10 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 521, women exiting refuge—I assume that this refers to a transitional home; the minister can correct me if I am wrong—and to teenagers in need of a crisis accommodation facility. Is the minister able to expand on those two line items?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can the member help me out? What page?

Ms M. BEARD: It is page 521, "Election Commitments", women exiting refuge.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can the member repeat her question?

Ms M. BEARD: Does the minister have any information about what that is?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am not sure whether the member knows, but it refers to the line above, which is subsidised driving lessons and dental for women exiting refuge. It is quite specific.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry; it is indented. The next one is teenagers in need of crisis accommodation. Is that a reference to the 19 houses —

The CHAIR: Sorry, can I just control this?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Chair, you are here!

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry, chair.

The CHAIR: Is the member for North West Central asking a new question about the line item, teenagers in need of crisis accommodation?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: That question is for the Minister for Homelessness.

Ms M. BEARD: A new question; hopefully, I get this one right! I refer to page 518, works in progress, "Safe Place—Youth Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Homelessness Program".

Ms S.E. WINTON: Again, that is a question for Minister Carey.

Ms M. BEARD: Thank you.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 504, significant issues impacting the agency, paragraph 19, which states —

... the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence was due to cease in 2022–23 ...

Can the minister provide an update on the status of the NPA?

Ms S.E. WINTON: In December 2021, the Western Australian government entered into the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses. The national partnership agreement aims to support service providers to deliver critical family, domestic and sexual violence services to meet demand and support those who need it most, trial new initiatives, undertake reforms and enhance data and reporting across jurisdictions.

The total funding to Western Australia for 2021–22 and 2022–23 was \$30.1 million. That partnership was implemented through a two-staged approach with the first stage facilitating early payments to states and territories. WA received its first payment of \$7.5 million in January 2022. The second stage facilitated payments two to four, which totalled \$22.6 million and were provided in the 2022–23 financial year. The key focus areas of that investment have included building capacity across the family and domestic violence service system, improving outcomes for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, protecting and supporting children, service delivery in regional and remote areas, perpetrator interventions and working with men, community outreach to increase the capacity to work with women and children in the community impacted by FDV and enhancing the capacity of services to support victim–survivors with complex needs. Finally, another focus area of the program is brokerage funding, which is referred to as flexible support packages, to support services to meet the material impact needs of victim–survivors. The commonwealth committed more than \$1.7 billion for women’s safety initiatives to support the *National plan to end violence against women and children 2022–32*. It was great to be in Canberra a few months ago to talk about this important area with my state and federal counterparts. Finally, I can confirm that the state government is currently negotiating with the commonwealth government about the proposed extension of the agreement from 2023 to 2026.

Ms L. METTAM: Just for clarification, the government is currently in negotiations to extend the agreement to 2025 or 2026; is that what the minister said?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Is any funding likely to be withdrawn?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for Dr Leggett to elaborate.

Dr N. Leggett: The national partnership agreement funding of \$22 million that we received in 2022–23 is short-term funding. We understood from the start that it was short-term commonwealth funding so the way that it has been disseminated into the service sector is by building on existing services. This means that when the funding ceases, which will predominantly be in March 2024, services will not be taken away but they may have fewer FTE. The number of FTE in some services may reduce by one FTE.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, members. People in the public gallery need to be seated.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister clarify which programs could be impacted by the negotiations?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to respond.

Mr M. Rowe: I thank the member for the question. We have about 160 service agreements in place for a variety of family and domestic violence programs. A number of those consist of funding from both state and commonwealth sources so a number of programs will be impacted by the outcomes of these negotiations.

[12.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: The minister stated that she had recently met with her federal counterpart.

Ms S.E. WINTON: It was about five months ago now.

Ms L. METTAM: How does the minister feel about the success of those negotiations and whether any of the funding might be withdrawn?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for the question. I commend the federal government for its priority on family and domestic violence, which fits well with this state’s long-held commitment to and investment in family and domestic violence. I am sure the relationship will continue.

Ms L. METTAM: Will any contracts with the not-for-profit sector be impacted by those negotiations or be at risk of not continuing if funding is not forthcoming?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think Dr Leggett already answered that.

Ms L. METTAM: Dr Leggett did not refer to the not-for-profit sector. I am seeking clarification: will the not-for-profit sector be impacted?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think Dr Leggett may have referred to the community services sector, which takes in the not-for-profit sector. I think we are playing semantics here.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 504 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Paragraph 18.3 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” refers to the establishment of the new Broome one-stop hub. Is the minister able to advise where that is going to be located and who will be delivering the service?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for the question. I was recently in Broome to announce that. We are going ahead with the Broome one-stop hub, which will be the fourth hub of this model that is being introduced by the McGowan government. It is a model that we know works because it provides one safe and culturally appropriate place for victims of family and domestic violence to come to get the supports they need. I have previously spoken

about it in the Parliament. In terms of this year's budget, a couple of announcements related to the one-stop-hub model. We announced \$13.4 million to ensure that the hubs in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie will be funded until June 2027. That is really important to provide certainty. We are now moving ahead with \$16.3 million for the Broome one-stop hub, which will be slightly different because it will provide not only that bespoke model, but also services for Derby and Bidyadanga. The funding will pay for 20.5 FTE to deliver culturally appropriate specialist FDV supports to the local community, including two staff located in Derby.

In terms of where it is up to, the design has been completed following quite extensive community consultation. That was really important to make this place part of the community and welcomed by the community. The two-stage procurement process has commenced. When I was in the Kimberley with the member for Kimberley to announce the hub, we announced the registration of interest process. That will be followed by an open tender, planned to be released in July or August this year. Also, a request for information for property in Broome to identify a suitable property for this important hub was released via Tenders WA in April and has now closed, so we can move ahead with site selection.

Ms M. BEARD: Will the one-stop hubs extend to crisis care at any point, such as overnight accommodation, or will they only facilitate the services?

Ms S.E. WINTON: One-stop hubs are a place for victim-survivors to be connected with various services that they might need. Victim-survivors need to be connected with a range of services, whether it is crisis accommodation, legal advice or mental health support, and the hubs are the conduit to connect them with those services. Having said that, some of those services are actually in the hubs. Obviously, crisis care accommodation is not one, but where professionals provide things such as counselling, we want them located in the hub. That is the whole point of the exercise—so that victim-survivors can go to one place, feel safe, tell their story once and be connected with all those service providers.

Ms M. BEARD: I have a new question that flows from that one. I refer to paragraph 18.4, which states —

extended Coordinated Response Services to work with the Western Australia Police Force in the Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams ...

Can the minister explain how that will work and what the response team might look like?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think I answered this question previously.

Ms M. BEARD: Are those services part of the hub?

The CHAIR: Minister, could you explain what you have answered?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member asked a question about the family and domestic violence teams and their role and how they work. I thought I had already answered a question on that. However, the member's question is slightly different.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry, I probably confused you. Is the coordinated response services group the same as the group that will reside in the hubs? Is that how it will work? Will the coordinated response services group that will work with the police on family and domestic violence be the same team?

Ms S.E. WINTON: My understanding is that the response teams are a separate program, but we would expect them to refer to the one-stop hub. Does that answer the member's question?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, that is fine; thank you.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 503 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the heading "Fitzroy Floods Management".

The CHAIR: What number is the member looking at?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is just under that heading.

The CHAIR: Are you referring to paragraphs 7 to 14?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will go with paragraph 10. Can the minister provide an update on how many houses have been delivered to replace those that were damaged? What impact is still being felt by those who were displaced by the impact of the Fitzroy floods?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Just for clarification, I am able to answer questions around the temporary accommodation as part of the flood recovery. The refurbishment or replacement of homes that were damaged by the floods comes under the remit of the Minister for Housing, if that helps.

The CHAIR: Does the member want information on the dwellings?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. Perhaps the minister can just clarify her responsibilities so that when we get to Housing, we know what we can ask that minister. Could the minister tell us what her responsibilities are in terms of temporary accommodation? In other words, how many people are currently in temporary accommodation and need to be shifted back into their own homes?

[12.30 pm]

Ms S.E. WINTON: I have to say that I was quite surprised, when I was first made minister, that the Department of Communities is actually involved in emergency response. The distinction, broadly speaking, is that the Minister for Community Services is responsible for short-term support for people who have been displaced and the provision of temporary accommodation until such time as reconstruction occurs. The significance of the flood is really quite extraordinary because of the area and the number of shires that it has impacted. Four local governments have been impacted. They are the Shires of Broome, Derby–West Kimberley, Halls Creek and Wyndham–East Kimberley. Combined, over 35 000 residents were affected, but we think that some 170 residents were evacuated in the initial stages from at least seven different communities. The Department of Communities is providing emergency welfare services to residents. It is important to note the strong partnership between the state and commonwealth governments, which have provided \$34.3 million to communities to support the recovery efforts in the Kimberley, particularly around the provision of temporary accommodation.

The Department of Communities is also responsible for welfare, communication and support. We have set up the disaster response hotline, which has received over 1 800 calls. Communities has allocated \$33 million to provide medium-term temporary accommodation while damaged homes are being repaired. In that regard, Communities is adopting a two-phased approach. I have been to the Kimberley I think five times now and I visited Fitzroy four times. I can say with confidence that the amount of consultation that has occurred with local people about the support that they want and need, particularly around temporary accommodation, has been significant. Right from the beginning, the message loud and clear was that people wanted to stay on country and be back as soon as possible. In that regard, the temporary accommodation has been done in what I would describe as two phases. In a sense, the first phase is around the Humanihuts model, which was chosen because it gave us those outcomes for the people in the Fitzroy Valley who said that they wanted to be connected and placed close to country. The Humanihuts model allows us to do that because we do not need sewerage or other things to be turned back on; it is all self-contained. That was the fastest model available to us. Now we are doing what is considered the phase 2 temporary accommodation. We are now embarking on more, not permanent, but more family-appropriate and suitable accommodation. That is the critical driver of phase 2 to complement the Humanihuts or, in some instances, replace the Humanihuts on country in those various community locations. The consultation has been quite significant. We have heard from families, specifically about their particular requirements for their family units and where they need to be placed in relation to everyone else.

Another key aspect of the temporary phase to note is that Derby Hostel is now fully functioning, which I think allows up to 40 people to be located in temporary accommodation at the hostel. Again, that was in response to feedback from the communities who said that they wanted to be on country but that there are some people who have complex needs or medical needs that require them to travel to Derby at any point in time. Therefore, we also needed a temporary facility that was appropriate for those people to move in and out of, depending on how long they needed to stay in Derby to access the other services they might require.

The member would be aware that in the initial stages we had a number of commercial accommodation requirements. I am informed that no more Fitzroy Valley people are accommodated in commercial arrangements. They are now either in the Derby Hostel or in Humanihuts back in Bungardi in Fitzroy. A number of Humanihuts are set up in Tarunda Caravan Park in central Fitzroy. We are still taking guidance from communities about placing more of that temporary accommodation on their country.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How many Humanihuts are there on country and where are they located?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am trying to visualise it because I was in Bungardi with them. The first lot in Bungardi is for 16 Humanihuts. As well as that, two pods are set up in Tarunda, which accommodates 32—another lot of 16. We are waiting on some guidance from Burawa to understand what it needs in regard to another pod of 16 Humanihuts.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: So 16 plus 32 are already on country and another 16 will be deployed. Is that funded from the amount that the minister mentioned at the beginning? I am sorry; I missed the amount. The minister mentioned a number at the very top of her address. It was X million that was provided. Will that go to whoever owns Humanihut or have we paid Humanihut in addition to that?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes, as I said, \$33 million has been allocated through a joint federal–state disaster recovery funding arrangement.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that department of agriculture and food Western Australia funding?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that funding being paid to Humanihut, whoever that is?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Not all of it, but part of it is. As I said, we also have the Derby Hostel accommodation. That funding is not just for Humanihut.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I take the minister back to phase 2. How many of these Humanihuts are being built? Are they being delivered? When will they arrive? What is the time line for the government to get these more permanent solutions on country?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to comment, but they are not the permanent final solution. They are a temporary solution, but they are more family friendly, given that we know that the rebuild is going to take a considerable time and that some families are looking at spending extended time in the temporary accommodation. Obviously, the Humanihuts are limited in their suitability.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you for the question. We are very conscious that the next wet season will be upon us in the not-too-distant future. We are keen, as the minister said, to make sure that we have some more family-friendly options available to people before then. We are working very hard with our colleagues in the Department of Finance and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to procure the next lot of more substantial family-friendly accommodation that will likely complement the Humanihuts in some locations. We have done extensive consultation with each of the affected communities to understand what the family make-up is and the nature of the accommodation they require, and we will be procuring those sorts of facilities. We imagine that will involve substantial dongas, effectively, from various locations to provide the next phase of temporary accommodation within the time frame, which is by October.

[12.40 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that next phase being funded by the \$33 million?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will defer to the director general.

Mr M. Rowe: The funding for that phase will not be coming out of the first tranche of funding that has already been approved. It requires additional funding over and above the \$33 million, but we are still in negotiations with the commonwealth government as part of the disaster recovery funding arrangements process.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that still DRFAWA funding?

Ms S.E. WINTON: It is joint funding.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am very interested to know where those more substantial dongas will come from. I do not know where they exist currently in Western Australia or Australia. That is one question. My second is: when are they likely to be put in place?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to respond.

Mr M. Rowe: We are looking at a range of possible suppliers. The member might imagine that there would be a combination of commercial suppliers that build these sorts of facilities and other companies that use these sorts of facilities that might be in a position to provide some support. Conversations are afoot more broadly. We are also looking interstate and at what we might need to do to bring them across. At this stage, given the number that we think we need to acquire, based on the family groups across different locations, we are reasonably confident that as challenging as that time frame is, we will be able to achieve it by October.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Do you have an estimate on how much that next phase will cost in terms of securing those houses and how many will be needed?

Ms S.E. WINTON: We do, but it is subject to a negotiation process with the federal government, so I do not think it is appropriate to provide that information.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I understand that from the financial side of it, but does the minister have an idea of how many dwellings will be required?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The Department of Communities is in negotiations with each family group about their particular needs and the accommodation's specifications and location. I am advised that about 30 in total are required. We are doing everything we can to try to get those in place by October.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I want to turn to page 522 of budget paper No 2 and the details of controlled grants and subsidies table that continues from the previous page. The topic of the prevention of family and domestic violence has been referred to, but the specifics of my inquiry are around counselling. Midway down the table is the line item for FDV counselling, with an allocation for \$273 000 rising to \$288 000 in the out years. That seems like a very small amount for counselling. Can the minister please reassure us that the government is in fact doing far more when it comes to family and domestic violence counselling?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Thornlie for the question and he is right; there is an amount on page 522 of \$273 000 for family and domestic violence counselling services that is provided by Allambee Counselling in Peel. As I mentioned before, counselling is critical for recovery, and it is also important for prevention at not only the crisis stage, but also the early stages of family and domestic violence. In fact, the government, as part of its commitment to the prevention of family and domestic violence, sees counselling as being critical to that overall story. We have invested in this area to the tune of \$7.5 million, which provides advocacy support through a mixture

of phone-based and face-to-face counselling. For example, we are investing in one of two specialist youth family and domestic violence counselling services. I was recently in Rockingham to announce that Communicare will be providing that service. It is really important that we acknowledge and provide support for young people experiencing or witnessing family and domestic violence because the impact on them is just as significant. It is important that they get that support to not only deal with what they are experiencing within their families, but also help them to break the cycle, because we know from evidence that when children and young people experience family and domestic violence, it can tragically play out when they become adults. We need to break that cycle and one way to do that is by supporting young people through a counselling service. It was great to talk to Communicare in Rockingham, which is well placed to take on this project because it delivers a number of critical services in this space. Its staff advised me they have the aspiration that this funding will allow them to support up to 270 young people per year, which is quite fantastic.

Ms L. METTAM: Is anyone turned away or redirected from this service? Is the service at capacity?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that the Rockingham service started in March and it is still taking on new clients.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 522—the same page—and the line item “Marnin Bowa Dumbara Aboriginal FDV Services”. Can the minister explain why the funding for this service expires in 2023–24?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think that the response to this question will be similar to that of a previous question in terms of where it appears in the budget. The Marnin Bowa Dumbara Aboriginal Corporation provides safe and supported accommodation to women with or without children escaping family and domestic violence. A current agreement is in place for continued service provision for the period to 30 June 2023. From 2023–24 onwards, the service will be contracted via a service agreement and paid from funding for a services expense category, thus the out years budgets do not appear in the grants and subsidies table. Does that make sense?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Will this service be impacted by the national partnership agreement?

[12.50 pm]

Ms S.E. WINTON: My understanding is that the baseline service will stay the same.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 519 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Under “Statement of Cashflows”, paragraph 3 states —

The Department’s end-of-year cash position for the 2022–23 Estimated Actual is expected to decrease by 9.1% compared to the 2021–22 Actual. This is primarily due to increased payments associated with emergency placement for children in statutory Out of Home Care.

I am wondering whether the minister can elaborate on this.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to comment.

Mr M. Rowe: Out-of-home care is a fundamental part of how we care for the 5 122 children in our care. About 20 per cent of the children in our care are looked after through third-party providers that we commission and contract, and this arrangement has been in place now for many years. The department is currently undertaking a commissioning process for out-of-home care, and that will result in some new types of temporary care, which I mentioned previously—new temporary emergency care and some other care arrangements. Right now, we are in the middle of that procurement process, so it is not possible to disclose a lot. We can say that part of the challenge we face in the out-of-home care setting is that the current design of the out-of-home care system is not fit for purpose. Also, we need to change the underpinning funding arrangements for those services because at the moment we are having to use unpanelled providers to provide short-term emergency care for children, and that is pretty expensive. Part of the challenge that statement of cash flow refers to is the additional cost associated with very expensive placements for children. With the out-of-home care reforms that we will put into place, we are confident that will not be the way in the future because we will be procuring service providers using a different model. That will ensure that we get good-quality care for the 20 per cent of children who operate in the out-of-home care space, and it will be cost effective.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 508 and “Outcome: Families and individuals experiencing FDV, homelessness or other crises are assisted to build their capabilities and be safe” in the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators. I refer to the “Percentage of homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion of a homelessness service support period”, specifically to the actual and budgeted amounts of the 80 per cent budgeted—sorry; that is the wrong line. I meant to ask about the “Percentage of departmental clients who were assessed and received a response as a result of a FDV incident and did not require another FDV-related response within 12 months”, which has 80 per cent budgeted and 74 per cent actual. I am wondering whether —

Ms S.E. WINTON: Is the member talking about (g)? Sorry; that is my language. Does the member mean the last one before the outcome of children and young people needing protection?

Ms L. METTAM: The last one before that; yes. I wonder whether I am able to obtain the global numbers and what those percentages relate to in relation to the number of departmental clients who were assessed and received a response.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for the member to put that question on notice, and we will try to get that information to her.

Ms L. METTAM: Can it be provided by supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a new question. I would like to ask about the global figures for the “Percentage of homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion of a homelessness service support period”.

The CHAIR: That is a line down from that. Is that right?

Ms L. METTAM: It is two lines up. Can that be provided?

Ms S.E. WINTON: That is for the Minister for Homelessness.

The CHAIR: The member for Bateman is ready to ask a question.

Ms L. METTAM: I have another question.

The CHAIR: Go ahead. At estimates, you have priority so that is fine.

Ms L. METTAM: I have another question about this table and the outcome that starts with “Children and young people in the CEO’s care receive a high quality of care”. I asked the question previously about Aboriginal children in the CEO’s care and the significant gap between the actual and budgeted figures. I again ask whether that information could be provided now, ideally, or by supplementary information.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for that question to be put on notice if the member would like that information.

The CHAIR: The question will be on notice, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: This is a brief question, so I will take the opportunity to ask it. My question relates to page 521. About halfway down the page is the line item “Hardship Utility Grant Scheme”, otherwise known as HUGS. Given the cost-of-living pressures that many Western Australians are experiencing at the moment, what has the government done to improve HUGS and provide support to the most vulnerable members of our community?

The CHAIR: Do you need a line item?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think she has —

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: It is halfway down the page, and it is its own line item.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I have it. I thank the member for Bateman for her question. It is good to have the opportunity to briefly talk about the McGowan government’s considerable investment to support cost-of-living relief for everyone in the community. It is a difficult time for many people around the state and Australia; things like interest rates and inflation are having an impact on more people than ever before. As a government, we are doing everything we can to make it easier for people who face those cost-of-living pressures, and we are doing everything to provide relief. That happens because of our strong financial management during the six years of this government, which sees us able to react to circumstances and provide relief when it is needed.

The member for Bateman specifically asked about the hardship utility grant scheme. We are absolutely committed to assisting individuals and families who are experiencing financial hardship.

The CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt, minister. We are dealing with division 35, and this is the end at one o’clock.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Division 6: Western Australian Electoral Commission, \$13 542 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Minister for Electoral Affairs.

Mr R. Kennedy, Electoral Commissioner.

Mr G. Meyers, Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner.

Ms M. Buchanan, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I am afraid that members on this side already know my form. I am more than happy to give you further questions, but keep your initial questions short and to the point, with no hyperbole, rhetoric or preamble—just short sharp questions. The Minister for Electoral Affairs will no doubt do likewise. The first question goes to the member for Central Wheatbelt.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 94 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2 and the FTE staffing, which is a consistent 45 across that line item. I think we talked about this last year as well, but I thought I would have another go. Is the staffing sufficient for what the Western Australian Electoral Commission is likely to be undertaking at the next election with the redistribution and the significant changes that are happening in the Legislative Council?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes, the staffing levels are sufficient. The member mentioned the electoral redistribution. Electoral redistributions are undertaken by the Office of the Electoral Redistribution Commissioners, chaired by Hon Eric Heenan, KC. The amendments to the electoral system in the Legislative Council, apart from a little more complicated count, will not throw any more work onto the commission. In relation to the count, because this will be the first year that local government will have preferential voting, a program will be made available to local government that distributes the preferences. We are fully confident that we have the commission staff at an adequate level.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Because the minister raised it, local governments will be able to access that function. How many does he anticipate will use it?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I think there are 139 local government municipalities in Western Australia. It is done on a cost-recovery basis. So far, 121 have signed up with the commission to do the count on a cost-recovery basis. Many of the other 18, as the member will appreciate, are from the wheatbelt and places like that, so there are some small local government areas. I think there is one up north with about 100 electors, so the smaller ones will predominantly do their own count.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Following on from the minister's comments about cost recovery, what is the cost to those local governments for engaging the Electoral Commission?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is not broken down per vote, because, as the member knows, it is not mandatory to vote in local government elections. Of course, how much each local government is charged will vary across local governments, but overall, as a global figure, it is a sum of \$9 million.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that \$9 million what will be recovered or what the local government sector will be charged for the commission to carry out the elections?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is what is anticipated, yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How are those charges being determined?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: On a cost-recovery basis.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is it based on time taken or per vote? What is the model?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the commissioner on that technical point.

Mr R. Kennedy: Essentially, the costs are what it costs us to operate those elections. It is everything from compiling, printing and posting voting packages to costs for the time of the commission's staff, the costs for what we call temporary election staff whom we bring in to assist mostly with the counts on the night and any other costs that arise in the course of delivering those elections, with the exception of advertising. We do not do the advertising; that is handled by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. That is simply because if we did it, we would have to pass the cost on to the local governments.

The CHAIR: Member for Thornlie, did you have a further question on this or is it a new topic?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is a new topic. I refer to page 93 of budget paper No 2 and the third paragraph under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency". I am very interested to know what the commission's efforts are towards ensuring that at state elections there are facilities for booth workers especially and for party volunteers? I have raised this over a number of years and been sorely disappointed. It is a problem that I do not think has been addressed at all in the past. Indeed, it is my observation over a number of elections that the commission has had no regard for

the comfort and wellbeing of party and booth workers. I am not just referring to those very good people who are paid by the WA Electoral Commission; I am referring to those wonderful people who work for all parties—the Nationals, the Liberals and Labor. They are committed people who are involved in the democratic process. I want to know what basic facilities, such as toilets, might be provided for them. How can we ensure that those facilities will be available to them and what consideration is being given to shady spots and spots that are not dangerous in terms of traffic flow and busy car parks? I am really keen to hear what we are doing to ensure that future elections are conducted in a manner in which our volunteers are respected for the fine contributors they are.

