

Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Donald Punch; Mr Zak Kirkup; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Chair; Ms Mia Davies

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet, \$134 636 000 —

Ms S.E. Winton, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Mr D. Foster, Director General.

Mr M. Bradshaw, Deputy Director General.

Ms M. Andrews, Deputy Director General.

Mr G. Meyers, Director Corporate Services.

Mr R. Kennedy, Executive Director, State 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, 1 June 2018. 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.

Members, we are dealing with division 3. I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. For clarification initially, I refer to page 57 of budget paper No 2 and the heading "Spending Changes". In 2018–19, there are increased allocations for Infrastructure WA, public sector reform and the transfer of Aboriginal policy to the department. If we add up the positives and negatives in that column, it comes to \$7.3 million worth of higher spending. However, the appropriation amount goes down in 2018–19. Can the Premier do some reconciliation between the announced spending changes and the appropriation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will make some comments before I hand over to my advisers to provide more detail. At the bottom of page 57, the Leader of the Opposition will see the 2018–19 start spend for Infrastructure WA, which ramps up over the forward estimates to \$5 million per annum, which is very modest by national standards. It is the most affordable of such bodies nationally; nationally, they are generally far more expensive than that. We are delivering on our election commitment to provide for Infrastructure WA. I suspect over time this will become a bipartisan policy. We all know that the advantage of Infrastructure WA is to ensure a coordinated and rational allocation of state government capital and a proper effort to acquire funding for its programs from the commonwealth government. Infrastructure WA will have a whole range of purposes along those lines. I have released a discussion paper and sought advice as to what the exact structure will look like, but we know that it will have both public and private sector involvement.

The public sector reform is a commitment to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet that has largely arisen from the Langouant review. Mr Langouant said that the central agencies, in particular DPC and Treasury, did not have sufficient strengths for some of their functions. So we have provided some support to both DPC and Treasury. The Leader of the Opposition would know, as a former Treasurer, that over the last 10 years or so, Treasury's budget barely grew while the budget of other agencies grew significantly, and the central agencies of government have needed additional support. That is those two. In terms of the specific question the member asked, I will ask Mr Foster to comment or get an adviser to comment.

Mr D. Foster: Leader of the Opposition, the net result is obviously the result of significant increases as a result of public sector reform and Infrastructure WA, but there are also significant savings. That is a shorthand explanation of the difference. I will ask Mr Meyers to talk about some of the specific reductions to explain that net difference.

Mr G. Meyers: Thank you. I guess if we look at the total cost of services line for the 2017–18 estimated actual, which is \$160 million, compared with the 2018–19 budget of \$149 million, there is a net decrease of close to

\$11 million. That change of \$11 million also incorporates the increases for Infrastructure WA, public sector reform and the Aboriginal policy to which the Leader of the Opposition previously referred. The overall net reduction relates to some one-off funding issues for 2017–18, specifically funding for the South West Native Title Settlement Noongar Land Fund of \$2.8 million. We received supplementary funding of \$2.4 million for Yarloop. The allocation for Local Projects, Local Jobs reduces by \$2.25 million. There is an adjustment for the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer of close to \$1.7 million. The strategic assessment of the Perth–Peel region decreases by \$1.1 million. There is a voluntary targeted separation scheme impact reduction of \$1 million. Funding for the inquiry into government projects reduces by \$1 million in that year. That closely covers the net impact of reduction of \$11 million.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer has been brought into the department from somewhere else. Is that a positive or negative impact on the overall spend?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will invite Mr Meyers to respond to that question.

Mr G. Meyers: The funding for GCIO drops by \$1.7 million in 2018–19 compared with the previous year, 2017–18.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Was that agency brought into DPC last year, 2017–18, or will it happen in the prospective year, 2018–19? What is the cause of the drop? Is it a transfer from that agency from somewhere else or is it a cut to its budget?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will invite Mr Foster to respond.

Mr D. Foster: The Office of the GCIO is currently attached to the Department of Finance; it is a sub-department in the Department of Finance. The government has decided to transfer it to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet from 1 July this year. The funding for OGCIO, which was established under the former government, I believe, in 2015, had a three-year life. The government has extended that to the 2019 calendar year and will make further decisions about the ongoing nature of that body once it has made decisions in coming months about the direction it will take and the new responsibilities it will pick up.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: When it is transferred from the Department of Finance to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 1 July 2018, will there be a reduction in its budget allocation?

[2.10 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr Foster to respond.

Mr D. Foster: I will get some specific details from Mr Meyers, if I may.

Mr G. Meyers: In the budget papers, the financial information for the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer has been back cast for comparative purposes. The 2017–18 estimated outturn for the Government Chief Information Officer includes expenditure of \$9 million, and based on the funding that has been left over, \$7.3 million or thereabouts has been allocated for 2018–19.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 58 and the second dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, which notes that the GCIO will be transferred to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and I quote the following relating to cybersecurity —

... ensuring that information and communications technology (ICT) performance, data sharing and cyber security are strengthened.

Has anything specific been identified? I note the comments the Premier made yesterday about leaks or issues within the agency. I imagine that might be about something that happened in an electronic or information and communications technology–related environment. Is that why the GCIO has been brought in?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr Foster to comment on the question.

Mr D. Foster: This picks up issues that were identified in the service priority review—the need to have greater attention to issues such as cybersecurity and data sharing. That office already existed under the previous government but had a slightly different purpose, primarily around the procurement of ICT. The intention is that this office will morph into an entity that has a stronger cybersecurity focus. That specific mandate will be given to the office on 1 July and funding has been provided accordingly. It is not to do with any particular issues other than regular reports over a number of years by the Auditor General about the need to strengthen cybersecurity across the sector.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Will the GCIO look at the security review that the Premier noted yesterday?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I would not have thought so. No, that would not be my view.

