

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Services 1 to 3, Premier and Cabinet, \$156 729 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Mr D. Foster, Director General.

Mr M. Bradshaw, Deputy Director General, Infrastructure and Major Projects.

Ms E. Roper, Acting Deputy Director General.

Mr R. Kennedy, Executive Director, State Services.

Mr G. Meyers, Director, Corporate Services.

Ms H. Gladstones, Principal Policy Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The Premier may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the Premier to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the Premier's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 31 May 2019. I caution members that if the Premier asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I refer to page 67 of budget paper No 2 and the heading "Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government". I would like to ask a series of questions about the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's role in dealing with technical guidance for greenhouse gas emissions from the Environmental Protection Authority, and specifically whether the Premier was advised in advance or briefed by his department, the EPA or anybody else about the guidance, in advance of the guidance being issued, and whether or not anyone in his department had involvement with the EPA in the development of that guidance prior to it being released.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which page are we dealing with here?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Again, page 67, heading 3, "Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government", and the dot point "leadership and coordination of cross-agency solutions to complex issues". This is a complex issue, and DPC provided a leadership and coordination approach, as it necessarily would, to this big issue.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice that was provided or that was made publicly available was via the EPA, so the EPA did its analysis off its own bat, as far as I am aware.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, I ask the Premier questions, and he —

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, can you just let the Premier answer first? Then I will come back to you and you can have a further question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The EPA did its analysis advice on the offsetting of emissions by new projects across Western Australia off its own bat. Obviously, when the EPA comes in, the Leader of the Opposition can ask it how it did it and who it did it with. To the best of my knowledge, my only involvement or advice was that I received a briefing from Dr Hatton at some point in time before it was announced. The nuances or consequences of the policy change, I was unaware of—the implications, I suppose, I did not grasp. It is independent of government; it did it itself.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The focus is on the activity and the government policy management, the whole-of-government approach, of the DPC. The Premier made numerous public statements on this about his role and his action in telling the EPA to go back and reassess, so we are exploring that—and we will continue to do so. Did the Premier's department provide him with briefing notes prior to the EPA's decision on the DPC's involvement with the formation of that policy or its advice or otherwise to the EPA on the EPA's proposal?

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

p36b-54a

Chair; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Simon Millman

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that there were cross-government DPC meetings with all agencies at various points in time, but I do not have any knowledge of briefing notes prior to the event. I do note and advise that the Leader of the Opposition has put a number of questions concerning briefing notes on *Hansard* and obviously we will answer those in due course.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We are in estimates now and this is a major issue that relates to the EPA's approach to managing large projects. The Premier's document has enunciated a whole raft of very important, large projects that would be significantly impacted upon by such a policy. The Premier publicly announced that the EPA should review it. We want a good explanation about the Premier's or his department's role in the formation of those policies prior to the EPA announcing them. As the Premier just indicated, it is expected—and undoubtedly was the case on this occasion—that the DPC, which is involved in whole-of-government management and in coordinating strategic policy issues, of which this is an important one, should and would have had some involvement in discussions with the EPA prior to the release and formation of that guidance. I just want to explore what advice the Premier's department gave to him in respect of its briefing on the EPA's then proposed guidance.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The DPC does not have any role in the formulation of EPA policies.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It does have a role in a whole-of-government approach —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Can I finish my answer? The DPC does not have a role in the formulation of EPA policies. When the EPA or the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions are here, the Leader of the Opposition can ask them —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Did the DPC —

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, can you let the Premier finish, please?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition can ask them about it at that point in time, but it does not relate to the DPC budget.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Again, I go back to the line item, and I will read it again: “leadership and coordination of cross-agency solutions to complex issues”. This issue fits that perfectly, and DPC quite rightly had a role in coordinating it. Again, I go back to the question: did anyone in the DPC brief the Premier about discussions with the EPA on the EPA's thoughts and processes in forming this guidance, prior to the EPA releasing it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will answer the Leader of the Opposition again: to the best of my knowledge, no. The EPA is independent —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Can I finish my sentence? The Leader of the Opposition can talk; I will sit here for a while.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Go ahead.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, no; the Leader of the Opposition can go. It is the first question. I am obviously unable to finish my sentences, so the Leader of the Opposition can fire away, exhaust himself, and then I will answer.

The CHAIR: Premier, I think you have answered the same question twice now. Leader of the Opposition, unless you have a specific question, I am going to move on to someone else.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Premier's response is, “To the best of my memory.” In government, we go beyond memory; we keep records and notes. Will the Premier commit to exploring not just his memory but also his files and his notes to find out and then later report to the estimates committee, maybe in a submission, whether or not he received advice on that specific issue?

[2.10 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Environmental Protection Authority is independent. It formulates its own policies. That is the way it operates. DPC, to the best of my knowledge, does not interfere in the EPA's policy formulation. Again, to the best of my knowledge, I had a briefing with Dr Hatton sometime before that policy was released. Obviously, I did not grasp the implications of the policy. The policy was released and the EPA then had a change of heart during the course of that week, which I think was a wise thing for it to do.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Again, I am not asking questions about the EPA; I am asking questions about the advice that the Premier has received from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which we are dealing with now. The Premier responded to the best of his memory—fair enough; he has responded like that numerous times. But we need to go beyond memory—we have files, notes and records. I asked him to submit to the estimates committee as supplementary information any information that goes beyond memory and for him to check his records to see whether he was in fact briefed by somebody in DPC about the then upcoming guidance from the EPA.

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Chair; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Simon Millman

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition has a range of questions on notice about this matter. He also has submitted a freedom of information request. Any information on this matter, if there is any, will be secured by those mechanisms.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Is the Premier refusing to answer?

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, the Premier has answered the question multiple times now.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, he asked another question. He is basically saying no.

The CHAIR: No, he did not ask any questions.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He has indicated to us that he has answered the question to the best of his memory. I have asked him to go beyond memory and to check the records, but he said no. Is that the answer?

The CHAIR: No, he answered —

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition verballed me. That is not what I said. I said that he has a range of questions on notice and he also has an FOI request.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We are in estimates now and I am asking questions about a pertinent area —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not like duplication.

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, you have exhausted that line of questioning. The Premier has answered it multiple times and given his response.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 63 of budget paper No 2 and the drafting services to minor party members of the Legislative Council. In the spending changes table, there seems to be an injection of \$400 000. Can the Premier define what a “minor party” is and how this funding allocation is reached with the agreement of all the parties concerned?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The allocation of \$400 000 is broken down to \$200 000 in both 2019–20 and 2020–21. This funds reasonable access by minor party members of the Legislative Council to parliamentary drafting services. That includes the Greens, Pauline Hanson’s One Nation party, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and the Liberal Democrats. The services will be delivered by providers acquired following a competitive tender process currently being undertaken by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Successive governments have maintained an arrangement under which private members wishing to request the drafting of a private member’s bill approach the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office directly. Requests to draft extensive and/or complex private members’ bills may be declined by the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office as its primary responsibility is to deliver the government’s legislative agenda. The Legislative Council currently consists of a significant number of minor party members—nine out of 36—contributing to an increased demand for drafting. During 2018, private members whose request for drafting services was declined by the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office raised the matter with the President of the Legislative Council. The government examined the resourcing of the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office. Due to a variety of factors, the office’s drafting capacity has been reduced—people have left on maternity leave and things of that nature. Drafting is a highly specialised area. Experienced drafters are a scarce commodity worldwide. A number of strategies have been employed to increase the PCO’s capacity. However, there are presently few opportunities to increase it further. Therefore, the government has agreed to this relatively small allocation to meet the request of the minor parties for the provision of drafting services. Under this arrangement, when the PCO denies a request for drafting services because the bill is too complex and time consuming and the like, a minor party member will have the option of engaging a panel provider provided that member has not already exhausted his or her pro rata allocation for drafting services during that financial year.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question. I note that the list of minor parties that will get extra resourcing, as outlined by the Premier, does not include the National Party. What avenue does a minor party like the National Party have to access drafting options for legislation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are just a couple of things that I need to mention. Firstly, the Liberal Party and the National Party have much more significant budgets than the minor parties. The minor parties do not have the central office budgets that the member’s party receives from taxpayers. Although Pauline Hanson’s One Nation has three members of Parliament and the Greens have three or four MPs, they do not have that allocation that the National Party has. Therefore, it is a different circumstance. As I said, it is an allocation of \$200 000 in 2019–20 and in 2020–21 that is accessed only if the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office cannot meet the needs of those members. We could deny it, I suppose, but it would not really be fair because all those Independent and small-party MPs would not then be able to introduce legislation and compete with the resources that the Liberal and National Parties have.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is basically impossible for the National Party to get any legislation drafted. The PCO’s response is that it does not have time because its priority is government legislation. Is the Premier saying that there are no resources, other than the ones that he mentioned—so no resources for the National Party—for any minor