[2.10 pm]

The CHAIR: Minister, we are all in fierce agreement about that. I was once told to go to the toilet behind a bush at a polling booth.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I do not want to in anyway be demeaning, but come election time, I might have to become Kenny the plumber! We are going to ensure we are putting forward a budget for the midyear review for enough funds to locate porta-potties—that is, portable toilets. It is very important. It is laughable here, but —

The CHAIR: No, it is not.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is not laughable, minister; it is deadly serious. As someone who has been to many polling booths, I am in full agreement with the member. More needs to be done.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am just saying that like Kenny the plumber, we are going to deliver porta-potties to the polling stations, because to have convenience at polling stations is critical. That is in a budget bid for midyear. We want to wait until the redistribution is known and we find out where these booths will be and how many we will need and then we will put in our budget bid. We take it most seriously, member.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is a very good question. To follow on from that, the pre-poll station for the North West Central by-election was incredibly busy and incredibly dangerous, for not just the booth workers, but also people who were trying to cast their vote. It was on a very busy section of road. In the car park, honestly, we saw that many near misses of people nearly being cleaned up by cars. Can we please have some consideration given to making sure that we do not select locations like that, particularly when we know there is a tendency for the Electoral Commission to go toward pre-poll for extended periods? It was chaotic in Geraldton—no, perhaps it was in Carnarvon; it might have been the one before, in 2021. Regardless of the year, which I will check, the location of some of these centres are inappropriate, particularly in regional communities.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is a comment and not a question.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: My question is: can the minister exert some influence over the Electoral Commission to make sure that we do not end up with similar situations?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am sure there is, and I am sure that I will bring to bear what little influence I have. Following the redistribution, which we know will be sometime in October or November, we will know where the polling places will be located. Once we know where the polling places are located, it might be incumbent upon some members with local knowledge about what is happening, if they are concerned about the situation of a polling place—well, the member has indicated she will not be standing.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will still be standing at a polling booth.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: If there is a concern about a situation, I invite the member to write to me and I will be straight on to the commission.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I am greatly heartened by what has been said. I have one final question on this. On election day the majority of polling booths are at government-owned primary schools. I would like some reassurance that perhaps in the contractual arrangement between the Electoral Commission and the Department of Education, access could be given by schools to facilities on the school grounds rather than having the expense of paying for portaloos.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The facilities on the school grounds?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Schools have a lot of toilets, but in the past they have been locked off to booth workers. It is simply an oversight in the contract arrangement between the Electoral Commission and the Department of Education that means people cannot access those facilities. I would like to be reassured that in the next round of agreements between the commission and the Department of Education, there will be a line that says toilets will be opened up for booth workers.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That will have to be directed to the Department of Education. We will speak to the Department of Education, but we cannot compel the department to open any toilet block.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: We sign the contract with the Department of Education.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We cannot force it to open any toilet block. I notice that at the schools in Butler that are polling places, the toilet blocks are open, but the object of my endeavour is to ensure that conveniences are available

at every polling station. I cannot give members any detail of contract details yet, but it is my remit to make sure that people can visit a convenience when they go to vote.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 93 in budget paper No 2, volume 1, and paragraph 4, which is below the paragraph we were just talking about. It states that there will be continued efforts to increase engagement with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse electors as a priority. It notes the upcoming referendum on the Voice and the opportunity for the commission to harness this energy to, in particular, engage with the Aboriginal community in advance of the next election.

Specifically going back to the North West Central by-election and looking forward, what efforts are being made to try to increase the number of Aboriginal people on the electoral roll and how are they then encouraged and enabled to actually vote? I am talking about remote communities.

[2.20 pm]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: This has been a particular concern of mine since taking office as Minister for Electoral Affairs. I thank the member for the question. There are two parts to her question, firstly, how to get them on the roll to ensure that as many as possible are on the roll, and, secondly, once on the roll, how we can encourage them to participate. The WA Electoral Commission is working with the Australian Electoral Commission to increase Indigenous enrolment and turnout. The Western Australian Electoral Commission and the Australian Electoral Commission have a joint role agreement. Under this arrangement, much of the enrolment of Western Australian electors is picked up by the commonwealth processes, which flow through to the state role. The state makes an annual financial contribution to the commonwealth as part of the joint role agreement in return for those services. In 2022–23, our contribution was \$1.77 million per annum.

Indigenous enrolment on the AEC's direct enrolment program is being expanded into remote areas. That is important. In the recent past, efforts have targeted electors in the Broome and Derby communities resulting in an increase in enrolment numbers. Electors in more remote areas were not covered originally due to concern about the reliability of mail deliveries, but those issues have now been resolved. Electors will be contacted via this program as the AEC is made aware of the apparent changes or gaps in information that they hold from commonwealth agencies such as Centrelink and the taxation office, because they swap datasets.

The Australian Electoral Commission has been granted additional funds for 2023 to try to get the enrolments up prior to the Voice referendum. These benefits will flow through to the state for the 2025 state general election. Recognising this effort, and not wishing to confuse the electors, the Western Australian Electoral Commission will engage in efforts in the lead-up to the 2025 election to identify new and disaffected or disengaged Indigenous electors. The challenge is to prepare people, engage with people, hold their interest and ensure that they participate in elections. The WAEC's focus is on improving the accessibility of electoral services to Aboriginal people and tailoring our education and guidance material so that it specifically engages these voters.

Two existing positions in the commonwealth have been repurposed to focus on engagement and communication. This team will be responsible for developing the first reconciliation action plan for the Western Australian Electoral Commission. The key focus of this plan will be greater engagement with Indigenous electors. A further task for the coming year will be to reach out to community development advisers in remote communities to gain a better understanding of the election services needs of each community. Normally, this is done only in the lead-up to an election event to determine remote polling requirements, but the commission is now looking forward to building sustained relationships with these communities to generate improvements in electoral participation at election time. Ideally, the commission would like to have a longer term partnership with these communities, whereby the Western Australian Electoral Commission staff visit for joint educational and engagement activities—the answer is nearly finished—which is important for the Indigenous communities, and to support the locals operating the polling facilities at election times. This will be a significant change from what had happened before with the fly-in fly-out arrangement. We hope that this approach will generate a sense of ownership of and engagement in the election process and democratic system for Indigenous voters.

I am sorry that the answer was a little bit wordy, but I had to detail all the genuine efforts that the Electoral Commission is making to engage with this cohort of voters.

The CHAIR: Minister, before I give the member for Central Wheatbelt another question, her question related to not only Aboriginal communities, but also the culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I do not know whether the minister answered that aspect of the question.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I specifically narrowed it to the Aboriginal communities.

The CHAIR: Did you? Okay.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is the line item.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: My answer was directed to the Indigenous communities.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is all right. Thank you, minister.

The minister can correct me if I am wrong, but the Electoral Commissioner said that the commission would manage all this work with the same number of staff. Therefore, will the government significantly increase the effort in dealing with the people of Broome and Derby—I find it remarkable that that was the effort last time because I think about the size of Western Australia and wonder about the remaining Aboriginal population in our state—but not change the budget or the number of employees in the Electoral Commission? But there will be two people from the commonwealth.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: This has been done before, intensively, and approximate to an election. The staff will now be utilised over a longer period and we have the staffing resources to do that. We will also reach out to community development advisers. This cannot be just a single effort. We have the Australian Electoral Commission, the Western Australian Electoral Commission and those advisers who are in touch with the communities. We are confident that we will be able to engage with them.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister knows as well as I do that it is a very expensive business, particularly in some of those regional and remote communities. Is the minister appropriately funded? What funding is being attached to this program? Is it reliant on only those two federal FTEs?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am sorry. I have had a cold and my ear is a bit blocked.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: What funding is attached to this effort to increase engagement with Aboriginal people across Western Australia?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The two officers that the member referred to are not AEC officers; they are WAEC officers who have been repurposed. As I have said before, I will introduce a bill to the Parliament to do with disclosures. We first have to let the Voice vote go through before we go and engage with people in these communities or we might confuse them. We will review the requirements in the midyear budget review to see whether any further funding for engagement with these communities is needed.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 93, budget paper No 2, volume 1, significant issues impacting the agency, paragraph 3 and project planning for the 2025 state election. The member for Central Wheatbelt and I brought this up in the last estimates. Has the commissioner reflected on the pre-polling policies from the last two state elections? Will there be any changes to the 2025 state election?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: In terms of the length of pre-polling?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Last time there was a two-prong scenario, which was shortening the length of pre-polling and improving the advertising. That was the emphasis that we discussed in the last estimates.

The CHAIR: Okay. I think the minister gets the question.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: What I can say about the length of pre-polling is the cabinet's decision will be announced in the not-too-distant future. As I said, we will bring in a bill to confirm some better disclosure rules, and I intend to put before the cabinet the parameters of pre-polling. I note that at least in Butler—it might have been different elsewhere; I do not know—it is reasonably quiet at the start. I think it was nearly 21 days. It was very quiet out in Butler for a while.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is exactly my sentiment, minister. I would suggest that rather than paying people to sit there for the first week and do nothing, the government uses that money to improve the advertising and shorten the length of pre-polling so that people are aware that it is happening. Seriously, as the minister says about Butler, it was the same thing in Roe and no doubt in the Central Wheatbelt electorate. People were not aware that pre-polling was open and that was a challenge. To my mind, it is a week wasted for which the money could have been used on advertising.

[2.30 pm]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is a comment, but I will take it as the question: will the government consider the length of pre-polling? If I can infer that is the question, the answer is yes. I cannot say what the decision is before the cabinet makes a decision, but that matter will be on my agenda to look at.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I appreciate that. When there are, say, three pre-polling booths in an electorate, on election night those votes are all blended, so it cannot be pinpointed who voted for who from any of those pre-polling booths. Will that pre-polling information be broken down into the different polling booths?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Could I defer to the commissioner on that, please.

Mr R. Kennedy: Yes, that issue has been raised with us in the past, particularly by the psephologists and the TV commentators who like that sort of data. We are looking at that issue to see whether we can do it. It does create complications for us during the count in that we have to keep all those votes together so that we know where they came from, but I am keen to try to resolve that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That would be appreciated.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I clarify whether the pre-poll decision is a cabinet decision, not an Electoral Commission decision?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It will be in the legislation.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Okay. Well, there you go.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Sorry. I will ask the commissioner to comment.

Mr R. Kennedy: I think the member will recall from the last time this issue was raised, I was the only one in the chamber who supported a longer period, and my position remains unchanged.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Will the minister introduce legislation so that it will be the government's decision about how long the pre-poll will be for?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 92 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, "Spending Changes". I see that the estimated actual to run the North West Central by-election was \$737 000. Does the Electoral Commission conduct a review after the by-election; and, if so, is that review published? Obviously, the numbers and the information are publicly known on the website, but is there a review of the conduct of the election, any challenges that were experienced and those sorts of things?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that made public?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there a reason why it is not public?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is not made public because it is part of a general review. The commission reviews it and notes it, but it is not in a format that could be made public at the moment.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could it be put into a format that could be published? Would the minister be prepared to publish it?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It will be a bit of extra work and then the member will ask, "Where's the money?", but she asked for it. It is possible. We will look at that, but the opposition should not thrash us by saying, "Where's the money to do this?" We are trying to respond to the member in a positive way and be of assistance.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Noting the expenditure, is it comparable with other by-election spends? Do by-elections cost a similar amount? Is there a loading when looking at a regional area? I think the last one was in Darling Range.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The North West Central by-election would be one of the more expensive, simply because there is a relatively small number of voters spread over quite a vast area, as the member would appreciate. Yes, it is a bit high.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 93 in budget paper No 2, volume 1. Under the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators is the line item "Percentage of enrolled electors voting in State general elections (or by-elections) or referenda".

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am sorry; I was not concentrating.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is on page 93.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Page 93, sorry.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No. I must have it on the wrong page. I am on page 94. Sorry, I gave the minister a bum steer. On page 94, in that table at the top, it talks about percentage of enrolled electors voting in state general elections or by-elections. I am presuming that that 47 per cent relates to North West Central.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Correct, member.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That goes to my last set of questions about the review. Was that addressed in the review that was done internally by the Electoral Commission around low voter turnout?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would the minister like to elaborate on what the findings were? It might be one fewer page in the report that he does not want to provide!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am happy to provide it. I have not seen the report. Of course, a turnout like that—there are often low turnouts at a by-election—is a concern. The report looked at possible ways that the commission can reach and encourage more electors. The commissioner is happy to expand upon my answer.

Mr R. Kennedy: It was a disappointing outcome as far as participation goes. As the minister mentioned, by-elections traditionally suffer from low participation rates. North West Central was behind the eight-ball from the beginning, because it has a low participation rate, even at state general elections. It was 60-odd per cent in 2021. Looking at 2017 and before, because there have not been a lot of by-elections for a while, when we compared the drop-off from the most recent previous state election participation rate with the next by-election rate, the drop-off was about the same for North West Central. In other words, there was about a 20 per cent drop in what its state election participation rate was. From that point of view, it is not surprising, but it is disappointing.

What we identified in the review is that—we were quite frustrated with our efforts to promote the by-election—it was not a by-election that was active in the media. We tried relentlessly without success to generate some interest in the by-election with the media. As we did with the state election, we made direct contact through email and SMS with electors in North West Central on three occasions, reminding them about updating their enrolment, early voting opening and polling day. One of the interesting observations that the review identified was that a large percentage of those people who were contacted directly still did not vote. I cannot read the minds of electors; I am not sure why they did not vote. Reasons were given to us through the non-voter process that allows people to provide valid excuses to me as to why they did not turn up. From memory, a quick perusal of the reasons that were given to us included, “I wasn’t in the district on polling day”, “I was out of the district and down in Perth” and “I was out of the district and in the south west of the state.” There were those sorts of things. A few people had moved interstate; it seems like there is a fairly mobile population in some of these areas judging by the some of the responses we got. Illness was another common excuse given, and it is one that we will accept as a valid excuse. We have certainly looked at it and, in terms of by-elections, it has given us a lot of learnings that we hope we can deal with when we next face a by-election.

[2.40 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How much of the \$737 000 was spent on advertising?

Mr R. Kennedy: I did try to break this down the other day; we have it by project code. I have a feeling it was between \$200 000 and \$250 000. I cannot put my finger on it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: While the Electoral Commissioner is finding that information, did that include an advertisement in *The West Australian*?

Mr R. Kennedy: Yes.

Sorry; approximately \$100 000 was spent on advertising. Just to answer the member’s other question, there were advertisements in *The West* on 13 August, *The Geraldton Guardian* on 16 August, and the *Pilbara News*, *Midwest Times* and *North West Telegraph* on 17 August. We then did regional radio and digital between 22 August and 17 September, which was polling day. We did further advertisements in *The West* and the regional newspapers that I mentioned before on 31 August; in the regional newspapers on 7 September; and in *The West* on 16 September and 17 September, which was polling day.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I recall that one of the advertisements in *The West Australian* about people needing to vote in the upcoming by-election did not detail that the by-election was for the electorate of North West Central.

The CHAIR: Was that a question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That was a mistake in the first advertisement. It was quickly corrected in all subsequent advertisements. It was embarrassing, but slips happen. It was corrected and readvertised.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On the same theme of voter turnout —

The CHAIR: You guys won and you are still grilling him!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: — is the minister aware that there was an early voting centre at Gascoyne Junction for only one day, the Thursday before the election? Gascoyne Junction is the centre for those people who are inland of that community, but on election day there was no polling booth there for the people who turned up to vote, as instructed by the phantom *The West*. For those people who have not done a pre-poll, it is quite a distance to do a round trip from Gascoyne Junction to Carnarvon. That is not acceptable, is it, minister?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have had no previous notice of this, but I am happy to take the question on notice. This happened locally.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I feel that not as much attention was paid to this election because the Labor Party did not have a horse in the race.

The CHAIR: Member, that is not a question. I have warned the member about editorialising. Is there a further question as opposed to a statement?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will ask for that to be struck out; it is a free kick.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The Electoral Commissioner mentioned that a large percentage of people did not turn up to vote. What percentage of the near 50 per cent of people who did not turn up to vote have to pay a fine? How much revenue has the Electoral Commission received?

The CHAIR: Is the member restricting his questions to the North West Central by-election?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

The CHAIR: All right. The member might need to repeat the questions for the minister.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: As I understand it, the first question is: of the 52.5 per cent of people who did not vote, how many were prosecuted?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the commissioner for those numbers.

Mr R. Kennedy: I cannot say how many will be prosecuted because that is ongoing, but 5 736 infringements were created for non-voting. Of those, 2 649 were excused or closed and 1 622 were paid by the person who incurred the infringement, which leaves 1 463. We have now handed them over to the Fines Enforcement Registry, which is the process that we follow, and it will follow them through.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What is the total revenue up to this point?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will take that question on notice.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 99, net appropriation determination and sales of goods and services. I want to go back to the costs to local government for running their elections. Will the minister confirm that the global figure of \$9 million is the cost recovery that will be garnered from the local government sector for running its elections?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have been advised that in some cases, the increase per local government is almost 40 per cent on what has previously been charged. Can the minister provide feedback on that?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: In some cases—it is not across the board; it depends—there have been significant increases because of the preferential voting system and the need for a count on the preferences. For those municipalities that do not want the commission to undertake the count, the commission has made the software program available at the very reasonable cost of \$10 000, which they then own and can use for future counts. I am told that most of the increases are not due to the changes that the Minister for Local Government made to the count—although some of it is, as I have just detailed—because there are other increases due to inflationary costs. For example, vehicles have to be hired.

[2.50 pm]

The CHAIR: Before we finish this division, I am going to —

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I can give the figure to the committee now.

The CHAIR: The member for Roe is after that and he is not in the chamber. He can look in the *Hansard*, so let us know.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have just been handed the information. At this stage, the fines for non-voters for the North West Central by-election amount to \$55 000, which goes into the consolidated account and not to the commission.

The CHAIR: I am going to seek the indulgence of the committee to ask the minister a question, as I am entitled to do. I refer to page 93 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the significant issues impacting the agency. My question relates to the conduct of the 2025 state general election to make sure that it is a smooth and successful event. Is any consideration being given to restricting the amount of electoral advertising material, particularly plastic bunting, which is the bane of everyone's life and is inconsistent with our plastic-free future?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Who still uses the plastic stuff?

The CHAIR: Well, we do.

Ms L. METTAM: So good!

The CHAIR: In other jurisdictions, there is a limit on the amount of space that can be used for electoral material.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There are two issues there, Madam Chair. The first is bunting. People wrap schools in bunting. This is not an issue for the Electoral Act; this is going to be considered by the Minister for Environment in terms of single-use plastic. As to other signage out there like corflutes, consideration was given to saying what size a sign could be, but we are not going to do that. That would have put too much burden on electoral booth workers, who would have to go out with a tape measure to measure the signs and then multiply the dimensions to see how many square inches a sign was—no.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The corflutes get used again. I give them to schools and all sorts, but I completely concur with the chair's question around plastic bunting. That is a good one.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 27: Justice — Services 1 to 8, Attorney General, \$742 916 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Attorney General.

Dr A. Tomison, Director General.

Mr T. Clark, Deputy Director General, Corporate Services.

Ms K. Maj, Deputy Director General, Strategic Reform.

Ms J. Stampalia, Deputy Director General, Court and Tribunal Services.

Ms G. Hill, Executive Director, Aboriginal Justice Transformation.

Mr M. Hainsworth, Executive Director, Advisory Services.

Ms K. Kraszlan, Commissioner for Victims of Crime.

Mr B. Roche, Public Trustee.

Ms P. Bagdonavicius, Public Advocate.

Dr J. Byrne, Commissioner for Equal Opportunity.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

Ms M. Buchanan, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

The member for Vasse with the first question.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Could I make an application, please?

The CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I wonder whether members would be kind enough to deal with the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity first so that we can release Hansard.

Ms L. METTAM: Absolutely.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Thank you very much.

Ms L. METTAM: That was going to be my comment, so there is no problem there.

I refer to division 27 in budget paper No 2, volume 2. On page 418, under the service summary, the seventh line item is "Equal Opportunity Commission Services". What is the reason for the elevated cost of services in 2022–23? Is that associated with the act review?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There is no significant variation between the 2022–23 budgeted amount and the 2022–23 estimated actual amount. We are on the Equal Opportunity Commission, are we not?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. It is not much; it is just a small elevation in the cost of services.

[3.00 pm]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There is no significant variation.

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: I refer to the fourth significant issue impacting the agency on page 416 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, which states that the Equal Opportunity Commission experienced a significant increase in

inquiries and complaints received during the COVID-19 pandemic. Can the Attorney General advise whether there are any outstanding matters and whether the EOC is still receiving COVID-19 complaints?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Thank you, member. During the pandemic, the government mandated various measures relating to vaccinations, masks and the border closure. The Equal Opportunity Commission received a substantial number of complaints and inquiries alleging discrimination relating to people's vaccination status and mask wearing, most commonly on the grounds of impairment in employment and the provision of services. All those people complained about vaccinations and masks. This resulted in a significant increase in the total number of complaints and inquiries received. The mandates overrode the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 to the extent that they were incompatible. Many of the complaints, particularly regarding vaccinations, were resolved by an explanation of the scope of the act, and, in relation to the mandates, the Equal Opportunity Act was specifically excluded. Complaints relating to masks were compatible with the mandates and were made by the people whose medical exemption from wearing a mask was not accepted by a service provider. Most of those complaints were resolved when the service provider was advised that the complaint was valid.

Complaints related to the pandemic ceased after the mandates expired. However, a significant backlog of complaints occurred due to the increased volume of complaints and the secondment of the commission's staff to contact tracing. The backlog was cleared during 2022–23. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to changes in society, including some that appear to be permanent.

One of these changes is an increase in the number of people working from home. Although not directly related to the pandemic, the commission receives inquiries and complaints from employees who were required to work from home during lockdowns but are now being required to work from the office. The complaints allege that the requirement to return to the office discriminates on the grounds of impairment or family responsibility. The volume of complaints about returning to the office is low and the complaints are considered on their merits. The commission is currently considering but one of these complaints.

The CHAIR: For members who have just come in, we are dealing with division 27, and we are dealing with the Equal Opportunity Commission first.

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: Are there any other emerging trends, besides complaints regarding COVID-19?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The pandemic contributed to advancing societal changes, including some that appear to be permanent. As I mentioned before, some people are working from home. The Equal Opportunity Commission received several complaints from people who were required to work from home during the lockdown and other measures aimed at managing COVID-19 and who have recently been instructed to return to work in the office. Many of these employees began working from home for the first time during the pandemic with no loss to productivity and, in some cases, there was an improvement. Often, working from home had valuable benefits for the wellbeing or work–life balance of the employee, most significantly those with compromised immunity or impairments for whom commuting to and/or being in an office environment presents difficulties, and those with responsibilities to care for children, a person with disability or an aged relative. The complaints that alleged the requirement to return to the office discriminates on the ground of impairment or family responsibility are considered on their merits. The Equal Opportunity Commission is currently considering one complaint.

The Commissioner for Equal Opportunity believes that the benefits from greater flexibility in arrangements for working from home will flow to employers; a significant number of employees, including women; people with a disability; the Australian economy overall; and current employees.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 418, the service summary table and service 7, "Equal Opportunity Commission Services". I note that the review of the Equal Opportunity Act was completed in August 2022. How has the review of the act impacted on the operation of the commission?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We will be bringing in a new equal opportunity bill. As the member knows, the Law Reform Commission presented to government, and I tabled in Parliament, an extensive report on the Equal Opportunity Act, which was project 111. The Law Reform Commission undertook extensive consultations during the review and received 995 written submissions. Following the tabling of that report in Parliament, the government announced that it would broadly adopt 163 of the recommendations in the final report of the LRCWA and would draft a new bill, as I just mentioned. Several key elements of that will remove the outdated disadvantage test for sexual harassment complaints. I am sure that would be of interest to the member, having chaired the committee into '*Enough is enough*': *Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry*. Under the new legislation, people will not have to prove disadvantage, only that they were harassed. I think that is a big step forward.

The new bill will strengthen the equal opportunity protections for our LGBTQIA+ community, and staff and students in religious schools. It will provide anti-discrimination protection for those who are trans, gender diverse or non-binary and extend the prohibition against sexual and racial harassment to members of Parliament and parliamentary staff, judicial officers, court staff, local government councillors and staff, and unpaid volunteer workers. The member will remember the incidents that happened around this Parliament that could be properly described as sexual

harassment. The victims had nowhere to complain. They could not lodge a complaint against the member because the member was not their employer. The same is true in court settings. The bill will also aim to protect family and domestic violence victims from discrimination in rental accommodation and employment. We will introduce anti-vilification laws and strengthen the victimisation provisions in the Equal Opportunity Act. For the first time, we will introduce an obligation called a “positive duty” on employers to eliminate discrimination, harassment and vilification. I expect that will be another move welcomed by the member as the chair of the committee that brought in that valuable ‘*Enough is enough*’ report. These proposed changes will address the concerns raised in the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee’s second report, which is the report the member signed off on, ‘*Enough is enough: Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry*’.

We are drafting the equal opportunity bill at the moment and it is at an advanced stage. I have been receiving representations from stakeholders during the drafting process. They had made previous submissions to the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia, but after the tabling of the report and the announcement that government would be drafting legislation, they have written in again. I have invited those who have come back with substantive concerns to attend my office and sit around the table with me to address and take on board their concerns.

[3.10 pm]

The CHAIR: Member, that answer was actually broader than the question you asked, but that may well limit what other questions you need to ask.