Ms A. SANDERSON: My question relates to page 61 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, service 1, “Administration of Executive Government Services”, and administrative support to the Premier and ministerial offices. Is the Premier able to outline the current workload in regard to processing FOI applications; and, if that workload has increased, what has driven that increase?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Since 1992, the Western Australian government has had a Freedom of Information Act, an important part of accountability for Western Australia. In the 2017–18 financial year, on behalf of ministers’ offices and the department, there have been 144 FOI applications. In the 2016–17 financial year, it was 79 and in the 2015–16 financial year, there were 94. Compared with 2016–17, it is already around double and obviously we have not finished this financial year as yet. There have been 53 FOI applications from the opposition. There have been a range of applications that could only be described as “nuisance” applications. Some of the applications have been duplicated between members of the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition’s office. Some FOI applications have been put in seeking every single text message I have sent to a minister over the course of the year or since we arrived in office or something of that nature. The broad and imprecise nature of many requests have therefore contributed to FOI applications not being able to be dealt with within the legislated time frame; therefore, the FOI unit is under enormous pressure. FOIs from members of the public are therefore experiencing delays and journalists’ FOIs are experiencing delays. As I said, some of them have been duplicated between members of the opposition frontbench and the Leader of the Opposition’s office, with the same ones being sent—so much so that on occasion we have had to consult with the shadow minister about whether we can reveal their identity to the opposition leader’s office in order to answer an FOI. That is the coordination that has been going on. All I would say is that FOIs are an important part of accountability of government, as we know, established in 1992. It has been a worthwhile initiative, but if it is overloaded, the consequence is that we cannot have answers in as timely a fashion as we would have liked. Of course, when an FOI comes in, an enormous amount of consultation needs to go on in order to provide the information that is required under the law. That consultation takes time. If there are twice as many applications in the course of this year than in the year before, members can see the pressures that would place on the staff. I urge everyone to be considerate and take account of these pressures in FOI applications. If they want to put in another 100 or 200 applications, it just means that the system is incredibly delayed as a consequence, and those perhaps more legitimate FOIs, which seek important information rather than nuisance information, are delayed. I urge everyone to treat the FOI laws in the spirit in which they are meant to be treated.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Could the Premier tell me how many FOIs the government has sent?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not understand the Leader of the Opposition’s question.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The government has undertaken a couple of FOIs on activities of the previous government. I received a number of them from the Premier or his ministers; they are time consuming. I am just wondering how many FOIs the government has initiated over activities of the previous government, since we are talking about excessive use of FOI.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I gave the member the figures I have from that financial year. I get the point about members of the government, but 144 applications have already been received in the 2017–18 year, with a huge number from the opposition. Compare that with 2016–17—the last three quarters of which was in the term of the former government—when there were 79 applications, and we can see that there has been a significant increase in the number of applications. I think what the Leader of the Opposition might be referring to is requests for information from government to the former opposition about issues of public moment. I am not sure that they are FOIs. It might be a different thing that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I would like to discuss Infrastructure WA, which is at page 57 of budget paper No 2 under “Spending Changes”. What will Infrastructure WA actually do? I have read the background paper. The Premier indicated that this is low cost relative to other infrastructure equivalents around Australia, and it is. However, from my reading of the Premier’s paper, Infrastructure WA will not do anything that the other ones do not already do. It will specifically assess new projects, whether election commitments or others, assess policy decisions of the government of the day, and focus on longer-term coordination of infrastructure planning, which all of them do. There is no criticism of that. Since the Premier has released the background paper, has he reconsidered whether Infrastructure WA will look at infrastructure projects already underway or being planned or implemented by the government of the day?

[2.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Infrastructure WA was an election commitment as part of our program for the 2017 state election. Its key objective will be to improve infrastructure planning and decision-making to maximise the value to Western Australia from every dollar spent on infrastructure. This will create more certainty, a better environment for private sector investment and more secure long-term jobs. Infrastructure WA will help to tackle

issues experienced in recent years, including the lack of a long-term infrastructure strategy; siloed decision-making; a lack of transparency, consultation and engagement; and issues experienced with infrastructure delivery, from business case development to construction. The IWA proposal aligns with recommendations of the inquiry into government programs and projects—I forgot about that; the Langoulant report recommended this. A haphazard approach to infrastructure planning cannot continue; it is not in the public's best interests and it undermines industry confidence, which impacts on the economy and jobs. Infrastructure WA will set our vision, identify challenges, establish priorities, recommend direction for infrastructure planning and investment for the next 20 years, and advise government on the highest-priority infrastructure projects most needed for the state. It will have an independent board made up of senior members of government—that is, from the public sector; they will not be political appointments. My expectation is that it will have an independent chair from the private sector, but that is a matter for consultation. Infrastructure WA will also provide government with advice on alternative funding and financing options, certainty, and a better environment for investment to create jobs. It will work with government agencies to improve consistency and quality of business cases, including those submitted to the commonwealth, boosting WA's competitiveness and opportunities to create jobs. New South Wales and Queensland have these bodies. I think Victoria has one, but certainly the commonwealth has. There are various models. New South Wales has a bigger version, which has taken over some of the responsibilities of individual agencies in terms of project planning, scoping and the like. We are going for a smaller, more targeted model. I must say that I have not had a single piece of negative feedback from anyone in the business community about this proposition; it has overwhelming support from the business community. Over time I expect that what it produces will become bipartisan. I suspect that the Leader of the Opposition and I will not be here, but in 10 or 20 years' time the opposition and government will be arguing at the edges about infrastructure because the document will largely set out the priorities, projects and the like for the future of the state, which will largely be a good thing. That is a good model and that is what is in place in other states.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Will this model assess current proposals by the government of the day, such as Metronet? Will Infrastructure WA do an assessment—a cost-benefit ratio or whatever it will do—of the government's Metronet projects, for instance?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As the Leader of the Opposition can see from the forward estimates, in 2018–19 there is an amount of \$1.8 million, in 2019–20 it is \$3.5 million, in 2020–21 it is \$5 million, and then \$5 million after that. Our Metronet program, which is the rail line to Ellenbrook, Yanchep, Thornlie–Cockburn, Byford and the others, will largely be underway or completed. Obviously, Infrastructure WA will be looking forward rather than backwards. In any given year, the state spends in the vicinity of \$6 billion to \$7 billion on infrastructure—that is the natural order of things. Obviously, making sure that we have a coordinated, cohesive, thought-through infrastructure program in the future is very important.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Back to my point: if the government of the day, either today or in 10 years' time, comes up with a proposal to build a project in the general government sector—it does not matter what—will Infrastructure WA be expected to do an assessment of that project and give a recommendation to the government before the government commits to the project, as the commonwealth one does?