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parties to put forward legislation? Time and again the National Party's requests to have legislation drafted during this term of Parliament have been rejected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, that is not what I said. I said that the Parliamentary Counsel's Office can provide support for drafting, but if it is complex and requires significant resources—considering the government's heavy legislative load—minor party members can access pro rata an amount of money to get some drafting done by a private firm selected from a panel process. As I explained at the start, the National and Liberal Parties have a budget that can be used for whatever purposes of this nature they want. That is exactly the same as it was under the last government.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I do not know whether the Premier has a list of how many times the National Party has put forward a request to the Parliamentary Counsel's Office to draft some legislation, but in my experience I have been rejected a few times. There is pretty much no access or ability for the National Party to ask parliamentary counsel to draft legislation. It seems that the government is ensuring that these resources are not provided to minor parties like the National Party. I do not know what is happening with the resourcing of the Liberal Party. I find it quite amazing that the government seems to be stopping the National Party from putting forward any legislation. Clearly, this allocation of \$400 000 will make it even more difficult because we are not considered to be a minor party.

[2.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will repeat my answer and make one point. Members have access to the Parliamentary Counsel's Office but it depends upon the complexity of the bill. If the bill is complex and requires huge resources, parliamentary counsel makes its own decision on whether it has the resources to draft complex legislation for an opposition party—I do not call the office to tell it what to do or anything like that. Having said that, unlike the Greens, Pauline Hanson's One Nation and the others, the National Party has a budget that is administered by the Leader of the National Party, Mia Davies, and whoever is her chief of staff, which can be used for drafting if the Nationals so choose. I make one other point: the Greens Party, which has four MPs, does not have a budget, but its vote is about double the National Party's vote. The Greens' and One Nation's vote is about the same as the National Party's vote. They do not have a budget; they do not have access to any money for drafting or anything of that nature, whereas the Nationals do and it has the staff they do not have.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I remind the Premier that we have nine members of Parliament, unlike the others. What is the current backlog of bills faced by the Parliamentary Counsel Office's drafting services? Does the Premier have a list of the backlog?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That does not come under this aspect of the budget; it is the Attorney General's area. Obviously, the government has a very heavy legislative agenda. Later this year, obviously, we will have the voluntary assisted dying legislation, which will be a big debate and take a bit of effort by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. On the commitments we made, numerous pieces of legislation are being worked on currently.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: In 2018–19, the government allocated \$450 000 a year across the forward estimates to minor parties. Is this \$200 000 a year in this budget additional to that or a substitute for it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, it is. I think what the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, from memory, is the additional staff member those minor parties asked for. Obviously, we did not meet their demand; they would have liked more. I think it was two staff each for the Greens and Pauline Hanson's One Nation. I think for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and the Liberal Democrats it was one each. As I said, it is a relatively small allocation of \$200 000 a year for them to access drafting services. They asked the Legislative Council President, in light of the fact that they do not have a budget like the Liberal and the National Parties. The Liberal Party's budget is enhanced because it does not have the rent for its office taken out of its budget, unlike the last opposition, so I think it is reasonable.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: To be clear, the total allocation to the minor parties is \$650 000 a year—\$450 000 in additional money last year, which is continued through the forward estimates, and an additional \$200 000 a year for this year and next year, so it is \$650 000 to the minor parties. When we add them up, not only is that substantially more money than is provided to the opposition—the Liberal Party and the Nationals—whose numbers are substantially more, but also the number of minor party members is substantially fewer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am not sure about the maths there.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It seems to me that you are giving a very large fillip to the minor parties.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am not sure about the maths. I do not know whether the \$450 000 is accurate.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: That is your advice.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You finish, and I will answer.

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Dr M.D. NAHAN: As the Premier indicated, in last budget the government gave \$450 000 a year to the minor parties for staff and now it is giving them an additional \$200 000 a year for drafting. If we add those up, it is \$650 000, which is substantially more than the opposition receives, and the government has told the opposition there is no more scope in the budget for any drafting services for us but the government is funding it for them.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Last year and the year before, we provided, I think, two additional staff for the Greens and for Pauline Hanson's One Nation and one additional staff member each for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers and the Liberal Democrats. What that amounts to I do not know, but that is what was provided. This financial year there is \$200 000 in 2019–20 for drafting and \$200 000 in 2020–21. It may not all be used; it is pro rata. They may not use it at all. Maybe Parliamentary Counsel will meet their needs, maybe it will not, and when it is exhausted, it is exhausted. It is a relatively small amount of money. I make the point that the last Labor opposition, of which I was the leader for a considerable period, had an allocation but rent was taken out for an office.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Because you chose to do so.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Hold on; let me finish. Rent was taken out for an office, and that is not what occurs for the current Liberal opposition, so it is significantly better off than the last Labor opposition.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No choice.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No; that is untrue.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to the ministerial air charter outline under the asset investment program on page 69 of the *Budget Statements*. I am keen to understand the process by which the planes are purchased, which I believe was through a tender process, and the rationale for that decision. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think at one point consideration was given to whether the lease program would continue or a new lease program might be undertaken. Obviously, the government decided to purchase those aircraft. Can we get an understanding of the rationale about that process?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a good question. We explained it, I think, in last year's budget. As the member knows, the government has had two aircraft going back 30 or 40 years. Sometime around the Charles Court era, it was decided, due to the size of Western Australia—the biggest self-governing jurisdiction in the world—that to get around from Kununurra to Esperance and everywhere in between, two aircraft were required. Liberal and Labor governments have had the same arrangement. Obviously, the aircraft were leased. The advice I received was that leasing was extremely expensive. I think all governments have received this advice but no government had the courage to deal with the issue. We therefore decided to save significant money by purchasing the aircraft. It cost \$5 million to acquire the two aircraft, which were previously leased. Over the next three years, leasing the aircraft would have cost \$6.3 million at \$2.1 million a year, and that was more than it cost us to buy the aircraft. We therefore made the decision that we would save the taxpayers money. Over time, obviously, the savings will grow. At the end, we will have an asset that we can sell. That was the purpose behind it. There is nothing more sinister than that; it was a savings measure for government.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I would appreciate a bit more specific information about the lease. Did the lease increase the airframe hours with the plane getting older? As the Premier rightly pointed out, the planes are getting on in years. Did the lease price increase as time went on?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member asking whether it would have?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Was it forecast as part of the decision that the cost would increase?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The costs were projected to increase but it was not connected to the aircraft.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to the monthly cost of \$2.1 million a year, which would have increased each year, effectively. As part of the lease arrangement, did the government get a certain number of hours that the charter could fly or anything like that, or was that the operational cost of the planes and the cost per flight was added?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I might get Mr Foster or Mr Kennedy to comment.

Mr D. Foster: In a nutshell, it does not matter how many hours are flown; we still pay the same price. It was quite an advantage to the department to acquire the aircraft because we are saving money, but there is no additional overhead associated with flying more hours.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Regarding weighing up the options for purchasing and leasing, obviously the ongoing costs of the lease would have included maintenance and what have you. In purchasing our own plane, what costs are involved with the company and the engineers we use? What are the ongoing maintenance costs and so forth to government in owning its planes?

