

Division 35: Communities — Services 1 to 6, Women’s Interests, \$1 154 930 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Dr J. Krishnan, Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Women’s Interests.

Mr M. Rowe, Director General.

Ms C. Irwin, Assistant Director General.

Mr W. Millen, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms N. Kozulin, Manager, Strategic Policy.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 501, the delivery of services, and item 71. How much of the \$1.261 billion in the Department of Communities is appropriated for the work of women’s interests with the department?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member for her question. The total annual budget for the women’s interests portfolio for 2022–23 is \$1.64 million, and for 2023–24 it is \$1.56 million. Key projects the budget will deliver on the portfolio will include \$335 000 for the Women’s Grants for a Stronger Future program; \$200 000 allocated for the Respect in Mining program, with funds provided by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety; \$25 600 allocated to the *Women’s report card* data platform updates conducted by the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre; \$5 000 allocated to the purchase of International Women’s Day ribbons; a \$20 000 administrative support grant for the Western Australian Women’s Hall of Fame; and a \$6 000 sponsorship for the Women in Technology Western Australia awards. There are 7.3 full-time equivalents totalling approximately \$963 370. The total is \$1.56 million allocated to women’s interests.

Ms M. BEARD: How many FTEs does that fund?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: It is 7.3.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry, I missed that. Are there any vacancies at the moment?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: There is one vacancy and we are in the process of filling it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Has that funding changed over the last four years?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member for her question. There was previously an FTE of four, which has increased to 7.3. There is increased funding there; and, particularly, the women’s grants funding significantly increased from \$85 000 to \$335 000 a year.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could the parliamentary secretary just expand on the grants process? Is it annual?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Yes, it is annual.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that process contestable? How does it operate?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: It is an advertised grant process under which people put in an application; the eligibility requirement and assessment is done by the panel, and grants are then awarded to the successful applicants.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer back to one of the programs that the parliamentary secretary mentioned within the \$1.56 million—the *Women’s report card*. How many staff are allocated to that, and what is their role in creating the report card?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: It is not actually full-time staff from the department. It is a grant that is given to the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre to prepare the report card so that we can act on it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Did I hear the parliamentary secretary mention that there was funding for the purchase of International Women’s Day ribbons?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Yes, \$5 000 is allocated in the budget for that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is a lot of ribbon; okay. Where do those ribbons go? Are they distributed through the government? That is an enormous amount of ribbon. I am very supportive of International Women’s Day!

[8.10 pm]

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Yes. Community organisations get them; they get distributed through them.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Has this government taken on that distribution? Is this a new initiative? What happened previously?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Member, it has always happened, but this year we have allowed organisations to apply for ribbons through the website, which means there is a wider spread of the International Women’s Day message. That is where the expense is.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the line “Women’s Grants” on page 522. Can the parliamentary secretary advise us how many applications for grants were made and how many of those projects were funded?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member. I do not have the number of applications we received, but I know that 14 organisations were successful in getting grants ranging from \$7 000 to \$100 000.

Ms M. BEARD: Do you have information on the locations—which areas those grants went to?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I can read out the 14 grants. They are: Motivation Foundation Ltd, \$10 000; Womens Health Care Association Inc, \$9 900; GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc, \$7 000; Umbrella Multicultural Community Care Services Inc, \$10 000; Walpole Community Resource Centre, \$9 950; Consumer Credit Legal Service WA, \$10 000; Escare Inc, \$10 000; As One Nyitting Ltd, \$10 000; University of Western Australia, \$9 790; Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry, \$20 000; Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, \$24 725; Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia, \$50 000; Big hART Inc, \$50 000; and Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia, \$100 000.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would it be possible by supplementary information for the parliamentary secretary to advise how many grant applications were received—not the ones that were approved, but the total number received?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: The member has other means of getting an answer for that through parliamentary questions to the Minister for Women’s Interests.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We are in the estimates hearings, though, and it is directly related to grants that are provided by the department, so can I just be clear that the parliamentary secretary is not going to provide that information via supplementary information? Surely it is not difficult for the department to provide advice on how many applications were received for the grants. The parliamentary secretary could tell us how much was announced.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: We can provide the supplementary information.

The CHAIR: What exactly are you going to provide, parliamentary secretary?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: The number of applicants in the process of approving the 14 organisations.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We are looking at the appropriations in budget paper No 2, volume 2, but I cannot find a specific line item for the implementation of the Stronger Together plan for gender equality.

The CHAIR: Do you have a particular page?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, I am saying that this is one of the programs that was spoken about, but there is no specific line item. I am wondering whether the parliamentary secretary can provide some guidance on where we can find in the budget funding for implementation of the Stronger Together plan for gender equality, and how much net funding has been provided for that work out of the total appropriation.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member for the question. That program has no allocated funding. The Stronger Together framework for gender equality provides a framework for coordinated action across government, industry and community and is being delivered through four action plans across 10 years, from 2020 to 2030. Individual actions identified in the action plan are undertaken from within existing resources. If additional funding is allocated, it is considered as part of the responsible agency’s budget.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I thank the parliamentary secretary. How is that being monitored? If the plan has been created and is, as I understand it, being implemented through various agencies, the directorate would have a responsibility to monitor and report.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member. The implementation and monitoring process comprises senior representatives from key government agencies. The Stronger Together implementation program was established in 2022 to provide a collaborative forum to address cross-agency issues, progress actions in Stronger Together and advance gender equality. The 2022 progress report for the second action plan was launched on International Women’s Day. It provides updates on 55 actions to advance gender equality and the development of 25 new actions.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am trying to gain an understanding of how often that group meets and who it is accountable to. Is it accountable to the Minister for Women’s Interests? Where is it reported?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Senior representatives from key government agencies meet every two months and an annual report is prepared.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are there costs associated with the implementation of the work, or is that borne by each of the departments?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: It is borne by each of the developments; there is no separate funding.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Have all the actions from the interim report been implemented or progressed?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Of the actions, 12 have been completed, 12 are in progress, and 28 are ongoing.

[8.20 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 521 and the line item for women exiting refuge, which is just above the line item “Teenagers in Need of Crisis Accommodation Facility”. Can the parliamentary secretary provide some information on what that provides and where those locations may be? I assume it is transitional housing.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: May I kindly request that the member ask that question of the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence.

Ms M. BEARD: Sure; thank you. It was about women, so I was not sure.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I think I am going to get the same answer, but I will try anyway! It is in relation to the respect in mining report. I refer to page 522. No; it is under women’s interests. We might be in luck! The “Respect in Mining” line item shows that there is no funding in the forward estimates. How many grants were provided? Is it a grant program? Maybe that is my first question. Sorry; let me clarify that: is it a grant program?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Thank you for the question, member. The Mental Awareness, Respect and Safety program is not a grant that we give. The Department of Communities receives a grant from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety and then allocates the grant accordingly. An amount of \$100 000 has gone to Curtin University to undertake preliminary research to inform the development of tools and resources and to provide evidence-based recommendations for an appropriate implementation approach. Another \$200 000 will be used to engage subject matter experts in the primary prevention and psychosocial space to develop bespoke implementation plans with selected mining organisations.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just to clarify, what was the total of what the parliamentary secretary just said then?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: It is \$300 000.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry; I misheard. That is me done.

The appropriation was recommended.