

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Services 1 to 3 and 6, Premier; Federal–State Relations, \$151 737 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Ms E. Roper, Director General.

Ms A. Pickrell, Deputy Director General, Intergovernmental Relations and Strategic Priorities.

Mr C. Clark, Deputy Director General, Infrastructure, Economy and the Environment.

Ms F. Hunt, Deputy Director General, Aboriginal Engagement and Community Policy.

Mr D. Stewart, Assistant Director General, State Services.

Mr A. Brender-A-Brandis, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr G. Italiano, Government Chief Information Officer.

[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. I 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.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the Premier to indicate what information he agrees 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 the Premier 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 Leader of the Opposition. Before I do so, I just counsel members to please keep the questions short. I am happy to give you further questions, but any rhetoric or hyperbole will be ruled out of order quick smart. I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Welcome to all the advisers. Premier, I refer to page 70 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Note (b) to the income statement states —

The FTEs for 2021–22 Actual, 2022–23 Estimated Actual and 2023–24 Budget Year are 813, 864 and 876 respectively.

I note the further explanations in the key service indicators of additional staff but they in no way account for this number of staff. Can the Premier outline what roles these new staff members will be performing?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The staff numbers are designed to deliver key priorities, including COVID-19 coordination, intergovernmental relations and the digital economy. The increase to 876 in 2023–24 is to support the delivery of the function of the interim chief data officer, the ICT delivery unit, workforce review and native title resourcing. I might hand over to the director general to expand further.

Ms E. Roper: That is a new FTE that was added through that budget process. It also includes a corporate overhead. The numbers in terms of headcount versus what is actually in the budget paper includes a corporate overhead. There is also, in spending changes, a conversion of some temporary resourcing to permanent under-departmental resourcing. That is not reflected in those numbers because FTE are already in place this financial year, so they will not look different into the next financial year.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I have a further question relating to the office that has been established for the interim chief data officer and the general capability project. Is that the full complement of staff or are there more to come in the future as that program builds?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand over to the director general. I think she will ask Mr Italiano to respond.

Ms E. Roper: Yes, I will hand over to Greg for that one.

Mr G. Italiano: It is only one FTE for an interim chief data officer at this time. That was the additional FTE we received through the budget. It is anticipated that, in line with future legislative intentions with respect to privacy and responsible sharing of information legislation, a future business case will be prepared and that business case will provide options to government in relation to further resourcing for the chief data officer function.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Just in relation to that, Premier, the Auditor General recently completed a report into cybersecurity, which found the majority of government agencies were not meeting the benchmark for the required protections in their agencies. Is there sufficient focus on that area, given that finding for such an important area?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the member will find that lots of government organisations around the world are attempting to step up their efforts on cybersecurity. We saw some remarkable breaches of some major private sector organisations over the last year. In the last two years, we invested pretty much \$1 billion in ICT upgrades across government. In terms of the investment, it has been a competitive process, which has funded scores of projects across government. In terms of specifics around cybersecurity, in November 2021, the government allocated \$25.5 million in additional money to the cybersecurity unit—\$4.6 million to establish a cybersecurity uplift team, \$2.2 million to establish a hunt and incident response team, \$14.7 million to expand the WA government’s Cyber Security Operations Centre, and then there is additional funding from the digital capability fund for the security operations centre. The SOC currently provides services to 66 WA government entities. We make it a priority and we raise it with agencies all the time because this is a growing area of concern for all governments. I might ask Mr Italiano to respond further.

Mr G. Italiano: It is indeed the case that over the last year, the expert judgement is that the cybersecurity environment and the threat environment have deteriorated further. The number of threats and the sophistication continues to grow in terms of risk. We are very focused on uplifting cyber maturity across the sector, particularly in agencies that represent higher risk. Through the cybersecurity unit, we are working in conjunction with those agencies to improve their cyber maturity. We are very focused on the core issue of the Australian Cyber Security Centre’s essential eight, which is generally the standard accepted across Australia for where the focus ought to be to prevent the majority of attacks, and we have made good progress against those essential eight controls. The security operations centre has been a major benefit—66 agencies connected. We see threats in real time now across the sector, and we can manage and respond to threats very quickly. We are very focused on improving cybersecurity but it will be a journey without an end because every time we improve our defences, the community that would attack us is also becoming more sophisticated in the way in which it proposes to attack us. It is just going to become one of those things that is an essential ongoing part of managing risk in organisations.