[2.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The maintenance costs that the member is referring to had to be paid in addition to the leasing costs, so it is the same whether it is owned or leased. It is just that the leasing costs over three years were nearly \$1 million more than the purchase cost.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What is the projected time frame for the government having to replace the plane? Obviously, there is a limited life span on a plane, whether it be because of the engine or what have you. Is there a time frame of five years or 10 years before the engine has to be rebuilt, and what is that cost to the government?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I said, whether one leases or buys, that cost is on top of the leasing cost. The advice I have received is that the planes have actually flown relatively few hours compared with other aircraft of its range, which is interesting. The pilots say that the planes are very underused compared with some others, so they probably have a much longer life expectancy than other planes of the same age. But I will let Mr Foster comment.

Mr D. Foster: That is correct. The planes have quite a decent life span ahead of them. That was one of the considerations we took into account in deciding whether we acquired or re-leased the advice —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What is the life span?

Mr D. Foster: I cannot recall off the top of my head. The advice we had was that they are still in very good serviceable condition and will last a number of years, so there are no plans to replace the aircraft in the foreseeable future.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is pretty important to know whether the aircraft has two or three years left before it has to have a sea change, or someone goes in and goes through the plane—there is a time when that has to happen. It will be interesting to see what that time is because that obviously has a bearing. We may be \$1 million better off over the next two years, but over the next five years, we could be \$5 million worse off because the plane has to be replaced. It is actually quite an important question to ask and a very important answer to have, because it could cost taxpayers over a five-year period a lot more than leasing it over the initial period.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can assure the member that the advice I received was that this was going to save taxpayers a significant amount of money. If we leased a brand-new, state-of-the-art aircraft 12 years on from when the original was bought, the leasing costs would be higher. The current aircraft was constructed in 2006 or 2007, so it would be a significant additional burden. I did not make this decision lightly, and I was reluctant, to be honest, but the savings were so great that it was hard not to.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the Premier able to provide that advice that shows that leasing is a better option than purchasing? At what point are taxpayers left with the burden of an ageing aircraft, which can cost a lot of money, and obviously it has to be replaced at some point? Does the Premier have that information? Is the Premier able to provide that as supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: If I could just be clear about what I said before, the three-year cost of leasing the aircraft was \$6.3 million—that is for the next three years. The cost of purchasing the aircraft was \$5.5 million. Within three years, there will be an \$800 000 saving and that saving will then grow because there are no leasing costs. At the end of it, there is an asset that can be sold, and it means we do not have to lease a new aircraft, and if we want to lease a new aircraft, we can look forward to it being far more expensive than existing leasing arrangements, because the cost of aircraft, as I understand it, goes up significantly every year. That was all the advice that we received.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I know the Premier is saying that there is a saving of \$800 000 over three years, but what I am interested to know is about the fourth, fifth and sixth year. It is an ageing asset in an airline industry. Aviation is very expensive because planes are very expensive and it could cost us a fortune in the long run. What are the associated costs, and is the \$800 000 benefit lost after the third year starts to impact because the aircraft is ageing? I am just trying to see.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is actually the opposite. Over three years, the entire cost of the purchase ends up being offset, and then there are no leasing costs at all. There are no leasing costs of over \$2 million a year over the next five, 10 or 15 years that we have the aircraft. The member flies around the north west, like I do, in charters and the like. Sometimes the aircraft we fly in are 40 years old. In effect, for the next three years the entire cost of the purchase is paid for and after that we do not have to pay for each year's lease, which is more than \$2 million a year.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question, and I understand —

The CHAIR: Member, the Premier has answered every single question so far and given a response. He has given enough information to deal with what the member is looking for. One last question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I understand the Premier flies around in planes that are 36 years old, but the motor can be brand new and that is the real cost associated with an ageing aircraft. It is not the physical body of the aircraft; it is the actual engine and other bits and pieces that go in it that get replaced because they have a life span and it has to be done because of Civil Aviation Safety Authority regulations. That is what I am trying to get at. After the

third, fourth or fifth year when will that plane's engine need to be replaced or will those planes need to be replaced entirely? That would be another cost. Obviously, the modelling would have been done over a period of time and we may be better off now over the next three years, but it could cost us a lot more in time. Is the Premier able to provide that modelling over a five to 10-year period to see exactly how much purchasing the aircraft is going to either benefit the state or cost the state?

Mr M. McGOWAN: All the advice I have received and receive is that after three years the saving will be greater than \$2 million every year. If the aircraft is well-maintained, it is not really an issue and the maintenance cost will have had to be paid, above the leasing costs, by the taxpayers anyway. When I said that I flew around the north west in chartered aircraft that were 40 years old, sometimes they were 50 years old, so an aircraft that is well-maintained can remain in the air for a long period of time and it is far cheaper to have owned it than to have leased it, particularly if the idea is to change it out at some point and get a state-of-the-art aircraft, in which case the leasing costs would probably double.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: As the Premier pointed out, the Hawker Jet and the King Air were built in 2006. According to parliamentary questions dated, I think, February this year, the Hawker Jet has about 4 500 hours on it and the King Air has about 2 900 hours on it. That is the answer that came back. I appreciate the Premier will not know that off the top of his head. Perhaps what the member for North West Central was getting at was: does an anticipated air time exist for those planes? If there are 4 500 hours on the Hawker Jet, might it be expected to last for 10 000 hours before it reaches its useful end of life?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice we received is that we do not use it much, and that was the same with the last government, although it is good for ministers and the government to be able to get out there. It works for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. It is available for emergency purposes. I took the police commissioner on it when we went to Osmington, where the appalling family massacre took place. It is used for those sorts of things as well. The advice we have is that it has very low usage and it has a long life expectancy. I think it is actually indeterminate. It could go for decades. If the member wants to look at well-maintained aircraft, he should look at the United States Air Force. It is still flying aircraft built in the early 1960s —

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I think Air Force One is 45 years old or something.

Mr M. McGOWAN: B-52s, yes. Maybe that could be our next aircraft.

[2.40 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to the eighth point under “Statement of Cashflows” on page 70 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, which refers to the cash balances transferred to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation to reflect the machinery-of-government changes since the election of the McGowan government. If I understand this correctly, it was those changes in moving the trade offices from the DPC to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation that led to the discovery of the rort that unfortunately was occurring in the Tokyo office. I believe the Premier has previously told the house that the DPC has commissioned an independent review of the trade offices and also conducted its own audits. Can the Premier update us on those reviews? Has the government been able to recover any assets or money from the former trade commissioner in Japan? If so, how much has been recovered?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question; it is an important matter. The trade offices were all transferred to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation in April or May 2017. Before that, three offices were under the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, so they were split between the old state development department and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Once they arrived at the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, irregularities were noticed by some of the staff at that department and they were eventually referred to the Corruption and Crime Commission.

The CCC found in its report that unfortunately there had been significant rorting of allowances by Mr Peacock, the former trade commissioner to Japan for the Western Australian government. It included falsifying official documents, misappropriating expenses, tax evasion and double dipping. It was unfortunate and very sad for everyone involved, and obviously terrible for the taxpayers of Western Australia. Following that, immediate action was taken. New internal auditors were appointed. An independent chair of the department's audit and risk management committee was appointed. A governance and reporting branch has been created in the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. DPC itself has introduced a comprehensive governance framework and strengthened internal control oversight. The department is undertaking periodic data matching to identify potential fraud. In answer to the question about an independent review of all the overseas offices, KPMG has been engaged to undertake a governance audit of our handling of the Tokyo office during the period of the misappropriation from 2008 to 2017; a wider review of all the overseas offices is being run by some eminent former senior public servants at a national level; and a KPMG audit of the eight international offices is being conducted.