Ms L. METTAM: The Attorney General answered a few of my other questions, so I thank him for his response. When does the Attorney General anticipate the amended bill will be introduced to Parliament?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is now towards the end of May. We are in the final stages of drafting the bill. I do not expect it to be complete before we get up for the winter break. This Attorney General will not be travelling to Europe or northern climes. We will be working on this assiduously during the winter break to present it to the Parliament as soon as possible. A lot of people are waiting on this legislation, especially those people in the fly-in fly-out industry. I note in the media recent examples of the conduct that the member’s committee reported on, so it is imperative that we do this as soon as possible. The member will recall that it has not been that long since the report was tabled, and it was a long report. We got cracking on it straightaway.

Ms L. METTAM: The Attorney General is quite correct in that we are continuing to hear concerning reports in the media about assaults or sexual harassment at mine sites. I have also raised another matter with the Attorney General.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I did respond to the member, did I not?

Ms L. METTAM: The Attorney General did; absolutely.

The CHAIR: All right—question?

Ms L. METTAM: In the last 12 months, how many cases of harassment or complaints have been received by the Equal Opportunity Commission?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Does the member mean generally or in relation to FIFO workers?

Ms L. METTAM: In relation to sexual harassment or assault in the workplace?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: May I defer to the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, please.

Dr J. Byrne: Thank you. We include that type of data in our annual report, but I do not have it in my head at the moment. Complaints of sexual harassment are not very common really. We need to realise that in employment, people first take it up with the employer. If the employer addresses it well, the complaint does not come to us. It is those complaints that the employer does not address well that come to us. The mining industry has greatly improved the handling of sexual harassment complaints. Although sexual harassment in the mining industry has been facing attention, this problem is far more widespread than just in the mining industry. Many workplaces have a cultural problem, particularly male-dominated workplaces. We get complaints across the full spectrum of workplaces, but predominantly those with a male workforce.

Ms L. METTAM: That is a very good point. I note the fact that most people do not report to the Equal Opportunity Commission; many people go directly to the employer. In relation to the bill that will be introduced, it is important to have the resourcing that will support these changes. What additional resourcing does the Attorney General think will be required by the Equal Opportunity Commission?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That would require me to expose what is going to cabinet. All I can say is that we are bringing in what I think will be leading equal opportunity legislation in Australia. There is a patchwork of legislation around the country and it seems that different jurisdictions are jumping ahead of each other. That is good, but we can do better. Our act has not been replaced for many years. We are very confident that we will be bringing in very good legislation, which I anticipate the member will be quite pleased with, given the matters she has raised with me, and the commission will be properly resourced to deal with it. I cannot go further than that prior to the introduction of the bill.

The CHAIR: If we have no more questions on the Equal Opportunity Commission, we might move on more generally and the commissioner will be free to go. Do we have any general questions on division 27?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the table on page 416 and the line item “Review of Public Trustee Fee Model”. The funding for the review goes into the 2024–25 financial year. Why does there need to be funding in the following year as well as this year? Surely we can complete the review in one year.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Very important issues have been raised about beneficiaries. From 1 July 2023, Public Trustee clients will receive \$13 million towards fee relief over two years while the Department of Treasury conducts a review into the agency’s fees and funding model. Might I remind the chamber that it was the previous Barnett Liberal government that put in this self-funding model for the Public Trustee that has been burdensome for many vulnerable clients of the office. During the 2023–24 budget process, the Department of Justice will spend \$500 000 over two years, from 2023–24 to 2024–25, to develop and revise the Public Trustee fee setting and operating subsidy model to one that is simpler, more transparent and more equitable. The Public Trustee clients will receive fee relief for two years from 1 July 2023, a 50 per cent reduction in the establishment and financial asset and property management fees, ahead of the development of the revised fee and operating subsidy model. The independent governing board will be established to strengthen the oversight of the Public Trustee, in addition to the establishment of an independent advisory board to oversee the development of a revised fee model and fee waiver policy. In six weeks’ time, there will be a 50 per cent reduction in fees charged by the office, and I am sure that this will be applauded by the member and all the beneficiaries and clients of the office.

[3.20 pm]

The CHAIR: Further questions?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am not sure whether it is a further question or whether it is different. It is similar, but it may be a different question.

The CHAIR: Is it to do with the Public Trustee?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Sort of.

The CHAIR: All right; give it a go.

Mr R.S. LOVE: With regard to the review of the Public Trustee’s fees, which the Attorney General has just outlined, the funding model that was in place and the governance around it, will a similar review take place into the Office of the Public Advocate for people who are under state guardianship?

The CHAIR: No. It is quite a different question, member, but you can proceed.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I did say that it was a long lead, but it seems to have worked.

The CHAIR: You will need a page reference.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 422 under the heading “Advocacy, Guardianship and Administration Services”, which is all about the Public Advocate. With regard to the service that is available, is there a need for a review by the Public Advocate; and, if not, why would there not be? Would that be part of this other review?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Public Advocate is a service offered by Western Australia. The office does not charge fees.

Mr R.S. LOVE: All right.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Unless the member had dealt with the office, he might not have been aware of that.

Mr R.S. LOVE: No. I have only been told of it. I have not been personally involved with it.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: You never know, because families are.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The Public Advocate in other states can have suppression orders and administration and guardianship over people. Would the Public Advocate here have the same role?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: In getting suppression orders?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The question of suppression orders arises only when applications are made to the State Administrative Tribunal. These are generally in relation to very vulnerable people and often people with dementia. SAT orders the suppression. Under the Guardianship and Administration Act, there is a statutory bar to the identification of those people. That is why when those SAT decisions come out, there is reference to “BA”. They do not go before SAT for anything they have done or for any appeal they are making. They are just a person who is labouring under severe disability or cognitive disability, so the legislation provides for non-disclosure of their name because they are vulnerable clients. They have not been brought there for punishment or to seek redress. These poor people have been taken to SAT for orders to try to help them look after their estate.

Mr R.S. LOVE: However, the person is also bound by that suppression order, so if they wished to be known, they could not be known. I understand that that issue has been examined in other states. Is it going to be examined in Western Australia?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No, we are not planning to at this stage. All I will say is that there is a general prohibition on the identification of those people. People say that that prohibits them from going to the media. A lot of those people do not have the cognitive ability to make decisions in their own interests, and that is why the order is made in the first place. There is no disadvantage to bringing those cases to public attention by just referring to them anonymously. Because we are bringing forward a bill to amend the Guardianship and Administration Act, we have also sought advice about whether there is any capacity or room within our amendments to allow people to speak about their own circumstances perhaps without identification. There has been some recent publicity of cases that did not accord with my or the Public Advocate's knowledge or recollection of the cases. That is not surprising, because the client is cognitively impaired. We do not mind them talking, but in their own interests and that of their families, it is not contemplated to allow the media to publish their name.

Mr M. HUGHES: I go back to page 416. Paragraph 3 under the significant issues impacting the agency refers to the establishment of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, which provides cultural advice and guidance to ensure that key departmental policies and programs operate with meaningful involvement from significant Aboriginal community advisers. Can the Attorney General please outline some of the achievements of the committee in its first term of operation?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: This is a subject dear to my heart and I know it is a subject very dear to the heart of the director general, who is responsible for this. I have gone to a morning tea at the David Malcolm Justice Centre at which people not just from the Attorney's side of Justice, but also from the corrective services side of Justice have congratulated and thanked the committee members. The AJAC was established by the government in October 2021 to provide cultural advice and guidance to the department on justice issues relevant to the Aboriginal community. In that regard, it might be regarded as a voice for those people, but only to the Department of Justice. The department has convened a diverse membership of Aboriginal leaders with a range of lived experiences in the justice system. The AJAC is already helping the department improve its cultural responsiveness and increase Aboriginal workforce participation through policies, programs, services, reviews and development. This is contributing to improved justice outcomes for Aboriginal people in the medium to long term.

In June 2022, the AJAC identified four strategic priority areas to be focused on: young people; safe housing and homelessness; Aboriginal workforce development and employment; and procurement and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. In 2023, the AJAC has progressed the establishment of three subcommittees to monitor action on these four strategic areas. The AJAC's first quarterly meeting of 2023 was held with the department's corporate executive to discuss the AJAC's Aboriginal workforce development and employment strategic priority and met with the Department of Communities' Aboriginal strategic advisory group to explore opportunities for future collaboration on issues significant to both portfolios. In 2023, the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee received briefings and provided advice on the following: referrals regarding policy matters under collaboration with the Attorney General; the Dandjoo Bidi-Ak care and protection court—Dandjoo Bidi-Ak is Noongar for “on the path together”—within the Perth Children's Court; the establishment of Aboriginal reference groups; the department's draft Aboriginal suicide prevention strategy; the proposed recommendations and a draft strategic framework from the policy partnership under the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap; the Department of Justice youth strategic plan; and the department's contribution to the national discussion about the minimum age of criminal responsibility.

During the AJAC's first term, it conducted site visits, which have helped its strategic priorities, at the following departmental locations: the Perth Magistrates Court, the Office of the Chief Assessor of Criminal Injuries Compensation, the metropolitan youth bail service, Banksia Hill Detention Centre, Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women and the Corrective Services Academy.

The AJAC has also been consulted by the heads of jurisdiction on its united statement of reconciliation. The statement will be launched by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on 29 May and will be displayed soon after in courthouses across Western Australia.

The AJAC's membership comprises Aboriginal people from across Western Australia who are connected to one of the 10 metropolitan and regional areas—Perth metropolitan, north; Perth metropolitan, south; great southern; south west; midwest; goldfields; Ngaanyatjarra lands; Pilbara; East Kimberley; and West Kimberley. The AJAC establishment aligns with the Aboriginal empowerment strategy by encouraging truth-telling, reshaping government services to work with culture and supporting Aboriginal-led solutions.

The AJAC members are contributing to an Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia initiative to develop a collaborative approach for government Aboriginal advisory boards, which aims to ensure that high-level cultural advice is delivered in a consistent and structured way across government.

Finally, in June 2022, the AJAC met with AACWA co-chairs Gail Beck and Martin Sibosado to discuss AACWA initiatives. In September 2022, two AJAC members attended the AACWA-led meeting of all Western Australian government Aboriginal advisory boards to discuss the development of a collaborative strategy. The AJAC members are currently appointed as members of the recently established AACWA youth justice committee.

I want to vary from the answer by extending my personal congratulations to the director general, who is sitting to my right, and to his deputy, who is sitting behind him, for initiating this and to all staff for getting right behind it. When I attend the Department of Justice, it is such a wonderful feeling to be amongst these wonderful people.

[3.30 pm]

The CHAIR: Member for Cottesloe, you have been very patient.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I was almost drifting off there!

On page 417 under significant issues impacting the agency, paragraph 15 discusses the fact that we are not seeing significant reductions in the time to trial for criminal cases. From time to time, we hear from the courts that judges feel overwhelmed by their workload. Do we have a sufficient number of judges and sufficient resources? Is that the real problem rather than the factors in that paragraph? I know that COVID has not disappeared, but it has been more normalised, and I would imagine that the other factors would happen over time, not just now.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: A few issues are involved in this. It was my very great pleasure this morning to address the Full Bench of the District Court to welcome the “thirty-third and a half judge” to the District Court. That is how the Chief Judge described the new judge, Wendy Hughes, who is a brilliant person, because 50 per cent of the time she will be a judge of the Children’s Court, along with President Quail—so much has the Children’s Court expanded—and 50 per cent of the time she will be at the District Court. When I came to this office, I had an ambition to increase the quorum of the court by an extra judge each year at least, given that no new judges had been appointed and the quorum of the court had not been increased by the previous government, to my recollection. We have exceeded that because the department, with Treasury, devised what we call the justice pipeline model. It is a wonderful computer model. People can enter, for example, 500 more police, and it automatically goes down the line to show that this will lead to 2 000 more arrests, with so many more cases in the Magistrates Court, so many more cases in the Supreme Court or District Court, and so many more cells needed to accommodate prisoners. The justice pipeline has been in place for four or five years and has delivered the proper quota of judges to the respective jurisdictions.

But there is a problem, member, which I was discussing with the Solicitor-General today. Under the Constitution and the Judiciary Act, the state courts also exercise federal jurisdiction. When a person is charged with a federal crime, the commonwealth could elect to put them before the Federal Court, but it puts them before the state courts.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Cost-shifting.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Exactly! Then the federal offences and the federal trials are mega. I know of no federal trial that lasts three or four days. I remind members of the immigration trial that came from the growers at Wanneroo. I think it was strawberry or tomato farms, or something like that. It could have been cannabis farms. I do not know, but they were all illegal immigrants. The case went for about three months before the Director of Public Prosecutions fessed up that it had not disclosed all the telephone intercepts, so the trial had to be abandoned and started again. We are bearing literally millions of dollars. It was the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions that mucked it up, not the state DPP.

Similarly, there was a big drug trial relating to all the methamphetamine that was brought into the port of Geraldton. The member might remember that one. The people have just been sentenced by Justice Corboy to between 28 and 33 years, as I recall. That was a commonwealth charge. Two-thirds of the way through that very big and complicated trial, people realised that the commonwealth had not disclosed all the evidence, so the trial was abandoned and restarted. When the trial restarted, it had to be split in two because of the disclosures. The thing went on for about six or nine months, and we had no control over it.

I have sent a bill to the commonwealth. I did. It sent us a bill for the cost of detaining people for their trial on criminal stay warrants, and they were being held in the detention centre. The commonwealth had the cheek to send us a bill for millions of dollars for accommodating those people at the detention centre. I wrote back and said, “Thank you. You can set this off against the millions you owe us for crime.” We never heard from the commonwealth again. This is part of the problem.

[3.40 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Send in the collectors.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Part of the problem is that we are also accommodating all the commonwealth trials. I would not mind if the commonwealth built its own criminal courts with jury rooms where its prosecutors could prosecute and we would have more capacity here. We are doing everything to provide. The courts thank us time and again that the pipeline for justice is delivering them judges.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Further question.

The CHAIR: I cannot believe you need more information, member for Cottesloe, but proceed.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I thank the Attorney General for that, but given that those factors will continue, the gap between the aspiration in terms of time and what is being achieved is about a 15 per cent decrease in time. As the Attorney General pointed out, he just appointed half a full-time position into the Supreme Court, which is a 1.5 per cent increase. Is there a requirement for further resources?

The CHAIR: Okay, that is it. That is the question.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I anticipate the unfairness of the position the Attorney General is in, but it continues.

The CHAIR: Do you need more resources, Attorney General? That is the question.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We would like, and we are working on, more courtrooms, because the Liberal government built a 32-storey David Malcolm Justice Centre for the Supreme Court and the Liberal government said that we are not allowed to have criminal trials in there. We are at a choke point. Yes, we need a new court building to make up the flawed decision to build a multi-32 level building in which we are not allowed to conduct a criminal trial.

Dr D.J. HONEY: There was less crime then.

The CHAIR: Do not get us started on that now, member.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am looking at spending changes on page 416, under “Other”, and \$33 262 000 is listed.

The CHAIR: On page 416 in the table up the top of the page, Attorney General. Which particular heading are you looking at? Other?

Mr R.S. LOVE: “Criminal Injuries Compensation” under “Other”. Last year, or this year still to be completed, an estimated amount of \$33 million on top of —

The CHAIR: So you want to know why there is not any money in the out years. Is that what you are asking?

Mr R.S. LOVE: No.

The CHAIR: Sorry.

Mr R.S. LOVE: As an explanation for the chair, there is a standard allocation of around \$41 million per annum to allow for the criminal compensation.

The CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We had a \$33 million uplift in that one particular year in compensation payments. Why was that? Perhaps, by way of supplementary information, the Attorney General can detail some of those payments so that we can understand why there is such an extraordinary amount in that year.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The general assessment in the first place, when it came through with the budget, is that in 2022–23 it is forecast that a total of \$75 million in criminal injuries compensation payments will be paid out to victims of crime. In fact, the sums paid out to victims have drifted down a little from about \$20 000 to \$16 000, or \$17 000. Each claim has drifted down slightly and that is for a number of factors including the types of claims being made, but there was quite a backlog of claims that we had to attack. A total of \$75 million in payments will be paid out to victims of crime, which is an additional \$33.3 million above the target of \$41.7 million. Due to the increase in applications and increasing number of awards made together to the reduction in backlog, the government has approved an additional \$33 million, as the member noted. The number of awards assessed under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 2023 increased following the appointment of an additional assessor and support staff to address increasing demand as community awareness of the scheme continues to grow. The increased efficiencies and procedures of the Office of Criminal Injuries Compensation follow an introduction of end-to-end processing, and the continual growing of e-lodgements has contributed to the increase in the number of applications being assessed. Also, a dedicated effort to reduce the backlog of claims and backlog of cases older than 12 months has reduced by 10 per cent the total case load on hand from 14 per cent the previous year. That is the backlog. The number of CIC applications finalised and awards granted in 2021–22 was 7 708 and 6 475 respectively. As of February 2023, 3 928 applications had been finalised and 3 049 awards granted. The number of applications received has increased significantly. The case load on hand has increased from 4 452 in 2021–22 to 5 767 at the end of February 2023. This is an increase of 29 per cent. To deal with all of this has required supplementary funding to the office. We do not want to be telling victims of crime who have made e-lodgements that it is empty. Also, because we have the extra assessor and a new end-to-end processing system for greater efficiency, the processing time in which people have to wait for a result has shrunk from 16 months to eight months. That has put a lot of this backlog into this year. Therefore, it is over the budget.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Can the Attorney General give me some understanding of perhaps the maximum amount that was paid out in all of that, the minimum amount and the average? Can the Attorney General give me some idea of how complex this all was?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The maximum was \$75 000, and people can get it for two offences, if two things have happened to them.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If that is a list, could the Attorney General perhaps table it?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No, it is just a historical list, which the member is probably not too interested in, like, in 1976 it was \$2 000, and in 1982 it was \$7 500.

The CHAIR: Do not encourage him, members.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: What we got to is \$75 000. If it is a double offence and the person has been convicted on an indictment of several offences against them, they cannot claim for more than two. That is the maximum and the average is about \$16 000 or \$17 000, even factoring in the large ones.

The CHAIR: I call the member for Thornlie. Can I counsel the Attorney General to keep it relatively brief, because we need to give the opposition maximum time.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: My question relates to fine reforms. I am looking at page 421, and the table under court and tribunal services. The last line is “Fine Enforcement Registry—Cost per enforcement”. What impact have the fine reforms had on vulnerable and marginalised Western Australians?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The fine reforms have had a dramatic effect. In September 2020, we introduced legislation to focus on protecting marginalised and vulnerable Western Australians. Changes were implemented across several areas prohibiting the fines enforcement registrar from issuing licence suspensions, introducing a new scheme of work development and removing the registrar’s ability to issue a warrant of commitment. This has been groundbreaking stuff in vulnerable communities and especially in regional communities where the suspension of a person’s licence for the non-payment of a parking fine could mean that the person could lose their job. Most importantly, since the introduction of the legislation, no person has been imprisoned for the non-payment of a fine, like Ms Dhu was and tragically died whilst in custody.

[3.50 pm]

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 416 and the table of spending changes. A moment ago we were discussing criminal injuries compensation, but if we move down the list, there is another heading, third from the bottom, which is also significant this year. Line item “RiskCover Fund Insurance Premiums” has a one-off lump sum of \$55 million. What is the reason for this extraordinary figure?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I wonder whether I could defer to Mr Clark, please.

Mr T. Clark: We have seen a 10 per cent reduction in the number of claims, which has led to a seven per cent reduction in lost-time injuries between 2018–19 and 2021–22. Therefore, the agency’s performance is slightly better. However, there has been an increase in workers compensation claims that have been paid. This is mainly reflected through the higher number of lost-time injuries; the increasing psychological injury claims; the number of long-term injuries; and the high costs associated with workers compensation claims due to high rates of pay—if someone is earning over time, the workers compensation claims are higher. Medical expenses have increased, and, quite often, the length of time taken to make a determination on contentious claims has been a factor in these increases.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I also raised the issue of workers compensation in the Insurance Commission of Western Australia division and compared with private sector outcomes, the public sector seems to be falling behind in return to work and recovery. Is that also the experience that the Attorney would report?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to the director general, please.

Dr A. Tomison: The department has identified that the case management of active workers compensation claims needs to improve and be done in a more speedy fashion to identify those workers who can return, and to actually work with them to get them back to work. We have met with ICWA a number of times over the past 18 months to two years, in various ways, to try to improve the process of both the Department of Justice and ICWA. That is an ongoing discussion. We do take it seriously. We do think there is an issue there, and we actually want to improve people’s return to work, essentially in a more speedy fashion. It is good for the worker. In fact, it is very difficult to get a worker who is off for 12 to 18 months to come back to work. Usually, it indicates a more serious injury. But we do want to do better at getting people back.

The CHAIR: The Attorney has indicated that he wants a comfort break. My shift change is at 4.00 pm, so is it all right if we do it then?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is fine.

The CHAIR: In which case, I might ask the Attorney a quick question. I refer to page 419, about two-thirds of the way down, where it says, in part, “Government receives quality and timely legislative drafting ...”. What measures are being taken to ensure more timely legislative drafting than is currently available?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I understood the chair’s question to be: what steps are being taken in relation to timely drafting?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Parliamentary Counsel's Office is staffed by specialist drafters, who take a long time to train, and we have lost a number of them because of pregnancy, death and other life factors. They are hard to replace. The passage of the uniform law enabled practitioners from other jurisdictions, who have not been admitted but who would be working for government, to supervise things and to practice here. Since then, we have engaged outside employment consultants to advertise internationally and nationally. We have secured some responses to the national and international advertisements. Now that the uniform law is enacted, the drafting speed and resources in the office are picking up due to our aggressive recruiting campaign. Additionally, we have secured the services of some retired interstate drafts people, who can draft online. The amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act, which has about 400-odd sections, are being drafted in Sydney by the retired chief Parliamentary Counsel of New South Wales, who flew over to talk to the team before going back and doing it online. Therefore, we are doing all we can to aggressively pursue extra parliamentary drafts people.

We have also introduced a scheme whereby we advertise for private law firms that can offer drafting services to tender. They are on a panel. That is being largely supervised by the executive director sitting behind me. When ministers want particular bills but they cannot get priority at the Parliamentary Counsel's Office, they can make a request to my office and I can see whether it is a bill that could be drafted privately. I discuss it with the Premier and it requires the Premier and myself to sign off on it and it goes to a private firm. We have also employed a retired person from the Department of Justice, who was overlooking bills with PCO, to be a project manager of these matters.

The CHAIR: That is excellent. Is there anything else on this division or do we want to vote on it now?

Dr D.J. HONEY: There are some more questions.

The CHAIR: We will adjourn now and return at 4.10 pm, continuing on division 27.

Meeting suspended from 3.58 to 4.09 pm

[Ms A.E. Kent took the chair.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Attorney General is very passionate about the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.

The CHAIR: Which page, please?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I apologise, Attorney General. It is page 423, service 4. There is a relatively small but dedicated staff in that unit. The payment efficiency indicator—the average cost per claim for that unit—is up around \$60 million. Can the Attorney General provide a breakdown of the costs? I do not need an agonising breakdown. I note that the explanation refers to the Western Australian scheme payments to the commonwealth government. I assume that this does not include payments to individuals but is administrative expenses, plus those payments to the commonwealth. Can the Attorney General clarify that?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I invite the Commissioner for Victims of Crime to speak on this, please. I defer to her.

Ms K. Kraszlan: The costs include the redress payment to the survivor, the payment for counselling and psychological care and the administrative percentage that we pay the commonwealth. We also pay a percentage towards the free legal service available for survivors. The cost also includes our administrative costs for delivering it and is minus any prepayments that survivors may have received in other redress schemes or criminal injuries.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Do the payments to victims of child sex abuse that involved, in part or whole, a government agency come out of this budget and not individual agency budgets? I may have misunderstood because I thought individual agencies would be responsible for that. Are payments made from one central point of government?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to Ms Kraszlan, please.

Ms K. Kraszlan: The Department of Justice has received the allocation for payments for all responsibility of government agencies, local government and any funder of last resort payments.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Approximately—I do not need an exact number—how many cases does that correspond to? Looking at last year, it looks like it is expected to be a steady case load.

Ms K. Kraszlan: In terms of case loads for government institutions—those related purely to government—we have processed 1 729 applications over the course of the scheme, which is four years. On average, we have somewhere around 100 requests for information each month.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Concern has been expressed about unnecessary delays in finalising these schemes, particularly when a matter goes to court. Does the Attorney General have any comment on that in relation to claims against state government agencies?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: This will be covered in the division on the State Solicitor's Office, which is now a sub-department of Justice. The question will have to be addressed to me in that division.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to the net appropriation determination table on page 434 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. In the middle of the table is the bold heading “Sale of Goods and Services”, and the fourth point under that is “Public Trustee Contributions—Estate Fees and Other Revenue”. The Attorney General can read that as well as I can. What seems to be a little bit surprising is that in the out years of 2025–26 and 2026–27, there looks to be quite a significant increase in the estimated figure. If I heard correctly—I was not completely concentrating when the Attorney General provided answers to the member for Moore on a related topic—I think the Attorney General indicated that the government was restructuring the fees for this service and that the cost, which was a result of a former government’s decision and was seen to be unfair, would be halved. Why is the government estimating such a significant increase in fee income?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the Public Trustee himself, Mr Brian Roche.