[2.10 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I appreciate Mr Italiano’s response, particularly on the high-level end of intercepting risks before they even come into agencies, but the risks that the Auditor General identified included really basic things such as agencies not requiring staff to change passwords and staff using passwords of staff who had resigned from the organisation, which showed really poor internal control. Will this new position have an overarching responsibility across all agencies? I will explain that a little bit, Premier —

The CHAIR: No, I think you may ask a further question. I think that is clear enough.

Mr M. McGOWAN: For those sorts of things we are dealing with 140 000 people or thereabouts. I understand we have education programs, and advice and so forth goes out to staff, but we are dealing with people. I always find that when we deal with people, wherever it is—in the private sector, the public sector or community organisations—they do not always do what we want them to do. I will ask Mr Italiano to respond further.

Mr G. Italiano: I make the point that password sophistication is the area in which we have made the greatest progress. There are now very simple programs to detect whether people are using simple passwords, but in reality password strength has passed by as one of the major controls. Multifactor authentication and having more than passwords protecting systems is considered good practice.

To the Premier’s point, we see that sometimes in cybersecurity it is not about the technical control. Some of the things that lead to failures are simple things relating to behaviours of people and that, of course, as has been indicated, is a significant challenge.

Just to the last point, the chief data officer role that we have been talking about today is not a cybersecurity-centric position. We already have a chief information security officer, but through the chief data officer we will add further capability so that when data is shared, it is shared responsibly.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Does the Premier expect the majority of the Auditor General’s findings to be dealt with? One of the Auditor General’s concerns was that the majority of previous findings had not been responded to.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that in relation to cybersecurity?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, that is in relation to cybersecurity in agencies.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We continually improve, and I outlined before that we have \$1 billion of spending. I will ask Mr Italiano to respond.

The CHAIR: Before he answers, you are trespassing a bit away from the line item, but you might be mindful of that.

Mr G. Italiano: One of the initiatives that we have taken in the course of the last 12 months is to ask the Premier to issue a circular requiring agencies to provide us with their management letters that they receive at the conclusion of audits. Prior to that, the reports we saw tabled in Parliament did not tell us which agencies the findings related to and often the findings could be quite dated by the time we read them in a report. Having those management letters has given us much better visibility of the findings and, of particular relevance, their significance. From a risk-based perspective, addressing significant issues is the best place to start to try to lift maturity. We are presently analysing those management letters and we will provide advice to government about the achievability of addressing those recommendations, noting that one of those will be to make sure that the most important recommendations are addressed first.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If we look at page 63 of volume 2, we see the fourth paragraph under the significant issues impacting the agency is “Commonwealth–State Engagement and Reforms”. It refers to the department supporting the Premier’s participation in national cabinet meetings and says —

The Department continues to play a critical role in addressing policy and funding opportunities and risks for the State arising from the Commonwealth Government’s extensive reform and election commitment agendas.

Earlier, in the Treasury division, we discussed the GST arrangements. Is discussing the future of the GST arrangements also part of the department’s activities in supporting the Premier?

Mr M. McGOWAN: National cabinet is the successor to the Council of Australian Governments. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet provides me with briefing materials and verbal briefings before such time as we attend, and then provides the personnel support at the meeting. The director general attends the national cabinet meetings and other staff are there but not actually in the meeting. If the GST issue were on the agenda, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet would provide that support. To my memory, I do not recall it being a specific agenda item in recent times. It sometimes comes up in conversation, but it is not a specific agenda item. Therefore, Treasury would provide the support for the broader debate. It may well come up in what is called CFFR, which is the commonwealth federal financial relations body with all the Treasurers, and Treasury provides the support for those meetings.

Mr R.S. LOVE: In relation to this paragraph, what part of the commonwealth government’s reform agenda does the Premier or the department see as being a significant risk to the state?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which paragraph?

Mr R.S. LOVE: The fourth paragraph. The last sentence states —

... funding opportunities and risks for the State arising from the Commonwealth Government’s extensive reform and election commitment agendas.

Which of the commonwealth government’s agenda items causes the Premier to feel there is a risk to the state?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are lots of issues on which the commonwealth and state interact. I have been assured many times that the GST floor arrangement is safe, at least under this commonwealth government. I take it at its word on that. Other issues pose a risk to the state. The interaction of the commonwealth in state health systems is always an ongoing issue for every Premier and Chief Minister simply because the decline in bulk-billing is putting pressure on our emergency departments and too many people who should be in nursing homes, aged-care facilities or disability facilities are in our hospitals. That is an ongoing issue between the state and commonwealth. Fortunately, at the last federal budget, the commonwealth allocated \$3.2 billion for additional bulk-billing, especially after hours. It has bulk-billing clinics—I forget what they are called—rolling out around the country. That will reduce the risk, but it is an ongoing issue between the state and commonwealth. Every state has health as its number one issue in state–commonwealth relations.