The State Solicitor has commenced recovery proceedings against Mr Peacock, including the freezing of his assets, in both Australia and Japan. Have we been able to recover any funds? I inform the chamber that the State Solicitor has reached an out-of-court settlement with Mr Peacock. He has agreed to pay \$540 000 in reimbursement to the state. This does not stop the state from pursuing further action against Mr Peacock if investigations uncover any additional allegations of financial wrongdoing. The moneys that are to be repaid by Mr Peacock are to an account nominated by the State Solicitor. I congratulate the State Solicitor's Office and the Attorney General for pursuing this matter forcefully and ensuring that we recovered the money we have identified that Mr Peacock owes the state. Obviously, if further money is identified, further action could be taken.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: One of the new initiatives on page 63 is the "Service Western Australia (ServiceWA) Pilot" with an allocation of \$866 000, which I understand is part of a three-year \$6.9 million pilot in Bunbury. Is that correct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What specific role will DPC play in that and how will its allocation be spent? Will this pilot be monitored? What level of outcome is required for it to be adopted in the longer term?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for North West Central for the question. It is a good question. I wish one of our members had asked that. ServiceWA supports the government's commitment to deliver better services to the people of Western Australia. It is an across-government reform to be delivered by the Departments of Finance, Transport and the Premier and Cabinet. It will pilot as a one-stop shop to make it easier to do a range of government transactions—I think up to 90—in the one location. It will provide the citizens of the region, and in fact the whole state, with a single point of contact for 85 everyday services delivered by Transport, Communities, Justice, Primary Industries and Regional Development and Western Australia Police Force. An amount of \$6.9 million will be spent across the three agencies, with \$866 000 coming from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to develop an online ServiceWA directory on the WA.gov.au website, launching in May 2020. The Bunbury service centre will be launched in July 2020.

The development of the ServiceWA online presence is keeping with community expectations of online accessibility and paves the way for an expanded reach of digital services. This reform aims to reduce frustration with travelling times, waiting in queues and searching for the right department. Essentially, people will be able to go to one location and do most of their government transactions. If they want to buy a fishing licence, pay a fine, register their car or obtain advice, the idea is that the staff will not have a silo mentality; they will be across government in their service delivery nature. I would like to see the shopfront on the main street of Bunbury drawing people into the City of Bunbury and becoming an area for the south west where people can go to do these transactions and support the economy of Bunbury. Obviously we could have done one, three or 20. Eventually I landed on one and a regional location that is in the most highly populated region of Western Australia with lots of special land patterns, with many towns, villages and communities. I thought that was a good option. We could have done it in Joondalup, Fremantle or the City of Perth, but I thought that doing it in a regional location was a good thing to do and hopefully it will work. If it does, a future government may well roll it out more broadly.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is this pilot not competing with the role that the community resource centres play in our community as shopfronts providing government services? Will community resource centres be engaged in the rollout of ServiceWA?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, it is not a rival for community resource centres. It is a much bigger operation with a large range of services provided in the one location. I will let the director general comment on its engagement with other things.

Mr D. Foster: The community resource centres have already been engaged in the project and will continue to be. In fact, they are likely to play a very big role in this in the future. Should the pilot be successful and demonstrate some public acceptance and utility and convenience for people—that is the experience we have seen in other jurisdictions—obviously the government would consider rolling out the project. It may well be a hub-and-spoke arrangement in which the CRCs deliver a modified form of service along the same lines as ServiceWA. The Minister for Regional Development as recently as this week has been in discussion with CRCs about planning and preparing for that eventuality. Yes, they will be involved, and they are pretty critical to that service delivery.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the Premier able to provide a list of all the services that will be on offer?

[2.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The expectation is that there will be 85 services. I am happy to provide that by way of supplementary information. I think it is a great news story for regional WA and for Bunbury. I am more than happy to provide the current list, but I put this qualification on it: obviously, as it rolls out, it may be that they change somewhat and, hopefully, expand. By way of supplementary information, I will provide a list of the expected 85 services to be offered from ServiceWA.

[*Supplementary Information No A6.*]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Why was Bunbury chosen over somewhere like Mandurah or some other area?

Mr M. McGOWAN: A good local member!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mandurah has a good local member.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No—that was a joke, just for the record.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, that is not regional.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am totally in the camp of the member for Mandurah. It is a regional area. I had to make a decision: do I do one or three or however many; and, if so, where? Obviously, people in the city have easier access to a range of services than do people in the regions, and Bunbury is a hub for all those communities in the south west, so I thought it was a good location on the main street of Bunbury. But it is a subjective judgement.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The third significant issue impacting the agency outlined on page 64 of the *Budget Statements* refers to policy development for unsolicited private sector proposals—unsolicited bids, I assume. Can the Premier describe where he is at with that policy, what issues and assets are covered, and how he is going to ensure transparency, competition and value for money?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Certainly. Market-led proposals are otherwise known as unsolicited bids. This was a key part of our Plan for Jobs. The policy provides a single, clear, transparent process for parties seeking to approach government with proposals that have not been requested. It is a one-stop shop for government to evaluate those unsolicited proposals and determine whether there is benefit for taxpayers. The proposals are essentially those that cannot be dealt with by the existing government process. The policy began operating on 12 April. As part of it, the Market-led Proposals Steering Committee was established. We have appointed an independent chair, and it also includes directors general from key agencies. The steering committee's role is to coordinate the evaluation of high-value market-led proposals or those that involve multiple agencies. It will also carry out an evaluation, if requested by the responsible minister. The steering committee will provide recommendations to cabinet, but at the end of the day, it will be the government that determines whether a proposal goes ahead. The steering committee has already met. Western Australia is the only state or territory without a whole-of-government process for dealing with market-led proposals. Every other state has something similar to this. I launched a draft with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia last year and we had full consultation on it. We have now arrived at a final policy. There was consultation with industry, the community, government agencies and the like. I will get the director general to say who the independent chairperson is, but we had to ensure independence so that they are not conflicted. The implementation of the policy is being led by the Department of Finance. Director general, who is it again?

Mr D. Foster: Lynne Robinson is the independent chair. She is from Victoria. It was important to try to get somebody from outside of WA, because everyone in WA is either related or closely connected. Having someone from outside this jurisdiction was important. She has a strong governance background. The Department of Finance is doing the administration of the policy, so the full policy document is on its website. As the Premier said, the committee met for the first time last week.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Firstly, how will the government ensure transparency of the decision-making process if someone puts forward a good idea, and at what stage will it be disclosed that a bid has been received? Secondly, how will it ensure competitiveness when a firm puts forward a good idea—I accept that firms do this—but there might be alternative providers? How will it deal with these conundrums, if you like?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, a range of guidelines were established following the consultation process that took account of what has happened in other states. I will let the director general comment.

Mr D. Foster: Thanks, Premier. The committee is turning its mind to some of those questions. On the degree of transparency of the policies, obviously we are dealing with commercially sensitive proposals from individuals, so there is a bit of analysis going on by the Department of Finance about to what extent we can disclose details of those proposals, but there is an acceptance that that needs to happen and they need to be disclosed to some degree—that a decision has been made on a particular proposal and these are the characteristics. We are working through what that looks like at the moment; it is very early days. Whether it is capable of being put to tender is an obvious question that we have to turn our mind to: is this a proposal that would lend itself to a better outcome if it was subjected to a normal tender process, which goes on all the time across government? They are some of the questions in the evaluation criteria that we turn our mind to.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I have two questions related to the same issue. I understand that the policy development process is underway. If someone puts forward an idea for a project, do they have any proprietary right, if the

project is taken up by the state, to be a participant in that project? Has anybody made bids to the government that it is now considering?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general answer, except I will say that I think the second question might relate to a commercial-in-confidence matter, but I am not sure about that.

