

**Division 3: Department of the Premier and Cabinet — Service 5, Innovation and the Digital Economy, \$32 185 000 —**

Mr C.M. Collins, Chair.

Ms H.M. Beazley, Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy.

Ms E. Roper, Director General.

Mr G. Italiano, Government Chief Information Officer.

Mr P. Bouhla, Chief Information Security Officer.

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

Mr A. Degli Esposti, Chief Technology Officer.

Mr J. Petersen, Chief Digital Officer.

Mr O. Pincott, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

I give the call to the member for Roe.

[5.00 pm]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to page 62 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the significant issues impacting the agency. Down under “Digital Transformation” I notice that the department is “supporting and coordinating the digital transformation of the WA public sector” and it “continues to build services by integrating more services into the ServiceWA App”. How many people now use the ServiceWA app?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** As of March 2023, 1.4 million people have downloaded the ServiceWA app.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** If 1.4 million people have downloaded the app, are 1.4 million people using it? How does that compare with usage when it was mandatory to sign in?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** Obviously, the numbers would be going down because we are no longer in the mandatory COVID-19 check-in period. I will refer to Mr Italiano if there is further information at hand.

**Mr G. Italiano:** I do not have the precise figures around daily usage available. I concur with the view that it has decreased from the height of its use during COVID. I do not have the number of daily users available here today.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I just opened mine for the first time in a very long time so I am sure that is correct. How much data can be usefully gathered if usage of the app is down?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** I will defer to Mr Italiano. I am not sure whether more clarity might be needed around the question.

**Mr G. Italiano:** If the question is, “Do we have data on usage?”, the answer is yes, we do. We are able to obtain statistics about the use of the app. That is possible. The fact that usage may have dropped does not prevent us from obtaining statistics.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** What will the \$4 million for app operation deliver?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** In terms of the technicalities of what will be delivered through that funding, I will refer to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** The \$4.857 million as indicated is for the operation of the app. I can outline what that funding is expended on. Funding is used on specialist contracted ICT resources, software subscription licences, managed services and infrastructure that supports the app. This is the ongoing cost of maintaining the app, keeping it secure and up to date and keeping the infrastructure on which it is held secure and contemporary.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** As part of that further expenditure, has security been tightened up? I am referring in part to the scenario in which, I understand, the WA Police Force accessed information from the app. What changes have been made in relation to that?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** As we all know, there is increasing activity of cybersecurity incidents culminating in an increasing risk to WA government systems. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet's Office of Digital Government is the lead agency for cybersecurity in the WA government. I will defer again to Mr Italiano to talk about the security of the data.

**Mr G. Italiano:** The member referred to WA police accessing SafeWA, or sometimes called in check-in data. That was not a breach of security. At the time that it was accessed, it was a lawful and authorised use of that particular data.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Mr Italiano said that it was not a breach. Is that pathway no longer used by the WA Police Force?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** We passed urgent legislation to ensure that police were no longer accessing ServiceWA app data.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is WA looking at introducing a digital driver's licence, similar to other states, that may be used on the ServiceWA app?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** I know digital drivers' licences are a hot topic of conversation, and I will divert to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** We are undertaking planning activities to ascertain the requirements and potential costs of introducing a digital driver's licence. We have the benefit of being able to access the costs of implementation in other Australian jurisdictions to understand the complexity and cost of that work; however, at this stage we are still in the planning phase and it will be subject to a future decision of government.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** If and when that digital driver's licence comes in and potentially comes onto the ServiceWA app, I am assuming that people will still be able to use their "hardcopy" card. Will it be an optional arrangement or will there be a point in time at which it will become automatic that people will need to have it in a digital format?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** As Mr Italiano said, the research is happening now in terms of a proposal for a digital driver's licence. We have a digital inclusivity strategy to help those who otherwise would have difficulty accessing digital sources. The director general has just confirmed with me what I was about to say—that there is no intention at this point in time of making a digital driver's licence the only driver's licence available for Western Australians.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 63 of budget paper No 2 under the heading "Cyber Security" in the significant issues impacting the agency. Reference is made to a number of initiatives to improve the government's cybersecurity. Can the parliamentary secretary elaborate on what these initiatives are and how they have improved our cybersecurity?

[5.10 pm]

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** As I outlined earlier, this department is the lead government agency for cybersecurity. The department has introduced a number of initiatives to strengthen cybersecurity across the WA public sector. The department will continue to lead, coordinate and support whole-of-government cybersecurity efforts to protect the government's information, assets and service delivery from cyber threats. In November 2021, the WA government allocated \$25.5 million in additional funding to the cybersecurity unit within DGov. This allocation included \$4.6 million to establish a cybersecurity uplift team to strengthen the cybersecurity of agency networks through enhanced technical guidance, improved verification and direct implementation; \$2.2 million to establish a hunt and incident response team to provide a dedicated advanced incident response capability to manage incident responses and threats; and \$14.7 million to expand the WA government security operations centre—the SOC. The security operations centre was first established in 2021, a first for Western Australia and the first of its kind in Australia. The SOC provides enhanced visibility of the cyber threats against agencies' networks and improves the government's ability to detect and respond to cybersecurity incidents. The additional funding for the digital capability fund has enabled the expansion of the SOC's activities, including enhanced testing of agencies' cybersecurity defences, and the SOC currently provides services to 66 WA government entities.