I refer to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. At the last national cabinet meeting we were very keen to ensure that we work with the commonwealth to make sure the systems are sustainable, but not on the basis that people or costs are pushed onto the state. It should be the responsibility of the commonwealth. That is one that could perhaps be interpreted as something to watch, and then there is the ongoing funding of infrastructure, which is, as the member knows, a range of rail and road projects funded either 50–50 or 80–20, and the commonwealth is doing a review. I have been reassured that there is no risk to our funding, but we have to be vigilant about that as well.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Has the department identified the change to the environmental protection arrangements, which has been discussed with the federal government, as a risk to our state in future development?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The department has not given me advice at this point in time that it is a risk, but, obviously, if the issue makes it onto the national cabinet agenda or I get advice to put it on the agenda, that would probably then be elevated to be in this category.

[2.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 66, service 3 and the explanation of significant movements. There is a reference to the Collie delivery unit. How many people are involved in that unit and what is their role?

The CHAIR: It is paragraph 2 under the explanation; is that right?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, it is in paragraph 2 and in paragraph 1 as well.

Mr M. McGOWAN: How many people are involved?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: With the Collie delivery unit, I am very proud of what we are doing in Collie. At the last meeting of the national cabinet the Prime Minister advised the other states who were having issues with the transition from coal-fired generation to lower carbon generation to look at Collie as the example for how to manage it. We are fortunate that Collie is perhaps a smaller and more discrete community than some of the eastern states ones, but it is an example of how a community can be worked with to transition it and make it as successful or more successful than before. The other Premiers were advised to look at it, even to go there. I would organise a program if they wanted to look at what we have done there.

The Collie delivery unit has eight positions—three are based in Collie, five are based in the metro area and one is currently in the process of being filled.

Ms L. METTAM: What are the roles of the eight positions and what is the background? What sorts of positions are they?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I said, there are three in Collie. Their role is to work with the local community on the transition initiatives to make sure that good ideas are assessed with perhaps a local lens. The positions in Perth are there to assess potential projects for the Collie Futures fund. We are spending something in the vicinity of \$650 million on Collie, of which \$200 million is specifically industry attraction. On top of that, there was the recent announcement of the big battery in Collie. That will be a major project for Collie as well. The roles assess projects, rank them, work out whether they are worth proceeding with and get them to a point at which the state can make an investment decision or provide financial assistance.

I was there maybe six weeks ago for the announcement of the support for the Magnium Australia project, which is a magnesium plant. There is another project I announced while I was there, which was International Graphite. All those projects have to be assessed at due diligence, and a ruler placed over them to make sure that they are justifiable for investment of government money. This is our commitment to Collie to make sure we do what we can to attract industry there and put the state's balance sheet behind it to assist the community to transition. There are no other examples of a town like Collie in Western Australia, but there are lots of them around Australia, where there are coal communities that have supported the country for a century or more and then, through no fault of their own, this transition process is occurring, so we want to make sure that all those people and that community remain strong and vibrant. The sorts of projects the Collie delivery unit has delivered are the Collie trails project; the Collie dam mural, which is just remarkable; and the Lake Kepwari project. There are some specific industry projects such as the WesTrac training facility, the call centre, the fire truck servicing facility and the transfer of some of the fire training facilities to Collie and Pinjarra. Then there are these new projects that we are working on like Magnium Australia and International Graphite. There were some others we have achieved for Collie. There is also the big battery. There is strong training, the one-stop shop and the jobs and skills centre we opened recently. There are a lot of things going on in Collie.

Ms L. METTAM: How many of these eight roles are communications roles? Are they public relations roles? What is the skill set of the eight employees?