Mr D. Foster: There have already been applications through the process. We have dealt with the very first one, and we have dealt with only one other application that has been made, but we have had no advice from the agency on the supplementary ones. Part of the process involves seeking advice from a whole range of agencies and different inputs to form a view on the competitive nature or whether it would be better going to a full tender process. Although I cannot disclose details of the first one, there is probably not a human in this building who would not think it was a ridiculous proposal that should be knocked on the head as quickly as possible. It is part of the job of the committee to reject things that government should not waste its time on for very long.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: To explore that answer, if a party proposes a project to the government, whether it is an unsolicited bid or otherwise, and the government subsequently decides to go through with it, does the person who initially proposed the project in a large sense have a proprietary right to be a participant in the project that is subsequently taken up by the government? Can the Premier disclose any of the proponents who have put forward projects?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get the director general to handball that question to someone.

Mr M. Bradshaw: My understanding is that simply because a proponent puts forward a bid, that does not necessarily give them a proprietary right to participate in the project at a later stage. It would depend upon the assessment that the committee provides on that project. As the member is probably aware, proposals across government, and very often of a property nature, are all very different and have very different elements of participation. The simple answer to the question is: no, not necessarily, but it would not necessarily exclude them either.

[3.00 pm]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The previous government had a policy on unsolicited bids on land and land alone. I assume this is going beyond that. Could the Premier indicate some projects that have been put forward to date—not the details of course, but some of the proponents that have put forward projects in an unsolicited bid?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think this process requires confidentiality. I am being listened to here and someone may hear the broad outline of an idea and put in a competing thing. That is not the way the process is meant to work. There should be a commercial-in-confidence process for unsolicited bids. Do the guidelines indicate that, Mr Foster?

Mr D. Foster: Member, there is confidentiality to a point. We still have not finalised our view about how and when decisions should be made known and communicated, but clearly there needs to be some accountability and transparency around those decisions but that might be in a very lean or simplified way so as not to compromise anyone. But these issues are still under consideration and, as I have said, we have only just begun the process. There are a lot of questions about how this will be navigated, but we are mindful of the need to be transparent, hence having an independent chair to oversee the governance questions in particular. We also have to give industry some confidence that the process will have a high degree of integrity. There needs to be a high degree of transparency and accountability for everyone concerned. We are turning our minds to those very issues at the moment.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I assume the answer about the breadth of the projects goes beyond land to other things because the existing policy applied only to land. Can the Premier take me through the process? Someone goes to the government and puts forward a proposal to the board and independent chair, which is under the Department of Finance. That body assesses the project and advises the government. The proponent does not go directly to the government or the minister to promote the project. The project has to go through the channel of the board and an independent chair rather than around them to higher levels of government.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get the director general to comment.

Mr D. Foster: I think the member is delving into the realms of human behaviour that might be impossible to control. The process is designed to help various parts of government that are often assailed by proponents with an idea or a proposal. This will channel that process into one direction—“Thanks; interesting idea, but it needs to be subjected to this process and this scrutiny.” As the member would be aware from his experience, a lot of times proposals kick around government for many years with no clear decision because there is no clear project owner. Proponents tend to approach multiple agencies seeking someone to adopt and take up the idea, but a decision will not be made because there are no lines of accountability and clarity about who is the decision-maker on a particular proposal. It is designed to overcome that problem by giving a single entry point into government through the

Department of Finance, which is gearing up to handle this to make informed decisions, draw on advice from multiple agencies, identify the logical lead agency and give a quick decision—“No, this is not going to be entertained” or “We’ll take this a little bit further into another stage and have a look in more detail.”

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Is the East Perth power station project, for which the government has invested \$30 million for the remediation of Western Power facilities—I understand fully why that needed to be done—one of the projects under consideration?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is not; it is an existing expression of interest that started in 2015 and stalled. I looked at it over the course of last year. I visited the site and looked at the electricity infrastructure. I know more now about gas mains, electricity substations and high power lines being put underground than I did before. I did not know that all the electricity and gas that goes into the city goes through there. Those issues have to be resolved or else the project will remain unfulfilled for the next 20 years. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, a small investment of taxpayers’ money could well result in hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars of investment because the East Perth power station site is that sort of site. I would love to see it turned into a national Indigenous gallery, an amazing Indigenous or private gallery or something spectacular to create a new attraction for Perth in exactly the same way that the Museum of Old and New Art has done for Tasmania. Perhaps we could do something more outrageous than the Mona, although that would require some doing. In any event, it was an existing EOI and we have had to kick along with that investment.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The East Perth power station EOI was an existing one. Its pick-up and development was inhibited by the gas and Western Power facilities, the relocation of which we estimated would cost \$30 million. Why did the government not ask the proponent to cover the \$30 million cost? It stalled, but there have been substantial developments in the area, such as development of the river bank and Belmont and Optus Stadium, that have enhanced the value and therefore increased the ability of the future proponent to pay to remove the energy infrastructure.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is not really on point, but I will do my best to answer the question. My recollection is that the advice was that the proposal had stalled because all those issues were sitting there and no-one had a way forward. Amending the EOI might have meant that we had to go back to market when five proponents had already put forward proposals. In any event, if we spend \$30 million, we will bring forward the benefit. It may well be that taxpayers get their money back or they will get a project that creates more jobs, in which case the investment will be worth it. Whatever happened, we had to intervene to get some activity. The development of Belmont in due course is a fair distance away. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, I am pretty tight with taxpayers’ money but I thought that that investment would create something that every Western Australian, city and regional, could be proud of. As I said, it might become an Indigenous art gallery from which much Indigenous art will come. It could be a wonderful tourism attraction or a precinct for residential, commercial and high-tech development. All those things are available on that site if things are done right. We had to resolve those issues. I suspect that even if we amended the EOI process and required the proponent to move it, it would have sat there unused for years to come.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I refer the Premier to page 65 of budget paper No 2 and to the third point under service summary, “Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government”, and to the last table on page 75, which is headed “ICT Renewal and Reform Fund”. It states —

... To expedite the delivery of ICT reform across the Western Australian public sector in an efficient and cost effective manner ...

Can the Premier outline what is happening with reforms to the public sector from a whole-of-government point of view and what benefits can the public expect to see from this reform?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are implementing a program of public sector reform to improve service delivery to the community. This reform is shaped by the independent reviews commissioned by the government, including the service priority review and the “Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects”, which is more commonly known as the Langoulant review. Implementation of the review findings is well underway with considerable reform momentum and buy-in. This year we are doing Infrastructure WA and we have just discussed market-led proposals, the government trading enterprise legislation and the pilot program for ServiceWA in Bunbury. We will continue to progress the government’s digital reform priorities by refreshing the WA government’s ICT strategies for 2016 to 2020 to ensure contemporary service delivery; continuing to convert eligible fixed-term contracts and casual employees to permanent positions in the WA public sector to provide better job security for workers and improved services for the community; and bringing online the remaining whole-of-government reform initiatives that make up the public sector reform program. Our priorities will deliver real outcomes on a range of complex issues for the WA community. An implementation unit is being established to support agencies to deliver these outcomes. There is already money in the budget to support these things. As the member said, his question is predominantly about digital reform priorities, so I invite the director general to comment.