Mr M. McGOWAN: In the future?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Under this model, will Infrastructure WA be required to do an assessment of infrastructure projects committed to by the government and to provide an assessment of that project, just like they do in the commonwealth, New South Wales and Victoria, and make a recommendation to the government? In other words, under this model, will Infrastructure WA have the teeth to do an assessment of a project to which the government commits?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I imagine that governments would work with Infrastructure WA to work out which projects to commit to. If it started 10 years ago, I think the Leader of the Opposition's question might have more validity. Obviously, to reassess contracts that are signed, election commitments that are underway, and projects that are about to be built or are being built and to say that we will not do them anymore and to leave a half-built hospital, railway line or pipeline is not really its role, and I would not think that anyone would think that. It will involve planning documents. It will start its processes over the next couple of years and will become a bipartisan organisation over time. If and when the Liberal and National Parties ever get back into office, I suspect they will work effectively with Infrastructure WA. It is not intended to be political; it will have an independent board. The Leader of the Opposition is asking me whether it will go back and analyse projects that are signed up and commenced; I do not understand his point.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, I mean prospectively. In the future, a government will announce or consider a new project. Let us say that Infrastructure WA comes out with a plan that identifies needs—it might be rail; it might be a hospital—just like these bodies do for the commonwealth and other places. When the government of the day

starts implementing that plan, the projects that it decides on will go back to Infrastructure WA. Infrastructure Australia, Infrastructure Victoria and Infrastructure New South Wales are expected to do an assessment of new projects—not back-casting—and to give a recommendation or otherwise. We are trying to find out the gamut of activity of Infrastructure WA—that is it. Will it assess new projects, not past, that the government is considering? Will it make an assessment and make that publicly available? Is Infrastructure WA going to be an assessor of the bona fides of new projects?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is designed to be prospective, so I would imagine that it would look at new projects. The first task of the government will be to get the legislation through the Parliament. The second task, once the board is appointed and the like, is for Infrastructure WA to develop a 20-year strategy. I suspect that will take some time. How that fits with whatever happens in the future, I do not know. I am not going to say to the Leader of the Opposition at the next state election or whomever is the opposition leader at the following state election that their promises must align with the 20-year strategy, but I would urge them to. I suppose that is the way it works. It is not subverting the democratic process; what it is saying is that there is an independent board that will look at the priorities of the state for its long-term future and political parties can choose to align their commitments and promises to those or otherwise. I expect, over time, that they would be wise to align their priorities.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Fair enough; I agree with that. There is no disagreement in the private sector. The question I have, to which I will obviously not get an answer, is about when a government makes a decision to invest in a project. In all other states and the commonwealth the infrastructure body is expected to do an assessment of a project, make that assessment publicly available and rank the project against other projects, so that there is some independent assessment of the choices of the government of the day. I do not think, from the Premier's response, that that is what the government has done here.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The question about what the model might be is speculative. It has been out for public consultation and work is now being done on the model we will bring forward. When the model comes forward, I think I will be able to better answer the Leader of the Opposition's question. It will come to the house. We are not trying to somehow escape scrutiny or do something inappropriate or anything of that nature; we are trying to create something that has worked well elsewhere and means that governments spend infrastructure money wisely. I think a \$5 million investment per annum, when governments have a \$7 billion infrastructure budget and the prospect of securing billions of dollars more in commonwealth money, is a wise investment.

[2.30 pm]

Mr D.T. PUNCH: This question refers to the sixth dot point on page 58 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" and relates to the GST. What is the current state of play on the GST issue so that Western Australia receives its fair share, and what work is being done in the department on the issue?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As we know, it is a big issue for Western Australia. It is one of a number of financial impacts on our state, and there are many. One is the lack of a commonwealth commitment to the remote communities housing and maintenance program. The commonwealth has pulled \$100 million out of that program. Think about that: over four years that is \$400 million in housing in some of the most difficult environments in the world where maintenance and keeping housing over the heads of some of the poorest and dispossessed people is an issue. That is a \$400 million shortfall for Western Australia as a consequence of the commonwealth's decision. I have been at the Council of Australian Governments and have raised the issue directly with the Prime Minister. I saw the Northern Territory Chief Minister raise the issue with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was negative about giving anything to the Northern Territory and I note that the Northern Territory was funded recently. I urge the commonwealth to give Western Australia the same treatment as it gave the Northern Territory. Quite frankly, it is not fair. Why is it that a remote Aboriginal person living to the west of the Northern Territory border is treated to the detriment of a remote Aboriginal person living to the east of the Northern Territory border? To me it is not fair and it is not right. That is an issue we will continue to pursue with the commonwealth.

Then there is the issue I was talking about earlier; namely, the lack of GPs in the state which is forcing many more people to go into emergency departments, resulting in higher hospital expenses. We also have a lower share of aged care beds and that puts more pressure on hospitals, which is not reflected in our GST share and which is costing the state a lot more in terms of health care and, therefore, Western Australia is disadvantaged once again. We have one of the lowest rates of GPs anywhere in the country. When I was in Newman the other week I learnt that there are only one or two GPs in that town; I think it is one. Members should think about that: one GP in a town of 4 000 or 5 000 people. What does that mean? It means that everyone goes to the hospital, which is therefore a cost on the state. We pick up the cost of the hospitals and Medicare picks up the cost of GPs. It is a big problem for Western Australia. On top of that is the GST issue.

Obviously this issue has been around for a long time. I remember voting against Western Australia signing up to the GST arrangement when I was in opposition in 1999. We had a range of votes in here.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: What is this? What are we doing in estimates if the Premier just keeps getting dorothy dixers? This is not a history lesson.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: It is my question, hang on.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think history is important. It is important that people learn about history. I remember voting in here on a number of occasions against Western Australia signing the GST arrangement. We said that Western Australia would be disadvantaged and we were right.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: You were wrong.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was wrong?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, the way you argued it, you were wrong.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Okay. Obviously the Liberal Party supports our GST share. They signed us up to it, so no doubt they do.