Mr M. McGOWAN: One of the positions is a communications role. That is important. We want to promote Collie. I want Collie to be seen as a great place. We are investing \$10 million in trails. The mural is \$1.5 million or something like that. We did Lake Kepwari, which is \$5 million or \$6 million, including all the camping facilities and so forth. There is also the land allocation and the promotion of industry. The role also includes engagement with the community, because as a community transition, there is nervousness; people are nervous about what the future holds. What does the future hold for someone who owns their house there and whose kids go to school there? All those things require some engagement and communication with the community, which I think is fair enough. As I said, I think this is a story of national significance. Shows like *7.30* or *Four Corners* should go to Collie to look at what is happening there as an example of what can be done in the coal communities of Victoria, New South Wales or Queensland—how a town can transition, still remain strong and vibrant, and still have blue-collar industry as part of that transition. I really think what is occurring there is a nationally significant event, and I encourage people to look at it. As I said, the Prime Minister was glowing about it at the last national cabinet meeting.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am looking at page 63 of budget paper No 2, “Service Summary”, and the second line item “Administration of Parliamentary Support”, with an amount of \$37 514 000 this year and similar amounts rising a little bit as we go down the track, but not significantly. I have two questions in this field. First of all, has there been any thought or discussion at any stage about transferring that support directly to the Parliament to administer rather than the Department of the Premier and Cabinet? I will perhaps ask another question on that same item.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think it was considered by the last government as well and no-one made the decision to do it. Perhaps the cost benefit of doing such a thing is not there. It would require the transfer of all staff, systems and so forth. I am not aware that there are any problems or issues that come up by DPC running these things. Certainly, in the eight and a half years I was in opposition, and the four years I was in opposition the time before, those governments did not do it either.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The out year 2025–26 will be the first full year of the operation of the different Legislative Council arrangement. During the debate on the shift to having a whole-of-electorate situation for upper house MPs there was some discussion about the extra resourcing that might be required for those MPs. I can certainly find references to that in *Hansard*, but I will not go through that now. Is there any plan to increase the resources for members of the Legislative Council so they can represent the entirety of the state, get across it and communicate with it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is not often I hear a member of the Assembly advocate for additional resourcing for members of the Legislative Council, but there we go! After 27 years here I have finally heard someone say that!

Mr R.S. LOVE: We are very generous people!

[2.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is a first for me! As part of those reforms, we will create an extra position, so an extra Legislative Councillor, which I think takes it to 37 members.

The process is that it will be a chamber with one electorate, so it will be, basically, purely democratic. That means there will have to be an assessment by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal of additional allowances, travel allowances and charter allocations, depending on where members live and/or where their electorate offices are located. That is a process it will have to go through. I will leave that to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to sort out. If a member is genuinely regional and has to travel from home or around the electorate, there will be an allocation.

We do not want people setting up electorate offices in Mandurah in order to get additional allowances; we want genuinely regional people. Not that Mandurah is regional, but the further a member is from Perth, the greater, I would have thought, the assessment is of what the entitlement might be. That is a process that the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal will go through.

In terms of additional electorate staff, I do not have any intention of giving any additional staff, but in terms of remuneration and allowances for MPs, that will be a matter for the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 62 and “Department Resourcing” under the spending changes. There is \$508 000 allocated for 2023–24. Can the Premier please explain what department resourcing is and why it increases in the forward estimates?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general explain.

Ms E. Roper: That resourcing is for the conversion of about 20 temporary roles to permanent. It is effectively internally funded in that first year through underspends or reallocation of moneys for temporary funding for FTE, like COVID, communications and the like, and then it is fully funded in the out years through the papers. That is across a range of policy areas.

Ms L. METTAM: Is that in some respects making permanent the temporary staff who were put on board during COVID?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general answer that.

Ms E. Roper: No; a straight line cannot be drawn to that. It is not simply those roles. We had temporary funding for a range of initiatives, royal commissions and the like. Just 20 of the subset have been made permanent, but some of them were, yes, ostensibly the funding for COVID roles but now they have been reallocated to other policy functions—for instance, health.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a competitive labour market as well, which explains this. If people have temporary roles, it is difficult to keep them. Therefore, providing people with more certainty means we are more likely to keep people we might need.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 66, “Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government” and the third dot point about emergency management policy advice to the Premier, ministers and government agencies. That could refer to the COVID situation and to situations we faced with other emergencies like the recent cyclones et cetera. Can the Premier explain how the interaction between his department and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services unfolds in the case of an emergency, such as the one we had in the Kimberley recently?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Department of Fire and Emergency Services is very professional and knows how to respond to an emergency very quickly. There is the need to acquire commonwealth resourcing at times. When the floods were on, I went up to that area. I have been up there twice, I think. I found a range of commonwealth people

on the ground, particularly from the military—Air Force, Navy, and Army people. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet often helps with those processes. Then there are the ongoing processes of the recovery and the costing around that. DFES combined with Treasury and DPC would assist with those things because, generally, the costs are shared between the commonwealth and state on a whole range of matters, and disaster recovery is on a 50–50 basis. DPC assists with all those things. If there are any others I will ask the director general to comment.