Mr B. Roche: The reduction in fees that was announced as part of the state budget will be over two years while Treasury has allowed us to use \$500 000 to do a significant further review of our fees and self-funding model. These are very much estimates and I think they will change significantly once the review is complete. That will not report back to government until 18 months from now.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I see. Based on what the Attorney General said previously, we will potentially see a figure south of \$20 million as opposed to above \$30 million, based on a similar number of clients.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is to be determined based on the income and the review.

Mr M. HUGHES: I refer the Attorney General to page 416 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the third significant issue, which relates to the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee. In the Attorney General’s answer to me before the break, he made reference to matters relating to Closing the Gap and raising the age of criminal responsibility. I am well aware that this matter is before the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. Is it possible for the Attorney General to give me some sense of how the possibility of that reform is progressing?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Sure. At a SCAG meeting in 2019, I moved that the attorneys investigate raising the age. Western Australia was then nominated, or the Department of Justice, as the jurisdiction to lead SCAG’s investigation of that. A report was prepared and handed down, which recommended raising it to either 12 or 14 and presented us with options. We took that back to SCAG. We came away from there all in agreement that we could not abandon these children by not bringing them into custody or whatever, so we were charged with looking at alternative pathways to deal with children who are involved in miscreant behaviour but who now will not be captured by the criminal justice system. The department runs magnificent juvenile justice programs for dealing with children, especially when young ones come before the criminal justice system and are given bail or are under orders. If they are not arrested or charged, those programs will not be automatically available or delivered. We are working through that. The deputy director general, Kylie Maj, who is sitting behind me to my left, is leading that working group working with the commonwealth and we are taking that back to the Standing Council of Attorneys-General, I think in August, for the final decision. The Premier of Western Australia has said that we will not be raising the age above 12 at this point. Providing that we can get all the ducks in a row and have good alternatives for the 10 and 11-year-olds, we will look at raising it for them, conditional upon us having the right pathways available. We are working assiduously on this to bring us into line with the standards of the age of criminal responsibility in other commonwealth countries.

[4.20 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages on page 424. The net cost of service for the 2022–23 estimated actual shows a very significant deficit compared with the 2023–24 budget estimate.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am sorry, which page?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is the fifth service and key efficiency indicator on page 424.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have that. I am looking for which line it is.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is the net cost of service. The department lost money in 2021–22; the budget in 2022–23 made up that deficit—it virtually zeros it out; in 2022–23, the estimated actual was \$1.8 million; and there is a significant decline going forward. What change has caused that turnaround from 2021–22?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I think I have the answer here. I defer to the director general.

Dr A. Tomison: I think the change is mainly attributed to the increase in salary costs due to the new Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA agreement in 2022, which also includes the one-off cost-of-living payment and some back payments. That is the only variation that I am aware of. We would have to take anything else on notice.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I assume from past practice that there is expected to be, effectively, no net cost to government for that service. It is a service that pays for itself. Will that be reflected in an increase in fees to recover that increase in the costs?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to the director general.

Dr A. Tomison: My recollection is that there is no plan to make a significant increase to any of the fees that are being charged by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The budget for the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages typically comes out pretty much cost neutral in the sense that it balances income and expenditure. I do not expect this will be an ongoing issue and believe that it will balance out. From time to time there are increases in the various services offered by the registry, but at this point I am not aware of anything beyond CPI being contemplated at all.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In relation to the FTEs carrying out the services, there is an eight per cent increase in the number of FTEs from 56 to 60, which is an increase of four people. Why do we need more people in that area?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to the director general.

Dr A. Tomison: Essentially, the answer is that additional staff are needed because of the increase in the services provided. That is an increase in the range of certificates that are produced and applications that are processed et cetera. The increase will see increased registration positions, including a senior customer service officer. There will be three of them. A community engagement officer will also be employed, so there will be two of them, to inform the work that the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages does in communities when it goes to remote areas to assist others and help people who cannot get to Perth to get their birth certificates and get their information processed appropriately. We all know that identification is a very important part of existing in our society and that Aboriginal people in particular are disadvantaged. The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages joins the Aboriginal justice transformation team in the department and they do open days of which there are quite a large number now. One reason these staff are needed is to staff that particular resourcing of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages presence on those open days. There will also be one additional corporate support person to assist with backroom functions. Essentially, the nature of the service has increased in workload and the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages is moving to address that appropriately.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will preface this question by apologising if it has been asked already. Cut me off if it was. I refer to the third significant issue impacting the agency on page 416 of budget paper No 2, which says that the department has implemented an Aboriginal justice advisory committee.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We went through that in detail.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It has been answered. Okay, I will read *Hansard* tomorrow. Can I ask a new question or try again? After that I might give up so that I do not waste everyone's time! I refer to paragraph 15 of the significant issues impacting the agency on page 417. It is also linked to the line item "District Court—Criminal—Time to trial" in the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 419. There is quite a disparity between the budget target and what was budgeted for in the previous year and what the estimated actual is. Perhaps the Attorney General can explain why the 2022–23 budget target is 32 weeks yet the estimated actual for 2022–23 was 70 and in 2021–22 it was 66. I would have thought it was optimistic to think that the target of 32 weeks would be met. Is that realistic?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: A lot of those time to trials were blown out by COVID and the restrictions on the courts and on juries. We have come through that now and are playing catch-up. We are reducing the number of outstanding matters and think that we can get the time to trial down. Under the pipeline of justice model, which I have discussed previously and which the computer modelling tells us that we need another judge, in the District Court, we have been doing better than appointing one judge a year, which has increased its capacity. We have also just increased the number of judges in the Supreme Court.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I saw that. I refer to the line item "Coroner's Court—Time to trial" under the heading "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators" on page 419. It would not be a budget estimates unless we had this conversation, Attorney General. It is still a long time.

[4.30 pm]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Has the government been able to make headway? I appreciate that the Attorney General is probably going to say that this is everybody else's responsibility, but what has been done at a cabinet level so that the numbers in this area do not look like this next year when I come back for my last budget estimates? That can be the Attorney General's present to me; I will not have to ask this question again.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We have reduced it from 1 315 cases in 2021–22 to 1 165 as of 31 March 2023. We have for the member's penultimate appearance reduced it by some 200 cases. Not all these cases will go to a full coronial inquest. Many are dealt with administratively by the State Coroner, the Deputy State Coroner or the assistant coroners, and the files are dealt with administratively when the cause of death is uncontentious and known, but had to be reported as a sudden death. A good number of years ago, the previous Liberal government commissioned a Law Reform Commission of Western Australia report into the Coroner's Court and a weighty voluminous report

came back. It took hours for me to work through that with the coroner's staff. The completely new coroners act will allow for more efficiencies within the system. The member knows from experience that sometimes the lead time in getting these bills to that table for consideration in detail is unfortunately long, especially when dealing with a large bill. That is what we intend to do. I intend to bring in a new coroner's act that will really speed up the process. It will allow for quicker dispositions of those matters that do not have to go to a full hearing. I will defer to the director general to expand on that answer.

Dr A. Tomison: Obviously, deaths are also increasing each year, which does not help us address the backlog, but as the AG said, the backlog has gone down in the last year. One of the issues for the court is that about 30 to 35 per cent of all backlog cases are under the control of the court. Two-thirds rely on the coroner receiving an appropriate coronial investigation, and final supplementary post-mortem examination reports and toxicology reports from PathWest and ChemCentre respectively. Once the medical reports are provided, the coroner awaits the police investigation report that puts together the whole picture for the coroner. The inquest cannot be progressed until these matters are covered. This year we have spent time, as has the coroner herself, meeting with representatives of the Western Australia Police Force and also PathWest to try to work through what can be done to speed up the process. Additional resources have been allocated by WA police to the coronial investigation unit, resulting in more police reports being submitted to the coroner's office so that more matters are finalised. We have also met with PathWest to identify where it can speed up the delivery of its toxicology reports and other medical reports that are also required. We are holding ongoing discussions with those agencies. They have their own issues around workload, but we are trying to get that prioritised, as is the coroner herself, by meeting with those bodies—we are talking about senior representations such as CEOs and the Commissioner of Police et cetera. This matter has been taken seriously and that is what we are doing to further reduce that backlog.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 424 of budget paper No 2 and item 6 "Services to Government", specifically the line item "Total Cost of Service". A little while ago at least, the Attorney General and the Premier were joined in action against Mr Palmer for defamation. Does the cost of that action appear under services to government or does it appear somewhere else?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No, the Premier made a very detailed public statement on the cost of the defamation trial. As the member will recall, it included the fact that the defamation trial was not conducted by government solicitors but by Clayton Utz, an independent counsel.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In which case, did that money come from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and not involve —

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The member would have to ask Treasury that. We will have to wait until we get to the division on the State Solicitor's Office because it is really a question for then.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is why I was unsure. Thank you. I refer to legal assistance on page 425 and targeting access and the like. I see a reasonably significant increase in the total cost of service from the estimated actual of \$135 million to \$141 million in 2023–24. Why have we seen such a significant increase in the cost of that service?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The increase in the total costs between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 budget years of \$13.2 million is primarily due to an increase in legal assistance grants of \$7.3 million, an increase due to the public sector wages policy of \$2.3 million, and an increase of \$2 million due to the new public hourly rate for private practitioners—we increased their rate from \$140 to \$160. The increase is also due to additional funding of \$4.7 million to maintain the community legal centres, which is a really good news story for all the regions. The community legal centres have never had a sustainable funding model. There are women's legal centres and tenants' legal centres—all sorts of legal centres. Those centres enable those who cannot afford to walk into a lawyer's door to get some quality advice.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Did the Attorney General just say there is a \$4.7 million increase to the base funding for legal centres?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes, \$4.7 million.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: What does that equate to for each centre? Was the funding spread across the board or was it weighted to particular centres—for example, the Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre versus the Women's Legal Service WA?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the executive director Mr Hainsworth who supervises all this.

Mr M. Hainsworth: The \$4.7 million was subject to quantitative and qualitative assessment criteria to inform the allocation to the 25 community legal centres across the state. The quantitative criteria focused on the allocation of funding based on the estimated relative greatest need. The qualitative criteria focused on the community legal centres' capacity to deliver those services to the areas of greatest need. That resulted in about 69 per cent of funding going to generalist centres that basically occupy a geographic area and 31 per cent being allocated to specialist centres. It would be fair to say that community legal services servicing outer metropolitan areas got a slightly greater

increase than those in regional areas. That was largely driven by population growth and the growth in the number of priority clients within that population growth.

The appropriation was recommended.

[4.40 pm]

Division 8: Commissioner for Children and Young People, \$3 237 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Attorney General.

Ms J. McGowan-Jones, Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Ms D. Fitzgerald, Director, Policy, Monitoring and Research.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Are there any questions? Member for Central Wheatbelt.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 107 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2 and paragraph 1.6, which states —

continuing to advocate for the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to be enacted into legislation ...

Can the Attorney General provide an overview of the interaction of the Commissioner for Children and Young People specifically in relation to the issues we are facing at Banksia Hill Detention Centre?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Was it in relation to the work of the commissioner in relation to the Work Health and Safety Bill?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Banksia Hill.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Banksia Hill—I could not hear. I warned the member that I had a bad cold and my ears were blocked. Yes, certainly. The Department of Justice has supported the commissioner's regular visits to Banksia Hill Detention Centre, where the commissioner goes to listen to the views of young people. Since July 2022, the commissioner and her team have visited Banksia Hill on seven occasions, hearing from young people about their experiences of unit 18 and Banksia Hill, taking part in youth leadership meetings and assisting the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services with its announced inspection of Banksia Hill in February. The commissioner will continue to monitor the progress of the department as it implements Banksia Hill's new operating philosophy and service model of care and addresses staffing issues, infrastructure improvements and the wellbeing of detainees. The commissioner agrees that detention is required for children and young people who have been involved in serious crime, particularly crimes against a person. The commissioner is also supportive of investment in services and programs at Banksia Hill Detention Centre, but notes that staffing impacts the ability to achieve change. The commissioner has had a very active role in going out to Banksia Hill to listen to the views of young detainees.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Attorney General advise what formal advice the commissioner has provided to government as it has been managing these issues?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No, I cannot, because a lot of the advice goes to the department of corrections, which is responsible for the management of those issues. The commissioner's office sits within my portfolio basket, but the member would have to ask that minister about the advice she gives to the department.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Within the Attorney General's purview—the courts and how they are dealt with—what kind of advice has been provided to him from the commissioner about children on a pathway to Banksia Hill?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We have to adopt a therapeutic model with these young children.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How far back has the commissioner been providing that advice to the government?

[4.50 pm]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I cannot recall. We have to work with the Children's Court. We have to develop a therapeutic model, and there are two places for the therapeutic model. One of those areas is within the detention centre itself and the other is before they go to the detention centre. We have been developing with the President of the Children's Court a proposal—these are not easy to work up—to have a therapeutic court within the Children's Court as a last stop before Banksia Hill. It is intended that some children who warrant detention, who have committed numerous crimes or who have committed fewer crimes but of a serious nature, will be offered placement on a program of a therapeutic nature run by the Children's Court. As part of the program, it is intended that they will be screened for auditory impairment from upper respiratory infections as children or because they did not get their grommets and cannot hear the court, for cognitive impairment, and for general health. These people will be screened to see whether we can keep them on a therapeutic program within the court and divert them from Banksia Hill Detention Centre. We are working this up at the moment. The member might be aware that therapeutic courts are already operating out of the Children's Court, but they are for drug offences. To get on the therapeutic program in the court, one has to plead guilty to the drug offence and agree to go on the program. We are looking at modelling it the same way. It will be available for —

The CHAIR: Sorry, Attorney General, we just want to condense this.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It will be modelled the same way. If young kids plead guilty, they will be able to go on the program to see whether we can keep them out of Banksia Hill on a therapeutic model. This will require extra resources—an extra judge—at the court. I referred to that earlier today when I said that we have 33 and a half judges. Today, we inducted a new judge who will be spending half her time at the Children's Court and half her time at the District Court.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you, Attorney General. Can the Attorney General advise when this new therapeutic model is likely to be in place?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We hope that there will be a trial or a pilot very soon. First of all, we have to get another judge because the judge is overwhelmed with criminal cases. The wonderful Judge Wendy Hughes, who was sworn in only last week, will be spending 50 per cent of her time doing this and other criminal matters at the Children's Court. We had to have the resources first.

I said there is the court side and the Banksia Hill side of the therapeutic model. I do not want to talk about the Banksia Hill side because that fits within the Department of Corrective Services.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I understand.

The CHAIR: We are talking about division 8. I just wanted to clarify that, Attorney General.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I note from announcements that Mr Tim Marney will be heading the therapeutic side. The member would have to ask the other minister.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On that paragraph, has the Commissioner for Children and Young People formally raised concerns with government about government breaches of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in relation to the young children we are talking about? Has that advice been provided by the commissioner?

The CHAIR: Are you referring to page 107, paragraph 1.6?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. Has the commissioner provided advice to the Attorney General and government about these breaches?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Those matters are all with the Minister for Corrective Services.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Has advice not been given to the minister who is in charge of making sure they do not end up in Banksia Hill?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Is the member asking about the breaches at Banksia Hill? That is what I thought the member's initial question was: has the commissioner advised about breaches or alleged breaches of human rights at Banksia Hill? That is for the Minister for Corrective Services.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would that then drive the Attorney General's decision-making around therapeutic programs? Okay; let us think of a better way to ask the question.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is probably my fault, member, but I am trying to do my best.

The CHAIR: I will throw to the member for Bicton, who has a question.

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: I refer to page 106 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and paragraph 1.2 under significant issues impacting the agency. I understand the commissioner has delayed the Speaking Out Survey planned for 2024. What are the reasons for the delay?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The 2021 Speaking Out Survey was very successful. In fact, it was brought forward a year to ask questions about COVID. The commissioner felt that there was a considerable opportunity to review the questions based on the information so far gleaned. This would include potentially adding questions to tease out information such as the decline in girls' wellbeing. In discussion with three school sectors, it was also felt that the survey could benefit from the inclusion of additional schools to enable intraregional comparisons in the survey topics. The 2021 survey had over 16 500 participants, which was up by more than 10 000 from the inaugural 2019 survey. There will be an extension to include more children and young people by including a greater number of schools. It is believed that the inclusion of additional schools and students will help to provide even greater evidence going forward. The delay was discussed with all school sectors—government, independent and Catholic schools—and they all indicated that they would be keen to continue their participation in the survey, notwithstanding the delay.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On page 106, under significant issues impacting the agency, paragraph 1 says —

In 2023–24, the Commissioner will primarily focus on the following key areas:

1.1. holding events, forums ...

Would the Attorney General like to provide some feedback on the events and forums that have been held over the last six months, including visits to Banksia Hill on seven occasions, as was previously noted?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The commissioner has done a number of projects and research projects. I could refer, for example, to the Talking about Vaping survey.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: My question was specifically about the events that she has done in the last six months with Banksia Hill.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: What has the commissioner done? She has been out there seven times to discuss the concerns of young people. I have not got a report back on that; there is no published report on it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would the Attorney General like to reflect on any advice that has been provided by the commissioner in relation to those visits? Will there be a formal, published report on those visits?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: At this stage, it is not envisaged that there will be a formal report. The commissioner has already made her views known, as others in the community have made known, that Banksia Hill needs to focus on a therapeutic model. We are dealing with young, very troubled people.

I also think that some credit should go to the system—I was going to say the government. When we came to office, over 200 kids were in there. At the last count, there was about 87, from memory. They are only the really intransigent cases.

In due course, the commissioner will be reporting orally, giving evidence, before the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, when she can be examined at length about where we are up to at that point. That will not be too far into the future.

In my portfolio, I am concerned about what can we do in the court system, because a number of agencies are involved. We are trying to come up with a therapeutic model within the court system, and we have a wonderful new judge to supervise that. But then we need Communities for alternative programs and a number of things. We do not want these children to fall out of the system. I mean, they can fall out of the detention system, but we do not want them falling out of those support systems that are available to people in detention or on bail.

[5.00 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: Did the commissioner raise concerns with the Attorney General about the impact of understaffing, which was leading to the unlawful confinement of individuals at Banksia Hill? It was not as a result of their behaviour within detention, but rather as a result of understaffing. Has that matter been raised by the commissioner?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The commissioner has not raised that directly with me personally, because that is a matter before the Supreme Court. Justice Tottle has heard evidence on that. The member says detainees are locked down or confined not because of their behaviour. There are provisions in the legislation to have a lockdown for general safety reasons. One of these lockdowns for general safety reasons was when we very recently saw the children on the roof, throwing rocks and projectiles at staff and stopping fire trucks getting to the scene of the fire. The whole institution was locked down. The question then arises of locking down the institution when an insufficient number of staff turn up to work. These are also issues that might properly be raised with the State Solicitor's Office. The commissioner has attended meetings with the Premier and the Minister for Corrective Services on these issues. I am not privy to those meetings, so I cannot give the member a full run-down of them.

Ms L. METTAM: The Attorney General compared the situation at Banksia Hill Detention Centre with that of prior to 2017. Is he saying that there has been an improvement in the way Banksia Hill is being managed?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There have been difficulties at Banksia Hill for a number of years, as the member knows. Under a previous government, they had to move all the children out of Banksia Hill to Hakea Prison next door. That happened some considerable time before we came to government. When I say there has been an improvement, I mean that of the court trying to manage the children in ways other than detention. However, when it does that,

we get media pushback saying that the court is being too lenient by not sending them to Banksia Hill. It is the presence between a rock and a hard place—sometimes. Then there is the incident when the youth stabbed the gentleman, now deceased, who was trying to be a good Samaritan and retrieve a pushbike. They were sent straight to Banksia Hill for offences against the person. However, the numbers have come down. It is important to keep those numbers low. It is easier to deliver a therapeutic program to 80 or 90 children than 250 children.

Ms L. METTAM: Is that happening? Is a therapeutic program being delivered?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I do not want to dodge all this, but this is within the department of corrections and under Minister Johnston. When I go through the briefing papers, I think, “What is all this about?” Then I see there is CS on them, for corrective services. All I know from the public announcements is that Mr Tim Marney—he was the Under Treasurer and then the Mental Health Commissioner—is going to assist in the design and delivery of the therapeutic program. For the courts—which is cutting it off at the headwaters—what is being contemplated is a therapeutic model in which those who have pleaded guilty and are on their way to Banksia Hill might be dealt with by turning up to court every week or fortnight as they are managed for the offence, like what is done in the Drug Court. That is being looked at now.

The CHAIR: I do not know whether the members have been reminded, but there are five divisions to go in 50 minutes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 107 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, around how continuing to advocate is one of the primary focus areas for the commissioner. Paragraph 1.6 reads —

continuing to advocate for the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to be enacted into legislation ...

Can the Attorney General expand on what that would look like, and whether the government has considered that? What are those conversations between the Attorney General, the government and the Commissioner for Children and Young People?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There were four potentially contentious issues identified in last year’s budget estimates—that is, the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, children and young people in residential care, children and young people in Banksia Hill Detention Centre, and the appointment of an Aboriginal children’s commissioner. As I have pointed out, we were very fortunate to get someone with such vast experience in the public service as our commissioner, who herself is Indigenous. There are 15 or 16 FTEs at the commission and a lot of these are part-timers. There has been a substantial turnover of staff, or people leaving, which has given the commissioner the capacity to employ two more Indigenous people. Before the appointment of Ms McGowan-Jones, there was not one Indigenous person at the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. Now there is an Indigenous commissioner and two more Indigenous staff. As the member knows, Indigenous children, who are only a small per cent of our population of young people, tragically make up an inordinately large percentile of young kids who are getting in trouble. It is so sad.

[5.10 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is very sad, minister. Sorry, I am not sure quite how that related to the question. The last few words are “to be enacted into legislation”. I am wondering what that means. What kind of legislation are we looking for?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: People with disabilities will be covered by the equal opportunities legislation and people who are suffering a disability because their rights are being trammelled will be able to find redress in new legislation. On that point, I defer to the commissioner to expand on what I said.

Ms J. McGowan-Jones: The Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians group has been discussing the need, particularly for the rights of Indigenous peoples, to be enacted into legislation, because notwithstanding signing the United Nations conventions, there is not much power in those conventions without appropriate complementary legislation across the country. For next year one of the key priorities of that group is to see some of those various areas enacted into legislation at the commonwealth level, or at the commonwealth, state and territory level. The importance of this is in ensuring that it is about not just justice, but all the rights of the child, of which there are 54 articles in the convention. They include freedom from sexual slavery, freedom from slavery, a right to education and a right to health et cetera. It is about making sure that when those particular articles in the convention are not enacted in legislation such as the Equal Opportunity Commission Act, the Racial Discrimination Act, that we can protect the rights we have for education et cetera in Australia by having them in legislation in the right place.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 31: Corruption and Crime Commission, \$32 548 000 —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Attorney General.

Ms E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr D. Robinson, Director, Operations.

Mr M. Squires, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with these details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

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I give the call to the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 469 and significant issues impacting the agency. I note there is continued pressure on the assessment process caused by, among other issues, continued high staff vacancy rates that have impacted the assessment process. Can the Attorney General advise whether there is any information that explains the continued high staff vacancy rates and what those reasons are?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the CEO, Ms Johnson.

Ms E. Johnson: The vacancy rate in the assessments area is up to around a 20 per cent vacancy rate, which is a little higher than the rest of the commission. We do not have any particular reasons for that area being at a vacancy rate of that significance. It is a challenging area to work in. It is a front-facing role. Officers in that team have a lot of dealings with members of the public; however, like most areas across the public and private sectors, recruitment and retention is difficult at this time. It is a tough market. There is nothing specific that we can point to. I will see whether David Robinson, director of operations, has anything to add to that response.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I invite Mr Robinson to answer.

Mr D. Robinson: That is right; I do not think there are any specific reasons for that. Recruitment is a problem across the sector with the labour market the way it is at the moment. There is a lot of pressure, as Emma mentioned, on the assessments area in terms of being a front-facing part of the organisation, which typically means we have a higher turnover in that area. That higher turnover is exacerbated by the security clearance process that we have for everyone at the commission. The commission needs to be negative vetting level 1 cleared and that takes time. Recruitment processes are underway. We are regularly filling positions, but it is challenging in the current environment.

[5.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: How many roles at the CCC are currently vacant? What impact is that having on the operations of the CCC?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Could I defer to the CEO, please.

Ms E. Johnson: Thank you for the question. I would have to take that on notice. I do not have that exact figure with me today.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay. Could we have that by way of supplementary information?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Certainly.