I remember being part of the debate. Admittedly I was a junior MP and I was listening to more senior people like Geoff Gallop and Eric Ripper who put the case very cogently, but we were adamant that it would disadvantage Western Australia and we were right. The arguments that were put were about the fact that our share would go down over time and the reality is that the state government knew it but still signed up. Now we are in this position. I will outline where we are at. We are expected to lose \$16.7 billion over the period 2017–18 to 2021–22 relative to our full population share. Some people might say that getting to 48 cents in the dollar is a victory. We are still down \$16.7 billion over the next four years on what we would have been if we received our population share. Obviously the commonwealth now has the Productivity Commission report. I urge the commonwealth to release that report as soon as possible and provide us with a proper response to that Productivity Commission report because it is very important to Western Australia that we get a proper response and we have some forward planning in relation to this issue. People are saying that everything is fixed now because we are 47 cents in the dollar, whereas I do not think that is right. Over the forward estimates our share goes to the mid-60s I think. Still, the lowest level that another state has ever gone to is around 92 or 94 cents in the dollar.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is 71 cents.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, no-one has ever gone to 71.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes; Victoria in 1948.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, no-one has ever gone to 71 cents.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, they have.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can advise the Leader of the Opposition that they have not.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, they have—twice, actually.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition might have to correct the record.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, I do not think so; the Premier will.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition might have to correct the record. In any event, the lowest any state has ever gone to is around 90 cents in the dollar.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: What is New South Wales today?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Opposition leader, please stop defending the GST system.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: New South Wales last year was 87.7. It is in the budget.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I said, around 90 cents. Why is the opposition leader defending the system?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Is the Premier going to apologise? He just said he might have to correct the record.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I said around 90 cents.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Premier said no other state —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was asked a question.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We have heard it and it is nonsense. The Premier is just plucking it out of the air as usual.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, GST is an important issue.

Several members interjected.

The CHAIR: Thank you, members. We have a lot of divisions to get through.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is an important issue and the fact that the opposition leader is defending the system shows that they have not moved on from when they signed up to the system.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Premier said that no-one went below 90 cents. It is in front of him and he just misled Parliament.

Since we are talking about GST relativities, according to budget paper No 3 it is expected to go to 47.3 per cent in 2018–19 and then to 65 per cent by 2021–22, growing by about three per cent a year. Where does the Premier think, without any change, the relativities will end? Where does he think Treasury would have done an estimate of this? It is going to 65 per cent. It is no longer 30 per cent. It is 87 per cent this year, expected. It is going to 65, which, by the way, gives a —

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is 47 per cent.

Ms A. SANDERSON: It is not.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, it is. It is going to 65 per cent in the budget paper in 2021–22. That is a very large increase, almost more than the doubling of the per annum share of GST. Under Treasury's estimate, can I have an estimate, without reform of GST, of where the relativities will go to? It is going to 65 per cent in 2021–22. Where is it going over the next years? Treasury has estimates of this.

Mr M. McGOWAN: To what page is the opposition leader referring?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I refer to page 75 of budget paper No 3.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What the Leader of the Opposition is asking me is what the relativities will be beyond the forward estimates.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Treasury is not here, but I think that is a difficult question to answer.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, it has estimates.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If I could just answer the question, I think it is a difficult question to answer because, as the member knows —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: But it is relevant.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Okay, the Leader of the Opposition can keep going; I will let him go.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is relevant. The relativities are coming back sharply. There is a 250 per cent increase over the forward estimates. I am asking the legitimate question: where does the Premier think it will stabilise at without reform of GST?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Can I answer now?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a difficult question to answer because obviously beyond the forward estimates there is a range of variables. The iron ore price is a variable. Payroll tax take is a variable. The system contains a range of variables that we do not control. The level of the Australian dollar, whether it goes up or down, impacts our take from petroleum royalties in particular. All those things are variables so they are difficult to predict. I cannot give a definitive answer on where it will be beyond the forward estimates. As we know, the forward estimates are instructive, but they are estimates. Last year we had a shock on GST; it went down. Our estimate of where we are going to went down because of our population growth figures that the commonwealth has used. This year we lost what we would have expected would be another half a billion dollars simply because our population, according to the commonwealth estimates, was not growing as fast as we would have liked. There are all these variables that we cannot control. All we are asking for is a bit more certainty in terms of our share of GST and a bit more recognition of the fact that the arguments for reducing Western Australia's share are flawed. The commonwealth has not reformed the system, despite a range of commitments to assist Western Australia. It has undertaken the Productivity Commission inquiry—that is good—but it now has it in its top drawer. I ask it to release it and to respond as soon as possible.

[2.40 pm]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to "Administration of Executive Government Services" on page 61 of budget paper No 2 and the references to support provided to ministerial offices, the Premier's office and the functions of cabinet and Parliament. I refer the Premier to yesterday's article by Nick Butterly in which the Premier suggested that a security review needs to take place as a result of the leak of a confidential complaint. Will the Department of the

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Premier and Cabinet undertake this review? What will that review look at? What are the Premier's concerns that warranted an internal or external review taking place?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Dawesville would have read the story on Saturday. I was asked a question about it. We are considering the issue and making sure that we have high security standards. The member might have more to add about that issue. I suspect he knows more about it than I do.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Would the Department of the Premier and Cabinet be responsible for that review?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have not yet decided exactly what sort of review it might be, but, as I said, the member might know more about the issue than I do.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The Premier obviously has some concerns about the security that exists in the Premier's office or across government and the confidentiality of the systems that operate in ministerial offices.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, we have seen some incidents whereby documents or information have come out of government and have gone to someone—whom the member might be aware of—and then on to the press. Obviously, the member might be able to answer these questions better than I can.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am trying to understand the Department of the Premier and Cabinet systems. For the Premier to say that he will order an external review of his own agency is significant. I have not seen that happen in any other jurisdiction, and certainly not in the last eight years of the former government. That seems to be quite concerning.

