

Division 34: Office of the Auditor General, \$7 431 000 —

Mr N.W. Morton, Chairman.

Dr M.D. Nahan, Treasurer.

Mr C. Murphy, Auditor General.

Mrs S. Godfrey, Assistant Auditor General, Business Services.

Ms L. Di Paolo, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr M. Don, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: 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 the 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. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

The Treasurer 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 Treasurer 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 Treasurer's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 3 June 2016. I caution members that if the Treasurer asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office.

I give the call to the member for Cannington.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to page 396 of budget paper No 2 and the third dot point under the heading "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" about the office's legislative obligation to undertake audits et cetera. How many requests for inquiries, audits or investigations has the Office of the Auditor General received during the current financial year from members of Parliament and, secondly, from the community?

Mr C. Murphy: I do not believe that I have that information to hand, but I would be more than happy to provide it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Hold on.

Mr C. Murphy: I may well have that information.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: That is why Mrs Godfrey is the Deputy Auditor General!

Mr C. Murphy: That is absolutely right. Did the member want the figures for the current financial year?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes.

Mr C. Murphy: We received a total of 149 referrals or inquiries: 27 were from state government agencies, 16 were from members of Parliament or parliamentary committees and 106 were from members of the public.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: How many of the 149 requests in each of those categories led to an inquiry or action being taken?

Mr C. Murphy: There is a lot of overlap in the nature of the questions we are asked, and those questions are often used to formulate different audits. There may be a lot of overlap on the questions and some of the questions are generic. We have not specifically tracked which of those 149 requests resulted in a specific tabled request. We can certainly track back the action taken on any individual request—how it was incorporated into a report or whatever that might be.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The dot point I referred to acknowledges that the agency's budget is limiting its activity. Was the Office of the Auditor General caught up in the recruitment freeze?

Mr C. Murphy: Yes, indeed, we were caught up in the recruitment freeze. We had a couple of exemptions for some critical positions but, in general, we were subjected to a number of the savings measures that were introduced across the public sector, and to a point I believe that was appropriate. We audit the public sector, so we are well aware of the stringent arrangements that operate within government agencies. Agencies have had to review their activities and curtail some of them, so I think that it was entirely appropriate that we had a good hard look at our activities to see whether we could achieve savings in any areas. Having said that, I am also

particularly keen for our performance audit program to provide for the needs of Parliament, and that is a concern going forward.

[12.10 pm]

Dr M.D. NAHAN: As the member knows, some of the audits of the Auditor General are contracted out to private sector contractors. Those, of course, were not caught up in the hiring freeze. My memory might be wrong, but the Auditor General also had a program to employ younger people.

Mr C. Murphy: That is correct. Our graduate recruitment program was specifically exempted so that we could continue our annual intake of graduates.

The appropriation was recommended.