The CHAIR: Can the Leader of the Liberal Party specifically state what she is after?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I do not know about the second part of what impact it is having, but we can give the member the vacancy figures.

Ms L. METTAM: I would like the figures on how many roles are currently vacant at the CCC.

The CHAIR: Is the Attorney General happy to provide that information?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

Ms L. METTAM: What impact are these vacancies having on the operations of the CCC?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Obviously, for any agency to be acting at optimum speed, we would want all our positions filled. Big jobs can be outsourced to make up the work. Even though it is the CCC, an example of that was the matter of Scott Austic, who had been convicted of murder, was subsequently acquitted of murder and made allegations of evidence planting. It was a big job to look at. Obviously, the CCC did not have all its positions filled, so the assessment process—because there were masses of documents such as the police brief, the first trial and first appeal, the petition to go forward, the second trial and the second appeal—was outsourced to an independent barrister, Mr Tony Power of chambers. That was handled, even though there were not perhaps optimum staffing levels in the assessment area. Similarly, acting commissioners can be brought in when required.

Ms L. METTAM: Further to that, prosecutors have now dropped the state's biggest case of public sector fraud, which came to light as a result of the work of the CCC. Is the Attorney General suggesting that that case is also an example of how the CCC could have been or should have been better resourced?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The CCC did marvellously in that case. The Department of Communities did marvellously in finding the corruption of Mr Paul Whyte in the first place, albeit on the suspicion of others about his lifestyle, the horseracing and all that. It was a marvellous effort by the CCC that brought it all to life. The CCC referred it to the police. We might get to this in the Director of Public Prosecutions section; I know all about this case. The CCC's effort was stellar. It was a five-star effort. We can deal with the dropping of the prosecution in another section if the member wants to ask me a question and we have time. It is a decision that I wholly back for reasons.

Ms L. METTAM: While we are on the Corruption and Crime Commission, is the Attorney General very confident that the CCC did its job in relation to Jacob Anthonisz?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: If the member is asking me to rate my level of confidence in the CCC in that particular matter, I would rate it 110 out of 100.

Ms L. METTAM: The charges amounted in the end to about \$2.5 million, but I understand that the amount taken was over \$25 million.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Correct.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the Attorney General saying that there were no failures of the CCC in relation to that?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There were none whatsoever! The member has to remember that the CCC examined Mr Whyte. The CCC was able to put certain matters to him, which resulted in him being charged for \$2.5 million and which resulted in him immediately trying to take his own life. Then when he woke up in hospital, and his family were around him, he decided to do more disclosures than what he did during examination. He said, "I did this, this and this", and it just started building. It was very complex. I think there were something like three primary bank accounts, 50 subsidiary bank accounts and 14 credit cards to cover all this up. Whilst the CCC had the investigation running and referred the first lot of charges to the DPP, he tried to take his own life and then started talking about all these other accounts, and off we went.

Ms L. METTAM: But 500 charges have now been dropped, so where did the state let the public down?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Nowhere! The member can ask me about this in another section like the DPP or the State Solicitor's Office wherein I can answer it, but it is not in this section. I am not trying to avoid it, member. I know about it in detail.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 469 and the service summary on the bottom third of the page. Service 1 is about assessing all allegations, but it could be any one of these three services. I am not sure where my question fits, but the Attorney General will be able to correct me if I am not right. I understand that the CCC is currently investigating the WA Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Parliament House and the Labor Party on a possible abuse of funds. There was an article written in November last year by Gary Adshead and published on WAtoday. Can the Attorney General advise how the inquiry is progressing? I am particularly interested to know whether any members of Parliament are making claims of privilege, following on from the challenges that we know have been experienced when investigations involve members of Parliament.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will never discuss a current operational matter of the CCC, even under privilege here in Parliament when perhaps I could not be prosecuted for breaching secrecy. I do not know whether that is right; I might not be prosecuted here in Parliament. But it would be a grave misconduct for me to reveal where any operational matter of the CCC currently lies.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would the Attorney General or the commission like to provide any comment on whether they are satisfied with the level of cooperation they are getting from the Labor Party, DPC or the Parliament?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I understand the political point the member is trying to make and the headline she is trying to get.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am just querying it.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: But, no, I will not answer it. My only reflection is one by way of comparison. When Liberal Party and Nationals WA members were under investigation, they used their position on the Joint Standing Committee

on the Corruption and Crime Commission to block the reappointment of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner for 14 months. Talk about a lack of cooperation! Mr Jim Chown, who was under active investigation by the CCC, used his vote on the joint standing committee to stop the investigation into him. I tell members what: there is no member of the caucus who will be doing that!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am glad to hear it, Attorney General.

The CHAIR: Maybe we should go back to the budget line items.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It was; it was in relation to an inquiry that we know is underway! That is all I have.

The appropriation was recommended.

[5.30 pm]

Division 30: Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, \$55 673 000 —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Attorney General.

Mr R. Owen, Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr P. Rechichi, Director, Operations.

Mr M. Bugg, Director, Legal Services.

Mr L. Beeck, Manager, Financial Services.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

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I give the call to the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 459, outcomes, services and key performance information and the government goal of safe, strong and fair communities. I again refer to the fact that prosecutors have dropped the state's biggest case of public sector fraud, which came to light as a result of the work undertaken by the Corruption and Crime Commission. How did this happen?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Certainly. Can I just correct the question?

The CHAIR: Absolutely, minister.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It was temporarily dropped.

Ms L. METTAM: Right.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It was a strategic move. As I explained before, Mr Whyte was charged with \$2.345 million worth of offences. He attempted to take his own life and went to hospital. Shortly thereafter, after conferring with his family, he made a massive confession that went even further than the disclosures he had made in the hearing room before he tried to take his own life. It was masses of information. The police prepared a spreadsheet. As I have said, they were trying to follow all the cheques everywhere. They charged him with all the offences, to which he pleaded guilty. He got 12 years in prison.

Ms L. METTAM: For \$2.5 million or \$25 million?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: No, the lot—\$22.5 million.

How were the charges dropped? That interview implicated—I always forget his name—Mr Anthonisz, who was charged. The police had the job of preparing the brief for the prosecution, which was forwarded to the prosecution. The prosecution advised the police that a lot of the evidence—nearly all of it—that had been gathered against Mr Anthonisz was in an inadmissible form. Had the trial proceeded at that stage and had his defence counsel taken objection to the evidence, he could well have been acquitted. During the year, the prosecution had been asking for extra statements and, as has been said in court, there was a communication breakdown because at the police end,

there had been a turnover of staff in the section. The head investigator resigned from the force and others were moved out. People came in and looked at this massive job but the evidence was not prepared for the prosecutor in the format that could have been received by the court. If they had boxed on at that stage, Mr Anthonisz may well have been acquitted so the matter was discontinued. The police will do their job and complete the brief of evidence. There is no bar at law to recharging him on a refreshed brief. We will not have it that either the CCC or the Director of Public Prosecutions did anything less than a stellar job.

Ms L. METTAM: Will the Attorney General clarify whether it was under-resourcing of police that saw the evidence put not being in an admissible form?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The member would have to ask the Western Australia Police Force; its members come on at eight o'clock tonight. It is not a question, as I understand it, of under-resourcing; rather, there was staff turnover with an officer resigning and another applying for a promotion and being moved to a sergeant in traffic, which happens.

Ms L. METTAM: There is an exodus; we know that many officers are leaving the force.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: One left while others were transferred out of the section. New staff came in to a job that was not properly finished and had to pick up it. The DPP requested more information and there was more staff turnover. To give the member an idea, the prosecution cannot go on a summary of where the money went through three primary bank accounts, 50 subsidiary bank accounts and 14 credit cards. The prosecution cannot say, "There's the summary, your Honour, to put to the jury." They have to get evidence from each bank behind it to show where he was putting the money and it has to be in an admissible form. That is a big job. If he had pleaded guilty, what the police had at that stage was sufficient for the court to sentence him, but it was not sufficient for a contested trial in front of a jury. Whilst it is regrettable, I hasten to add, as I said in the previous division, the CCC acted 110 out of 100, as did the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is just regrettable that there was this churn within the police section and that the issues that had been raised with them had not been properly attended to. All is not lost because of the wise decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions to discontinue, get the work done and file a new indictment.

[5.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: What is the time frame for the new indictment?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The member will have to ask the police in the next section of estimates. We do not do the police work, nor can I forecast that. The police were asking for an 18-month adjournment of the trial. That is what the police wanted. No judge was going to adjourn a trial and put a person on bail for the next 18 months! It has been discontinued. Everyone is hopeful that it will be well under a year and that this time next year, when we come back to estimates, we can be smart Johnny and say, "I told you so."

Ms L. METTAM: Are we waiting on the police?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: At this stage we are waiting on the police to give the director the brief in the admissible format that the director and his staff have requested.

Ms L. METTAM: Once the evidence is in a form that the DPP is comfortable with, will that trigger it?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the director himself, because he makes the calls and is independent of me.

Mr R. Owen: It is a function of my office to always assess every investigation that is handed to us by police. That assessment involves whether there is a prima facie case and whether there are reasonable prospects of conviction. In that assessment of reasonable prospects of conviction, there is an assessment about whether the evidence is in an admissible form. There is also a public interest assessment. That is a continuing obligation on my office right up until trial. In respect of what is to happen in the future, if the evidence that has been requisitioned by my office of the police since approximately 2021 to 2022 comes in in an admissible form, that process of assessment will occur independently and afresh in respect of what evidence we have at the time.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you. Is the DPP anticipating that the evidence will come before him within the next 12 months?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to the director as he has been in direct contact with the police.

Mr R. Owen: The police have indicated the time frame. We are not in control of the time frame. What was submitted to the court when the discontinuance was presented was that the time frame was estimated by the police to be 18 months. Whether that has changed is a matter for the police to address the member on.

Ms L. METTAM: How confident is the DPP that the police, the second time around and with a bit more certainty, will be able to get this right?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I will defer to the director, but that does involve a bit of speculation.

The CHAIR: Mr Owen, you can answer as you feel comfortable.

Mr R. Owen: Thank you, chair. In this case, we were very specific about the nature and form of the evidence that was required in respect of why the prosecution could not proceed at this time. If that information is provided and

no other circumstances or public interest factors change within the time period that is estimated at the moment, our reassessment will occur in that framework.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you for that. We have only 15 minutes left, so we need to go to another division.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 34: Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, \$753 000 —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Attorney General.

Ms S. Burnside, Principal Adviser to the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission.

Mr J. Deery, Chief Finance Officer, Department of Justice.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The parliamentary inspector apologises because he was on pre-booked annual leave before we got this message, and he is out of the jurisdiction.

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

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 492 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the significant issues impacting the agency. The second paragraph talks about the significant increase in the number of investigations and cases undertaken by the office. In this note, it attributes this to a greater awareness of the office. Is that the case or have there been other contributing factors?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Corruption and Crime Commissioner has adopted a policy of advising people whose complaint to him might be rejected of the availability of the Office of the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission to review his decision. By educating complainants of the existence of the office, it might have led to the increase.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that a relatively new practice of the CCC to advise of the existence of the parliamentary inspector?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I think there also has been an uptick in the number of complaints going to the CCC. A lot are assessed and are told that their complaint is not within the CCC's jurisdiction and that they can go to the inspector if they want to.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is an analysis done of the complaints that come through? Would the parliamentary inspector be able to advise whether there are any themes in terms of the types of complaints or reasons for complaints?

[5.50 pm]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to my principal adviser.

Ms S. Burnside: Every year in the annual report we report on the broad themes of the complaints. We will have so many complaints that are referred to us directly by the Corruption and Crime Commission or by the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. We have some matters that are filed under "miscellaneous" because they are requests from people who have matters that do not fall within the parliamentary inspector's jurisdiction, so if they have not made a complaint to the commission first, we advise them that we cannot assess the way the commission deals with the matter until they have made a complaint. I think that last year we reported on the number and proportion of complaints that related to police, which broadly reflects the proportion of complaints that the commission receives about police as distinct from other public sector agencies.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The first service summary under the heading "Expense" on page 493 is the evaluation of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Corruption and Crime Commission's operations. Are there any issues that the parliamentary inspector is aware of that make it difficult for the inspector to be able to carry out that responsibility?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to Ms Burnside.

Ms S. Burnside: No. The office has sufficient resourcing to carry out the function and the commission cooperates. Whenever the parliamentary inspector gets a complaint that requires him to assess the appropriateness of the commission's procedures, he has the right of access to all the commission's materials on the matter and they are swiftly provided.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Have there been any events when there was not an open line of communication between the CCC and the parliamentary inspector in relation to information that was required?

Ms S. Burnside: No.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I again refer the service summary on page 493 and note that the funding for the evaluation of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Corruption and Crime Commission's operations has gone from \$818 000 in 2022–23 to \$895 000 in 2023–24. Can the Attorney General please explain what the increase relates to? Is it related to the number of cases or is it an additional number of staff?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I defer to Mr Deery.

Mr J. Deery: There is little change in the total cost of services from the 2022–23 budget, which was \$818 000. It is up by six per cent, which is \$53 000. There was a minor increase in the budget between the 2022–23 budget to \$895 000 in 2023–24 as a result of an increase because of a determination by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. There were also additional expenses following the implementation of the new public sector wages policy, which we heard about earlier from different departments. There was also a one-off cost-of-living allowance. As the member said, it is a slight increase in cost. It also involves operating and replacing minor equipment and miscellaneous costs.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 28: State Solicitor's Office, \$50 242 000 —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Mr J.R. Quigley, Attorney General.

Ms A. Komninos, Acting State Solicitor.

Mr N. Kabugua, Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Mr W. Meier, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr J. Lee, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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The Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the third significant issue impacting the agency on page 437 and note that the volume and complexity of child sex abuse claims against the state continues to rise. The State Solicitor's Office is looking at opportunities to better manage those claims for the state. What is driving the increase in the volume of child sex abuse claims against the state?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I would like to defer to the acting State Solicitor because she will have a good idea of the driver behind that.

Ms A. Komninos: The nature of child sex abuse claims is that we removed the statute of limitations. It appears that for many, many years, people have stayed silent and it is a very slow process for people to come to terms with bringing a claim. Since the statute of limitations was removed on 1 July 2018, we have received 382 claims. There does not appear to be a slowdown in those claims. In the last six months, we received 57 more claims.

Ms L. METTAM: In what period?

Ms A. Komninos: From 1 January we received another 57 claims. There is a significant continuation of claims coming forward and the claims are highly complex and factually complex, and because they are historical, it is also difficult to get across all the facts and details.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: You have 10 seconds!

Ms L. METTAM: Given the significant body of work, what can be done? Is there a dedicated agency to support these individuals, given that they are historical cases?

The CHAIR: Sorry, Leader of the Liberal Party.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 9: Office of the Information Commissioner, \$3 111 000 —

The appropriation was recommended.

Legal Aid Commission of Western Australia —

The CHAIR: For the minutes, I note that the Legal Aid Commission of Western Australia was not examined.

Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Division 14: Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 1 to 3, Defence Industry; Veterans Issues, \$414 065 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Defence Industry; Veterans Issues.

Mrs R. Brown, Director General.

Ms L. Dawson, Deputy Director General.

Mr A. Boddy, Acting Executive Director, Defence West.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr P. Zappelli, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr J. Gangell, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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Do we have any questions? I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to paragraph 7.2.3 on page 192 of budget paper No 2, which states —

monitoring and assessing implications for Western Australia following the release of the Commonwealth Government's Defence Strategic Review ...

Can the minister explain the initial implications for Western Australia of the *National defence: Defence strategic review 2023*?

Mr P. PAPALIA: At this stage, some pretty significant matters have been identified in the strategic review that represent opportunities for Western Australia, but some clarification around shipbuilding in particular will have to be provided by the federal government before we are able to answer the member's question more thoroughly and identify where a lot of the opportunities lie. The member probably would have seen the federal government's comments about the need to consolidate shipbuilding in Western Australia. It has identified and confirmed, as noted for some time now, that Western Australia is one of only two naval shipbuilding sites in the country. The Minister for Defence Industry, Pat Conroy, made some comments about shipbuilding in Western Australia needing to be consolidated. We have two shipbuilders here and he said that one has a lot of work and not enough workers, while the other one has workers but not enough work. We are waiting on the next move by the federal government.

I have met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Conroy and they have indicated that work is being done right now on a very rapid review of the surface fleet post the announcement of nuclear submarines, because that changes everything. Our surface fleet structure was being developed based on Collins-class and Attack-class submarines, then that was all dropped. We have now gone to nuclear submarines, which perhaps changes the need for anti-submarine frigates, for instance. The review will look at what the surface fleet will look like. It may even

have implications for the ships that are built in Western Australia at the moment, which are the Evolved Cape-class by Austal and the offshore patrol vessel by Luerksen Australia. What happens next may all change after this quick review, which I think the federal government anticipates being finished by September.

Ms M. BEARD: Knowing that that is coming, has the government taken any steps since the release of that information to review whether any high-level opportunities exist to expand defence assets in the north of the state? I know that there has long been a push for a defence presence in Exmouth.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Again, the strategic review is pretty light on for specifics, but it identified the need to harden our northern bases, which in Western Australia includes the bases at Curtin and Learmonth. The review also referred to Cocos (Keeling) Islands, but gave no real detail beyond the need to harden and strengthen. The strategic review makes reference to the expectation that the Army will defend those bases, but in Western Australia we have very little presence in terms of the regular Army, and the whole Pilbara presence really is the Pilbara regiment, which is an understrength reserve unit. The Kimberley has part of the North West Mobile Force. We have a very small presence from Norforce in Broome for the whole Kimberley. Neither of those units would be capable of doing what was suggested that the Army will do, so there is potentially the opportunity for more presence, a structural change and some sort of forced posture change that involves the Army. There is also an opportunity for forced posture in shifting. The obvious place that I would suggest and the member would think of would be Learmonth, near Exmouth. The Air Force currently operates out of Learmonth, but it is mostly maritime surveillance based in Adelaide that flies to Learmonth, is temporarily based there and then pushes on to the west before coming back to Learmonth and going home to Adelaide. There is a lot of opportunity for more activity.

Our submission to the strategic review argued that there needs to be more presence and activity. The strategic review acknowledged the need for more activity. Exercise Talisman Sabre, which is the big exercise coming up, includes the Kimberley but not the Pilbara. That is a big multinational exercise across the northern parts of Australia, but the Kimberley is essentially where the Australian Defence Force assets will be operating from for that exercise.

Ms M. BEARD: Does the government support having a deepwater port at Exmouth and would it potentially be part of the strategic planning in response to the defence review?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member referring to the Gascoyne Gateway proposal?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: At the moment, that is a private enterprise proposal with lead agency status. This department is the lead agency for the proposal, providing something like a concierge service through the approvals process, so we support the proposal in that regard. With respect to defence matters—we are kind of stretched as far as a state defence industry minister goes—it really would be a federal government matter as to whether it perceives a deepwater port as being needed for its defence purposes. That is not my role.

[7.10 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 192 of budget paper No 2 and paragraph 7.2.3, which is about Defence West. Paragraph 7.2.1 states —

implementing initiatives and exploring opportunities to advance strategic partnerships between industry and defence and expand Western Australia's role within defence supply chains;

Can the minister explain what work has been done by the state government to improve that supply chain for defence?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the question about the supply chain or the engagement and partnerships with industry?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is about expanding the defence supply chain with industry.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are a couple of things in that line. There are strategic partnerships between industry and defence. We have been absolutely engaged in identifying those opportunities and building the relationships. We have a Defence Advocate. The new one is Rear Admiral Philip Spedding. He chairs a defence industry advisory forum. The intent is to enable those industry players to talk directly to the state government about identifying potential further engagement with defence industry opportunities. We also provide two-thirds of the funding for the Western Australian Defence Science Centre. It provides grants for research and development projects, with the aim of identifying problems that confront defence players, particularly in Western Australia. We have just changed the structure of the panel that determines where those grants go. It is now chaired by Rear Admiral Spedding. We also have Commodore Ivan Ingham, who is the senior defence officer in Western Australia; Brigadier Brett Chaloner, who is the 13th Brigade commander; and somebody from the Air Force, but I am not sure who. The intent is for them to identify the problems that defence has, and then we view opportunities for funding research by either universities or universities and the industry in conjunction to solve the problem with a view to potentially creating an opportunity for export. Just fixing our problems is a relatively minor market, but in defence, the opportunity lies with export. That is what those are focused on.

With regard to supply chains, our defence strategic review submission identified the vulnerability of defence supply chains into Western Australia, as confirmed not only by the pandemic, but also by the recent floods in South Australia that destroyed a rail line, which disrupted everything, not just toilet paper supplies. We made the point that we are at the end of national supply chains. There are very few producers of defence supplies; in fact, there are none. Some key defence items such as ammunition and weapons are not manufactured in WA; they are manufactured on the east coast and we are at the other end of the supply chain. We have identified those vulnerabilities in our submission. A lot of the solutions to those are going to come from the federal government. I acknowledge those problems and challenges, and the federal government has made some announcements in response to some of the review's findings, so it is doing some things. It is planning to establish a sovereign sea mine construction capability, but it will be in Sydney, unfortunately. It will be on the other side of the country. It has talked about bringing home capabilities and establishing missile manufacture and the like. But at this stage it has not got into things that might happen in Western Australia. I have advocated for this, and I will continue to make the case that it needs to build redundancy into its supply chains, not just ensure that they are robust. We need some degree of redundancy for anything we do as a sovereign nation. At the moment, there are small arms manufacturers at one site. It is a critical vulnerability and it is on the other side of the country. That could be said of firearms manufacture and a lot of artillery manufacture. They are all done at an increasingly small number of sites and they are on the east coast. We will keep making the case. The real change will come from the federal government making calls and changing things.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I just note as an aside that when my father was a mature man, we used to build tanks in Western Australia.

Mr P. PAPALIA: During World War II, there were dozens of small arms manufacturers right across the country. I think there were more than 60.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister mentioned R&D projects and grants. Where does that appear in the budget? Where can I find out about those?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is on page 202—"Defence Science Centre". I will put on the record again that we put into that program twice as much money as the federal government does. It is a very small program, but it is quite powerful—potentially even more powerful. I regularly advocate, and I did when I last met with the Deputy Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Defence Industry, that they should at least match our funding. There is likelihood of that happening, I hope, because they have just significantly increased funding for the Defence Science and Technology Group as part of bringing sovereign capability back to the country.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Can the minister give some examples? It is estimated that \$400 000 will be spent this year. Can he give us some examples of what grants have been given?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have just changed the system. We started it in about 2018, I think; I cannot remember. We announced it with Melissa Price when she was minister. Up until now, it has essentially been a series of research grants that have mostly gone towards funding PhDs on defence subject matter without as much focus as I would have liked, but we have collectively addressed that now. We have significantly increased the number of PhDs in defence in Western Australia over that time. If we have not solved a lot of practical defence problems, at the very least we have done research and enabled PhD students to pursue their studies in the defence sector. That is a good outcome.

There are a couple of case studies. For example, using a collaborative research grant from the Defence Science Centre, researchers from Edith Cowan University are utilising recent developments in virtual reality technology to develop, test and incorporate high-fidelity, high-graphical parachute simulation into military parachutist training. That is one of the studies we will be doing, and there is another one that was originally funded as a WA case study under the DSC grants. In 2021, ECU researchers leveraged the CRG project to secure an additional \$198 000 in funding from the Department of Defence to expand the project to develop a working VR system, providing an immersive interactive simulated parachute descent under canopy and a virtual version of a real environment. That would be more comfortable than jumping out of a plane. That is one of the things that have been done. A lot of other research projects have been funded.

What we are doing now is very much tying it back to the operator in WA and identifying a problem. We do that through Commodore Ingham, Captain Gary Lawton from the submarine force, Brett Chaloner from the Army or a senior officer from the Air Force. Through their contacts, they will seek to identify actual problems that WA defence people confront that we might be able to solve through a research grant. That is what they are going to be doing. We have not really done a round of that yet with those guys on the panel, but that is about to start.

[7.20 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: I had a question about the special purpose accounts, referring to page 207 of budget paper No 2. Can the minister give me a summary of the status of the Defence Science Centre? Who are the members of the science technology group and who do they report to?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Essentially, we fund a director of the Defence Science Centre. The Defence Science and Technology Group is the federal agency that does defence research and science activity. It funds a deputy director. As I said earlier, we contribute money. We contribute about two-thirds of the money for grants and operations of the Defence Science Centre. It does activities other than the grant scheme, but we contribute two-thirds of the money and it contributes one-third. The Defence Science Centre is physically located inside Defence West, which is part of the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, just so the member knows where it is.

We put in \$500 000 annually and the DSTG, the federal agency, puts in \$270 000. The public universities all contribute \$50 000 each. All that money is put together as funding for the Defence Science Centre. A lot of it is disbursed. It is all used, mostly for research grants, but it has other smaller activities. It does little events and problem and opportunity things, for which it gives smaller grants or shorter term research opportunities to people.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Under industry development, it refers to working with government agencies and the private sector.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which page is it?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Sorry. I apologise, minister. It is page 197, budget paper No 2, under “Industry Development”. That section is about promoting the defence industries.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sorry, what page number was it?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is page 197, “Industry Development”. It is in relation to supply chains.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which line?