[3.10 pm]

Mr D. Foster: The critical issue for getting digital reform across government is to have a functional Office of Digital Government. That has been established out of the former Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, which was the subject of some short-term funding under the previous government. A decision had to be made to either continue that funding or reconfigure the Office of Digital Government. It was decided to reconfigure the office and give it a stronger mandate from central government and bring it into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It was asked to focus on enhancing digital service delivery across government—that is, working with agencies to try to get them up to speed so that at least we will be on the same rail gauge—to pilot data analytics projects across the sector; to get involved in cybersecurity across the sector and drive improvements in that space; to implement the GovNext-ICT project by getting agencies to roll into that exercise; and, finally, to look at where the digital divide was in the community and to see whether the state or commonwealth government could do something to provide opportunities in that space. The office has a clear mandate. Its disposition is about helping agencies rather than dictating or directing. It has new leadership and governance over the GovNext project and the office itself. The former board that oversaw digital transformation in the sector was chaired by the government chief information officer. I have put in place an independent chair from outside that sphere. We also have a new recruit in Greg Italiano. He heads up that office and works very well with Treasury and other agencies. We are starting to see that the proof of the pudding is in the outcomes. That office is now funded, secure and able to concentrate on that transformation work across the sector.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 71 and Aboriginal policy coordination unit grants in the table “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies”. Over the forward estimates, or certainly in 2019–20 and 2020–21, there is a 60 per cent reduction in Aboriginal policy coordination unit grants. What are Aboriginal policy coordination unit grants? How do they tie in? I note that in previous questions we have referred to the response to the coronial inquest and a number of other recommendations in the Education and Health Standing Committee’s report “Learnings from the message stick”. Are those grants tied to any responses or are they separate; and, if so, why is there a 59 per cent decrease over the next financial year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a matter for the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He is under the Department of the Premier and Cabinet these days, so I will let the director general comment.

Mr D. Foster: The grants program is subject to the very technical Treasury term of being “lumpy”. The reason for that is that it relates to land agreements, so it is a fund for that purpose. When funding is needed for traditional owners to participate fully in negotiations, money is drawn down from that fund, and it has not been replenished. The fund has been used for things such as negotiations with the midwest Aboriginal native title claimants and also for the implementation of some outcomes of the South West Native Title Settlement. It is used for that purpose; that is, for native title determinations or other forms of agreements related to land.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate the response. I anticipate that at some point in time, as part of the government’s statement of intent and whole-of-government response to the inquests and reports, those grants will probably not be a part of any recommendation. Obviously, the state invests quite a lot in a number of other areas in health and community services to deal with those issues. Obviously this will not be drawn down, or the Premier does not anticipate it being drawn down for any land or other claim as part of the response to those reports; is that right?

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

Mr D. Foster: No. That program has a specific purpose; that is, it is tied to land agreements and the implementation thereof. Any investment in other matters will come from other sources.

The CHAIR: I remind members that there are four divisions and one off-budget item to go before six o’clock, so keep an eye on the time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 64 of budget paper No 2 and the significant issues impacting the agency. The third paragraph on that page states —

The Department has developed and launched a Market-led Proposals policy to provide appropriate policy and governance around the handling of unsolicited private sector proposals that may be of benefit to the State.

To date, has the government had any unsolicited private sector proposals?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member may not have been listening, but the Leader of the Opposition asked me 10 or 15 minutes’ worth of questions on this matter. Some have come forward, but we are not at liberty to say who has come forward because that would breach commercial-in-confidence.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I refer to the table on page 64 and line item “Voluntary Targeted Separation Scheme”. There is a cost reduction of approximately \$1.5 million there. The budget estimate for 2019–20 is \$500 000. I assume that that is part of the voluntary redundancy scheme the government laid out a couple of years ago, which had

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

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Chair; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Simon Millman

a targeted spend of \$185 million for up to 3 000 people. Could the Premier indicate how many FTE are covered by this cost reduction?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think this may be in relation to DPC. The Public Sector Commission —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is in your area.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is inside DPC. Apparently a question on notice was answered to this effect. Do we have a copy of that? The advice I have is that there were five in DPC.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I looked at DPC and found that between 2017–18 and 2019–20 there has been an increase of 22 FTE. DPC has booked a reduction of five, but overall the number has gone up by 22—that is a net change of 27. I thought the program was to reduce the overall number of FTE, but there has been a substantial increase in the number of FTE in DPC. Can the Premier explain how that has happened?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I said before, the \$500 000 budget reduction reflects savings harvested from the department and the corrective measure of approximately five FTE. Since that time the government has undertaken other functions. I will get more advice, but one is in relation to the Our Priorities program, which is trying to get government to work cooperatively to solve a range of problems, 12 of which we launched. That required additional staffing of nine people to deal with that across the entire public sector at a central agency level. There may well have been other people. Then we had to take on three to deal with child sexual abuse as part of the overall government response to the royal commission. There were some in federal–state relations, because obviously I wanted to beef up our efforts in that regard—frankly, to get as much money out of the commonwealth as we could and to give us a stronger presence in that environment when I attend the Council of Australian Governments and things like that, trying to get more support. At a central level, the Office of Digital Government, which answers to the Minister for Innovation and ICT; Science, had some additional staffing, but as the Leader of the Opposition knows, overall, across government, we are heading towards a target of 3 000, under the BTSS.

[3.20 pm]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I think the Premier will find that across government there has been a net 3 800 increase, but the —

Mr M. McGOWAN: When the Public Sector Commission comes in we can explore that.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes. How much was the cost of the redundancies of the five full-time equivalents exited from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: According to the notes I have, it was net \$500 000. Treasury took \$500 000 and the agency got to keep \$100 000 to employ new graduates and have a bit of a refresh.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, there was a redundancy program. How much was the cost of the payout of the redundancies to the five FTEs that were exited from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think it is \$500 000. The cost of redundancies may well include leave and other entitlements, including long service leave or whatever it is, that people may well have. The Leader of the Opposition can see that the budget there is \$500 000, but the agency got to keep another \$100 000. The total cost of redundancies was \$600 000, but on top of that there may be leave and other entitlements, which are there in any event.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, I accept that. Forget the redundancies; those are their entitlements. There was \$600 000 paid out in redundancies to exit five people. Rather than paying out the \$600 000, why did the Premier not keep the people and have them perform the duties that the department has been expanded to do? That way the government would save \$600 000 rather than having to backfill these FTEs with different people.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Some of the people who were brought in are cybersecurity experts. In the current environment—with hacking, international penetrations, US election campaigns and all the other stuff that goes on—the Office of Digital Government required certain skills sets that the people who were made redundant did not have.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 71 and the table headed “Cost of Services”. Under “Expenses” there is a line item, “Supplies and services”. I note that between 2018–19 and 2019–20, there is a \$2.6 million jump in the costs of expenses relating to supplies and services, and I am wondering whether there is some more information on what that increase might relate to.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whereabouts on that page is that?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Page 71, under the headings “Cost of Services” and “Expenses”—the third line down.

Mr M. McGOWAN: “Supplies and services”?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Okay. That is \$28 258 000 for 2019–20.

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Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Comparing that with 2018–19, Premier, where it is \$25.6 million, I am just wanting to understand what was the increase of \$2.6 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I might invite Mr Meyers to answer that question.

Mr G. Meyers: I do not have the exact details, but it would relate to new initiatives that the department is undertaking—specifically, our priorities and Infrastructure Western Australia expenditure under supplies and services.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I cannot hear.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It looks to me like it has gone down. Has it gone down?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It has gone from \$25 million to \$28 million; sorry, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The budget last financial year was actually \$34 million.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: But the estimated actual to the budget estimate —

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is right. They move around for various reasons, but I will let Mr Meyers comment.

Mr G. Meyers: Can the member hear me now? It is related to new initiatives that are outlined under spending changes—specifically, our priorities, IWA and expenditure related to professional services et cetera. That is the increase.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: But it predominantly related to Infrastructure Western Australia, IWA—is that right?

Mr G. Meyers: It is a combination. It includes professional services within our priorities and IWA.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Meyers comment further.

Mr G. Meyers: It covers IWA and our priorities. There are also bits and pieces from the Office of Digital Government and we got some extra funding for the royal commission as well. That is about it really.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: So, effectively, the stuff that the Premier was just speaking about, that is the financial impact there? Thank you very much.