The CHAIR: Is there a question in that?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The question is: what led the Premier to reach that point at which he thinks that the confidentiality of his ministerial offices or his office warrants a review?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have just been thinking about it. The member will recall that filing cabinets from, I think, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet were found in a second-hand store in Canberra, and there was a major inquiry into that matter. The member may not have heard of these issues, but I think that case shows that there has been a significant release of information at other levels. What has occurred with us is nothing of that magnitude. Obviously, the member for Dawesville has read the stories in the paper, as I have. I read the story on Saturday. We are considering what we might do about it. As I said to the member, I suspect that he is far better informed on where the information came from and he may well have had contact with the journalist in releasing the information any further. Perhaps the member would like to answer the questions.

Ms A. SANDERSON: My question relates to page 58 and the third dot point from the bottom, which states —

Western Australia is participating in the refresh of Closing the Gap, with the Department leading this initiative and providing policy support to the Premier and the Minister ...

Could the Premier outline what work is being done in this space?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member has asked me a very good question. I refer to the Council of Australian Governments refresh of the Closing the Gap agenda. After a decade of measuring the discrepancies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life outcomes, only one of seven national targets is on track. At the second Council of Australian Governments meeting in 2016, all jurisdictions agreed to invest significant effort in refreshing the Closing the Gap agenda. A national consultation process is underway, including an interactive website, to ensure that the final targets are developed in partnership with Aboriginal Australians. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is coordinating the consultation in Western Australia and has identified 10 priority locations in which there are substantial amounts of government activity. The WA government is working with Aboriginal Australians to ensure that the anticipated outcomes complement and add value to the state government's reforms and priorities. COAG will finalise specific national and state targets as well as jurisdictional implementation plans later in 2018. It is expected that the WA government's commitment to partner with Aboriginal communities will be realised through initiatives such as major infrastructure projects, government contracting, determined native title and Aboriginal Lands Trust divestment.

I might make two points in this context. Obviously, I talked about remote Aboriginal community housing and maintenance. When I went to the Closing the Gap meeting with the Prime Minister earlier this year, the Queensland Premier, the Northern Territory Chief Minister and I raised this issue. The commonwealth has funded the Northern Territory, but it has not funded Queensland or WA. The Northern Territory gets \$4.50 for every dollar of goods and services tax it puts in. We get 47c for every dollar we put in. The Northern Territory gets 10 times a person more than what we get. At the same time, the commonwealth is funding remote housing there, whereas if someone lives in Kiwirrkurra, Warburton or Wingellina on the western side of the border, they will not get the same treatment. What the commonwealth is doing is clearly unfair.

The second point I raise is that the member will have seen that as part of the budget. We have launched and funded our Aboriginal procurement policy to ensure that Aboriginal businesses get a fair share of government contracts. The intention is that by 2020, three per cent of government contracts will go to Aboriginal-owned businesses in Western Australia. We are doing a plethora of other things, including the Aboriginal rangers program and the program I announced on Sunday to assist families whose kids are having difficulties. We are doing all sorts of things to assist Aboriginal Australians, but it is very difficult when the commonwealth is doing what it is doing with housing and maintenance.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I refer to page 57 and the line item “Public Sector Reform”, which totals about \$15.3 million. What are the key performance indicators on this? Where will the funding be allocated? Will the government do more consultancy work? Will it do more studies? The Premier indicated earlier that he would further resource the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Treasury. Is that what the Premier will do?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr Foster to comment on that.

Mr D. Foster: The decision was made in the budget to fund a series of reforms, including the service priority review, the Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects, and, of course, the sustainability health review, which is not complete. A review of the Public Sector Commission is also on foot. There are in the vicinity of 300 to 350 recommendations that DPC will take the lead on and coordinate their implementation. The department has established a public sector reform team that will be co-owned, if you like, by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Treasury, the Department of Finance and the Public Sector Commission, with a governance board over that with those relevant chief executives and some additional chief executives from line agencies on a rotational basis. All up, about \$4.4 million is allocated in 2018–19. That will be divided into two major streams of work, one of which is reform mobilisation and implementation, so quite a lot of detailed scoping work is underway, and a proportion of that funding is allocated for whole-of-government targets. The intention is not to have rafts of consultants employed on this project but rather to do some strategic procurement of consultants when necessary for skills transfer purposes. One of the observations made by both the Langouant review and the service priority review was the loss of capacity in the sector. That is something that we have to rebuild, whether it be in project management, business case development or strategic human resources. There needs to be some skilling up and functional leadership in a range of areas. That reform will take several years to implement, so we now have secure funding for an office to drive that across the sector. But the important thing is that it is done in a staged, sequenced and carefully planned way in order to ensure there is uptake by the broader sector.

[2.50 pm]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This does not exist under the division for Department of the Premier and Cabinet, but page 132 of budget paper No 2 shows that public sector reform moneys from this project will flow into Treasury. That is why I am going there. Over the forward estimates, senior executive reductions will result in about \$4 million of savings. On the one hand the government is cutting Treasury’s senior executive service, which was, by the way, thin on the ground anyway, and on other hand it is putting more money into administrative and other activities. Could the Premier explain why that is not taking from one and giving to another?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Every agency of government, including Treasury and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has had to participate in the voluntary targeted separation scheme. The Leader of the Opposition knows that there are often people who want to leave, and it might be in their interests and those of the broader agency that they do. Those people go as part of this process, but then, under what we have provided here and the 20 per cent of the value of the salaries that it gets to keep, Treasury might acquire other people who better suit the needs of the agency going forward.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I understand that the government went to every department and said it needed a 20 per cent reduction in the SES. The government had a 20 per cent overall global estimate. The government went to Treasury and had to pay those people to leave. The SES people had to have payouts, unless they chose to leave without a payout.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not necessarily.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: There would not be too many of those. In this instance the government achieved efficiencies of about \$4 million, but then spent another \$5.5 million in the same agency. That \$4 million came at a cost. So why would the government exit people from the SES and Treasury, which is undermanned, and then backfill with additional money in the program? It seems that government should have started the reform agenda before people left so it did not have to pay them to leave.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will explain as clearly as I can. There are two things: the voluntary targeted separation scheme and the 20 per cent reduction in the SES. We do not necessarily pay people out when they leave the SES; sometimes they have a fixed-term contract or something of that nature that expires and they leave. Sometimes