Ms E. Roper: I think that covers it. When necessary, we play a whole-of-government coordination role in partnership with DFES for the implementation of recovery activities, for instance. We had a role in the response to COVID. With the cyclone recently, we supported DFES and the Premier with policy advice around the Premier’s payments in the region. That is a budget item this year as well.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If there is an emergency situation and federal government support is sought, does that come through an approach from the Premier and from the Premier’s department and not from any other government agency? Is the Premier’s department the only avenue for that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are federal–state relations. I am the Minister for Federal–State Relations. Within the department, we handle a range of those communications, but the Department of Fire and Emergency Services has its own networks through to the commonwealth government and through to the Defence Force as well. It is coordinated by everyone working together. I have seen many, many natural disasters over my political life—bushfires, floods, fires and cyclones. I think there is always great coordination across government. The way it all swings into action very quickly between the commonwealth, the state and volunteers is amazing. DPC assists, but DFES also has its networks.

Mr R.S. LOVE: In relation to the outcomes that are achieved when the commonwealth supports the state in the emergency response and money is put up for a program, does the Premier play a role in ensuring that it is fit for purpose? I am thinking of the situation with tropical cyclone Seroja when a very large amount of money was put forward by the commonwealth government, but it did not actually hit the ground. I am not going to go through all the details, but a lot of the money was found not to fit that situation; the criteria were not right for that money to be expended. Is there a role for DPC in ensuring that there are lessons learnt from that to improve the flexibility of funding into the future?

Mr M. McGOWAN: DFES manages the applications. I sometimes sign them, but DFES manages preparing the applications to the commonwealth for funding assistance. I am able to sign the application to the Prime Minister under the DRFA, the disaster recovery funding arrangements, but there are certain criteria. I think that the commonwealth is quite firm on us. Sometimes, it is one we may argue about, but the commonwealth can be difficult. It does not like scope creep, for instance. I will give the member an example of a road that has been washed away. When we rebuild that road, we want to rebuild it to a higher standard so that it might withstand the next flood. That would mean building the road to a more expensive standard. We would like the commonwealth to meet half that extra cost. I am not sure the commonwealth would agree with that, because it would just want to fund exactly what was there before; however, if it was washed away by a flood before, we want to build it to a better standard so that it does not get washed away again in the next flood. Those are things we sometimes debate.

There are also issues with private insurance. I think sometimes people think that the government should fund what should be funded by a private insurer, so there are ongoing processes around that. In the case of cyclone Ellie, most, if not all, of that housing was government owned, so private insurer arrangements did not necessarily come into play. That means the cost of recovery is significantly higher because it is the responsibility of the state and the commonwealth to rebuild the houses. At this point in time, I think that the cost of cyclone Ellie is \$322 million. It may grow, because I am not sure that includes the bridge. The old bridge is currently being demolished by a concrete-eating machine and work will start on the new bridge soon. There is a low crossing across the river; there are trucks and cars going across now as we speak. A lot of the roads are being repaired. There is quite a remarkable recovery effort going on in one of the most difficult and inhospitable environments in Australia—perhaps the world.

[2.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer again to the spending changes table on page 62, the reference to “ServiceWA App New Services” and “ServiceWA App Operation”, and the funding that has been committed for 2023–24. There is also a reference at the bottom of the page to the integration of more services into the ServiceWA app. How will the ServiceWA app be further expanded?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, Minister Dawson would know more about this than I do, but I might ask Mr Italiano to respond.

Mr G. Italiano: We are putting new services into the ServiceWA app, which has been funded from the last midyear review. Some of the more important services relate to the first digital credentials we are going to put in the app. We are currently implementing a digital wallet for the ServiceWA app to hold a skipper’s ticket and a recreational fishing licence as the first two digital credentials. That work is funded and in flight. We are also going to improve

services in the app for things like FuelWatch, whereby people will be able to get notifications from FuelWatch as they see fit to set them up, and we continuously look for opportunities to add other services to the app and work with agencies to do that. Another example is we are working with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to add a fish catch function to the app, whereby anglers could record their catch in the context of the demersal fishing changes that have taken place. We hope that the app will increasingly become an important service that Western Australians can use with a broad range of government services made available to them.