Ms A. SANDERSON: My question relates to page 64 of budget paper No 2 and significant issues impacting the agency. The second paragraph discusses some state infrastructure and coordination of future infrastructure. Can the Premier elaborate on how the state government is working to secure better commonwealth funding for WA infrastructure projects?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are committed to a whole range of infrastructure projects across Western Australia because they create jobs, strengthen the economy and provide essential services to the community. Since being elected, we have secured more than \$6.4 billion in infrastructure funding from the commonwealth government. This will enable projects like Metronet to be delivered with a much lower impact on state debt. We have also secured significant road and health packages across metropolitan and regional Western Australia. We will continue to work hard to secure a fairer share of commonwealth funding. We have negotiated a new national partnership agreement on land transport infrastructure, which will facilitate billions of dollars of commonwealth infrastructure payments to WA over the next five years. The state government is working collaboratively with Infrastructure Australia to improve business cases and secure federal support for nationally significant infrastructure projects in WA.

Highlighting our increased engagement with Infrastructure Australia, the “Infrastructure Priority List” published in February 2019 included 17 Western Australian listings, with many of these now federally funded—particularly roads and rail.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Lucky the coalition got in!

[3.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The truth of the matter is that we submit projects. The member will remember that the former Premier said that he did not have to; he did not need to. It was not his thing. I met on numerous occasions with the former Prime Minister, and I have met with the current Prime Minister a few times, and with federal ministers, to secure money for projects, and it would be fair to say that it has been pretty successful. The establishment of Infrastructure Western Australia will improve our efforts to secure money from the commonwealth to make sure our business cases are of quality and that our 20-year state infrastructure strategy provides us with guidance. That will help us in our dealings with Infrastructure Australia and federal ministers. Frankly, I am very pleased we managed to secure what we did over the course of the last two years during that second term of the current federal government. It was obviously concerned about its re-election and about Western Australia. We took advantage of that and secured an enormous spend on roads all over Western Australia, rail all over the city, and, as I said, hospitals and other projects all over the state. That was a good outcome and I am pleased we did it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 65 in budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the table under service summary, specifically the fourth line item, “Government Policy Management — Aboriginal affairs”. Does the Premier

consider it appropriate that the director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet was involved in a blatantly political advertising campaign funded by the WA taxpayer called “Don’t Walk Away”?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The answer is, obviously, no.

The CHAIR: The member can have a further question but keep it relevant and to the point.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the line item about policy management of Aboriginal affairs. Is the Premier saying that it is not appropriate for the director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to be blatantly involved in political advertising?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No—the member is verballing me. I will make a few points about that. We received advice from the commonwealth government that it was no longer going to fund remote communities. Mr Scullion, the former minister, was no longer interested in funding remote communities. The member might recall that a few years ago, the commonwealth government pulled out funding for ongoing services in remote communities that had been there for 50 years. The last government in Western Australia received some sort of final payment for that, and therefore the state had to pick up that responsibility in the vicinity of \$100 million a year. The commonwealth government then advised us that it was going to pull out funding for maintenance and housing construction in remote communities. To be frank with the member, the ministers I spoke to nationally told me, “This is it; there’s nothing more. We are getting out of this.” We decided to fight them because people living in remote Aboriginal communities need support with housing and maintenance; anyone who has been to a remote Aboriginal community would know that. The public appeals that we were making in the press and the like made no appreciable difference to the federal government, so we invested \$267 671 inclusive of GST on an advertising campaign, which included print advertisements, banners on websites, social media posts, a website and a few things like that. We secured the support of Ian Trust, Dr Kim Isaacs and Dr Mark Bin Bakar, who is quite a famous Kimberley identity, as part of our campaign because we were going to get nothing. The commonwealth contacted us after that campaign was launched. In discussions it indicated that it was prepared to up its offers from nothing to \$60 million. For an investment of \$267 000, in effect we got \$60 million—a pretty good investment. In light of the fact that the alternative was nothing, I decided to accept that. For an investment of \$267 000 in an advertising campaign, we got \$60 million. The overall outcome of the commonwealth pulling out is not good for Western Australia, but we got \$67 million as opposed to nothing.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the Premier agree that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet should be apolitical?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The approval process was consistent with that used by the previous government when it advertised. It was my decision to advertise. It was the cabinet’s decision to advertise. We were pretty upset that the commonwealth withdrew funding as it had been involved with supporting maintenance and housing in remote communities since Billy McMahon was the Prime Minister—since when I was born, it had been involved in supporting those communities. The commonwealth got involved because of the expulsion of many Aboriginal people from pastoral stations. They were living in poverty in camps and the commonwealth, back in Billy McMahon’s day, and maybe John Gorton’s, decided to put some effort into housing those people. Ever since then, through Prime Ministers Gorton, McMahon, Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd, Gillard, Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison, it has provided that funding. The Turnbull government decided that it would not fund them anymore and we were pretty angry about it, so we decided that we would do our best to secure some support. The member can term it as he will, but I think it was remarkably successful that for \$260 000 we got \$60 million.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the Premier not consider the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to be apolitical; and, if so, does he not consider that this advertising was very political and perhaps it should have had an ALP or Labor logo on it because it was political?

The CHAIR: Member, you are straying off the point here. Confine your comments to the relevant line item, please.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the Premier consider it to be a political advertising campaign against the federal government, paid for using taxpayers’ money and on which he engaged the director general? Is that correct—yes or no?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The ads did not feature me or the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. They featured Mr Ian Trust, Dr Kim Isaacs and Dr Mark Bin Bakar—three prominent Aboriginal people who were more than happy to be involved and wanted to be involved.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Who sourced those people? Was it the director general?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Three prominent Aboriginal people were of the view that we needed to do something. The campaign was approved by the Expenditure Review Committee on 11 June 2018 and the Independent Communications Review Committee on 28 June 2018. The campaign was designed to draw attention to a terrible injustice occurring to Aboriginal people in Western Australia and it was successful. It was not done in the context of an election campaign, I did not feature in the advertisements, it stopped as soon as we were successful and we got \$60 million out of it. On a broader point, I would urge the commonwealth government to reinvest in remote Aboriginal

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

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communities. This is a social issue that will build. I was hopeful that a change in government would mean a reinjection of support back into remote Aboriginal communities—that did not happen. But I urge the current commonwealth government to support remote Aboriginal people.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further to the question, I would like to know who sourced the three prominent Aboriginal people that the Premier mentioned? Who sourced the talent to spearhead the campaign? Was it the director general who sourced that talent?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Department of the Premier and Cabinet approached them and they were happy to be involved. The member is obviously on some sort of mission here. I understand that the member for Warren–Blackwood —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We have some documents that prove that the director general sourced the talent. I want the Premier to confirm whether that is the case.

[3.40 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is not unusual to seek a better deal for Western Australia. The fact that we advocated for remote Aboriginal communities and got \$60 million, the member for North West Central thinks he is onto some sort of Watergate. I am more than happy to say that is what we did, and I wanted to do it because the commonwealth government was not listening. The amount of \$60 million is not enough. Our electorates and people living in remote communities in the north of the state deserve more than that. Rather than attack us for getting \$60 million, the member should be attacking the commonwealth government; that is the one that has —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The Premier is making the department —

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, let the Premier finish.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I would like to finish my sentences. The federal government has let Western Australia down. It clearly does not care about remote Aboriginal communities and remote Aboriginal people. We do; we were successful in getting \$60 million we did not otherwise have.

Dr A.D. BUTI: We care about your constituents.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We are attacking the method, not the outcome.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: On 13 May this year—this follows on from the previous member’s questions about politicisation of advertising—the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, launched a program to enhance the \$23 million federal Labor commitment to deliver funding towards a causeway cycle bridge, which she launched —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sorry; I do not know which part of the budget this is.

The CHAIR: I was hoping you would get to that.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This is coordinated management.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whereabouts, sorry?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The issue is the use of the —

The CHAIR: No; Leader of the Opposition, which particular area?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is about the use of the state emblem on a Labor Party advertisement.