people retire and are not replaced, and we also had a process for ensuring people left with some financial recompense. I will repeat as straightforwardly as I can what I said before. Sometimes the agency might want people to move on and they might leave as part of that process, and then via the additional support provided to Treasury, it is able to employ people it wants going forward. The Under Treasurer, Michael Barnes, has said to me at meetings that over the course of the last 10 years or so, although other agencies' budgets have grown very significantly over that time, Treasury's, essentially, has stood still and it has not been given some of the support it might need. I think the Langoulant report suggested the same thing. We have allowed Treasury to participate in reducing the SES—people have left who perhaps might have other roles to perform in other organisations—while employing people it might need and want for its long-term future.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: According to the budget papers, the government has made \$4.5 million worth of savings in Treasury from the reduction of the senior executive service. That came at some cost. Now the government is putting an extra \$5.5 million into an agency that the Langoulant report, which the government is responding to, identified as understaffed to begin with. I put to the Premier that the targeted SES reduction was not a choice but an overall policy, and it impacted Treasury significantly. It was overstaffed and the government had to pay them to leave. Is this not just a case of the government pursuing a policy of exiting people from agencies it cannot afford, and now it will have to backfill with funding of \$5.5 million?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, I do not agree with that. I will comment, and then ask Mr Foster to comment. The agency was most happy with the voluntary targeted separation scheme and the SES reduction was Treasury. It was very pleased.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Really?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, we have had to make savings to ensure that the state's financial future is sound and —

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Premier said it was undermanned and had been systematically starved of funds.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition is not listening to my answer.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My answer is that going forward Treasury will be able to employ the sorts of people it wants. The Leader of the Opposition knows these processes were targeted. Agencies might have used these processes to change their agency up or create vacancies in areas where they might want to; those sorts of things. It is not a pleasant process and we would love to keep everyone there, but we have to live within our means. We have managed to streamline the SES, which had grown out of control; I recall it grew by 40 per cent under the term of the previous government. The rest of the public sector appreciates that. The VTSS is allowing agencies and people to work out who wants to leave, and agencies to determine the positions they do not need to refill. With Treasury particularly we managed to give it some money to allow it to have the analytical and other capabilities it wants going forward. I will ask Mr Foster to comment.

Mr D. Foster: The two component parts of the reform program that have been funded in the budget, as the Leader of the Opposition correctly identified, is \$4.4 million for Premier and Cabinet and nearly \$1.6 million for Treasury. That was for a range of initiatives identified in the service priority review and the Langoulant review. The reductions in the SES and as a result of the VTSS are obligations that central agencies, like all agencies, have. Both Treasury and DPC have met their obligations. There is an added expectation, I guess, for central agencies to lead by example. We have met collectively our obligations in reducing the senior executive service. That has allowed us to employ people in different positions at lower levels. Akin to the workforce renewal program that the previous government implemented, as people exit, people can be recruited at lower levels, as I have done in Premier and Cabinet, which removes layers of executive positions. Treasury, like DPC, has targeted and recruited people with the particular skill sets needed for the reform program. They are at different levels and have different skillsets to those who exited, so it is not like for like.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 64 of budget paper No 2 in relation to cost of services, expenses and accommodation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Do you just want me to talk about the vibe?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: No, not the vibe. I am making sure the Premier has the page.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can talk about the vibe if you like.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am sure the Premier could talk about the vibe. I am keen to understand the final costs of relocating the Premier's office to Dumas House. Can I have a breakdown of the fit-out costs, what they are and the total value of those costs, if we can?

[3.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will put a bit of background around this. When I got to the office of Premier, which is a very, very privileged position, I found the Hale House office to be very isolated from other ministers and other parts of government. It was one of those things that a lot of people had commented on to me before—that it was a symbol of the fact that the Premier was isolated from his or her ministers. I found in that office that that was a correct analysis. It was very isolating and it meant that if I wanted to see a minister or a public servant, it was very problematic to see and work with anyone. I therefore took the advice that the government had given the former Premier back in 2010, which he declined to accept; namely, to go into Dumas House. I realised that—the last government having spent nearly \$30 million on that office complex—to move into Dumas House, I did not want to spend any more money, so I came up with a way of doing it by which a large part of the Public Sector Commission would move to Hale House and I would move to the fifth floor of Dumas House and share a floor with the Attorney General. From memory, the savings are around \$1.7 million over four years from doing that, essentially, because the Attorney General's rent in the city, which was \$600 000 a year or thereabouts, was no longer to be paid. It worked out for everyone. I would be interested in the Leader of the Opposition's comments on whether he would move back into Hale House should he become Premier, or keep the arrangement I put in place for the future. Obviously, the new office—journalists and other people have been there—is nowhere near as salubrious or luxurious as the Hale House office, but I think that is probably appropriate for the Premier. The saving is around \$1.7 million over four years. We managed to achieve that because the Attorney General has come there with me. To the best of my knowledge, I have not upgraded furniture or anything of that nature. There might have been some networking for computers and what have you; I am not sure about that. There might have been a bit of that. There were obviously some removal costs. I think I and my staff carried most of the boxes across. It is the right message and it is the right way for government to work. If members opposite want to keep pursuing this, they can, but I will keep reminding people that the last Liberal–National government spent nearly \$30 million on the Premier's office. Personally, I think that was a big waste.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is the Premier saying there are no fit-out costs attached to his moving to the fifth floor?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There were some fit-out costs.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Beyond network cabling?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We had to fit out the Attorney General's new office. Obviously, there was not an office there for the Attorney General. The total cost of the fit-out for the office of the Attorney General and my office was \$818 000.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: So, Premier, \$818 000?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, \$818 000. The rent for his office was \$650 000, or something, a year in the city. Sorry, the lease savings are \$822 000 per annum. The saving —

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: You have explained that; I appreciate that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will explain it again.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Supplementary.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will explain it again. The saving in one year is greater than the cost of the fit out. There you go.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In that case, just to clarify; you previously said there were no associated costs for the fit-out and now there are \$818 000 in fit-out costs. Did that go out to tender? I think the tender guidelines say that something over half a million dollars has to go out to tender. I could be wrong. Did that go out to tender; if so, on what date?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We do not know the answer to that question. That is a Department of Finance matter. The member might want to ask the Minister for Finance, but I will repeat. The lease saving per annum for the Attorney General to move —

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am going to say it.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We have heard it three times so far; this is not what we are asking.