The Office of Digital Government continues to assist the uplift of public sector cybersecurity maturity through the implementation of the WA government cybersecurity policy, which requires agencies to implement a robust baseline of cybersecurity controls to better manage their cyber risks; issuing the Premier's circular on cybersecurity measures to WA government entities; establishing a vulnerability scanning service to provide agencies with the tools required to quickly identify vulnerabilities and missing patches in their system, and, to date, 21 agencies have onboarded to the VSS; a penetration testing program that tests cybersecurity defences within agencies; collaborating with domestic and international security organisations to inform agencies of known vulnerabilities and threats to their networks, and, since January 2023, DGov has issued 88 security alerts to agencies; participating in exercises to test and improve cyber incident coordination and response procedures; incorporating cybersecurity as a hazard

into the state's emergency management arrangements; and partnering with Australia's national identity and cyber support service, IDCARE, to provide a 24/7 incident response capability and specialist case management service to support community members impacted by cybersecurity incidents.

**Ms L. METTAM:** As the parliamentary secretary will be aware, the Auditor General tabled a report in March after a systems audit uncovered 13 cases in which cybersecurity deficiencies were so significant that the relevant agencies' records could not be trusted. The number of agencies that have fallen into this category has doubled since last year. The report found that, in addition to those cases, almost nine out of 10 agencies failed to meet the required standard for end-point security. I could go on, but a number of issues were raised. In light of the commitments that the parliamentary secretary has just outlined, what assurance can she provide that the government is addressing these issues urgently?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** That is a question about a report of the Office of the Auditor General, not about these budget papers or expenditure.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The Auditor General's report highlights significant gaps in the way that the government is dealing with cybersecurity. What assurance can the parliamentary secretary provide that those significant issues are being addressed?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** Again, that question is not about anything in these budget papers. However, I have just outlined the significant priority investment that the government is making in cybersecurity through all the initiatives that I just listed, and then some, and by working with agencies to ensure that they are safe and secure. It is an absolute priority of government, but I have already outlined all the programs related to cybersecurity.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What efforts have been made or where are we at with the removal of TikTok from government phones, as directed by the Premier? Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that all government phones no longer have TikTok on them?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** That is not related to these budget papers. That is a policy issue.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Given that it is a cybersecurity risk or threat, I would imagine that it would be relevant to that line item.

**The CHAIR:** That is not a question, member.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Paragraph 3 on page 63 refers to the whole-of-government cybersecurity efforts to protect the government's information, assets and service delivery from cyber threats. I think it is a perfectly relevant question.

**The CHAIR:** If you ask the question in those terms, you might get an answer.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Given what I have just said about that budget item, can the parliamentary secretary comment on the Premier's directive to remove TikTok from everyone's phones and how it is progressing?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** Thank you, member, for relating it to the budget papers. I will defer to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** The directive has been issued. The nature of the removal of TikTok from devices means that it has to be done at the agency level; there is no central capability to carry out some automatic technical execution to remove it. We have issued the directive and we have provided a follow-up with agencies, and we are currently getting responses from agencies to indicate to us whether the removal has occurred. Device management will vary from agency to agency. Some agencies will have device management in place that will allow them to remotely understand whether that has occurred; smaller agencies may not have that sophistication. But we are following up to check on it.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It sounds as though there is a regimented approach. It might be being done at different rates by different departments, but there is an approach that will see a beginning and an end to making sure that TikTok is removed from all those devices.

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** I will again divert the question to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** That is certainly our expectation.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to page 62 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2. In the table of spending changes, the line item "Western Australia Police Force—Independent Audit" has an amount of \$250 000. This of course comes under the digital capability fund. What are the aims of this audit and what is being audited specifically?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** I will divert this to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** The allocation referred to by the member is to the Office of Digital Government to undertake the audit. When matters relating to the digital capability fund are considered under Expenditure Review Committee and budget processes, additional recommendations can be made about certain decisions. In consideration of the Western Australia Police Force submission at the most recent state budget, a recommendation was added that an audit be carried out to assess current expenditure in the WA Police Force and that is why that allocation has been made.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Sorry; I would like that last sentence or two to be repeated, if possible.

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** I divert the question to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** In this instance, what lies at the heart of the item is that in the ICT operations of most agencies, there will be a delineation between that which is required for baseline operations—so, ongoing recurrent funding, which is often referred to as keeping-the-lights-on-type funding—and funding that is sought to do new projects at additional capabilities. What lies at the heart of this item is to establish that current recurrent ongoing operational support, and we need to provide that information back for government consideration.

[5.20 pm]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** What issues were identified to warrant the audit, and who is undertaking the audit?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** I will divert that to Mr Italiano.

**Mr G. Italiano:** The issue that was identified is adequately delineating between the ongoing operational cost and new initiatives that the Western Australia Police Force wishes to undertake. Who will undertake the audit is yet to be decided. I have sought a submission from WA Police Force in the first instance. When I have received that submission, we will form a view about the scope, scale and nature of the audit that needs to be undertaken.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I ask once again about page 62 and the Western Australia public safety network strategy under the digital capability fund in the table “Spending Changes”. What is the objective of this strategy?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** The Department of the Premier and Cabinet will commission \$1 million for the development of this strategy, and it will set the strategic context for investment in the state’s public safety communications capabilities and infrastructure for the next decade.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Why has \$1 million been provided only for this year, with no further funding in the out years?

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** It is for the development of the strategy, not necessarily what will come from the strategy in ongoing works.

**The appropriation was recommended.**