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, you need to identify a particular page.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes; I am referring to “Government Policy Management—Whole-of-Government”; that is, “leadership and coordination of cross-agency solutions to complex issues”, and particularly the use or misuse of the state emblem in advertising, signifying state support for a specific project, which comes to the Premier’s department. It is a policy. I can show the Premier a picture of a sign that has the state emblem on it and refers to a \$23 million federal Labor commitment to deliver funding towards the causeway cycle bridge. The picture was launched by the Minister for Transport in concert with two Labor candidates and Mr Albanese, the then federal shadow transport minister. Is this not a misuse of the state emblem in the midst of a federal campaign?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am unaware of what the Leader of the Opposition is referring to.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I will send the Premier all the material. Do you want me to table this?

The CHAIR: You cannot table anything, sorry.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am unaware of what the Leader of the Opposition is referring to. It does not sound like an overly large issue to me. The best the Leader of the Opposition has is that a crown appeared on a piece of corflute somewhere. Is that what you are saying? Do you mean the swan?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

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Chair; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Simon Millman

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The crest.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The crest appeared on a piece of corflute somewhere; is that your allegation?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No; it was launching a Labor Party commitment by the Western Australian Minister for Transport, using a corflute and saying that the state was behind it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Right. The Leader of the Opposition should ask the Minister for Transport personally, because I do not know anything about it. How it comes under leadership and coordination of cross-agency solutions is beyond me.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is because the Premier is responsible for the government's position.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I know nothing about a crest appearing on a piece of corflute at an event that I know nothing about.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Would the Premier be concerned that in the midst of a federal election —

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, the Premier has answered this question. It is a stretch to drag it into this session.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He says that he does not know anything about it.

The CHAIR: Correct.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ask the Minister for Transport.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Can I ask my question without being verballed?

The CHAIR: It depends whether it is along the same lines. You are struggling to drag it into this section because it is not really relevant.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes it is, excuse me, Chair.

The CHAIR: I will give you the courtesy of listening to it and then I will say whether it is or is not.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The issue is the use of state imprimatur for events and functions. You, as Premier, are responsible for that. One of the Premier's ministers used the crest in a blatant party advertisement in the midst of a federal campaign. The Premier knows about this; I know that he has been informed. Does he think it is an appropriate use of government imprimatur to launch and promote a federal Labor commitment?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know about it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Do you accept that? You are setting new standards here, mate.

The CHAIR: No; listen Leader of the Opposition, the Premier has answered the question numerous times.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: If I might add to that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You guys exhaust yourselves; I will listen.

The CHAIR: If it is along the same lines, member for Dawesville.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The Premier's Circular 2017/05 suggests that, under the Armorial Bearings Protection Act, members cannot use the crest or any other symbols for political purposes. If they are used to do so, they need the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's approval, as best as I understand that circular. I think the Leader of the Opposition is trying to ascertain whether the Department of the Premier and Cabinet was involved in approving that material, which clearly promoted a federal Labor initiative.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The director advises me that he does not know about this issue. If a crest appeared on a piece of corflute somewhere, perhaps it was an oversight. Maybe it is the crest of another state; I do not know. You are better off asking the Minister for Transport; she might know something about it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: You seem not to know —

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, thank you; we have exhausted those questions, thank you.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will respond. The Leader of the Opposition is asking me about a media event held at some point in time in the last, what, few weeks?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Somewhere a Western Australian crest appeared on what, a poster?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is not a poster; it is an Australian Labor Party propaganda piece.

The CHAIR: We are wasting valuable time here.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think it is worthy of a royal commission!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Okay; new standards. Scrap that.

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, you cannot make comments like that. The Premier answered the question and said that he did not have any knowledge of it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer the Premier to the fourth item under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 64 of budget paper No 2. The Premier has previously mentioned the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Can he give us an update on the implementation of the commission’s recommendations, particularly those regarding independent oversight of complaints?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you, member for Armadale. We supported the work of the royal commission. I think it was one of Prime Minister Gillard’s finest achievements. Western Australia offered an apology to the survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, and was the first state to do so. The Minister for Child Protection, with assistance from ministers across government, assisted with a whole-of-government policy management role. On 19 March 2019, the Minister for Child Protection tabled in the house the McGowan government’s first annual report on progress. Of the 310 recommendations applicable to the state government, 108 have been completed and work is progressing on a further 186. The report highlights the significant achievements of removing the limitation period that previously prevented survivors of child sexual abuse from pursuing civil action through the courts, as well as joining the National Redress Scheme on 1 June 2019. We did both of those things that had been talked about for years but had not been done. Our priorities in 2019–20 include the implementation of child safe standards, access to early intervention, appropriate assessment and therapeutic responses to harmful sexual behaviours, increasing the range of professions obliged to report suspected child sexual abuse, and designing a reportable conduct scheme whereby institutions are obliged to notify an independent oversight body of allegations or convictions of staff. The royal commission’s recommendations are expected to be implemented across a five to 10-year program of reform. That will involve a lot of ongoing negotiation and discussion.

The royal commission also found that institutional child sexual abuse was widely under-reported to external government authorities. It also identified problems with institutional complaint handling, such as conflicts of interest where institutions investigate their own staff, and appropriate mechanisms for children to make complaints. The royal commission recommended that a nationally consistent and independent oversight system be established across four areas: child safe standards, a legislative reportable conduct scheme, out-of-home care and youth detention. In 2019–20, my government announced funding of \$600 000 to develop a whole-of-government risk-based approach to ensure independent oversight of these four crucial areas in Western Australia to keep children safe. Western Australia’s existing oversight mechanisms will monitor aspects of child welfare, particularly for children in the care and protection system. The work of the royal commission and other important reports highlighted clear gaps in the state’s current arrangements that need to be addressed. The funding committed in 2019–20 will enable the development of a framework for a system of oversight. I expect the independent oversight to increase identification, improve capacity, strengthen institutions’ accountability and transparency, ensure the risk of child sexual abuse is adequately addressed, improve the wellbeing and welfare of primary and secondary victims, and promote consistent standards of reporting. Improved independent oversight in Western Australia will assure the public that the institutions entrusted to care for children cannot minimise or ignore complaints and that the leaders and employees of these institutions cannot operate with impunity. Obviously, people are now able to launch actions against the state or other institutions outside the limitation period. That is ongoing. People are also able to lodge requests for redress at the national tribunal. That is an ongoing process that will obviously have a budgetary implication, which will be significant over time.

[3.50 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer the Premier to item 1, “Administration of Executive Government Services”, under the service summary on page 5 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2. The figure takes quite a jump in 2020–21. Why is there a \$35 million increase in spending and where is that appropriation coming from? It goes from \$73.68 million to \$108 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that it is related to the Browse LNG special purpose account, but I might get Mr Meyers to comment.

Mr G. Meyers: The Premier is correct: it relates to the Browse LNG payment. An outline of the funds available for Browse can be found at page 75 of the budget papers.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The department’s income statement also shows a deficiency for the period of about \$35 million. Is there a correlation between the increased spend in service area 1 and this deficiency?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which deficiency?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The income statement for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet shows a \$35 million deficiency.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 May 2019]

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Chair; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Zak Kirkup; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Simon Millman

Mr M. McGOWAN: What page is that on?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is in budget paper No 3.

The CHAIR: That is not really in this division.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It refers to it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Meyers respond.

Mr G. Meyers: The income statement on page 71 of the budget papers reports a deficiency in 2020–21 of \$35.7 million and that is related to the payment of Browse expected in that year. The agency received the funding from Treasury some years ago. That is sitting in our cash balance. When we actually make the payment in the year 2020–21, it will result in a deficiency. It is just a timing issue to do with the expenditure and revenue.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I want to follow up the FTE issue. The Premier indicated earlier that five FTEs exited from DPC at a total cost of \$600 000. That was for the redundancy arrangement aspect of it. Could the Premier provide, perhaps through supplementary information, a list of those FTEs by their substantive role—not names; that is not relevant—and task?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that we provided that last year in budget estimates.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It could easily be provided again.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes. By way of supplementary information, we will provide the Leader of the Opposition with exactly the same information about the five people.

[Supplementary Information No A7.]

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 3.55 to 4.01 pm