The CHAIR: Member for Dawesville, the Premier is answering your question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sure one of my colleagues will ask me the question in a moment, but I want to repeat that the lease saving per annum is \$822 000.

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Dr M.D. NAHAN: That has nothing to do with you.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The only way it could work was for he and I to occupy the same floor.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: How was the cost for the Premier's move?

The CHAIR: The Leader of the Opposition can ask a question in a moment.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Liberal Party spent \$30 million on the new Premier's office—\$30 million.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: And you are still using it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have moved into much more basic accommodation and saved taxpayers nearly \$2 million over four years, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to criticise that, feel free.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Supplementary.

The CHAIR: No; it is not a supplementary, it is a further question.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Further question. I appreciate your guidance there Chair, in that case.

The CHAIR: I am sure you do.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is it true the Premier has received some complaints or has levelled some complaints about noise in the office and someone has been engaged to look at the acoustics within the office?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have no knowledge of that. The member should stop listening to his sources and stop communicating information to journalists.

The CHAIR: Further question, member for Dawesville; we are still on this first division.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Absolutely, thank you very much, while we take up 40 minutes of dorothy dixers from the other side, Chair. That is why we are here.

Can I get an understanding of the breakdown in relation to the Premier's expenditure in his new office?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I understand it, very little has been done.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: He said network cabling, but that does not cost \$818 000.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No; I said construction work for the Attorney General.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: And nothing for the Premier?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Some tables and chairs and the like have been purchased at a total of \$28 000.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to research assistance to minor parties in the Legislative Council under "Spending Changes" on page 57. Can the Premier advise which minor parties are included? How many staff does that include and who initiated the conversation; was it government or was it the minor parties?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Cabinet agreed to provide additional staffing resources to members of the minor parties in the Legislative Council. The minor parties made representation to the government. They approached the Leader of the Government in the upper house and they approached me requesting additional support. We agreed to the additional support. The additional support for the Greens is two full-time employees; for the One Nation Party, two full-time employees; for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers, one full-time employee; and for the Liberal Democrats, one full-time employee. It is a total of six additional staff.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was anything attached to the provision of that funding? Were any conditions attached?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There was absolutely nothing. I think it is fair to say that some of the minor parties would like more assistance—not all but some—but the government has declined to provide that. We think that what has been provided is more than fair and more than reasonable.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Very generous, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are no strings attached and there is no additional assistance. There was no quid pro quo or anything of that nature. The government was very, very careful about that.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I was going to ask about the substantial savings on the Premier's office relocation but the member for Dawesville beat me to that.

I refer the Premier to emergency policy management at the final dot point under "Government Policy Management" on page 62. What is being done to strengthen oversight of the state's preparedness for and management of state security threats and emergency risks?

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is a very important issue and thank you for the question. We recently decided to establish a new government cabinet security committee comprising me, the Deputy Premier, the Attorney General,

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the ministers responsible for police, emergency services, health, citizenship and multicultural interests, innovation and information and communications technology. The purpose of this cabinet subcommittee is to receive briefings on security threats and emergency risks and to consider security and emergency-related legislation and policy proposals, including issues such as cyber security, the outcome of Council of Australian Governments meetings and national critical infrastructure security developments. The committee will meet once every six months on average, but will be available to be activated at my discretion should circumstances determine. We need to prepare for the worst. We recently passed our so-called shoot-to-kill laws for terrorism-related incidents through this house. Hopefully, they will soon pass through the upper house. We have to be vigilant to the threats that are out there. Some things I have heard at the national level at Council of Australian Governments meetings about threats to the eastern states are very disturbing. I want to make sure that Western Australia is as prepared as possible for the modern world that we live in, where people are radicalised and there is the potential for terrorist acts.

There will be exercises for security and police services to prepare for these sorts of things. We have provided the legislative tool, which is the shoot-to-kill capability for our police were there to be a Lindt cafe-style incident in Western Australia. We have to be vigilant about the threats. All these things are going on and this cabinet security committee, which is made up of those ministers, will monitor all these things and make sure, as far as we possibly can, that the state is prepared for the worst that might come to Western Australia. I have said before that I think the main threats to Australia are in Melbourne and Sydney, but you can never be too careful. We know that Man Monis himself lived in Perth for a period and in the 1980s and 1990s there were some security incidents that could have been quite disastrous. We want to make sure that, as best we can, Western Australia is prepared for the worst that could come to our state at any time.

[3.10 pm]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to employee benefits on page 64. I am keen to understand, if the Premier feels so obliged, whether we can be provided with a breakdown of compensation and termination payouts and the like for any staff within the department or ministerial officers who have been terminated since Labor came to government—what that quantum is, how many staff and what their positions were.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ministerial officers?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The government inherited some permanent public servants who were moved out of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, for example, and shifted aside as well, so yes, ministerial officers, as well as the department more broadly.

Mr M. McGOWAN: After the state election a huge amount of payouts were made to a range of people. I would be happy to provide the member with those. By way of supplementary information, I agree to provide a full list of the payouts since the state election until now, and the amounts of money. Some of the amounts of money are really quite extraordinary.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I think the Premier provided that to us last year.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am happy to provide it again. I like to be fully accountable.