Dr D.J. HONEY: In the preamble to paragraph 3, it refers to working with government agencies, and then there is the total cost of service.

Has there been an analysis of the availability of suitable land at the marine complex? There has been an enormous focus on the naval component and, obviously, we have the Collins-class submarine servicing. Hopefully, we will pick up something in relation to the nuclear submarines, and then we have other naval vessels, as the minister knows very well. That site is extremely constrained. As I understand it, the marine complex is pretty well fully occupied. If we were going to see a significant expansion of that site, I would imagine that we would need to see a physical expansion of that location. I wonder whether there has been a review of appropriate available land so that we can have co-located industries at the marine complex.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Prior to the federal election and, in fact, prior to the AUKUS announcement before the federal election, a process was underway for the better part of a year and a half, going on two years. It was led by a task force that was led by the director general on our side and by Tony Dalton, the deputy secretary of national naval shipbuilding, on the federal government side. It looked at the challenge of land at the Australian Marine Complex in light of the announced need for a large vessel dry berth. A number of studies were funded to prepare and inform that process.

The AUKUS announcement kind of threw the whole thing into the air, because that changes everything. We are the submarine base. In fact, at that point, there was not enough detail about the AUKUS statement, and then we had the federal election, so for a period of time we went into a degree of knowledge vacuum.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Hibernation.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. Subsequently, the member would have seen a lot of action and activity. They established a nuclear submarine task force with Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead leading it. It did a really rapid bit of work and then announced that we will initially get Virginia-class submarines and then an AUKUS submarine at the end of that period. In the meantime, the member would have seen that it has announced the nuclear Submarine Rotational Force–West. I am pretty certain that is what they call it. Essentially, that is composed of the Virginia-class American submarines coming down here and forward operating from HMAS *Stirling* for a period of time. Ultimately by 2027, that will get to as many as four American nuclear submarines and one British Astute-class submarine, well before we have our own.

All that has implications for us. It means that Western Australia will have to rapidly develop a capacity to sustain nuclear submarines and do some degree of maintenance. We put a proposal to the federal government in August last year for a pathway to achieve nuclear submarine sustainment capability. I briefed the member’s colleague Hon Tjorn Sibma about it, but essentially what the federal government is going with kind of looks like what we proposed. It is not identical, but it is still early days as far as clarity. We proposed a phased development of that capability, and the first bit has to start almost immediately because nuclear submarines will be forward operating from our base very soon, so we have to start getting ready, but all that is driven by the federal government and the Navy.

There will be implications for the Australian Marine Complex in due course, but right now, the federal government has publicly announced that all the submarine activity will be at HMAS *Stirling*. I am interested in seeing how that goes. That aside, the nuclear submarines are big. The Virginia class is a big submarine, so even if it does the operating

and maintenance at HMAS *Stirling*, there will be implications for the surface fleet and whether it can continue to berth the fleet there all the time and do the maintenance. There may be implications for the Australian Marine Complex in having to accommodate more surface fleet activity there. They are not at that point yet, and it is part of the surface fleet review, which was due in September and I referred to earlier. The Deputy Prime Minister indicated that it will be really rapid; it will not go on. There will be some serious decisions.

Regarding what the member said earlier about land down there, in recent times a lot of sheds have been knocked over and a bit of land is available on the foreshore at the Australian Marine Complex. Once we get a picture from the feds of what they want, we will have to work rapidly to deliver our state support. It will probably have a defence precinct. That might have implications for non-defence activity, which is what the member was referring to before. I cannot give him an indication of what that will look like yet because we are not at that point.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is all the land to the north of the existing site—the Austal sheds and so on, where the North West Shelf platforms were constructed—under the control of government?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member talking about the common-user facility? That is the big flat bit where they do the lifting and shifting with a floating dock. BAE Systems, with the frigates, is just north of that. There is often offshore oil and gas activity there, next to the big shed; that is a big lay-down area. Then more land is further north of Austal, right at the other end of the CUF, which has not been developed but is used at the moment by Austal as a sort of lay-down area.

Whatever the federal government comes up with for site use, with this consolidation and request of us, if the federal government determines that it needs a defence area with nothing else going on, we will not be able to do it. What we call the common-user facility is available for commercial activity as well as defence, and there are multiple users. That may not be practical, so we will have to look at some other solution. I cannot tell the member now what its demands will be, and how we will go about solving them and providing our contribution to meeting the demands. As soon as we know, we will move on it, but at the moment this next decision around the surface fleet has serious implications for Western Australia. It is all on the upside. It is good for Western Australia. There will be a lot more activity and a lot of specialist skills being built around nuclear submarine sustainment. A lot of investment will be happening. I cannot give the member the details, not because I am not telling the member; it is just that I do not know.

[7.30 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: Given that will happen quickly and there will be all sorts of skill gaps—the skilled worker shortage is obviously taboo—has the government done any modelling around the shortages and how the department might foster skills development in preparation for that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Regarding the task force that I referred to earlier for Henderson, which the director general is the lead on for our side, we are looking at transitioning that to one focused on the future of defence needs around Henderson as opposed to preparing for a flood vessel dry berth solely being the focus, which is what it was before. That is one activity going on. If we transition that task force, part of its remit will be looking at training requirements. At the same time, we have already established a working group with the federal government on nuclear submarine sustainment. The deputy director general, Linda Dawson, is the lead for us on that, supported by our advocate, Admiral Spedding. From the other side, Rear Admiral Matt Buckley is the second-in-command of the submarine task force. It will bring in whoever it needs. I have anticipated that it will probably need someone from the Department of Training and Workforce Development to do the modelling of training requirements, and probably Terry from South Metropolitan TAFE will be training people. Again, we are at that point at which we are still waiting for the next bit of guidance from the federal government.

These guys have established a relationship. They are creating a working group. Before all the nuclear stuff and this latest round of strategic review, the Department of Training and Workforce Development had developed an industry workforce plan for defence in Western Australia, and it was delivering it. We put tens of millions of dollars into providing training pathways for people to meet the demand, and now it has all changed because we have a whole new sector. No-one has nuclear sustainment in Australia, let alone Western Australia. Sorry, \$30 million was already budgeted for that and was in the budget. We were training people. We had other programs. This portfolio has the defence industry veterans employment scheme, DIVES, that attracts defence people in uniform as they are retiring. If they find a job in the defence industry sector, we fund a scholarship for them to get “gap filled in” training. We already have things underway, but that was pre-nuclear. We will have to reassess and then shape our new pathway for delivery in the nuclear world.

It will not be just nuclear subs; it will also be meeting the demands of the shipbuilding sector. The Department of Training and Workforce Development does that by looking at the whole state. It does not look at just the defence industry. The skills that the member is talking about, even if they are in nuclear and submarines, are mostly the same technicians, electricians, plumbers, welders and people who the resource sector wants, except they obviously have a pathway towards a nuclear environment. There will be demand for those people beyond defence. The department looks at everybody, and then it looks at attrition, movement and the like, and competition from other

jurisdictions or other parts of the world and says, “How are we going to ensure that we meet our demand?” It is pretty good at it. The department did a great job of it during the last boom and it is meeting the demand now. It is punching out apprentices all over the place, but this will very much be more tailored to accommodating this new thing as well.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I had a chance to visit a nuclear submarine, which I think was a Virginia-class submarine down at HMAS *Stirling*.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Can the member remember which one?

Dr D.J. HONEY: It was the USS *Springfield*.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the Los Angeles-class.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Los Angeles—I apologise. The minister would know! Thank you.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am a diver, not a submariner, but I was there with the member.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It was interesting seeing that, and I observed the resources required for just one vessel. I agree with the minister that I cannot intuitively see how we could have three of those class submarines or larger, the Virginia class, there at that time. Is there some discussion or thought for the work going on around the Westport development? That will be a substantial port structure, with possibly 100 hectares of development. Is there some thought that perhaps future military needs could be incorporated into that? Is there at least some channel of communication with Westport?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Everything I have talked about with regard to the Australian Marine Complex and by de facto HMAS *Stirling* is provided to the Westport task force so that it ensures that it is understood and planned for. I would not anticipate that the actual port would have any naval requirement other than it has to deconflict shipping and ensure we have channel capacity and all those sorts of things that we require, but it needs to know what is going on in Henderson. The DG has just reminded me that there are Westport officers on the joint Henderson task force at the moment. There is no reason why the task force would not continue to be at least aware and cognisant of what is happening. We are being sensitive of the need to ensure that whatever planning is going on, we share the demands of the different sectors, particularly on this matter. One of the things we asked about when talking to the federal government post the election, and when it was meeting with its nuclear submarine task forces, was about whether it would require a dualling of channels and such things.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 192 and paragraph 7.2.2 on the nuclear-powered submarine sustainment pathway. Who is leading the state’s participation in that particular program? Who is leading our involvement for the state government?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Deputy director general Dawson sits on the working group that we have established with the federal government, and so does our Defence Advocate, Phil Spedding. Phil is located in Canberra to facilitate presence, because we are all the way over here and the member knows how hard it is to keep awareness, but he is also very engaged and knowledgeable of the defence players in the field. He is working with Linda to ensure that we identify and create a nuclear-powered submarine optimal pathway road map.

As I said earlier, last August we gave a proposal to the federal government. Before we knew what submarine it was getting or anything of that nature, a proposal for acquiring a nuclear-powered submarine sustainment capability was provided. That was a pretty good road map I think. We have delivered that as a proposal. Whether it looks exactly like ours or it comes up with another one, the working group will have to identify a pathway that will have its own road map. We were ahead of the game when we gave the federal government that document. It has welcomed our proposal that we form a working group. Admiral Buckley met with Linda and Admiral Spedding already and they are working on it.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 192 and attracting investment in new industries, and paragraph 7.2.1, which refers to the defence supply chains. Can the minister tell me what percentage of the Australian defence supply chains are held by the WA sector?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, I would not be able to do that. We launched a defence industrial strategic plan in 2018, which identified that at that stage, defence contributed \$3 billion annually to the state’s economy, and our strategy was to double that in a decade. I have no doubt that that will be easily achieved, but that is not what the member asked me. It is probably not really easy for us to identify because we are talking about the federal agencies and we would have to ask them what percentage we in WA contribute.

[7.40 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 192 and paragraph 7.2.4 about managing the veterans issues portfolio and supporting the veteran community. Can the minister outline what the state government’s involvement is with that, please?

Mr P. PAPALIA: What is the involvement with the veteran support dogs program?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, and on that portfolio generally.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is not our core business. We made a significant increase in funding for the support of veterans. There used to be \$300 000 a year from the consolidated account that went into the Anzac Day Trust and it was then disbursed in support of the veterans issues portfolio. At that point, because it was a relatively small amount of money, a lot of it went towards commemorative purposes. At the last election, my predecessor Peter Tinley sought a commitment to increase that funding fourfold, and we did that. Now, \$1.3 million a year goes into the Anzac Day Trust. The trustees who are all volunteers manage it and they have no vested interests or anything of that nature other than they are veterans or have a longstanding commitment in support of veterans. Essentially, the trustees disburse all the funds annually. What we ask them to consider is that, because we have increased the money, two-thirds if not three-quarters of the money—it is not rigid—goes towards supporting living veterans and the remainder goes towards commemorative purposes so that we do not have it skewed towards building memorials at great cost when people out there might require support right now.

Since we increased that funding, we have initiated a range of programs. We also asked the board members to consider doing things like consolidating the funds to have fewer but bigger grants and extending, when possible, funding for services over a number of years to the people delivering the services to veterans so that it gives them a degree of certainty that has never been there. They are doing that now. The trustees have given three years' worth of funding to Legacy WA to deliver a range of programs for families and widows across the state. They are also funding caretaker and maintenance-type operations of the Legacy camp in Busselton every year for three years, and they are looking to do it in perpetuity so that it relieves Legacy of the need to fundraise for that practice.

Recently, the trustees have also funded a great program that is a partnership between RSLWA and Working Spirit, which is run by a woman named Karyn Hinder. She was initially running it off the smell of an oily rag. It is like a placement service whereby she finds work for veterans. It is very effective. It seeks out and identifies employers who want to employ veterans and then puts them in proximity to veterans and, essentially, matchmakes them. Working Spirit is doing that with RSLWA. It has created a portal that enhances its ability to do that more rapidly and effectively. The trustees have funded Working Spirit for two years in a row. Last year, Working Spirit placed 115 veterans into employment when it had not been running for the whole year and it was early days when it did not have the online portal. To put that into context, about 350 veterans leave the service in WA each year and Working Spirit put 115 of them in jobs. The jobs are not just in the public sector; the jobs are everywhere. That is a really effective thing. In accordance with our strategic plan, we want veterans and their families to see WA as the attractive place to transition—not retire; we want them to retire eventually—and to come here and work because it is an attractive jurisdiction. Those are the things the trust is doing.

Other money is also being dedicated. The paragraph that the member referred to has a reference to support dogs. We are funding the creation of an assistance dog training program in WA. The Department of Veterans' Affairs funds the training of assistance dogs for veterans, but there is no certified trainer in Western Australia, so the department has funded dog training for our veterans. The veteran does not meet the dog until it is fully trained and brought over here from some other state. We are looking to establish our own training in Western Australia that meets DVA requirements so that it can be certified. I anticipate that the Anzac Day Trust will fund a certain number of dogs a year once we get some sense of what it costs and how much demand there is. DVA studies show that the dogs are valuable and worthwhile, so we will do that, but it will be with a Western Australian provider. This funding is with the Anzac Day Trust. Just recently, we moved the money over there. It costs about \$430 000 to establish that capability and then deliver. If the Anzac Day Trust views it as valuable, it can continue to fund it.

We have done other things. Hopefully, the member might come along—he will get an invitation; all members will probably get one—on 27 July for the unveiling of the Korean War memorial in Kings Park. The state's contribution for this was funded by the Anzac Day Trust. There is a lot of other money coming from the South Korean government and industry, and I think the feds ended up contributing—I hope they did! There are things like that, but that was a smaller amount and our contribution to the memorial was \$150 000. Out of the \$1.3 million, the Anzac Day Trust might distribute \$300 000 or a bit more a year to commemorative things.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not know whether the minister has been approached—I know his predecessor was—by the HMAS *Perth I* Memorial Foundation. It was looking to build a memorial near the Leeuwin Barracks in East Fremantle. Is that something that the minister has actively considered?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That memorial has had two rounds of funding. It is a magnificent memorial, so, yes, it has received funding. That is the Naval Historical Society, and the building is now a visual memorial around which World War II photos tell the story on the outside of the building. The bow-shaped memorial at the front of the building was funded by a series of grants. Those guys are very effective at advocating for funding! But it is an appropriate and nationally significant memorial, and that is what we suggested to the trust with the commemorative stuff. Rather than funding an annual reunion of a unit or something of that nature, we said that it would be good if the trust focuses mostly on nationally significant commemorative events or memorials of national significance, like the HMAS *Sydney II* memorial in Geraldton, the HMAS *Perth I* memorial and the Korean War memorial. A group is fundraising to build a Battle of Crete memorial in Kings Park as well, and it has a grant from the Anzac Day Trust because that is a particularly Western Australian story around the 2nd/11th Battalion.

[7.50 pm]

Mr R.S. LOVE: In terms of the groups that are supported, does the state support the National Anzac Centre in Albany; and, if so, what is the level of support?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We do not support it from that trust. The board of the trust determines where the funds go. Funds have not gone from that trust to the Anzac Centre. The member would recall that the federal government funded it at the outset with a significant amount of money, but it does not contribute to the recurrent costs. It would be up to the board to determine whether it would fund something like that. I would argue that it should be a part of the Australian War Memorial's estate. In the past, we advocated for it to be adopted as a federal government responsibility. It is spending half a billion dollars on the War Memorial in Canberra, but that one has not been addressed.

Mr R.S. LOVE: A new mob is there now so perhaps the state government can have another try.

Mr P. PAPALIA: My view personally is that it is a nationally significant site. Albany is an extraordinary location; it is the place where the Anzacs from the east coast and New Zealand first met. The fleets that carried the first New Zealanders and east coast Australians on deployment anchored in King George Sound. The men went ashore in Albany and would have met for the very first time. That is extraordinary. It was the last point of friendly coast sighted by a lot of Australians and New Zealanders. It has a beautiful outlook and museum, which the federal government built. It is very hard for a lot of Western Australians to make their way to the national War Memorial, but it is not so hard for them to get down to Albany. The federal government created the Anzac Centre, so I would have thought it reasonable that it contributes something to support the council that runs it.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 7.53 to 8.00 pm

Division 26: Western Australia Police Force, including Road Safety Commission, \$1 752 947 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Police; Road Safety.

Mr C. Blanch, Commissioner of Police.

Mr A. Adams, Deputy Commissioner.

Ms K. Whiteley, Deputy Commissioner.

Ms S. Cardenia, Director, Finance and Business Services.

Mr J. Catanzaro, Director, Media.

Mr F. Pasquale, Executive Director.

Mr A. Warner, Road Safety Commissioner.

Mr P. Zappelli, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr J. Gangell, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committee will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: Good evening, everyone. I refer to page 409, financial statements, and the reference to the additional police officer recruits under the 950 police officer program. There is also a reference on page 400 under ongoing initiatives. How many additional officers have been recruited as part of this commitment for 950 additional officers —

Mr R.S. LOVE: We agreed to do road safety first.

Ms L. METTAM: I missed that bit!

Mr P. PAPALIA: If we can—if the member does not mind. It is just Adrian, and then he can go. Is the member okay with that? Sorry about that.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I kick off with a question on road safety. Apologies if that was unclear, Libby.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, sorry; we had a chat during the break.

Ms L. METTAM: That is okay.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 402 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the paragraph on regional road safety. I refer also to the statistic that the number of people who died on regional roads increased by 17 per cent in 2022. What is going wrong with the campaigns if we are seeing more deaths on our regional roads? What can we do to raise awareness amongst our road users?

Mr P. PAPALIA: There is not necessarily something going wrong with the campaigns. There was an increase in the road toll last year right around the nation. I can confirm that we are in the process of the biggest spend on regional road safety upgrades. The Leader of the Opposition would be aware of the regional road safety program that is straightening roads, hardening and widening the shoulders and installing audible edging and centre-lines.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is all right; I will ask a question about it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We are spending \$875.5 million, most of which has been spent. About \$300 million worth of work is currently underway. That pretty much covers off on 40 years of regional road safety improvements in about four years on the major arterial roads. Despite that comment in the budget, I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that the most recent incident analysis by Main Roads Western Australia showed that the rate is going down on those roads on which we have conducted that work. It has shifted significantly. Historically, two-thirds of deaths have been in the regions and one-third have been in the city. Peter Woronzow was at a function with me during National Road Safety Week last week and he indicated that they have done an analysis of serious crashes on those roads on which we have conducted that work. It is early days, but it looks as though it is having a measurable impact. Minister Saffioti has told me this, too. This figure in the budget is a bit deceptive; that was the figure at the time of writing the budget. It specifically talks about the raw numbers in terms of deaths. That is an accepted fact. There are more people on the roads and more people travelling and the like. That does not make it acceptable or a good thing, but there is an indication that that spend is working and there is a change. As soon as we get better analysis and we are able to, we will make that public so that people know about it.

There are ongoing education campaigns. The things that are killing people now are probably the same as they were 20 years ago—maybe not, because we did not have mobile phones then—or in the last five or 10 years. They include speeding and not wearing seatbelts. It is crazy; 44 people died in Western Australia last year from not wearing seatbelts, and a lot of them were in the regions. They also include inattention, often due to mobile devices or things of that nature; drinking and illicit drug use; and fatigue. Those five things remain the identified causes of the vast majority of deaths or serious crashes on our roads. That is unchanged. There has not been a new phenomenon. However, it is disturbing that the number is getting bigger and we are making all these efforts. Early indications from some recent analysis suggest that the road improvements are working. That is a good thing, because as more of that work is completed, we anticipate that a greater benefit will be realised.

Of course, people die in serious crashes in the city as well and we have to address that. A lot of them are around intersections. The Leader of the Opposition would have seen the recent initiative by the minister to reduce the speed on 80-kilometre-an-hour roads or higher to 70 kilometres an hour as cars approach traffic lights at intersections. That is mostly in the metro area. That is because intersections are where most serious crashes occur in the metropolitan area, and they are trying to tackle that. There are campaigns. I might get the Road Safety Commissioner to talk about what drives their research around what is causing the problem, where we target campaigns and how we try to tackle the problem directly.

[8.10 pm]

Mr A. Warner: The campaign to get people to change their behaviour on the roads is a complex space. We understand much more about the psychology of driver behaviour. The classic public health education and road safety campaigns around the, “Don’t do this and don’t do that”, and the shock-and-awe public health campaigns work up to a point, but after that they do not work at all. The people who are entrenched in their behaviours are very hard to shift with those traditional messages. We have done a lot of market research, and much more in the last couple of years, into driver behaviour and psychology. We know what triggers people to change.

We have done two things. The first is that we have tried to expand our channels to move much more into active, targeted social and digital channels so that people are getting the information that is specific to the instances they need it for. For example, when people are looking up directions on social media apps, we can target certain behaviour to addresses that cohort. In large part, our road toll is a middle-aged men problem and so we are trying to target middle-aged men with certain messages in certain forums.

The second thing that we are trying to do is engage people. One of the key factors in road safety messaging is getting people to understand that it is everybody’s problem. Everyone can make little changes to their driving habits and that will add up and have an impact. When we use our traditional “Don’t drink and drive” campaigns—we still have to do some of that because it works for certain people—it allows people to go into a frame of mind that it is

someone else's problem. The big shift we have to make if we are serious about addressing the road safety culture in Western Australia is to say, "What can I do differently?" That is where we are trying to focus everything from now on.

Mr P. PAPALIA: One other thing we are absolutely going to do in this budget is roll out the purchase of the mobile point-to-point cameras that we trialled. Members will have seen those trials. We will buy three sets of them, which is three pairs. We trialled them in the regions and in the wheatbelt, which has not had much in the way of camera activity. These smart road safety cameras are capable of identifying whether someone is not wearing a seatbelt or is using a mobile phone and they can discern a single vehicle from a vehicle towing a trailer or caravan and the difference between a truck and a car. The older technology does not do that. All those things have been demonstrated. New South Wales and Queensland used different versions of those cameras. Initially, New South Wales had cameras that just identified phones and Queensland had cameras that identified phones and seatbelts. We know from their experience that the cameras have had a massive impact on people's behaviour. People changed their behaviour and the death rate dropped. In New South Wales, the death rate was more than 200 fewer deaths than in the previous corresponding period over the two years that the cameras were in use. The last time we heard, Queensland saw a 10 per cent drop in the number of people who died over six months in those locations. We hope that we will achieve that. We have to pass the law to enable us to infringe people, but we have all the knowledge now of where the cameras are needed and how we can use them. We hope and anticipate that it will make a big difference, particularly in the regions.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Further to that last point, I was going to ask whether any of the new technology on the freeways—the cameras and the like—are actually being used to infringe people because we already have the averaging cameras on Forrest Highway that are being used to infringe people, are they not?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Those cameras have been there for years, and they are fixed. As the member would probably be aware—this is a good thing—people are aware of them and, knowing that they are there, they will pull over to servo and get a coffee or something. That is not a bad thing because it lowers the likelihood of people suffering from fatigue, but the cameras are fixed and people know exactly where they are. These new cameras will be on trailers and will be mobile. People will not know where the second one will be. They can be moved to another location from one day to the next. We have a lot of good data about people not adhering to the lowest speed limits through roadworks. The Traffic Management Association and other bodies that represent people who work on our roads are really concerned about people speeding through those 40-kilometres-an-hour zones. When we place cameras in those locations, it is clearly because people are not anticipating being caught. The further out they are from the city, the worse it gets, actually. These are some of the things that we can do. These cameras will make a difference. They are much more capable, they will be less predictable and there will be multiples of them. We will have three pairs, so they can be moved around the state.

Ms M. BEARD: I was going to ask where they might be located.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The answer to the question about whether we are infringing people is not yet, because the current legislation is very prescriptive about camera types and does not allow us to use these cameras because they are not one of the prescribed types. We will have to amend the act to enable that. The cameras on the Kwinana and Mitchell Freeways that the member referred to are fixed cameras, but they are not currently used to infringe people for the same reason. It is technology that did not exist when the law was written, so we are going to amend it.

Ms M. BEARD: How are the locations selected? From my time on the road, I know which stretches of road people speed on.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the commissioner to respond.