With respect to future services going into the app, certainly the large one under consideration is, for example, a digital driver's licence, which a number of other jurisdictions in Australia have implemented or are in the process of implementing. There would be an association with a proof-of-age card and the like. One thing we are trying to achieve, of course, in the context of the data breaches that we have seen, is whether we can have a digital identity that works effectively so that people will not need to have their driver's licence and other credentials scanned and held somewhere where they can be breached. Therefore, creating an effective digital identity ecosystem is a very important security function, as well. We are investing in the app, new functions are going in, and we look forward to adding others in the future, subject to decisions of government.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand that it is anticipated in other states, and it has been talked about here, that we will be able to use apps to tap on and off when using public transport. Is that still some time away?

The CHAIR: Member, I think this might be a different portfolio area.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, thank you, chair. I think the Minister for Transport is working on that, so the member might want to raise that with the transport minister.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to a question I have asked previously. On page 62, for department resourcing the amount of \$508 000 goes up to \$3.3 million in 2024–25. How many FTE does this relate to in 2023–24 and 2024–25?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is 20 FTE.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I go back to page 66 to “Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government” and managing intergovernmental negotiations. When we discussed this issue earlier for federal funding for capital projects, the Premier mentioned that he did not expect any change. There is a Senate inquiry on foot on this matter. The relevant departmental secretary said that there had been no prescribed outcome for that; it is a completely hands-off audit of that program that is independent of government. How can the Premier have confidence that we will not see material change if that official is saying that an audit of those programs is underway and there has been no final outcome of that audit?

The CHAIR: Member, I am finding the preamble a bit perplexing. Are you able to rephrase the question more succinctly for the Premier?

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Premier's statement that he does not anticipate any changes seems to be at odds with the fact that this is an independent review of that whole capital program.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. The commonwealth is undertaking a review of infrastructure projects that it is participating in funding across Australia. It has engaged a range of reviewers. Most, if not all, of the projects are related to transport. I think that one of the reviewers is Reece Waldock, a former director general of the Department of Transport here in Western Australia and a respected figure. The review is particularly concerned with projects that have not already started, although I note that the Victorian government has suspended work on the airport rail, which was a project costing about \$15 billion. The review involves the commonwealth looking into its contribution and whether it will continue to contribute, particularly for those projects that have had massive cost escalations. One example that was given to me at the national cabinet meeting was what is called the Inland Rail—a project whereby a railway line is being built from Melbourne up through country Victoria through inland New South Wales up to Brisbane, I think. At this point, the cost blowouts of that project are at \$31 billion. Obviously, the commonwealth is looking at how it can arrest that one. Another example I was given was a fast transport rail line to Geelong. There may well be others.

I indicated to the member that I do not expect there to be impacts on jointly funded commonwealth–state projects in Western Australia because the Prime Minister indicated that it is not about our projects, which have relatively modest costs—very modest costs, comparatively—and also most of our projects have already started. The amounts of money that we are seeking from the commonwealth are minuscule compared with the cost blowouts of projects in the eastern states.

[2.50 pm]

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the table headed “Spending Changes” on page 62 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the line item “Department Resourcing” under “New Initiatives”, with an amount of \$508 000 this year and \$3.3 million in each of the subsequent out years. Can the Premier explain in detail what resourcing that is covering?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think you have asked that. I think it was asked twice, actually. Three times lucky!

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 23 May 2023]

p30b-37a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr David Honey; Chair; Ms Libby Mettam

Mr R.S. LOVE: I was concentrating on other things while they were talking!

The CHAIR: Members, I remind you that in addition to this division, we have the Public Sector Commission, Governor's Establishment, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, Infrastructure WA and the Lotteries Commission to six o'clock. We might need to move on, unless there are further questions.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: Do not feel you have to!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have upset my file now! Thanks very much, chair. Premier, I refer to page 68 and the table headed "Supporting the Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report on the Affairs of Crown Casino". There are no more moneys going forward on that, but unpaid taxes was an issue identified in the Victorian royal commission. Did the support include a review of whether Crown casino in Western Australia had paid adequate taxes? It was found in Victoria that it had not paid adequate taxes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Department of the Premier and Cabinet has been involved in policy responses to and working on the establishment of new legislation for improvements to the Gaming and Wagering Commission and the appointment of the Independent Monitor. That role is not in respect of taxes or anything of that nature. This question was asked this morning during the Treasury estimates hearing, and from memory Treasury indicated that it had not been advised of any underpayment. It is an issue for the Commissioner of State Revenue under the Department of Finance as to whether there have been any underpayments, but I certainly have not been advised that there has been anything of that nature, to the best of my recollection.

The appropriation was recommended.