[*Supplementary Information No A7.*]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Will that include DPC employees as well?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, that is ministerial officers.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The Premier did not clarify that when he put that —

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a whole different matter. The member asked about ministerial officers.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I asked about DPC. Unless there is a concern about understanding what I said, it was about DPC.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ministerial staff are in DPC's budget. That is where ministerial staff come from. More broadly, the figure for anyone in government—whoever left and whatever payout they got—at this point in time is 2 200 people. I am not prepared to provide their details and what they got. I think that would be a significant privacy issue. As was the case last year, I will provide the information about ministerial staff from the 2017 election onwards.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Can I get an understanding of whether the Premier would agree to do the same for corporate executives within DPC who were no longer employed as of 13 March? When the Premier came into the department —

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member puts a question on notice, I will address it that way.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is the Premier happy to do it for ministerial officers but not for the corporate executive of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Put a question on notice.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Does the Premier not have that information to hand?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I answered the member's question.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The Premier has not answered my question at all.

Can I get an understanding whether the information the Premier has said he will provide through supplementary information will also include payouts to former chiefs of staff, such as the former chief of staff to the Deputy Premier?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have said it will be ministerial staff since the state election.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to the seventh dot point on page 58. It refers to a number of committees and includes the rolling out of the methamphetamine action plan. Does the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce sit under the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It does. It sits under the DPC.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The task force does?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Premier tell me how often the task force has met, what type of consultation it is conducting, what its interactions with the community have been, and whether any regional visits have been undertaken as part of the targeted consultations mentioned on the website?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think it has done a fair bit. Ron Alexander has been working hard on it and it has been around Western Australia. We established the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce to provide advice to government on what else we can do. We have done a lot of things and I have answered questions on this before. The task force has listened to and spoken to over 330 individuals in metropolitan and regional areas, including Exmouth, Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Geraldton and Bunbury. It has done fairly extensive consultation. It has consulted individuals who have a long experience of drug use, those whose families and friends have been affected by drug use, workplace representatives, Aboriginal and South Sudanese community members, as well as service providers and peak organisations. The online survey was open between 15 January and 16 March to enable members of the public to provide their views and experiences to the task force. A total of 146 responses were received from users and ex-users of methamphetamine, families, frontline workers and service providers. That is pretty good.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How often has the task force formally met? Is it a regular occurrence?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know the answer to the question, but I think it has been doing a lot. I would not accuse its members of slacking. I know that Ron Alexander has been very engaged. Right now, he is in the Kimberley and Pilbara area with the meth task force. The insertion of methamphetamine into Aboriginal communities is very concerning. Consulting with those communities is obviously very important.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I think the task force was established in June 2017. Is there a date the Premier is expecting it to report by or is this a rolling task force that will continue?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are expecting a report mid this year. The government will consider the report at that time and decide what to do. The issue is not a secret. It is not as though we do not know it is out there. It is a matter of trying to work out innovative ways of dealing with it. We already have a range of responses, but addiction is addiction. Getting people off drugs is hard because they are addicted. If it were easy, it would have been solved by now.

[3.20 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there a line item somewhere in the budget that relates to the cost of running the task force—the cost associated with the task force members and allocating funds? They are travelling, so that does not come cheap.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr Foster to comment.

Mr D. Foster: We are absorbing the costs of running the task force internally within DPC.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not think it is that expensive but I think Mr Alexander left his job at the Department of Sport and Recreation, and this was one of his major tasks. Obviously, it is a good task for someone to throw themselves into because coming up with some innovative ideas is important for the future of the state. If the cost is met with existing resources, that is good. I suspect that it is fairly minor compared with the issue itself that the state is confronting. I could not tell members the number of times I have walked through a shopping centre and been absolutely positive that I have seen people on methamphetamine given the behaviours going on, both in my

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electorate and in other electorates around the state. I have talked to police officers in regional Western Australia a number of times, who tell me shocking stories about the things they see out there. Dealing with that is very important for the future of the state. I repeat that there are no real answers. Western Australia and, I think, South Australia have the worst rates of methamphetamine use in the country. It has been an ongoing problem for a long period.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer the Premier to “Administration of Executive Government Services” on page 61 and the list of services that the department provides. I am keen to understand whether the department provides the Premier with advice on prospective ministerial staff and whether that advice also includes staff who should not be able to join the ranks of ministerial advisers. If so, is that routine advice—to provide the Premier with a veto power for any prospective ministerial staff?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am advised that the department does police checks on ministerial staff. All the ministerial staff work for the Premier, so they are answerable to the Premier. I personally do not know the names of all the ministerial staff—there are 200 or so; I probably would not know the majority of them. Obviously, I do not think some people would be appropriate to work in ministerial offices. That is the prerogative of the Premier. I know that the former Premier had a view about a few people as well.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is that departmental policy or is it simply the Premier’s own choice?

Mr M. McGOWAN: They work for the Premier.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I understand that. I just want to know whether it is departmental policy.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We largely trust people’s judgement as to who they want to employ and the sort of staff they want. We get a wide mix of people from a wide range of backgrounds. Some of them, like the member for Dawesville, have political leanings. Others are from a public sector background. Others may have come from the private sector and have administration experience. We get a wide range of people, but the Premier has the final say and that has always been the way.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Has the Premier actively vetoed a number of staff—many staff? Is there a figure?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The Premier has not vetoed a single one?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member asked me whether I had actively vetoed many staff, and the answer is no, I have not actively vetoed many staff.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Has the Premier vetoed any staff?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have views about people and sometimes I express those views but it is not something I am going to speculate upon here. Obviously, some people might have close contacts with members of the Liberal Party, like the member for Dawesville, and we might think they are not appropriate to work in a minister’s office because they might liaise with the member on occasion.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Ministers have obviously recommended people to the Premier. Has the Premier overridden that minister? Is that what the Premier is saying?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is not what I said. I said that I have knowledge of some people who might communicate with the member and provide him with information.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Are you using me specifically or just generally speaking?

The CHAIR: Member for Dawesville, through me.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member can answer the question. I have acknowledged that some people might communicate with the member for Dawesville and he might give that information to journalists, so therefore those people might not be appropriate to work in government. That is a decision for the Premier of the day.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is the Premier worried about leaks within his own government?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not particularly. I think the cabinet has been extraordinarily good at maintaining the processes of cabinet. Obviously, there have been a couple of issues. There are always issues within any government of any persuasion at any point in time. I think the cabinet itself has been absolutely fantastic in understanding the role of cabinet.

The appropriation was recommended.