Mr A. Warner: There are two processes. One is for the fixed cameras, like the red-light cameras, and the fixed cameras that we have talked about. Their location is based on historical crash risk, including crash data and associated risk. There is a whole science behind it. A lot of engineers and others get involved, from Main Roads Western Australia to the police, and we are leading that charge. We provide input to police, but they control the mobile deployments on a daily basis. They go where the risk is.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I want to ask about the balance of the road trauma trust account. It is probably easier to go to page 276 of budget paper No 3, which has a section on that account. My question is about the unspent balance of the account and the fact that there is obviously a need to act to reduce the road toll. The minister has been speaking about the smart cameras. Perhaps the money could be used on road improvements—I do not know. Is it better to spend the money on the roads than have \$57 million sitting in the bank?

[8.20 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: This is an unfortunate consequence of when the budget is printed and compiled. The member needs to remember that the way the road trauma trust account operates is that all the fines revenue is deposited into the account, but that flow is not linear. The balance fluctuates, depending on people's behaviour and how rapidly or otherwise they are penalised and infringed. It is a bit unpredictable and the amount of money changes. The member can see that the balance of the account will vary quite significantly from day to day. When the budget

was printed, there was that amount of money in the account, but that is not the amount that will be in the account at the end of the financial year. I will get the commissioner to explain that in a moment. The member is better off looking at the total global amount that came in and went out of the account over the last four years. It is an almost equal amount.

The account does retain funds and then, by prudent financial management, and because of the unpredictable nature of this revenue stream, practices demand that the trust retains a buffer of about \$10 million, and it does that. The trust will never disburse at any time an amount of money that will drop the account balance below \$10 million. Beyond that, it disburses everything that comes in, but it does not go in a predictable fashion because of the nature of the revenue stream, and there will be delays in expenditure and the like. It is not like there is \$57 million sitting in that account. I know of some speculation by particularly interested journalists. There was a time more than a decade ago when \$90 million was sitting there for a considerable time. That does not happen now. Now, all the money that comes in, goes out, and it is managed by the chair of the Road Safety Council, Katie Hodson-Thomas. The council has representatives on it from the RAC, the Western Australian Local Government Association and relevant government agencies that have an interest in road safety, and Katie has worked to ensure that we have very high level representation from all those bodies that will ensure the most effective use of the funds. The commissioner probably has handy the numbers about what came in and went out over time.

Mr A. Warner: It is fair to say that over successive governments, the road trauma trust account has been managed in a very consistent fashion on the principle that governments always plan to spend as much as they expect to receive. On average from this current government's first budget in 2017–18 up until 30 June this year, and based on what we expect the end result to be, the average annual revenue has been \$106 million and average annual expenditure has been \$103 million. If we look forward in this budget to the end of the forward estimates, it changes a little bit to \$106 million in average revenue and \$107 million in average annual expenditure. That is a total of \$634 million that will have flowed into the road trauma trust account over the current government's period, of which \$615 million will have been spent to the end of this year. That difference largely reflects a completely unanticipated revenue of about \$25 million since the last time we sat here talking about the budget. Of that revenue, \$10 million was adjusted and picked up in the midyear review that relates to 2021–22, and there has been a \$15 million adjustment in this budget for 2022–23. All that extra revenue has been factored into new spending profiles over the forward estimates. That is consistent with the principle of always planning to spend as much as we expect to receive, but understanding there is volatility.

Over the longer term, it lines up. From 2012–13 to the end of this financial year, we will have had \$1.128 billion in revenue and \$1.124 billion in expenditure, so quite a minimal difference over that 10-year period, and that is the way we do it. We have two points in time at which the Road Safety Council reviews the road trauma trust account and its spending profile, which is the budget process, and the midyear review cycle. Between those two points, the Road Safety Commission monitors things to make sure that we are not getting into a risky situation, as the minister said, with that prudential buffer of \$10 million.

Mr R.S. LOVE: So the Road Safety Council reviews the expenditure of the funds, but it does not actually make the decisions.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It actually does. It recommends or proposes to me a spending profile, and I endorse what it recommends.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I want to go back to the earlier point that we started on around the regional road toll. The expenditures are outlined as a percentage of the trust account. How much is actually dedicated towards addressing that disparity between the regional and metropolitan toll?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As I said earlier, quite outside of money from the road trauma trust account, the government has dedicated \$875.5 million to that. In the current budget, we have allocated a further \$150 million, subject to that amount being matched by the federal government, which we have not yet heard about. Over a billion dollars will be spent by this government on the regional road safety program. That is a massive spend. On average, about \$20 million of the \$100 million in this account is allocated to the regional road safety program. It is pretty small in the scheme of things, but it is significant as far as a component of this account is concerned. At the moment, the road trauma trust account has a lot of money in it. Compared with a billion dollars, it is not a lot, but every bit counts. The road trauma trust account has around \$100 million in it, so \$20 million is a fair component of that.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 406 and service 4, "Road Safety Commission". The number of full-time employees has increased from 42 in 2021–22 to 56 in this budget period. Can the minister explain what those extra personnel are doing?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will get the commissioner to explain this because it relates to the additional restructuring and the transfer of people from other places.

Mr A. Warner: The increase in full-time equivalents in our staffing structure is related to a couple of things. One is projects around the infringement reform program, which is still continuing, and the standing up of a new procurement team and project team for the implementation of the rollout of the new safety cameras that the minister

referred to. The rest of the increase pleasingly relates to additional resources we have had allocated to us to increase our education and community engagement efforts. We will be standing up a new team to really reinforce and start to deliver programs into schools and to also increase our community engagement. We are actually borrowing, with the goodwill of the Transport Accident Commission in Victoria, a very successful program aimed at school students around incursions on road safety, which we will roll out in two ways. We will bring children in and we will also have a team that will go out, particularly to the regional areas, because, if we look at the road toll, we see that the regional areas are a dominant factor in our horrible road statistics. An increase in school-based education, programs and resources for teachers and school-based incursions are rolling out around the regional areas predominantly and that leverages off the youth summit that we had last week, which was very successful. Some of those learnings and the leveraging from Victoria are going to be important.

We also have extra money to expand the community engagement side of things. We believe that if we want to address road safety culture, we have to bring the local community along with local solutions for their areas, which will be different for different areas. On top of the roughly \$2 million that we give to WALGA each year to support its local community engagement efforts around road safety, we will be looking to prioritise through our social impact investment program, local community engagement, including through the Town Team Movement, which is pretty active in the regions.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is the fund that we were just told is being rolled out throughout the community found on page 276 of budget paper No 3 and called the community education and engagement program, which has an allocation of \$11.5 million?

[8.30 pm]

Mr A. Warner: I do not have budget paper No 3 in front of me, but I can talk generally about that figure. It relates to the four-year profile of the increase for education and the increase for the community engagement side of things. There are a few other things in there, but largely that is what we were just talking about.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 409 and the paragraph that refers to the additional expenses as part of the government's program for an extra 950 police officers. How many additional officers have been recruited as part of this 2020–21 commitment and are they on track to be delivered by 2024?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The number of officers who have been recruited is 750. What was the other question? Are we on track? The target is above attrition. Under that program, 750 have been recruited. There has been attrition at the same time, so it will still demand greater than 200 more. The continued attrition is a bit unpredictable, but the Western Australia Police Force is funded and resourced to meet the objective of growing the force by 950 above attrition. I can tell the member that there are about 200 at the academy right now, 1 600 local applicants are waiting to go to the academy and, the last time I looked, there were over 1 200 applicants from the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Are we on target? There are a couple of elements to that. One of the constraints at the moment is how many squash through the academy, and the Commissioner of Police is looking at other means of increasing that capacity. It has been done in the past. There have been eras when significantly larger numbers have gone through the academy than there are at the moment. The police force is looking at whether it can do that. There is a significant pool of people. That is not the issue. It is not the pool of people; it is whether we can get them through the door and trained and then get them out into the field, noting of course that the Brits are not brand new off the street. The British and Irish officers have a minimum of three years' experience, so they will undertake a shorter transition course when they come; it will be half the length of the normal course. All that is being worked on at the moment. The police force has all the resources and all the people applying. It is just a matter of enabling the capacity to train people.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to clarify, we are talking about the number of additional officers from when the original commitment was made in 2020–21 and that is taking into account the high number of resignations that we have seen.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The number I talked about is the number of recruits under that program. In the 2020–21 financial year, an additional 370 who completed training were recruited. In 2021–22, there were 210; in 2022–23, there were 170; and in the 2023–24 financial year, an additional 200 are planned. Those were the planned target numbers and they have been achieved. The force is recruiting and, as I said, it is looking to expand capacity, because attrition is a bit more difficult to predict. It has varied over time. In the first couple of years, attrition was low and in the last couple of years, it has been higher. At the moment, it is a bit difficult to predict what it will be like over the next 12 months.

Ms L. METTAM: Taking into account the high number of resignations that have been experienced since the program was announced, what is the total number of officers now?

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member is talking about this cohort as opposed to when we took office —

Ms L. METTAM: No —

Mr P. PAPALIA: From when we took office, there are more than 400.

Ms L. METTAM: — since the program was announced in 2020–21.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We are about 140 in front of the number, bearing in mind that we have more police from the few years before this commitment, when we grew the police force. There are more than 400 additional police officers from, say, 2016.

Ms L. METTAM: But since that commitment was made for 950 officers, we are up 140 officers.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Or thereabouts. There are 200 at the academy, and more will come in. It changes; as they graduate from a course, it changes.

Ms L. METTAM: That is a significant shortfall, is it not, minister?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We are not at the end yet.

Ms L. METTAM: How many officers have been recruited from overseas through the international program?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I told the member earlier that there are more than 1 200 applicants. The assessment process is underway, and part of that process involves the people who are selected getting visas, which is beyond our control. We have a labour agreement with the federal government that enables us to essentially offer them permanent residency almost immediately upon arrival. There is an agreement with the federal government to bring people here. At the moment, under the agreement 150 officers a year will be accommodated, but we can expand that and we will look towards growing that. If we wanted to increase the number, it would be about the number we can get through the academy. As I said, work is being done on enhancing capacity at the academy because it is short on courses. We have not started one yet. We have always said that we hope the first ones will be here around September.

Ms L. METTAM: Of the 1 200 applicants who have expressed an interest, would we take 150 at a time every year?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Not necessarily; 150 annually was the agreement, but we will probably expand that. I do not anticipate that that will be problematic with the federal government, because we are talking about agreements right around the country to grow migrant numbers and the police are part of that. We have already begun the process of applying to Minister Giles to increase that number, but I think we are talking about a normal squad of about 30 at a time. There would be 150 in a year, but we could increase that. The point is that there are more than 120 applicants. We want to get the best ones, but, even so, there are a lot of applicants. There is capacity for us to increase that if we get the agreement with the federal government, which I do not anticipate any great drama with. The issue would be at this end—getting them through the academy more than getting them here.

Ms L. METTAM: Hopefully, in negotiation with the federal government, the force might be able to attain more than these 150 applicants, but would they still need three years of training here?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Ms L. METTAM: They will not need three years of training.

[8.40 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: These officers are experienced and have already had three years' minimum service as a police officer to be able to apply. I was making the point of comparison with our local candidates. We have about 1 600 local candidates who have applied, and they are mostly people who have never been police officers before, so they go through a full course at the police academy. They go from being raw recruits to being on probation in the districts and subdistricts. We also get Brits who do half the length of course because they have had a minimum of three years as a police officer in the UK or Ireland. They are already experienced. When they come here, they obviously need specific training in our laws, customs, culture and the like, but it is half the length of training at the academy. They can then go out and be probationary officers, but it is a shorter time frame than for the other recruits. The other guys do a year of probation, and these guys do six months. They are already police officers. All we are doing is changing their uniforms and teaching them Australian slang, appropriate cultural awareness and the like; the use of firearms, tasers and things that they might not have been given by their other police forces in a lot of cases; and all the laws they need to know and that sort of training. It is not like they are raw recruits. In a way, we get an immediate lift from experienced officers joining the force.

Ms L. METTAM: Is it about six months of training?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is three months for these guys—the Brits and the Irish. It is six months for our Western Australian recruits.

Ms L. METTAM: How many sworn officers are currently in the Western Australia Police Force?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Last time we got a briefing note it was 6 619 FTE. That was at the end of April.

Ms L. METTAM: Have our numbers gone backwards?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No. Some of the commentary in the media is mistaken, although I do not think there is anything malicious about it. For a couple of months, particularly last year, the observation was made that attrition exceeded growth. We have set ourselves the very ambitious target of growing the police force by 15 per cent; that is what

950 officers represents, and it means significant growth. For a few months, we were not exceeding the attrition number, so in those months we went backwards. Before that period, there were two years with low attrition, and we added to the numbers. As the member heard earlier, there are in the order of 140 more officers than when we started. We are always adding to that, and attrition is eroding it; it is just a matter of what gets bigger at the time. As I have indicated, we have a very significant pool of people applying locally and from international sources. Really, right now, it is a matter of WA police adapting its training capacity to be able to punch people through the system and get them out and into the force at a greater number than we might experience attrition.

We are doing everything we can to try to prevent people from leaving. It is not like we are just saying that that will continue and is acceptable. We are in an environment that is very challenging because we have the best economy on the planet. There are a lot of opportunities. Also, concurrently, a lot of people are approaching that period in their service when they have done 10 years. They might have started as a single person and now have a family, and shiftwork is not as attractive as it might have been in the past. It might be the time that suits people to leave.

The command team here is also putting a huge amount of effort into ensuring that we make work more attractive by dealing with some of the pressures that people confront. Deputy Commissioner Whiteley is leading the retention and flexible workplace program. It is one particular element of what WA police is doing to try to make things better.

Before I get Deputy Commissioner Whiteley to explain that, there has been commentary about mental health having an impact and the culture being bad. Claims have been made about what is driving people to leave, based on things like people seeking treatment and assistance. I have said this many times, and I will continue to reinforce this message: that narrative is not right; it does not reflect the modern understanding of mental health and how we should encourage people to seek assistance if they feel they require it. It stigmatises people seeking assistance. We have massively increased the services and support to police officers in this field. People accessing and availing themselves of those services is a good thing. I will pass over to Deputy Commissioner Whiteley in a moment to talk about the workplace measures that are being developed and offered to people. That is not what is driving people to leave.

For the first time ever, we are recognising PTSD as an injury that might have been workplace induced. I am regularly signing off on medical retirements as a consequence of that injury, but there are physical injuries, too. That is just something that has happened. For the first time we are actually helping people, assisting them and recognising that as an injury, but the numbers of officers who are confronting that sort of challenge have not been massively increasing. I will pass over to the deputy commissioner.

Ms K. Whiteley: I can just add a little bit further. Of course, the most important part of our agency is our people. Every single day of the week, we are looking at what else we can do to make it a much more attractive agency for our police officers moving forward. We are in one of the most competitive environments we have ever seen, so we have other police forces around the world also trying to actively recruit police officers. At the moment, we are researching all the various parts of the workforce and making the changes that we need to make so that we become the differential in police officers wanting to come to work in Western Australia, let alone remain here or come from interstate.

A very simple example is our flexible work options. Traditionally, it has been fairly restrictive and managed on a local basis. Sometimes we would see officers struggling with their family or life commitments, such as elderly parents. We have introduced a regime in which we held a series of workshops and engaged with the workforce to ask what we can do to make that process much more streamlined. How can we be much more agile in how we employ and deploy police officers, and what might be their roles on the front line? How do we do it so that we maintain them in the agency but equally give them opportunities to progress? Importantly, we are about 75 per cent through finalising that program. We are always looking for more opportunities and researching across Australia and the world for how else we can maintain and retain our people.

As part of that, we have also done programs of work such as streamlining our frontline officers' opportunities for training. The sergeant promotion process is now a streamlined process that is much more attractive to officers on the front line. Likewise, streamlining our senior sergeant program is currently underway, so we are providing those career path opportunities and making sure that they are available to officers who either are part-time or need flexible work arrangements. A range of efforts is going on currently in this space to make sure that we become the most competitive and the most progressive agency in attracting police.

Of course, that is also supported by making sure that officers have the very best equipment, data and information to make sure that they can execute their duties as efficiently as they possibly can and that we are making the right changes for community safety.

[8.50 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I note the numbers that the minister provided for sworn officers being 6 619 for April. In June 2021, according to the annual report, there were 6 927 sworn officers. Since then, it appears the number has gone backwards. Further, while we are talking about the efforts to attain and attract officers, last year's resignations were quite significant, about three times above the average, with 473 officers resigning in 2022. I would like the minister to clarify. There is still a massive task ahead.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What that number represented was how well we had done in recruiting additional officers in those first couple of years.

Ms L. METTAM: That is extraordinary.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the truth.

Ms L. METTAM: The numbers have gone backwards.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Remember that when the commitment to getting 950 above attrition commenced, we were not suffering the attrition rate that subsequently happened after the date the member has talked about.

Ms L. METTAM: I do not call going backwards like that a success!

Mr P. PAPALIA: There has been some pretty simplistic reporting by some journalists who have not really thought about it very much. If we are on a trajectory towards achieving 950 above attrition, but at a certain point on the pathway to 6 900 we suffer attrition beyond anything that has been seen before because we have the best economy in the world and there are greater opportunities for people, and we drop back from that trajectory, then we have not gone back from where we were. There are more than 400 officers above the number when the member was in government. The police force is 400 officers stronger than when members opposite were in government. That is the point to make. The member is saying that at this moment in time, attrition is high. It is because we are constrained by the capacity of the academy due to the way it is operating at the moment, so our graduation of officers means that we are behind that particular curve. We have 200 officers at the academy and there are 1 600 local Western Australian applicants—more than ever before—waiting right now. There are 1 200 overseas applicants, all of whom are officers with three years' experience. It is not about whether right now we are above what we were in June 2021; it is about whether we are above the number when the member was in office, and we are, by 400. Will we be above that even further by the end of the year? I have no doubt.

I have no doubt that we will continue to grow the police force. The police force is resourced to recruit. A huge number of people are wanting to be police officers in Western Australia. Any inappropriate claims made by people about the health and professionalism of our officers are completely unhelpful and wrong. People should not do it because it implies that there is something bad about being a police officer, and there is something wrong about being a police officer in Western Australia, when in fact we have one of the best police forces in the world and our officers are respected by Western Australians like never before. It has been an incredible thing.

Ms L. METTAM: They are leaving like never before, minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The only people who apparently do not feel that Western Australian police officers are worthy of respect have been some of the people engaged in commentary about their health.

Ms L. METTAM: Three times above average are leaving. They are leaving in droves.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As I said, if the member knew anything about serving in uniform, she would understand that the worst thing people could do is suggest that they should not seek mental health assistance and not talk about the issues they might be confronting.

Ms L. METTAM: No-one is suggesting that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the worst possible thing that anyone can do. The member may not have done that, but people on her side of politics have done it.

Ms L. METTAM: I have not heard anyone suggest that.

The CHAIR: Member for Thornlie.

Ms L. METTAM: Further question.

The CHAIR: No, it is not your question, member for Vasse.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: My question relates to community perceptions on page 401—just the matter that the minister was touching on—and the incredible strength, support and positive view that the community has towards the WA Police Force. To what extent is that built on the work of the community engagement teams and the role those teams play in building that very strong community view towards our police?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member, like me, is very familiar with the work of our community engagement teams and the capacity that they have demonstrated quite often in some very challenging circumstances and environments to engage with a diverse range of community groups and individuals. They often de-escalate situations that might have become far more acute had they not been engaged. I can recollect on a number of occasions in recent times when culturally and linguistically diverse communities might have, for instance, been involved in a tragic incident of one type or another, and the community engagement team has provided great service in ensuring that things did not become more aggravated than they otherwise might have. They do that and also regularly assist with building relationships with communities across the state. As a result, one of the benefits of the recruiting numbers the member asked about has been the transformation or shift in composition of our recruit courses. Not long ago one would go

to a graduation and the vast majority of police officers would be Australian born and very likely of Anglo-Saxon ancestry or profile. Now, one would see at just about every graduation many overseas-born people and also a quarter to one-third of graduates will be from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Many speak other languages and bring cultural awareness and a really deep knowledge of cultural environments and language that would not otherwise reside within the Western Australia Police Force. We can see how that will benefit us over time with solving crimes and particularly more sophisticated threats from overseas. They become a really valuable asset. A lot of that can be attributed to the community engagement teams. They get out there and they are the police whom people see. People see that the police are good people. They see it as a potential career path as opposed to what might have been the case in the past. That is a positive thing and they make a huge contribution.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I thank the members of the police here. I refer to page 605. Under the regional and remote policing services area, paragraph 2 is about general policing services provided by districts within regional Western Australia. Can the minister advise us of the rules around police tenure in regional areas? Are there different arrangements in different regions? Have there been any recent changes to any of the tenure arrangements?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, there are different arrangements depending upon location. Some places have tenure and some do not, because of the nature of the location and they are more flexible in attracting people. Work is being done on tenure right now.

[9.00 pm]

Mr R.S. LOVE: Have there been any recent changes to tenure arrangements for serving police?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, not yet.

Mr R.S. LOVE: There has been none?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Does the member know where tenure came from? The royal commission into police in Western Australia identified that people who remained in the same location for significant or, in some cases, indefinite periods enabled corrupt behaviour. Tenure was one of the ways to respond to that. Beyond that, tenure facilitates progress and the spread of experience across the force so that people do not become isolated in the sole pursuit of one field of endeavour. Officers will often say—it is a reasonable observation—that the counter to that argument is that tenure tends to be four years. In some cases, specialist skill sets might just be coming to their peak when the person has to go. Therefore, there are pros and cons. In the past, we did not have things like body-worn cameras and almost constant oversight by external authorities, senior officers and bodies such as the Corruption and Crime Commission and the like. It is worth talking about, but at the moment there has not been any change.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 400, budget paper No 2, volume 2, and ongoing initiatives, under spending changes. I want to ask about two line items. The first line item is “Operation Regional Shield (Royalties for Regions)” with \$11.7 million. What locations does that program apply to? I understand that Operation Regional Shield has been very successful, but I cannot see anything for the year ahead.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is funded for this year. Operation Regional Shield is a response to an acute demand in any location in the regions, as required. The Commissioner of Police can use that funding to apply resources. That may not be officers; it might be capabilities such as intelligence or analysts. All manner of additional capabilities might be deployed—it is whatever is required wherever it is required. Operation Regional Shield is in response to juvenile offending in the regions, but it may be anywhere. The reason that it is not in the forward estimates is that it is a bit responsive to the challenge that is evident at the time. Therefore, at the moment, it is required. The member will be familiar with some parts of WA, particularly in the Kimberley and the Pilbara, and even in the midwest but not so much, where Operation Regional Shield has been deployed. Operation Regional Shield capability has been deployed to Carnarvon, but not recently. The line item means that right now it is funded, and it will be funded again if it is needed. The 950-plus police from the officer infrastructure program will have to go somewhere when they come. As we get the police numbers and the housing capability grows over time and we can put people out in the regions, perhaps that might end up obviating the need for Operation Regional Shield. But, at the moment, it is funded. If the commissioner ever came to us and said that he needed more resources for Operation Regional Shield, he would get it.

Ms M. BEARD: The other line item under ongoing initiatives is “Police and Community Youth Centres (Kununurra)”. Is the Western Australia Police Force looking at the establishment of PCYCs or service delivery in my electorate, which includes Mt Magnet, Meekatharra and even Exmouth? If not a PCYC, is there some kind of structure for youth engagement strategies that the government is looking at to help the police?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The P in PCYC is police!

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, I know!

Mr P. PAPALIA: But it is not a police activity. It is in the police budget as a mechanism for delivering the funding. The member will be familiar with the type of services it provides, and they differ in different locations. We inherited a lot of infrastructure, so there are a lot of PCYC assets around the state that were really in dire need

of additional capital when we took office. A lot of money has been delivered to PCYC to restore, renovate, improve and build new ones, like the member has, but the actual activity is really like a non-government organisation. It is a not-for-profit and it is not really part of the police force. It is in the budget because it has to be somewhere and historically there was that association.

With regard to all those other towns, more communities will likely have services being delivered through service providers, and PCYC may be one of those service providers, but at the moment, the police do not actually run the PCYC. They collaborate with them. They support them. They assist. The budget manages the things like capital. Mr Pasquale has inherited some projects for which he will be given the money to upgrade PCYC assets, and that will be done. All the day-to-day activity and where PCYC goes and how it might provide services in smaller towns is really for PCYC as an organisation to decide, not us.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the line item “Firearms Reform” on page 401 at paragraph 10. With the chair’s indulgence, I commend the great work of the WA Police Force in response to the shooting today at Atlantis Beach Baptist College. I think the whole community would agree that it was great work being so quick on the scene and supporting that school community, which must be in significant shock. I know I am and most people would be to see such an event happen here in Perth. My question relates to the firearms legislative reform and the government’s agenda in this space. Would any of the reforms announced so far have had an impact on the shooting incident today?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will reflect on that incident today. That was a bit of American gun culture right here in the Perth suburbs. It is very disturbing. There are too many licensed firearms in Western Australia. There are 360 000 or so licensed firearms in Western Australia. That is too many. They are too easily accessed. We are going to do something about that with the reform of the Firearms Act. The act is being completely rewritten from the bottom up in accordance with recommendations from the 2016 Law Reform Commission report. Elevating public safety above all else will be the principle consideration of the act and will drive the rewrite. That is not the case under the current laws.

The question to ask with respect to today’s incident is: why do the current laws allow it? They did. The current laws allow for the proliferation of licensed firearms. In the last 13 years, there has been a 60 per cent growth in licensed firearms in Western Australia with no justification such as the demand for vermin eradication or for participation in competitive shooting. Around 60 per cent of the firearms are in the city. The vast majority of them are rifles of the type, or similar to, the ones used today. We have to ask: why has that been allowed to happen? Thirteen years ago, the system for acquiring a firearms licence changed. Up to that point, a person had to go into a police station, physically stand in front of a police officer and make an application for a firearms licence. They had to complete the application, including a written test—that is pretty farcical—in front of a police officer. It was very likely that the person would have been known to the police officer, particularly in a lot of suburbs and regional towns. That changed when the system was centralised and essentially moved to online applications. We have seen a 60 per cent increase in the number of firearms in the state. It will change. In rewriting the Firearms Act 1973, we will reduce the number of firearms in the state and make the management of firearms far more rigorous.

[9.10 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I have been busy with estimates, so I have not read all the reports. I understand that in this case the firearm was obtained from the child’s grandfather.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I would say “allegedly”, understanding that it is still subject to an investigation. We do know that the type of firearms used were rifles.

Ms L. METTAM: Will they be captured by the government’s reforms?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Everything will be captured by our reforms. We are rewriting the entire act. The current law does not elevate public safety as the number one consideration and we will make that the case. By way of example, currently a person who is not deemed by the Commissioner of Police to be a fit and proper person can have their firearm removed. The commissioner may deem that a person who has been convicted of a violent act is not a fit and proper person and their firearm can be removed. This happens. People of that nature can challenge that determination in the State Administrative Tribunal and win because they may not have used the firearm for which they have a licence in committing the act of which they were convicted. They might be a violent criminal who has done something violent and hurt someone—even committed armed robbery—but because they did not use that particular firearm, the act allows them to challenge that decision and get their firearm back. That will not happen after we change the law.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The minister has just outlined the legislative reform for firearms. I do not think we should have any further discussion about the particular incident that occurred today.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member wants to talk about the law, that is okay. The chair does not want us to talk about the incident, which is understandable.

Ms L. METTAM: I am talking about reforms.

The CHAIR: No; some of your questions that you did not quite get out then were actually about the incident. There will be no more questions about the incident. If you want to talk about gun reform, that is separate.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I ask one further question on gun reform?

The CHAIR: As long as it has nothing to do with the incident today.

Ms L. METTAM: In terms of reform, understanding that a lot of people with gun licences do the right thing, will the government also look at areas such as online applications—excuse my ignorance here—and the storage of firearms or are those things already captured?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Both those things will be addressed in the rewrite of the act and implementing changes to the firearms management system—essentially, everything will be addressed. The act is 50 years old. We are the only jurisdiction in the country that has not completely rewritten its Firearms Act since the Port Arthur massacre and, because of that, we are vulnerable to being accused of not having done enough to protect the community. We need to change the act to elevate public safety to the number one consideration in the law and we will do that.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 403 and the service “Specialist Policing Services”. I note that last year considerably more money, \$663 million, was expended on specialist policing services as opposed to the proposed \$619 million this year. Can the minister tell me why there is a drop in expenditure for that service?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask Mr Pasquale to respond to that.

Mr F. Pasquale: A couple of years ago, we were confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic and with the introduction of COVID, a significant effort and resource capability was established as part of the specialist policing service group. With COVID no longer with us to the extent that we endured it two years ago, the reduction represents that capability being redirected from that service to the metropolitan policing service.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is it a reallocation rather than a reduction in capacity?

Mr F. Pasquale: Correct. The capability for that COVID team was temporarily established in the specialist service area from resourcing within the organisation. Once the pandemic calmed and we went back to business as usual, the capability and resources were redirected back to their origins.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 408, new works and the police station upgrade program 2024–2028. Can the minister provide some information about the stations that might benefit from the upgrades or advise whether they are published in the budget papers?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Mr Pasquale might be the best person to answer this one.

Mr F. Pasquale: As the program demonstrates the cash profile, it starts from 2024–25 onwards. This is an annual program in which we do an assessment of our assets and police stations and one year prior, we make a determination about what that program will look like and establish a program of works for the new year. We are a couple of years out. If the member looks at the works in progress on page 408, she will see the same program. The second item is the police station upgrade program 2022–2024. That is the current program about which I can be more specific. In 2022–23, two police facility upgrade projects are in progress, which are the Kununurra and Midland operational support facilities. They are both scheduled for completion this financial year. A number of other projects are underway and planned for the new year, but I do not have those details.

[9.20 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: Is there some kind of criteria? I know that there are a couple of really old police stations in my electorate and the police often say to me that it would be wonderful to get an upgrade at some point. Is the focus on technology first and then the building? Is there any kind of process that it goes through?

Mr P. PAPALIA: These guys look at their assets and have a prioritised spend on upgrades and refurbishments. During the post-COVID era, when we did the stimulus package, a significant amount of money was spent on the refurbishment of police stations around the state, including in Mingenew, Mullewa and Morawa.

Ms M. BEARD: It is Onslow that I am querying.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Are those not in the member’s electorate?

Mr R.S. LOVE: They are in mine.

Mr P. PAPALIA: They are just outside; they are in the member for Moore’s electorate. Every one of those stations got one. The Kalbarri station will get one as a consequence of the cyclone in Kalbarri. It had a tree land in it. That station will be refurbished.

Ms M. BEARD: The Onslow one is fairly old.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not sure. The police look at their prioritisation and do things as necessary. I travel around and they are regularly doing police stations out of sequence in terms of those that might be older or absolutely need a complete rebuild. They will be doing refurbishments and upgrades. They will fix things that are deteriorating. I will ask Mr Pasquale to add to that.

Mr F. Pasquale: As the minister said, we conduct building condition assessment reports for each of our stations. Obviously, based on the condition assessment reports and the funds that we have available, we look at some kind of prioritisation of the most urgent works for the areas in most demand. Whilst we would like to do more, we have to work within the financial allocation we have available. Having said that, the environment is quite competitive now in terms of being able to get tradespeople and those kinds of professional trades to produce the work. It is all based on those building condition assessments, which are prioritised based on where the greatest demand is. That is all done through a consultation process with operational personnel. We then obviously allocate funds to the highest priority areas and develop a program of works on an annual basis. That is an ongoing annual process. We are quite fortunate because many agencies do not have the good fortune of having annual programs. I talked about the future program that the member referred to earlier. We are quite fortunate. We have a police station program and a custodial program. They are annual programs. We are able to do that prioritisation exercise for those two programs on an annual basis, and that allows us to have that kind of steady investment every year.

Ms M. BEARD: I have a question in relation to parts of the north—I will use Onslow again as the example—in which some mining companies are building significant infrastructure and significant work bases. Does the department work in conjunction with those growth rates and what the resident police might need in that instance?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the commissioner to respond about what the police do globally with demand.

Mr C. Blanch: We recently did an assessment of growth across the regions, so we do exactly that. Particularly with the 950 program and the expected growth of police, we prioritise regional WA for growth across all districts to see where we need more people. Things like new mining operations are something that we have focused on. Obviously, we subject that to the availability of Government Regional Officers' Housing, but we are targeting significant numbers out of that 950 program to the north of the state.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 403 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the service summary, which notes specialist policing services, and to the government goal of “Safe, Strong and Fair Communities: Supporting our local and regional communities to thrive”. The Attorney General made some comments earlier today. I asked the Attorney General about how prosecutors had dropped the state’s biggest case of public sector fraud. I asked the Attorney General, during the Corruption and Crime Commission division, how this happened. The Attorney General responded by pointing me to ask some questions of the Minister for Police. He talked about the transient nature of police. The issue in managing this very important case was in some respects due to the transient nature of police and them being able to put together admissible evidence. I just wonder whether the minister is able to comment on that matter. I am talking about the matter of Jacob Anthonisz. It was well publicised; prosecutors dropped over 500 charges because the evidence that was prepared was apparently inadmissible.

The CHAIR: Minister, that is not a relevant budget question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are a couple of different reasons I would not answer that. Firstly, prosecutions come under the Attorney General; that is a different division. Secondly, it is inappropriate. The case the member is referring to is still active and subject to going before the courts, so I am not going to talk about it.

The CHAIR: Just for your clarity, member, under standing order 91, “Sub judice convention”, I will not allow any further questions on that.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I ask a broader question?

The CHAIR: It depends what it is.

Ms L. METTAM: I will give it a go. We referred to the number of police leaving the force, and I appreciate the significant challenge that the government is trying to grapple with at the moment. Is there a particular challenge in being able to prepare evidence for cases for prosecution? Is it having any other impacts in relation to that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will say something and then I will ask the commissioner to respond. I reiterate: there are around 400 more officers in the Western Australia Police Force today than there were when the member was in office.

Ms L. METTAM: But fewer than in 2021.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We grew it and then it dropped a little bit. The massive growth of the police force under this government means that there are 400 more police officers than when the member was in office.

Ms L. METTAM: That is fewer than 100 a year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member has to get that. In 2016, when the member was in government, there were 400 fewer officers or thereabouts. We are growing that number all the time. We have committed to growing it by 15 per cent. It is a big target; it is a high bar. We do not set a low bar; we set ourselves a high target. We have funded police to achieve the biggest growth in the police force in the shortest time frame in the history of the state—15 per cent and 950 additional officers above attrition. As I have indicated to the member, hordes of people are seeking to join the WA Police Force despite her best efforts or the best efforts of the opposition’s representative, who seems determined to suggest that it is not a good career path. Putting that aside, the member should not be talking about the matter that she is referring to.

Ms L. METTAM: The Attorney —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not know what the Attorney General said; I was not there. Whatever the Attorney General said, he was talking about his division, which is not what we are talking about now. If the member is talking about resourcing and whether the police have adequate resources for prosecutions, I will let the commissioner respond.

[9.30 pm]

Mr C. Blanch: Evidential requirements for police have increased significantly over the years, more recently due to the introduction of body-worn video, so our disclosure obligations to court are very significant. We have invested public sector staff—so, not sworn officers—as disclosure officers and other support officers for the compilation of briefs. We have increased those areas to assist officers get their briefs of evidence to court. The video volume is still a challenge for us, and that will only increase. We are working on better techniques within the prosecution area to get body-worn video to defence counsel and the prosecution as quickly as possible in the format they require. Unfortunately, some courts still require different formats or they require it in different ways or they require a hard drive, so we are looking at more streamlined and automated ways of doing that. We are working with the Department of Justice and the courts to come up with a coordinated effort to do that. There are a lot of different strategies afoot to improve the way we can get the large amount of evidence required to the court. Deputy Commissioner Whitely is undertaking a program within the prosecutions division to have early conversations with defence counsel and the Director of Public Prosecutions to get those early resolutions, because I think that is another way we can achieve a more streamlined effort within the court system.

Ms L. METTAM: I should point out that the commentary from the Attorney General was about the transient nature, perhaps, in the prosecution unit. We know that the number of resignations in 2022 was three times the average. Is that also a challenge —

The CHAIR: Member for Vasse, this is about the sixth time you have asked the same question in a different way. We have a standing order regarding repetition or irrelevant debate. Standing order 97 still applies. The member is running out of time. She has the Minister for Police and the highest ranking officers within the police force here. I would suggest the member use her time better and move on to another topic.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay, I will move on. I refer to this statement on page 401 —

The Western Australia Police Force is committed to fostering a culture where its officers and staff are supported, capable and passionate about policing ...

I also refer to an article of 13 May in which *The West Australian* reported —

The CHAIR: Member for Vasse, you need to stick with the budget papers. If you have a question, ask the question. We do not need a preamble or any reference to the paper in your question.

Ms L. METTAM: This is about the workforce culture. Can the minister update us on the internal investigations following the allegations of a kill list being compiled by a commanding officer?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, because that is something I would not be, and am not, involved in at all. With respect to this particular point, the member is talking about a pretty silly low-level incident that is embarrassing for those involved, but it is not reflective of the general culture in the Western Australia Police Force and is not relevant to this point. It is obviously something that the minister has nothing to do with, because the member is talking about day-to-day operational matters inside Police. If the member wants the commissioner to respond to that specific incident, which he already did publicly, the member can ask him whether he wants to respond. I think it is pretty tacky. It is not an indication of anything endemic and it is not a reflection of the culture. It is an incident that occurred that is embarrassing and wrong and has been, and is being, dealt with in an administrative way by the police, as is appropriate. I actually do not think we should really pursue it any more.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the third significant issue impacting the agency on page 400 that refers to officer safety. We have talked about attitudes towards the police in the community. Can the minister give me an idea of how safe the police actually are? How many police officers were assaulted in the financial year 2022–23, and how did that compare with years past? Is there a trend of increasing violence towards police; and, if so, what is the level of that violence?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member asked whether there is a trend towards more violence towards police officers. Obviously, numerically there are more police officers. I can tell the member that we increased the number of police officers in the Perth district, mostly in Northbridge, by 175 above the number that were there three years ago. That is the one site in Western Australia where there are most of these types of incidents because, partly, although not entirely, it is the most densely populated entertainment precinct in the state with a lot of police officers and they are there on a Friday and Saturday night. Members can wander down the street and bump into them. It is difficult getting past them on the footpath! By natural logic, that will result in them being at the incidents faster. I know that Deputy Commissioner Adams regularly refers to the fact that we are responding quickly to incidents.

The likelihood of a police officer engaging with someone at the start of an incident as it escalates is high and there is likely to be a greater rate of officers being subject to an assault. Does that mean it is reflective of a general increase? I note that, post-pandemic, right around Australia and just about every advanced jurisdiction in the world, there has been an escalation of incidents of people with mental health committing violence—family and non-family violence. That is a phenomenon that seems to have occurred everywhere. That may be a contributing factor. I do not know and I do not think that the commissioner knows either. We do not have that information with us. That is probably a bit hard to answer as a supplementary question because the member is talking about an entire year.

What did the member ask? Did he ask how it compares with past —

Mr R.S. LOVE: I asked whether police are facing more violence.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member asked about the numbers.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The numbers are an indication, are they not? If the minister does not have a number, he cannot really say.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is what I told the member. I explained to him that it is a complex matter and is not necessarily an indication of what the member is specifically suggesting. If the member wants the number of police assaulted this year, I could get that.

Mr R.S. LOVE: And how that compares. Is it a rising trend?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Compared with when?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Compared with five years ago.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member wants that information, I would ask that he put the question on notice. If he wants the figures for this year, I think we could get that by way of supplementary information. But if the member wants to go back in history and find a number that I do not know now and I have no idea whether the police know, that would be difficult.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We will start with supplementary information and work backwards.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I undertake to provide the member with the total number of assault public officer—police—offences in the financial year to date. What period does the member want?

Mr R.S. LOVE: In this year, although it is not quite finished.

Mr P. PAPALIA: For the financial year to date?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes, for the financial year, and the level of violence.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member will find that if people are charged with assault public officer, that is an assault on a police officer, but that varies. What meets the criteria can be a number of things. It could be spitting.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes, I am aware of that. That is what I was trying to ascertain.

[9.40 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The number may not necessarily reflect what the member is talking about.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We will have the number anyway and start from there.

The CHAIR: For clarity, minister, can you repeat what you will provide?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I undertake to provide the member with the number of police officers who were subject to an assault that resulted in the charge of assault public officer—can you guys help me here? I am struggling.

Mr A. Adams: Yes—assault police officer.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I just want to know the number of police who were assaulted.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That will be the number that the member wants. I will provide the number of police officers in the financial year to date who were on duty and subject to an assault that resulted in a charge of assault police officer.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 404, specifically the percentage of sworn officer hours available for frontline policing duties, which is a bit less than 70 per cent. This key performance indicator shows that one-third of a sworn officer's time is spent doing tasks other than frontline policing. Can the minister explain why this has occurred?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask the commissioner to answer that.

Mr C. Blanch: The Western Australia Police Force has spent a lot of time on this particular KPI to understand the mathematics that sits behind it. We have worked with the data science and analytics team on it. It is a rolling figure

over 12 months that gives frontline availability. It deals with the entire preceding 12 months. When we had officers working on COVID duties in particular, that was considered to be a non-frontline duty. When we had a high number of police on sick leave with COVID, as did all agencies with their staff at the time, that reduced that number significantly. An increase in the number of recruits in our police academy will reduce that number significantly. In those examples, because the police are not doing what is considered to be frontline policing duties—whether they are on sick leave, extended leave or in the academy—that number comes down somewhat. It is not necessarily reflective of other duties. When a large number of police officers are on sick leave and/or a large number of recruits are in the academy, as there were during the COVID pandemic, that number comes down. We expect that, following on from the COVID period, that 12-month lag will start to increase from June this year.

Ms L. METTAM: Thanks for that clarification. I imagine that the Minister for Police, the Commissioner of Police and others would still want to see improvements in the time our police spend on the front line. I accept the commissioner's explanation; I am not questioning that, but in terms of best utilising our officers for frontline policing, what is the government and Western Australian police doing in that regard?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the commissioner to answer.

Mr C. Blanch: One of the greatest changes to policing in Western Australia since 2019 has been the introduction of mobile devices. Mobile devices during the COVID pandemic were extremely useful for frontline police to stay out on the road. Now that we are through COVID, we are advancing the capability of using those mobile devices in particular to do e-infringements, information reports and intelligence reports on the phone itself. This alleviates the need for a police officer to go back into the police station, thus reducing their frontline presence. When I became commissioner, I set up what I call the policing fundamentals, one of which is high-visibility policing. All our technology investment today is based on keeping the frontline officer out on the road for the maximum time possible. We are finding efficiencies in the way that they do their business so that when a person is trained to be a police officer, they spend most of their career being that police officer rather than performing administrative duties. We are using technology to remove that administrative burden.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the table on page 407 and works in progress, specifically the helicopter replacement with an estimated total cost of \$46 million and \$21 million this year. Can the minister give me an update on that program?

Mr P. PAPALIA: They are on track for delivery and hopefully we will soon be able to announce something about the arrival of the first one.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Was any funding from the road trauma trust account used for the police helicopter?

Mr P. PAPALIA: These are Airbus H145 helicopters. The beauty of this is that we are buying two of them at the same time, so we are replacing two different aircraft frames to achieve a huge uplift in safety, commonality, training, maintenance and sustainability—all the things associated with an aircraft. The member can imagine how complex it has been for the air wing in recent years with two completely different makes of aircraft, each of a different age. Police have had to hop out of one and into another at short notice. It has been pretty dangerous actually, not through their own fault. They are operating the craft in every manner possible to ensure safety. Having two aircraft of the same type increases the likelihood of a much better safety outcome to a very high level. Apart from anything else, these are world-class and cutting-edge helicopters that have been budgeted for from within the police budget.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 403 and the service summary, specifically specialist policing services, but this is a very different question from last time. I note a cut to this area of \$44.5 million from the estimated actual of \$66.39 million —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Did the member not already ask this?

Ms L. METTAM: No.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Mr Pasquale answered it.

Ms L. METTAM: Really—about the canines?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member asked this one.

Mr T.J. HEALY: They are running out of questions.

Ms L. METTAM: No, we are not. I have another question. I refer to page 410 and paragraph (b) at the bottom of the table that states that the number of actual full-time equivalents for 2021–22 is 9 340 and the 2022–23 estimated actual is 9 182. Why did the approved FTE number go backwards?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think the member is talking budget matters—numbers and lines and things—so I might ask Mr Pasquale to shed some light on that. He will know what it is all about.

[9.50 pm]

Mr F. Pasquale: Can I just ask for clarification on the variance that the member is chasing? Which numbers is she referring to?

The CHAIR: Member for Vasse, Mr Pasquale wants clarity on what you are asking. Can you repeat the question, please?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes; sorry. Footnote (b) states that the number of actual full-time equivalents for 2021–22 was 9 340 and the estimated actual is 9 182.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which years is the member referring to?

Ms L. METTAM: I am referring to footnote (b) underneath the income statement. The actual for 2021–22 was 9 340.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, it is an estimate.

Ms L. METTAM: For 2022–23, there is the estimated actual. Why are the approved FTEs going backwards?

Mr P. PAPALIA: They are not, because they will go back up again. Budget numbers vary. The number of police officers varies over time. The estimated actual was not what it was, so there was an actual, and then there is a budget target in the future. It is what we were talking about before. At one point in time, we are on this track and we expect to get to that number, but then if attrition is a little higher, it is down from that and then the target is to go up again.

Ms L. METTAM: Was the minister anticipating it to go backwards?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No. The actual was for the 2021–22 financial year and the estimated actual was for the next financial year and then the budget for 2023–24 is the projection for the 2023–24 budget. They are different years.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 407 and the asset investment program. I note that the emergency services radio network will be shared by the police, fire and emergency services and justice services. I note that it does not involve ambulance services. Is that an omission or is it because there is no willingness by St John Ambulance to be involved? Why would a common radio network not be used by all emergency services?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask Mr Pasquale to respond.

Mr F. Pasquale: In the early planning days of the business case for the emergency services radio network, St John Ambulance, through the Department of Health, was certainly involved in the discussion and the dialogue around its involvement and inclusion. To date, however, the investment that the member can see in the budget papers is purely for the early transition, or tranches 1 and 2 of the program, which is about the immediate needs of the Western Australia Police Force and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services because of their ageing radio devices. At this stage, the initial investment is about replacing in excess of 12 000 devices.

We are required to report back to government through the Office of Digital Government, which is looking at doing a strategic review of future radio communications and what that would look like, particularly given the emerging technology around satellites et cetera. That opportunity will be revisited in looking at the business case and then re-engaging with Health and St John on what the future network capability will look like in the next tranches.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 404 and the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators. The 2021–22 actual for the rate of offences against property, excluding family violence-related offences, per 100 000 people was 4 200 or thereabouts and the 2022–23 actual was 4 400 or thereabouts, but the police force is persisting with a budget target of 6 200. If it is achieving significantly below that already, why would it persist with the higher target and not try to set itself a lower target? I appreciate that it might give a metric that is achieved, but why is it persisting with a higher target?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask the commissioner to respond.

Mr C. Blanch: The target of 6 200 in our key performance indicators is really what we were aiming for pre-COVID. During the COVID pandemic, we saw a drastic reduction in property-based crime. The Western Australia Police Force has worked hard coming out of the pandemic to keep up the pressure on property-based crime, targeting for offender process statistics. We are pretty pleased with our officers' response in managing property-based crime, but we are still assessing that post-COVID bounce back. Other jurisdictions have seen a return to normal numbers for property-based crime. We were monitoring that, but we have found that we have sustained this lower amount of property-based crime. If I talk particularly about burglaries, in the order of 10 000 fewer burglaries against victims in the last two years is a significant amount. The member is right; it is way below the target. We were monitoring it, thinking that it may show a trend like that shown in the rest of the country and go back to that. We will review it, and we are in the process of reviewing our KPIs, as we are required to do. But that is the explanation for where we are today. For us, it is a good news story to not have 10 000 victims of burglary a year.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is interesting. Outside of the fact that police officers are working hard, is there a particular theory for why it has reduced? It is substantial. It would be great if that could be encoded into DNA somehow. Does the minister think that people got out of the habit of breaking in or does he ascribe it purely to greater vigilance by police officers?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will get the commissioner to answer, but there has been an increase in the effectiveness of policing, and sanction rates have increased to extraordinary levels. The member will have noticed, and I think anyone who pays cursory attention to it would have noticed, how rapidly many crimes are resolved now in comparison with only a few years ago. There have been a lot of initiatives around the amalgamation of intelligence with operations via the State Operations Command Centre and other initiatives that the police have enacted in recent times. Everyone has access to data and situational awareness like never before and a whole lot of practices have changed things, but I will let the commissioner answer.

Mr C. Blanch: The numbers of offenders across Western Australia do not change by individuals and numbers, but what we consider high-harm offenders—there is quite a small cohort across the state—can have a drastic impact on these statistics if allowed to continue their offending. In some cases, an individual can do 50 burglaries in a week, which can make a massive difference to a district's impact. We have prided ourselves on focusing on technology, using data and intelligence, and having a rapid response. We have set up rapid response teams and the rapid apprehension squad and we have found that we are able to stymie that recidivist action throughout a week and get them at burglary 1 or 2 rather than at burglary 50 or 60. I think that is why we are seeing a reduction in the number of property-based offences.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 400 and the national anti-gangs squad. There has been only a one-off payment of \$1.65 million in this financial year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will let the commissioner answer. Quickly, what is the question, because we want to pass the division before the end of the time?

Mr C. Blanch: The national anti-gangs squad is funded by the commonwealth and it commits to it every two or three years. Its current advice to us is that it may not be funding it post this year, and we are waiting to receive that advice from it.

The appropriation was recommended.

The CHAIR: This committee is adjourned until nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
